#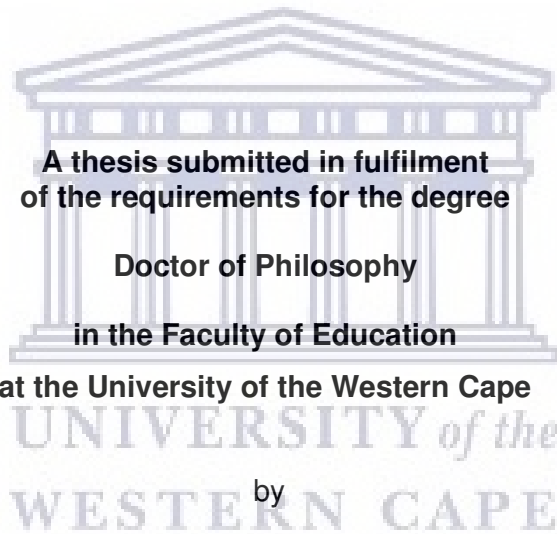 The Nature of Parental Involvement in Literacy Activities of Low Achieving Learners in Disadvantaged Contexts at a Selected Primary School in the Western Cape

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree**

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Faculty of Education

at the University of the Western Cape
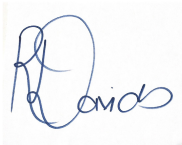
by

Rochelle Davids

Supervisor: Professor Rajendra Chetty

Date submitted: December 2020

DECLARATION

I, Rochelle Davids, declare that the thesis, *The Nature of Parental Involvement in Literacy Activities of Low Achieving Learners in Disadvantaged Contexts, at a Selected Primary School in the Western Cape,* is my own original work and that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university in order to obtain an academic qualification.

December 2020

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ROCHELLE DAVIDS   Date

ABSTRACT

Literacy levels measured against national and international tests indicate that South African learners are performing poorly. Literacy skills are critical in the development of learners, and research suggests that parents play an important role in enhancing these skills. The study takes into account the geographical, socio-economic and historical context of learners and parents, and seeks to determine why children are struggling with literacy activities. The research approach is both qualitative and quantitative in nature, from a pragmatic perspective. Critical literacy theory is employed as the theoretical framework, in conjunction with Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice.

The study uses a number of tools to shed light on the research questions. The sample is made up of fifty-nine Foundation Phase learners, all who obtained less than 50% in English. Quantitative data were extrapolated by administering the PIRLS (2006) questionnaire, a standardised instrument used by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Facts and figures from the questionnaire are presented and the data provided holistic understanding of the nature of parental involvement, as well as attitudes and behaviour towards literacy activities. Qualitative data in the form of focus-group interviews, semi-structured interviews and photographs provided insight into learners' home environment. Interviews were categorised into dominant themes, patterns and relations.

The findings illustrate that in order for parents to enhance their children's literacy, the social context of learners have to be taken into consideration, to determine how parents view literacy, and the types of literacy they possess. The findings highlight the impact of poverty, violence and mother-tongue instruction on literacy development. There is a need for a South African curriculum to embrace a critical approach to literacy and abandon a transmission pedagogy approach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Almighty God, from whom all blessings flow.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated

to

my father Percival Charles Davids, who died on 5 March 2019

and

my mentor Rev. Fr Canice Dooley, who died on 13 July 2019.

I am the resurrection and the life: he who believeth in me,
though he were dead, yet shall he live. (John 11:25)

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WESTERN CAPE

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

If adults implement curriculum that promotes interpersonal consideration and cooperation in children, we see even more of these behaviours.
(Donna Sasse Wittmer & Alice Stering Honig 1994)

1.1 Introduction

Literacy levels in South Africa, measured against national and international tests, indicate that South African learners are performing poorly. The literacy levels of learners in the Western Cape, measured against systemic tests conducted in 2016, revealed that Grade 3 learners scored 42,5% in literacy, Grade 6 learners scored 40,1%, and Grade 9 learners scored 55,1% (Western Cape Education Department, 2016). The 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessments confirmed the low literacy levels in South Africa (Chetty, 2019a:2). It should be noted, however, that Prinsloo and Krause (2019) have contested the validity and reliability of the PIRLS Test. Rule and Land (2017:1) point out that the 2011, Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ, iii) found that South African children's reading ranked 4th out of 15 African countries for the richest 25% of children, and 14th out of 15 for the poorest 25%.

Not only learners performed poorly, however, Grade 6 educators who wrote the SACMEQ English test performed relatively well with simple retrieval of information but their scores dropped drastically as soon as they had to perform higher cognitive functions involving inferences, interpretation and evaluation (Tayor & Taylor, 2013). The poor competence of teachers is often a result of poor teacher training at dysfunctional colleges of education during the apartheid era, and later as a result of continuities of behavioural pedagogy sustained at those institutions (Taylor, 2016:18).

1.2 Motivation for the research

My motivation for the study was to determine (i) whether parents are supporting learners and in what ways, and (ii) how parents can be assisted to contribute more meaningfully towards their children's literacy development. I wanted to determine why children were failing to succeed in literacy activities, and in what ways poor socio-

economic factors caused learners to under-achieve. The term 'parental involvement' may be interpreted in many different ways, and I was eager to determine the nature of parents' involvement in their children's education at the school selected for this specific study. Literacy skills are critical in the development of learners, and parents can play an important role in enhancing their children's reading and writing skills.

Manoil (2008:4) states that young children should be supported to develop literacy activities at an early age to prevent failure, and to prevent them from dropping out of school. Manoil asserts that an increase in school drop-out rates could lead to juvenile delinquency, and ultimately to unemployment.

Au and Raphael (2000) define literacy as the foundation for all other learning, and argue that literacy is the vehicle through which humans can make sense of the world. Durisic and Bunijevac (2017:140) argue that parental involvement starts in the home, with parents creating a safe and healthy environment, facilitating and supporting a positive learning experience, and promoting a positive attitude towards school. Schools need parents to be actively involved in learners' education, particularly in literacy activities. Sénéchal and Lefevre (2014:3) assert that parents' support in imparting knowledge about reading and writing is a foundational home literacy experience that is a reliable and central predictor of children's literacy development. The relevant literature chosen and examined for this study points to the impact of home experiential factors upon children's literacy skills, and formed the key rationale for this study into parental involvement in literacy activities among disadvantaged learners who are low achievers.

1.3 Research Questions

In light of the core concerns of the study, the main research question is formulated as follows:

1.3.1 What is the nature of parental involvement in literacy activities of learners in disadvantaged contexts, at a selected primary school in the Western Cape?
Flowing from the main question, the sub-questions were formulated as follows:

1.3.1.1 How do parents assist their children with literacy activities?

1.3.1.2 How does poverty impact upon parental involvement in literacy activities?

1.3.1.3 What kind of activities do parents implement to assist learners with literacy at the selected school?

1.4 Aims of the research

1.4.1 To shed light on parental involvement in literacy activities of learners in disadvantaged contexts, and to assess which kinds of involvement enhances literacy development; and

1.4.2 To determine the attitude of parents towards the education of their children.

1.5 Contribution of the study

Although foundational research has been conducted into workable and affordable strategies for creating school learning communities with parents, the scope of such work in South Africa has often been limited. This research project extends the range and depth of data collection to embrace socio-economic, geo-political and existential factors which dictate and condition the nature of parent literacy and the (i) ability and (ii) readiness or preparedness of parents to assist learners with literacy. This wider examination of literacy and parent involvement required a more nuanced and socially resonant definition of the term literacy so that the theoretical perspectives of such critics as Bourdieu and Freire became vital to comprehending the complexity of the particular community around the school. The key finding of this project was that literacy has to be conceived of in this broader sense in order to account for, and reflect, in subtle, useful ways the intricate layers of challenge, poverty and personal courage that are woven into such an historically oppressed group of parents and learners. This study achieves deeper insight into, and understanding of, parental involvement in literacy activities in disadvantaged contexts from a South African perspective. Voices and narratives of parents have frequently been marginalised in

South African studies into literacy. The main focus has too often been upon classroom achievement, pedagogy and teacher experiences of teaching literacy. This study gives a voice to parental experiences with literacy by providing thick descriptions of their involvement and literacy in the home. It is the argument of this thesis that parent narratives assist teacher education and literacy practitioners to understand the complexity of literacy achievement within working class contexts characterised by poverty, marginalisation and violence.

1.6 Historical background of the study

The context of the study is the Cape Flats, a loose grouping of so-called 'townships'[1], informal settlements and ghettos in the peri-urban surrounds of Cape Town, and inhabited largely by coloured/mixed race and black African people. The Group Areas Act of the Afrikaner apartheid regime in the 1950s formalised the racist separation of peoples instituted by colonial British rule, giving rise to the establishment of racially segregated communities deported to the Cape Flats. This study is located in a so-called 'Coloured' area that housed citizens classified as coloured/mixed race during apartheid.

Apartheid classified South Africans into four population groups, and these racial categories are still used today for equity and transformation purposes. Citizens were categorised as Blacks (African, Coloureds/mixed race and Indians/Asians), and Whites. The apartheid system was twofold; to sustain political supremacy and to promote economic prosperity for the white minority, while the black majority were marginalised, exploited and undereducated (Abel, 2015:5).

Racial oppression started during the British colonial administration in the 18th century when *reserves* were established for blacks in terms of the Land Act of 1913 and the Native Land and Trust Act of 1936. Due to poverty and overcrowding on the reserves, there was an influx of blacks to urban areas. The Group Areas Act created ethnically homogenous townships outside the cities, and forcefully removed people

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[1] This derogatory term was generated under white rule and is deplored by this researcher but the term is used here because it has come to be accepted as a way of referring to black areas of residence in the country.

from mixed communities such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg, District Six in Cape Town and Cato Manor in Durban, according to their racial classification, as defined in the Population Registration Act of 1950. The Cape Flats is an area which was earmarked as a place of relocation for coloureds who were forcibly removed from areas close to the city such as District Six, Woodstock and University Estate.

1.7 The birth of the Cape Flats

The Cape Flats is an extensive urban sprawl that consists of townships where the majority of coloureds and black Africans live. It is for this reason that many authors refer to the Cape Flats as apartheid's dumping grounds. Ledochowski (2007:1) describes the Cape Flats as a stretch of exposed sandy wetlands, which is highly unsuitable for residential purposes because it is racked by the harsh south easterly winds, and frequently floods during the winter season. Blacks and coloured townships, he demonstrates, are physically separated by highways and railway lines, and apartheid policies ensured that these communities remained (i) deeply divided along lines of culture and race and (ii) denied quality education to keep them as servants. In spite of having a common experience of poverty and oppression, these communities grew intolerant of each other, racist and distrustful (Ledochowski, 2007:2). Coloured people spoke the language of the oppressor, Afrikaans, and were granted second-class citizenship; during a limited period they were able to vote for representation in parliament. Schools in such areas today face an added challenge. Apart from attempting to repair the damage of segregation upon academic performance, schools need to break down historical barriers of mistrust, and nurture racial acceptance.   Gabrielssohn (2018:85) postulates that townships in the Cape Flats are made up of endless makeshift sheds, without proper provision of water, sanitation or electricity. Life in these townships, she argues, is marked by poverty, massive unemployment, elevated criminal activity and HIV/AIDS.

Figure 1.1 is a map of the Cape Flats indicating where blacks and coloureds were moved from the interior of the city to the outskirts with little allowance for subsidised transport to and fro.

Figure 1.1 Map of the Cape Flats
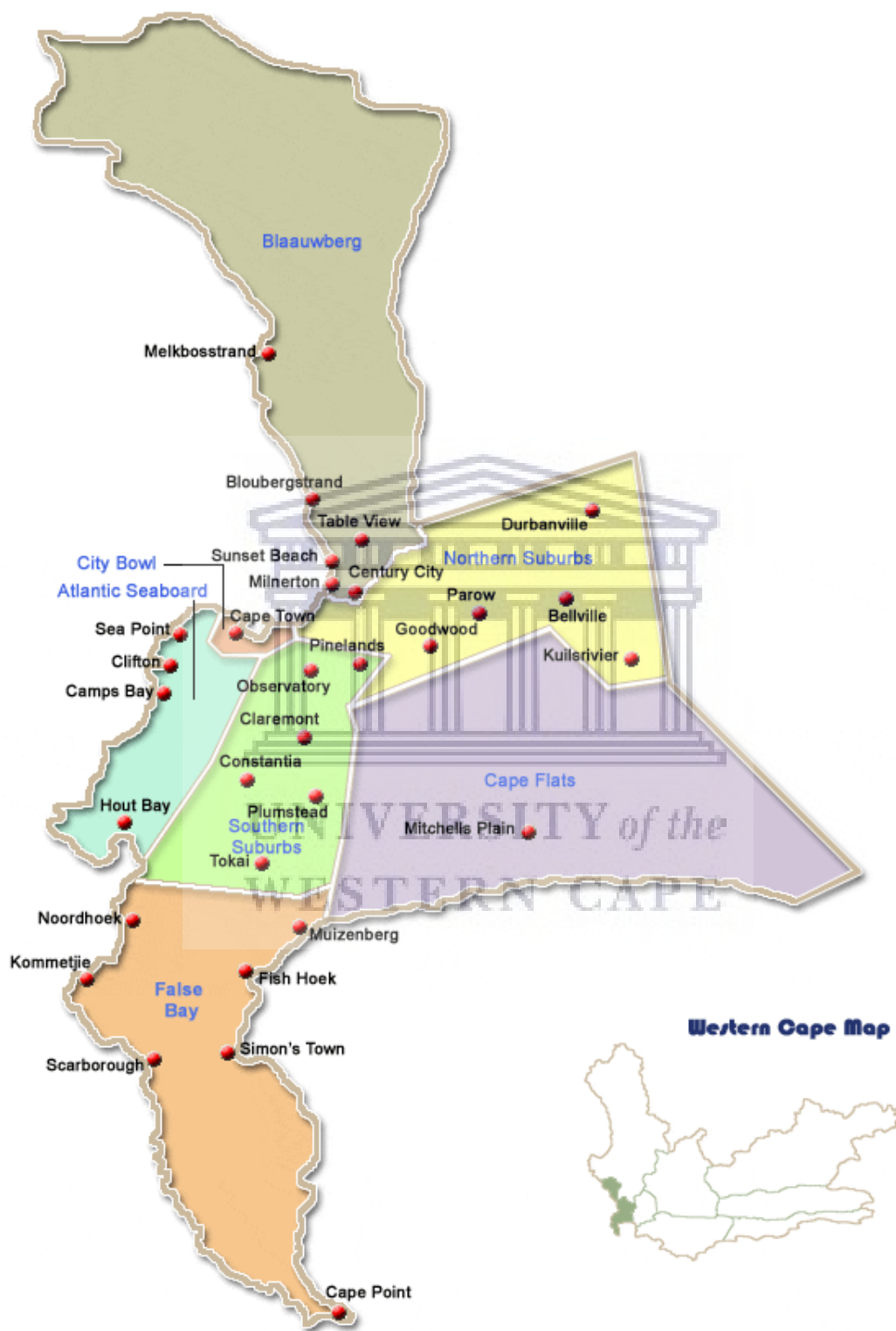
Table 1.1 Number of males and females (STATS SA 2012)

AREA IN THE CAPE FLATS	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
1. Cross Roads (black)	17 323	18 720	36 043
2. Delft (coloured)	74 612	77 418	152 030
3. Gugulethu (black)	48 277	50 191	98 468
4. Hanover Park (coloured)	16 452	18 173	34 625
5. Heideveld (coloured)	8 153	9 234	17 388
6. Khayeltisha (black)	191 562	200 187	391 749
7. Langa (black)	25 987	26 414	52 401
8. Manenberg (coloured)	25 253	27 624	52 877
9. Nyanga	28 090	29 906	57 996
10. Phillipi	100 823	99 781	200 603
TOTAL	**536 532**	**557 648**	**1 094 180**

1.8 Parental involvement and social capital

Parental involvement is uniquely packaged within the South African context, based on historical antecedents, which, after liberation in 1994, gave rise to the South African Schools Act (1996). In spite of the South African Schools Act empowering and motivating parents to be involved in their children's education, parents largely remain uninvolved in many of their children's school activities. This lack of involvement is not caused by parents' lack of concern but is the result of factors such as poverty, single-parenthood, non-English literacy, the effects of the HIV/Aids pandemic, as well as cultural and socio-economic isolation. Heystek (1999) argues that multi-ethnic communities face even greater barriers, especially in relation to language and other cultural idiosyncrasies. It is noted that studies conducted by Heystek as early as 1999 found that feelings of inferiority towards educators, negative attitudes towards school, inadequate knowledge and skills, demographic factors, as well as educators' negative actions and attitudes were some of the reasons identified as preventing black parents from becoming involved in their children's education. All these factors are still relevant to communities living in the Cape Flats today. Table 1.2 demonstrates the level of employment of individuals between the ages of 15 and 64 years. If the average employment rate stands at 25.2%, it may be deduced that a large proportion of these communities are living in

poverty. The information is derived from the 2011 census conducted by Statistics South Africa (STATS SA 2012).

Table 1.2 Level of unemployment 15 - 64 years (STATS SA 2012)

AREA IN THE CAPE FLATS	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	DISCOURAGED WORKER-SEEKER	OTHER NOT ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE	% of EMPLOYED CITIZENS
1. CROSS ROADS	7 854	6 300	1 542	8 979	22%
2. DELFT	39 729	27 987	3 900	31 582	26%
3. GUGULETHU	27 207	17 884	3 683	20 404	28%
4. HANOVER PARK	6 88	4 868	1 279	9 142	20%
5. HEIDEVELD	4 270	2 338	315	4 011	25%
6. KHAYLETISHA	111 094	68 145	11 201	84 129	28%
7. LANGA	14 854	9 984	1 456	11 128	28%
8. MANENBERG	10 946	7 537	2 025	13 838	21%
9. NYANGA	13 644	11 238	2 695	12 486	24%
10. PHILIPPI	59 286	35 545	6 192	38 464	30%

25.2%

As argued by Okeke (2014:2) the epistemological starting point for parents' involvement in their children's education is the disposition of cultural capital. This factor can be summarised as the knowledge and experiences of parents, their opinions, perceptions and ideals, as a result of how they have been socialised, and their level of education, in relation to how they view the school set-up. This factor in itself determines the manner in which parents interact with their children, as well as their involvement in school activities. As defined by Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital comprises forms of knowledge, skills, and education or any other advantage which may give an individual a higher status in society. Central to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) definition of social and cultural capital, the context of the home environment helps shape learners' attitudes towards, and interpretation of the world. Lareau & Horvat (1999:37) have found that learners who have inherited valuable social and cultural capital tend to do better in school. Msila (2012:305) notes that poor children are raised in homes where there is low cultural capital, and this results in the children having low educational opportunities. Table 1.3 represents learners living in the Cape Flats between 5 and 9 years of age, taken from the 2011 national census (Statistics South Africa (STATS SA) 2012.   These learners' ages indicate learners in the Foundation Phase (Grade R to Grade 3).

Table 1.3 Males and females ages 5 – 9 years (STATS SA 2012)

AREA IN THE CAPE FLATS	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
1. Cross Roads	1 554	1 736	3 290
2. Delft	7 544	7 202	14 745
3. Gugulethu	3 940	3 874	17 808
4. Hanover Park	1 703	1 581	3 285
5. Heideveld	735	729	1 463
6. Khayelitsha	16 998	17 098	34 097
7. Langa	2 052	2 072	4 125
8. Manenberg	2 423	2 437	4 860
9. Nyanga	2 407	2 432	4 839
10. Phillipi	8 883	8 926	17 808
TOTAL	48 239	48 087	106 320

Learners living in the Cape Flats, in general, have little cultural capital, particularly those learners living in the area where the study is conducted. Lack of money prevents them from being exposed to books, the theatre, social groups, thus preventing them from accumulating cultural capital. Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital refers to all the symbolic elements such as taste, clothes, possessions, credentials, mannerisms, etc. accumulated by being part of a particular social class or group. Because certain forms of cultural capital are favoured over others, Bourdieu (1986:1) views cultural capital as a major source of social inequality. Schools provide parents with cultural capital congruent with that of the school, as well as the attitudes, and knowledge that render the educational system a comfortable, familiar place (Okeke, 2014:3). The school may adopt values of middle- and upper class groupings, and transmit these to the learners. In a school environment where the poor sit alongside the rich, those who are poor are further marginalised because their home and lived experiences may be undervalued or ridiculed. Poor and working class learners are disadvantaged because of this disparity, and their parents may feel side-lined, impeding parental involvement. The culture of the institution encompasses the values, ideologies and practices and can create a power struggle, resulting in a dominant or officer class culture, and a subaltern or subordinate culture (McLaren, 1989:171). The school itself as a formal institution is deemed to be the dominant culture, and the learners' home is the subordinate culture. Schools create inequalities. As Chetty (2015:63) notes, "schools are not merely simply reproducing

race and class inequities; they are educating poor and working class youth away from academic mastery, independence and democracy, towards academic ignorance, dependence and civic alienation".

Msila (2012:308) finds that poor parents often do not think that they can make a valuable contribution to school. This observation is particularly relevant in Cape Town; other parts of Africa were colonised in the late part of the nineteenth century, all part of the scramble for Africa, from the Congo to Namibia and from Nigeria and Ethiopia down to Zimbabwe and South Africa. But the Cape had been under white domination and exploitation from a much earlier period, in the seventeenth century, so local inhabitants were systematically enslaved, humiliated and abused for far longer than in other parts of Africa. The depth of this subjugation has damaged the self-esteem of inhabitants in the Cape and formed cycles of ill-education, a sense of hopelessness and poverty which ruin lives (Sonn, 2016:43). These endemic socio-political ills have to be understood thoroughly before literacy can be envisaged as a means of assisting school communities, and breaking cycles of desperation. Parents of learners often believe that they have nothing to offer; they are aware that they are poor, and believe that educators are more educated to run the school. Social and cultural capital, Msila argues, can even be detrimental to parental involvement, particularly when parents are poor (Msila, 2012:313). However, there are strategies which can be implemented to overcome these challenges, since parents do not wish to see the reproduction and continuity of their poverty. They want education to redeem their children, and to break their own chains of illiteracy. Strategies need to be devised to ensure that parents of learners living in the Cape Flats are actively involved in school activities.

1.9 Choice of School

Apartheid laws ensured that blacks, whites and coloured learners were confined to racially segregated schools. It is for this reason that Kalloway (1988) indicates that apartheid was an effective tool to divide society as a whole. But with the dawn of a democratic South Africa in 1994, black parents explored the possibility of seeking

placement for their children in better resourced, historically white, Indian and coloured schools (Msila, 2009:83).

As argued by Fataar (2010:14) schools in township areas struggle with the impact of poverty, hunger and hardships, and learners at these schools are at the receiving end of poor quality schooling. Parents often opt to send their children to schools outside their domiciles. Learners exit the townships, in search of better schools away from their homes. Fataar refers to this phenomenon as *the school choice displacement phenomenon* (2010:14). These parents often come to believe that schools in their immediate area should be avoided because these schools struggle to provide learners with the aspirational capital needed for tertiary studies. These schools frequently fail to engender among their learners the appropriate dispositions needed for entering the commercial world (Fataar, 2010:14). Congruent with this assertion, Msila (2009:92) concludes that the majority of parents search for schools with high pass rates. Black parents, he argues, enrol their children in former white schools, since they yearn for racial integration. Msila (2009:89) found that working class parents in informal settlements were eager to see their children in historically white schools, to enable their children to speak English and/or Afrikaans, preparing them for the world of work. However, many poor parents and their children are condemned to under-resourced public schools in their community because of economic constraints, not being able to afford school fees and transport costs (Msila, 2009:95). This compulsion, Msila claims, can lead to injustice and segregation because the poor are forced to remain in township schools, even if they do not want to.

The children in this study travel long distances from the townships in the Cape Flats, in search of a 'good' school. Fataar (2010:14) concludes that 60% of urban children attend schools at more remote locations. Not all parents have the option of a choice of school since financial constraints in the form of school fees and transportation costs prevent them from sending their children to schools outside the townships. Fataar claims that even when these learners do reach their schools of choice, the school often dictates that they conform to a certain ethos or hegemonic culture so that their domestic culture is side-lined (Fataar, 2010:7).

1.10 Research design and methodology

A mixed-method research approach was adopted in this study. Quantitative methods in the form of a standardised tool, referred to as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 survey was used to gather data on parental involvement on emergent literacy practices, parental engagement, and family literacy practices. The survey served as a baseline to gather key factors related to learners' home and school contexts. The PIRLS (2006) survey constituted the second cycle of comparative reading assessments administered to Grade 4 learners internationally, and used to measure trends in children's reading literacy achievements. The tests are administered every five years, and were devised by the Lynch School of Education, Boston College (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), 2005).

Qualitative data in the form of focus-group interviews and one-on-one semi-structured interviews produced information on parental involvement activities, and drew my attention to socio-political factors which constrain parental involvement. Qualitative data in the form of photographs produced insight into the context of learners. This study is framed within a pragmatic perspective, which is most suited when undertaking mixed method research.

1.11 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised into six chapters and includes pictures and visuals of the context of learners living in the Cape Flats.

This chapter presented the low literacy levels of South African learners, measured against international literacy assessments. It provided the motivation of the study, and outlined the research questions and aims. The home and school contexts of learners were discussed in light of historical factors pertaining to apartheid. It indicated how pedagogy and learner achievement are influenced by poverty, as a result of apartheid legislation. This chapter outlined the foundational thinking of the project as a whole, that literacy *can* be a gateway skill to enable learners to break

free of cycles of poverty but literacy in terms of a school community such as that selected for this study has to be comprehended in broad, socially responsive and responsible terms such as formulated by educational critics as Bourdieu and Freire.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review that expounds theories around literacy, focusing on critical literacy, critical pedagogy, literacy as social practice, multi-literacies and New Literacy Studies. Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice is used as a critical lens to describe the home context of children in the study. The chapter further explores Epstein's (2002) model of parental involvement, benefits of parental involvement from international perspectives, barriers to parental involvement, as well as education within a South African perspective.

Chapter 3 focuses upon the research design and methodology architected for this study. It summarises pragmatism, while juxtaposing different methods of inquiry. It presents the sample, data collection methods, data analysis strategy and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents quantitative data, derived from the standardised PIRLS (2006) questionnaire, which consists of twenty-two questions. The questions covered emergent literacy activities, homework activities, parents' opinion of the school, literacy in the home, qualifications, and socio-economic position of parents. The results were captured on tables and graphs, using Microsoft Excel. Transcription from qualitative data, derived from focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews are presented in the first person, in conjunction with photographs which were captured during home visits.

Chapter 5 presents the interpretation of the findings. Themes and codes were extrapolated from qualitative and quantitative data. The key findings consisted of the following factors:

- Family ecology
- Time
- Habitat
- Pollution

- Literacy practices
- Resources in the home
- Literacy activities
- Mother tongue vs Language of learning and teaching
- Habitus
- Family-school-relationships
- Social capital
- Violence

Chapter 6 concludes the study with a summary of the findings and provides an overview of all the chapters. I detail the recommendations, being cognisant of theory on parental involvement, the data collected and the theoretical framework. I reflect briefly upon the research process and make recommendations for future research.

1.12 Insider research

Insider research is a form of research which is conducted at organisations or areas of work at which the researcher is actively involved. Because the researcher has a direct connection with the research setting, the researcher has to address possible bias and power-dynamics. I am the principal at the school where the study was conducted, and I took into cognisance the principles guiding insider research. I sought validity/legitimation as suggested by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006:48) when engaging with quantitative and qualitative research. These elements include sample integration legitimation, insider-outsider legitimation, weakness minimisation legitimation, sequential legitimation, conversion legitimation, and political legitimation. I expound on these aspects in detail in Chapter 3. I ensured triangulation in the method of data collection. I obtained written consent from all respondents, and written consent to take photographs.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter emphasises the need to consider literacy in a socially resonant discipline which takes into account the geographical, socio-economic, historical and existential aspects of the complex school community selected for this study. This first chapter provided an introduction to the study, and a broad context of the South African landscape. I outlined the problem statement and the aim of the study, as well

as the research questions. I discussed the methodological framework and the research design. I provided an outline of each chapter. I presented statistics with regard to the inhabitants of the Cape Flats, the unemployment crisis and the high numbers of children in the primary school age bracket, all pertinent information to paint a rich picture of the context of the study. The following chapter engages with the theoretical framework and literature review germane to parental involvement and literacy.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Families are educators' greatest allies in the effort to create schools
that are successful in serving all our children.

(Susan Swap 1991)

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate parental involvement in literacy activities of learners in disadvantaged contexts, at a selected primary school in the Western Cape. This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the purpose of the study in order to create a theoretical framework for the overall investigation. This study investigates the readiness, preparedness and willingness of parents from low-income households to enhance their children's literacy progress. Literacy skills are critical in the development of learners; parents as well as the school and community play an important role in enhancing these skills in children. In an attempt to understand the social dynamics which influence, condition and determine parental involvement in the literacy achievements of their children in disadvantaged contexts, critical literacy theory is employed as the theoretical framework, based chiefly upon Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice. Bourdieu relies chiefly upon three concepts, capital, field and habitus, to explain how the environment in which the individual learner is raised governs a learner's education: (i) conditions of cultural and material existence shape attitudes, (ii) means of interpreting the world, and (iii) capacity to engage in academic dialogue (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu's theory is employed here to comprehend how social realities can or do shape the literacy achievement of a young learner. Epstein's (2002) theory of parental involvement is central. Epstein (1996) devised a theoretical model to explain parental involvement which guides this research project. The Epstein model identifies six types of involvement, provides information, strategies and tools to help communities, families and schools to be effective partners (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Van Voorhis, 2002:25).

This second chapter discusses parental involvement, barriers which prevent parents from becoming involved in their children's education, and factors that facilitate

children's literacy development. The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) claims that parents in South Africa do not sufficiently participate in their children's education (NECT, 2016:6). This study is motivated by a need to determine capacity for parental involvement, in the context of the South African education system.

2.2 Bourdieu's theory of practice

Bourdieu (1977) uses the terms capital, field and habitus to explore the power relations in social life. These terms form the constructs of the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 2000) and are associated with the agents within a practice or activity. According to Bourdieu (1977) the concept of practice refers to day-to-day social activities such as traditions, which are followed by customary meals, marriage strategies and visits to museums (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008:730). The agents are the individuals who have the capacity to act independently. Agents may refer to an individual or a group socialised in a particular field. The term habitus is used to define the behaviour of individuals, the manner in which they think or act, as well as the rules which they follow, based on how they have been socialised.

2.2.1 Capital

Bourdieu (1984:446) defines capital as inherent qualities or characteristics which individuals draw upon when interacting in the social realm or field. Capital can be viewed as resources which individuals utilise or need when entering a certain field or context. Bourdieu identifies three types of capital: economic, cultural and social (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989:50). Economic capital can be measured and converted into money. Cultural and social capital are discussed below.

2.2.2 Cultural capital

Cultural capital is a result of many factors; education remains a key component of it and is linked to personal qualifications, the manner in which an individual speaks, and the way individuals behave or dress. Bourdieu maintains that an individual's cultural capital depends upon their period, society and social class (Bourdieu,

1986:1). Social class and success in education correlate with participation in cultural activities such as being exposed to books, museums, theatre, etc. (Sullivan, 2002:155). Lack of cultural capital may be viewed as a large source of inequality because poverty or lack of money impede participation in cultural activities. Although cultural capital is not about money alone, it can be exchanged for money and help individuals earn more cultural capital (Sullivan, 2002:155). Bourdieu (1986:245) defines success in education as a result of cultural capital which many individuals routinely obtain from their family background. Coleman (1991:17) agrees that all forms of capital are important for learners' education. He refers to cultural capital as human capital, and posits that in general, education brings about growth in human capital and financial capital.

 According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital can exist in three forms: the embodied, objectified or institutionalised state. Embodied cultural capital is knowledge which is consciously acquired through socialisation and transmission of traditions over time (Bourdieu, 1986:5). It shapes the manner in which a person thinks, and how he or she is able to improve or preserve him or herself. Cultural capital in the objectified state refers to possessions such as books, pictures and paintings. Cultural capital in the institutionalised state refers to academic qualifications or professional qualifications of an individual (Bourdieu, 1986:10).

Cultural capital, as identified and explained by Bourdieu, highlights an individual's knowledge and intellectual skills. Bourdieu (1986) attributes success in education to cultural capital, both in the quantity and type inherited from a person's family background and acquired by individual perseverance. Coleman (1991:16) concurs but claims that human capital/cultural capital comprise all the assets embodied in the knowledge and skill that a person gains. The more education an individual acquires, the more human capital is acquired (Coleman, 1991:16). Bourdieu (1977) explains that learners who obtain high levels of cultural capital from their home background are able to use this investment of cultural capital to gain further cultural wealth through the secondary socialisation process in schools. Learners observed in this study were drawn from poor socio-economic areas on the Cape Flats, and were disadvantaged, since there is little capital which they are able to accumulate.

2.2.3 Social capital

For Bourdieu, social capital constitutes the networks or social connections which individuals have assimilated and continue to develop (1986:245). Garson (2006:1) on the other hand, defines social capital as all the positive, social characteristics such as trust, honesty and the norms within groups or networks which support and benefit all. Schneider (2004:3) maintains that social capital is the key to sustaining healthy families and communities; arguing that communities lacking in social capital suffer "political disengagement and a host of social ills".   Social capital focuses on social connections within networks, and the quality of social interaction (Schneider, 2004:3). Social capital is about connections and support given to members within the network. Bourdieu (1986:11) claims that the volume of the social capital which an individual may utilise, depends upon the size or connections of the network. Coleman (1987:36) believes that the home environment of learners provides the social capital which is needed by schools, to ensure positive outcomes for the learners. Bourdieu (1977) maintains that individuals with access to similar types and amounts of capital share a common habitus, and in the case of poor children and disadvantaged communities, lack of capital is a common characteristic.

2.3 Bourdieu's construct of Field

Bourdieu (1986) defines field as a setting in which people or agents, and their social positions are found. Fields can be defined as various social and institutional networks, which may be religious, educational, cultural, etc. each with its discrete set of rules (Navarro, 2006:18). Agents in this social arena strive to achieve capital. Bourdieu (1984) defines field as a competitive arena, where individuals compete and struggle to accumulate and monopolise capital. When individuals or groups compete for capital, a measure of conflict inevitably exists. Bourdieu (1986) refers to field as an area of class struggle while the field of power consists of interconnected and overlapping smaller fields. These smaller fields enjoy a degree of autonomy and are able to influence each other at specific times and in relation to specific issues. Individuals in the field hold unequal positions and experience unequal trajectories, depending on the amount of capital which they have. The home environment may be

viewed as a smaller field with the parents in position of power. The classroom can be viewed as a smaller field with the educator in the position of power. Overlapping of these two smaller fields, such as home and classroom, has a general pattern of activities, which work together to create a larger field of power, where there is a transference of capital from each field. At the receiving end of these fields are learners. It is essential therefore to promote a constructive partnership between home and school.

2.4 Bordieu's construct of Habitus

Bourdieu (1977) defines habitus as the dispositions, reflexes and forms of behaviour which people acquire through acting in society. Bourdieu (1990) views dispositions in the form of values, beliefs, habits, feelings and thoughts which are a result of socialisation. Habitus is regarded as the rules of society which reflect the social position of the individual, and dictate how they operate. An individual's habitus may be reproduced and restructured, taking on a different social position. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds utilise opportunities and create a new habitus structured by an individual's past and present circumstances, family upbringing and educational experiences, and 'structuring' ensures that habitus helps to shape present and future practices.

2.5 School learning community partnerships: building social capital

Social capital is found in relations between persons (Coleman, 1991:16) and serves as resources which assist individuals, especially when these individuals are learners who are in trouble and who are then able to rely upon adult members in the community. Both Coleman (1987) and Bourdieu (1986) promote the concept of social capital that rests upon the premise that establishing relations through social interactions facilitates favourable outcomes. Studies conducted by Coleman and Hoffer (1982) found that learners at elite/private schools displayed higher levels of academic success, and these learners were less likely to drop out of school than learners at public schools. The direct result of this correlation was due to the social capital provided by the community that the school was embedded in, which generally

centred around the church. Results from two major national surveys on educational achievement, conducted in the 1960s by Coleman, reflect the importance of social capital and human capital as predictors of learner success. Asian, immigrant parents with low cultural capital mobilised their children through interest shown, active participation and involvement, hence building learners' social capital (Coleman, 1991:19). Coleman argues that these results document what schools and administrators already know through observation, learners in schools succeed best when parents have high levels of cultural capital and are involved and interested in their progress. Coleman (1991:19) notes that learners require the benefits of social capital from adult members in the community. In a school community, where there are high levels of social capital within the community of parents, a standard set of rules, behaviour, dress code, etc. can be enforced. Support can be offered to families and learners which prevents learners from dropping out of school, building relations between parents and children in the community, as well as forming relations among children themselves (Coleman, 1991:19).

The National Education Association (NEA) has found that despite twenty years of educational reform in the United States, only one-third of learners are proficient in reading and Mathematics (NEA, 2011:7). They noted that when their affiliates and members formed a supportive relation with parents and communities: (i) learner behaviour and habits improved, (ii) an increase in learner attendance and engagement in school occurred, (iii) there was improvement in learner achievement, and (iv) an increase in learner enrolment in college preparatory classes (NEA 2011:7). Longitudinal studies conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) identified strong family and school partnerships as one of five key elements in accelerating learner progress (NEA, 2011:7). These elements include school leadership, professional capacity, parent-community ties, learner-centred learning climate, and instructional guidance (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Eastern, 2010). It was found that a school's chances of success are attributed to all five elements but that a school's chances of success decrease precipitately when having only one or two of these elements. When a school establishes close ties with families and the community, the educators often become familiar with learners' culture. Home visits are conducted and educators become knowledgeable about the

concerns and needs of the community. Parents are invited to be observer participants in the classroom and an increase of parents at school events ensues (NEA, 2011:7). These partnerships are mechanisms which assist learners, their families and the greater community.

The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) has found that parent and community participation in South African education is low. Education achievement outcomes remain poor, and are often lower when compared to countries that have fewer resources. The Department of Education (DoE) has identified parent and community involvement in learners' education as one aspect which could affect educational outcomes positively. In order to maximise learning outcomes and learner achievement, the DoE has devised a framework to guide and encourage schools to engage with parents and communities (NECT, 2016:6). The *improved-school-parent-community collaboration* framework places the child at the centre, with the objective of optimum achievement for all learners. The three spheres of influence, *parent, school* and *community*, which are congruent with Epstein's (2002) model of parental involvement, highlight how children's behaviour and performance are shaped by the home and school environment. The *improved-school-parent-community collaboration* framework recognises benefits for learners, parents, school (educators and management) and communities.

A partnership needs to exist between home, school and the community. Epstein et al. (2002:14) have found that administrators are keen to work with families and communities in order to increase learner success. Their literature highlights that a school-family-community partnership improves school programmes and the school climate, provides family services and support, increases parents' skills and leadership, connects families in the school and the community, and ultimately assists educators with their work (Epstein, et al., 2002:20). They found that the four factors which support an effective school-community partnership include two-way communication between all the partners, a welcoming climate, high commitment to learning and support from the principal/school manager.

Parents and families of learners who find literacy activities challenging can be supported through the social capital stemming from these partnerships. Resources, which are available in the community, assist with literacy development; family and the community have to be viewed as partners with the school, sharing a common interest, with all stakeholders taking responsibility for learner development. This cooperation means that all the stakeholders support each other to increase the social capital. Yet, poor communities in South Africa are ravaged by violence and poverty, and often do not have the necessary resources to achieve this mutual support.

2.5.1 A decline in social capital

Bourdieu and Coleman indicate that the symbolic and material resources of families may be mobilised to benefit members. Coleman has determined, however, that since the 19th and 20th century, there has been a decline in social capital within the traditional family unit. Three generation families, grandparents, parents and children, have given way to households consisting of parents and children (Coleman, 1991:17). In current times, with an increase in divorce, many households consist of single parent families. Coleman implies that parents' activities and involvement with their children constitutes a form of social capital. Ravanera and Rajulton (2010:82) have found that social capital is greater in families where the nucleus of father, mother and children are intact but not because of the activities between parents and children, rather as a result of the size of the informal networks at the disposal of these families. Their study focussed on how families were embedded in the community through informal networks of families, relatives, friends, neighbours and other networks through organisations and institutions. Married mothers vs single mothers had larger informal networks, and displayed greater trust in people in general, such as the family, neighbourhood and government departments, and institutions (Ravanera & Rajulton, 2010:82). Women who were separated from their spouses, and who were not living with their children, showed low levels of social capital, despite the fact that these women presumably have more time to interact socially, considering that their children or family seldom lived with them. Divorced women displayed lower levels of social capital. A plausible reason for their reluctance to network may be that the marital disruption, and the marital dissolution, which is

often accompanied with acrimony, results in breaking of ties with informal and formal networks, and gives rise to distrust among people (Ravanera & Rajulton, 2010:82). Social capital and social cohesion between individuals in networks hinge on the formulation of trusting relations. Having trusting relations between children, parents and organisations outside the home, is most valuable in working together towards achieving economic and political goals (Kahn & Costa, 2003:56). Kahn and Costa (2003:19) looked at activities that produce social capital, using measures of volunteer activities, organisational membership activities, and entertainment and visits with friends, relatives and neighbours. Their study revealed a decline in social capital, with the largest decline occurring within the home, particularly among women. Coleman (1991:13), as well as Kahn and Costa (2003:40) are of the opinion that the entry of women into the labour force has diminished social capital in the home. Community involvement, formation of organisations and school partnerships are vital to the growth and development of learners. Failure to bridge the gap between home and school are a disadvantage for all learners but more so to those living in disadvantaged contexts. Research points to a decline in social capital in the home. But social capital, which is beneficial for all learners can and does exist outside the home environment. Sanders (2008:1) believes that school-community partnerships are good strategies to address challenges relating to effective teaching and learning in the 21st century. This collaborative partnership builds stronger schools, offers support to parents to assist their children to become physically and emotionally healthy, and revitalises communities. This begs the question, how to build strong partnerships in communities which are exposed to poverty and violence, and in which parents lack self-confidence and self-esteem?

A discussion of Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership model which includes the theory of overlapping spheres of influence and six types of involvement follows.

2.6 Epstein's model of parent involvement: School-Family-Community Partnership Model

During the 1980's Joyce Epstein developed a theoretical model to explain parental involvement (1996:214) which serves as a guide to educationists, practitioners and

researchers when focussing on relations between the home and the school. Epstein's framework centred on the notion of shared responsibility between home, school and community. These partnerships ensure support for parents, as well as services which families can utilise. Such partnerships enable parents to connect with other families in the school community, and increase parents' skills and leadership. The main reason for creating these partnerships is to support learners to succeed in school and life (Epstein et al., 2002:20).

Epstein et al. (2002:20) have found that when all the stakeholders, i.e. parents, educators, learners and the community view each other as joint 'partners' in education, a caring community can be established, and the goal, which is service to the learners, is realised. The relation between home, school and community is viewed as the sphere of influence in the life of the child. This theory itemises three different perspectives which explain relations between family and school. These perspectives are: *separate responsibilities of families and schools*, the *shared responsibilities of families and schools* and the *sequential responsibilities of families and schools.*

2.6.1 Separate responsibilities

According to this paradigm, sustaining separate responsibilities keeps interactions and communication between the home and the school to a minimum. Home and school are often incompatible, and there is a measure of conflict and competition (Epstein, 1987:121). Each entity, i.e. home and school, is able to perform a role optimally if there is a complete separation and no interference or overlap (Van Wyk, 1996: 62) because 'educators need to maintain their professional, universalistic standards and judgment about the learners in the classrooms, and parents need to maintain their personal attention and particularistic standards and judgments about their children in their home,' (Epstein, 1987:121). The notion of *separate responsibilities of families* implies that the goals, roles and responsibility of the school and home are best fulfilled when there is complete separation between elements. When the school adheres to the perspective of separate responsibilities of families and schools, the assumption is that educators (the school) alone provide the

necessary skills to facilitate learning, and parents provide the necessary skills to facilitate development. This dichotomy of skills specialisation pulls the spheres of home and school apart, decreases overlap and restricts interaction between educators and parents (Epstein, 1996:104) as indicated in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1 Separate responsibilities of families/home and schools
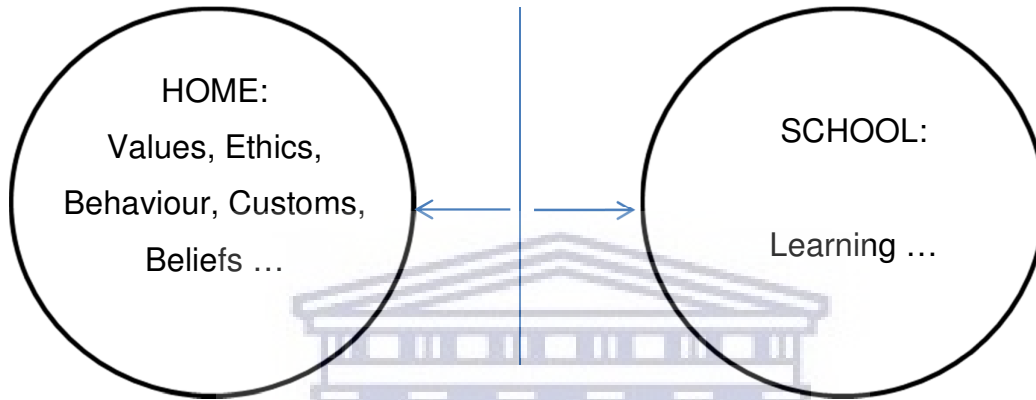
2.6.2 Shared responsibility

This perspective is contrary to the first perspective, it emphasises collaboration between school and home. Socialisation of learners' education is the responsibility of both school and family. This shared responsibility comprises coordination, cooperation, and the complementary nature of schools and families (Epstein, 1987:121). Good communication and collaboration are encouraged between the home and the school. Educators and parents share a common goal which can be achieved most effectively if there is complete collaboration, as indicated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Shared responsibility of families/home and schools

HOME:

Values, Ethics,

Behaviour,

Customs, Beliefs,

Learning …

SCHOOL:

Learning

Values, Ethics,

Behaviour, Customs,

Beliefs, …
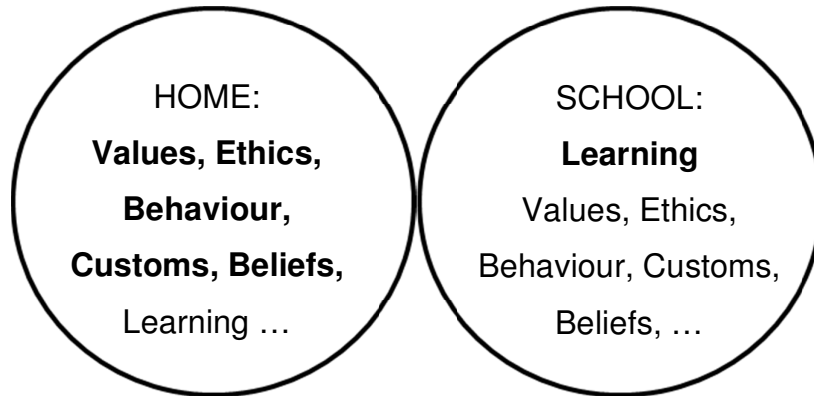
2.6.3 Sequential responsibility

This perspective is the final stage and viewed by Epstein (1987:121) as critical because during this stage parents and educators contribute most distinctly towards the development of the learner. Parents impart basic skills to their children which are needed until they attend formal school around the ages of five or six. The personality of the individual learner is shaped at this stage; when they enter school their attitude towards learning is well established. The educator assumes responsibility for the primary education of the learner, as indicated in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 Sequential responsibilities

HOME:

Preparatory

Education

SCHOOL:

Primary Education;

Continuing

Education
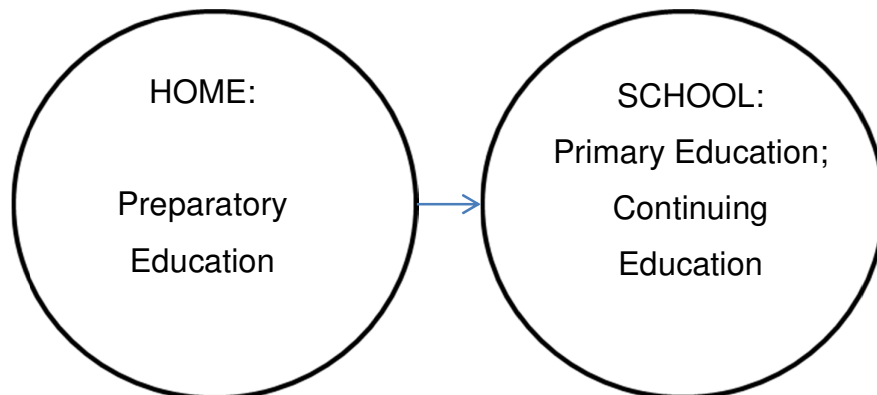
These three perspectives of Epstein's work indicate different relations between home and school which can encourage or discourage parental involvement. Van Wyk (1996:63) claims that these perspectives do not expound on measures to enhance the relations between home and school, or explain measures to eradicate boundaries which may exist between these two entities.

In order to be cognisant of all these variables, Epstein (1987:126) proposes an integrated theory of family-school relations, characterised by a set of overlapping spheres of influence.

2.7 Overlapping spheres of influence

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence argues that relations between the most effective families and schools overlap because they share a common goal and mission concerning the learners, as in a Venn diagramme. The proposed model assumes that there are mutual interests and influences of families and schools. Schools, families and communities are viewed as three spheres of influence in the life of the learner. The child is at the centre of the spheres. There exist external and internal structures which influence the overlapping. External structures can cause the spheres of school, families and communities to draw closer together, resulting in (i) an overlap between them (ii) a separation between the spheres (Epstein et al., 2002:21). External structures depend upon three forces of *time* which account for (i) the changes and grade levels of learners, and (ii) the impact of the time period, the philosophies, policies and practices of families and (iii) the philosophies, policies and practices of the school (Van Wyk, 1996:64). The internal structures reflect interpersonal relations and patterns of influence which subsist between individuals in the home, at school and in the community. Epstein et al. (2002:21) differentiate precisely between social relations at (i) *institutional level* which involve schools inviting families to events or communication to all families, and social relations at (ii) *individual level* which involve the educator inviting a parent to a meeting, or a parent making contact with the educator.

The theory of overlapping spheres of interest suggests that a partnership exists and that educators create *family-like schools* where learners are made to feel special, and where the school acknowledges every learner's individuality. In the home, families create school-like homes. By acknowledging that their children are school learners, they in turn stress the importance of all school activities. Communities assist families and create larger family-like settings, supporting families through programmes and services so that children are supported (Epstein et al., 2002:22). According to Epstein (1987:131), when teachers and parents acknowledge and enact their shared responsibilities, learners stand a better chance of achieving success. The learner is at the heart of the model of school-family-community partnership but the model recognises that this partnership in itself cannot guarantee successful learners. Learners are the main agents in their education but the partnership ensures that programmes are designed to guide, engage, energise and motivate the learner to become successful (Epstein et al., 2002:21). Often learners themselves serve as a source of information to their parents regarding school matters so it is fitting to place them at the centre of the partnership schema. Learners are socialised by the school, family and community, and the model recognises that there is a shared responsibility for their learning and development. The model acknowledges that there are certain practices of families and schools which are conducted independently but the notion of shared responsibility is beneficial for learner development, and the spheres are drawn closer together as outlined in Figure 2.7.1. below.

Figure 2.4 Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence
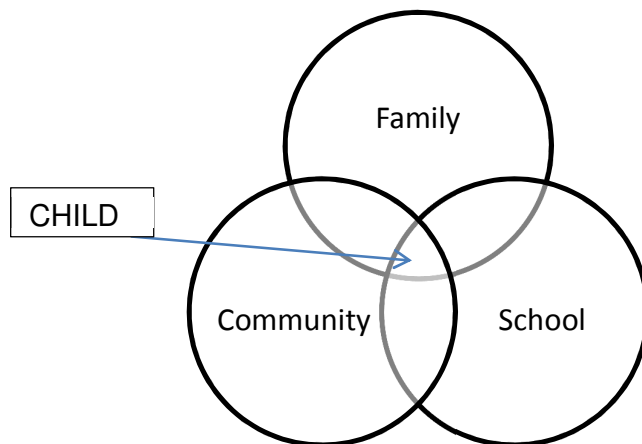
2.8 Epstein's framework of 6 types of parental involvement

Epstein (2009:12) postulates that parents/families care about their children and want them to succeed. They are eager to be good partners in education. Epstein indicates that educators and administrators like to involve families but that too few schools know how to build positive and productive programmes effectively and efficiently.

Epstein and Salinas (2004:12) differentiate between a *professional learning community partnership* and a *school learning community partnership*. The former embraces teamwork between principals, educators and staff in identifying school goals, curriculum improvement, learner progress and effectiveness of school programmes. The latter involves all stakeholders, school staff, parents and community partners whose joint vision is to improve the school and enhance opportunities for learners to develop. Epstein and Salinas argue that this shared responsibility of school community partnership strengthens families, improves schools and invigorates community support. This shared initiative leads to an increase in learner achievement and success (Epstein & Salinas, 2004:12). By focusing upon school learning community partnerships and by utilising Epstein's framework of involvement, schools can learn how to encourage parents to become involved in school and home activities, an involvement which assists learners and does not impact negatively on family schedules.

Epstein's (2002) framework of six types of involvement include: *parenting*, *communicating*, *volunteering*, *learning at home*, *decision making* and *collaborating with the community*. The framework has evolved from numerous studies and has been influenced by input from educators and parents over a number of years. Each type of involvement focuses upon different practices and challenges which need to be addressed in order to involve all the stakeholders (Epstein et al., 2002:25).

2.8.1 Parenting

Parenting deals with activities of parents which focus on child-rearing skills that guide learners to be happy, healthy and competent children. Parents are supported

through dissemination of information which highlights child development, health, safety and structuring of home conditions to enhance learning. The school provides families with information on different developmental stages of the learners so that parents can gain the tools necessary to assist their children. Parents, on the other hand, provide the school with learner information, family background and indicate their challenges and needs.

2.8.2 Communicating

Communication between home and school is essential. Schools can provide information via letters, flyers and social media to inform parents about programmes, services and progress of the individual learner as well as information on other educational matters. Parents need to keep the school updated on the development, health and life of the learner. Communication is in place to enhance a better understanding between home and school. Communication is a two-way process; from schools to parents and from parents to school.

2.8.3 Volunteering

Volunteering is essential and includes parental involvement in activities such as assisting in the classroom, helping at school with activities such as fundraising, supporting and attending programmes or performances. Volunteering refers to the support which parents offer to uphold the goals of the school, as well as the help they present to learners.

2.8.4 Learning at home

Learning at home refers broadly to information provided to families which assists a learner with learning activities out of school. Such assistance involves activities such as homework, assignments and curriculum enhancement, e.g. taking learners to the museum, etc. Good communication has to exist between home and school to ensure that learning is enhanced at home.

2.8.5 Decision making

Decision making refers to families participating in school decisions, governance and subcommittees such as parent/teacher associations. Parents may take on a leadership role and interact with other parents. Parents and educators have a shared interest in the education of learners, and there is collaboration between the activities of school and parent community.

2.8.6 Collaborating with the community

Community collaboration involves coordinating the work and resources of community agencies, businesses, colleges and universities to enhance and strengthen school programmes, family practice and learner development. The community assists learners, their families and schools by offering different services through business partnerships, health services, cultural organisations, recreational opportunities, etc. Epstein's model focuses upon family support, communication between home and school, and recruitment of parents to be involved in day-to-day school activities. Her model illustrates the important role of parents which reflects how parental involvement can increase or decrease. Overlapping spheres of influence denote different contexts and interpersonal relations between all the participants. Families need to be involved in curriculum aspects as well as decision-making processes of the school. Community organisations, services and resources may be optimally utilised to support families. Interaction between home, school and community enables learners to benefit from the ideas, resources and support available in order to enrich the social capital of the individual and community. These benefits may not increase learners' test scores or skills but may alter their behaviour, attitudes and level of motivation in unseen yet profound ways (Epstein et al., 2002:26). Engaging parents creates the scope to be involved in decision-making activities and confidence about parenting. It enables parents to interact with other parents and to be involved in curriculum related activities. Educators are enabled to connect with families and the community, and gain a good understanding of what is happening in the lives of their learners.

2.9 Defining parental involvement/parent engagement/family-school connections

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) acknowledges the important role parents play in their children's education. Parents are expected to know the school's code of conduct, and to ensure that their children uphold it. Parents are expected to take primary responsibility for their children's discipline. Parents are encouraged to become acquainted with their children's educator, by becoming actively involved by supporting their children's academic and extra-mural activities. A positive parent-teacher relation creates a happier child with a strong sense of security (WCED, 2016:1).

Researchers have used a host of terms to describe the various ways in which families and schools interact to produce learner outcomes. It is argued by Jensen and Minke (2017:169) that the term *parent involvement* or *parent participation* was initially used to focus on particular parental behaviours, valued by school personnel, which assist learners to succeed. Parents become involved by assisting with homework (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007) and by communicating with educators regarding learner progress (Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte & Bertrand, 1997). This type of parental involvement is described by Lawson (2003) as 'school-centric' since the school determines what is expected of parents. School-centric parental involvement includes activities which school personnel observe, such as volunteering in the classroom, assisting with homework, and attendance at parent-teacher meetings (Jensen & Minke, 2017:169). By contrast, 'community-centric' activities such as keeping learners safe in dangerous neighbourhoods are less visible to school personnel (Lawson, 2003). Jensen and Minke (2017:169) assert that miscommunication can occur that corrode family-school relations; involvement is judged from the perspective of the school alone. The notion of *parent engagement* is favoured by Jensen and Minke (2017:169) because it is arguably a relatively newer term, one which encompasses any behaviour which parents perform to support education. Parent engagement, they argue, includes school-centric behaviours and less discernible behaviours such as parents conversing with their child about school-related topics. Parent engagement perspectives acknowledge that there is no single way for parents to be engaged, and no matter how small the behaviour is, it may have a positive effect. Engagement

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includes any parental behaviour that shows learners that their parents have a vested interest in their education and future. It encompasses behaviours at home such as monitoring conduct and homework, interacting with educators and attending school events.

Family-school connections, a more recent conceptualisation of parent involvement, recognises that limiting the focus to include parents only, alienates the broader contextual support within families that is likely to have an effect on learner outcomes. Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratlife & Traynor (2017:9) are in support of this assertion and claim that *parent involvement* was initially used but that later there was a preference for the term *family engagement.* Yamauchi et al. assert that more recently the term *family-school partnerships* has been favoured since it extends to recognise all family members who play a role in learners' education, including grandparents, older siblings, etc. There appears to be little agreement between researchers on what the best definition of parental involvement is. The terms *parent involvement, family-school connection*, *parent engagement, parental involvement* are used interchangeably to conceptualise the relations between home and school (Jensen & Minke, 2017:170). For the purpose of this study, the term *parental involvement* is used to describe the relations between home and school. Parental involvement includes a wide range of behaviours but generally refers to parents' and family members' use and investment of resources in their children's schooling. These investments can take place in, or outside the school, with the intention of improving children's learning (Naong & Morolong, 2011:237). These activities include discussions about school, helping with homework and reading with children. Involvement at school may include parents volunteering to assist in the classroom, attending workshops or attending school plays and sporting events.

2.9.1 Benefits of parental involvement

Jensen and Minke (2017:167) maintain that parental involvement is a multi-faceted construct that encompasses ways in which parents become involved in their children's education at home and at school. Yamauchi et al. (2017:9) have found that parents who are actively involved in their children's education have produced

positive results, including better school attendance, an increase in high school graduation rates, fewer grade retentions, increased levels of satisfaction with the school, more accurate placement in classes, a decrease in negative learner behaviour numbers, and higher scores in reading and Mathematics tests (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). As a result of these interactions and participations, family members develop leadership and collaboration skills (Price-Mitchell, 2009). Schools benefit because positive teacher-family relations play a key role in teacher retention (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo, 2009).

From a South African perspective, Singh, Mbokodi & Msila (2004:305) conclude that parental involvement has an effect on learner performance. Their study involved eight historically disadvantaged senior secondary schools in South Africa which found that parents who spent quality time with their children each day were good motivators of their children's education. Those who received attention from an early age in their school life were more engaged in school work and were more empowered to deal with the challenges of school. These learners continued to progress to a higher grade, and to work independently, even after their parents were unable to support them overtly, when the level of work became too complex for them. Singh et al. found that community-based programmes, in the form of drama groups and reading clubs, significantly improved learners' results because confidence levels of these learners surged, as well as skills and knowledge (Singh et al., 2004:305). Lemmer (2007:218) endorses this assertion. She found that when a strong partnership exists between the school, family and community, learners' academic results improved, learners displayed higher self-esteem, with more appropriate social behaviour, and displayed better school attendance. Mncube (2009:91) found that parental involvement varied among different types of schools, depending on whether the school was situated in a rural or urban area. He concludes that the school context is a determining factor of parental involvement. His study involved ten schools in South Africa which reflect the racial classification of apartheid, rural schools, township schools, coloured schools, Indian schools and former model C schools (priviledged White schools). Irrespective of race, it was found that parental involvement depends entirely on the qualification levels of parents. Because of this correlation, parents serving on the School Governing Body did not believe that they

could make a valuable contribution. Parents became passive listeners and were not actively involved in the decision-making processes of the school (Mncube, 2009:95). As noted by Mncube (2009:83), actively involving parents as governors of schools in South Africa, paves the way for building democracy in schools, as well as society at large.

Research has shown a clear link between parental involvement and children's success in school. Yet involvement of parents in children's education remains bleak, as more and more parents are not involved in their children's education. Makgopa and Mokheke (2013:219) have found that no systemic research has been carried out to determine what types of parental involvement activities have the strongest connection with achievement. If parental involvement holds such benefits for learners, and legislation drives schools to adopt a collaborative role with families, why are all parents not actively involved?

2.9.2 Barriers to parental involvement

Despite widespread acknowledgement of the importance of parental involvement, and a body of research which expresses how schools can enhance a close relation between home and community, barriers between home, school and community persist. No doubt relations between school, home and community are to be viewed as a *partnership* but it remains the responsibility of the school to initiate this partnership. Barriers are seen as those elements which impede this partnership.

Schueler, McIntre and Gehlbacj (2017:276) claim that it is complicated to measure parental involvement because measurement requires an understanding of parents' behavioural acts of engagement, and the barriers to those acts of engagement. Barriers, they claim, come in multiple forms, logistical, behavioural, cultural or perceptual. Educators have to understand how parents perceive of their own engagement, and whether educators and parents' perceptions are aligned (Schueler et al., 2017:276).

2.9.3 Parents' perception

Hornby and Laefele (2011:38) add that the way parents view their role in education is crucial. If parents believe that their role amounts to no more than transporting their children to school, and that the school is responsible for the education of their children, they will be reluctant to become involved in school-based and home-based parental involvement. Similarly, parents who believe that they are incapable or unqualified or simply too diffident to help their children, avoid contact with the school because they do not believe it would bring about positive outcomes for their children. Many parents whose parents were downtrodden under apartheid sustain this sense of inferiority, and do not realise what wisdom, skills and maturity they possess. A sense of incapacity was detected by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) to be more prevalent in certain cultural groups and communities. Some parents lack the confidence to assist their children because the language of instruction is not their first language; they feel incapable of communicating effectively with educators (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:38). Parents who believe that they do not have sufficient academic competence to help their children are often reluctant to become involved: they remain victims of white 'baasskap', believing that whites alone possess knowledge. Parents who have had a negative experience with their children's previous schools or experienced academic difficulties or behavioural difficulties themselves when at school, often lack the confidence to engage in parental supervision of their children's work at home. As noted by Van Wyk (1998) and Mncube (2008), illiterate or semi-illiterate parents feel the stigma of their situation and find it difficult to keep abreast of the new challenges in education, so they delegate their responsibilities to the school principal and become passive participants (Mncube, 2009:95). Parents who believe that their children's intelligence or abilities are fixed, and that school achievement is mainly due to children's ability alone, frequently fail to see the point of getting involved in their children's education.

Naong and Morolong (2011:255) postulate that other obstacles constrain parents' ability to become involved in their children's education, including teachers' attitudes and family resources. Low levels of parental involvement at some schools may be the result of the school's perception of parents or the degree to which they feel parental involvement is important for the learners. Although all families want their

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children to succeed at school, not all families have the same resources or opportunities to become involved in their children's education. Families in which all caregivers work full-time, in which there are multiple children, or in which English is not spoken or read well, experience significant barriers to participation in their children's education (Naong & Morolong, 2011:246). Naong and Morolong conducted a study involving black parents from three primary schools in South Africa. They found that at meetings an excessive amount of English was used which excluded parents who were unable to express themselves fluently in English (2011:249). This finding is congruent with a study by Mncube (2009:100) who notes that parents are implicitly and explicitly excluded from involvement. Mncube found that parents did not want to challenge the status quo or raise pertinent issues for fear of academic victimisation, where their children may fail or siblings be prevented from being enrolled at the school (Mncube, 2009:96).

South Africa is not unique in the way it deals with issues around parental involvement. Yet it *is* unique in the intensity with which parents instil in their children a need to value education, mainly because the majority of parents in South Africa were socialised in an education system which branded them as unequal and second class citizens. It is imperative to examine parental involvement in the context of the history and historical after-effects of apartheid on the South African education system.

2.10 Context of the South African education system

Racial segregation, oppression and a lack of human rights are central themes associated with apartheid which, in its stated determination to build a white master race, denied equal educational opportunities and outcomes for the black majority which they regarded as a servant class. This white supremacist policy was architected upon unequal spending, access, opportunity, and distorted notions of equality, which compelled a need for complete transformation after liberation in 1994 (Badat & Sayed, 2014:130). Since its inception as a national policy in 1948, the apartheid era, and the struggle for liberation was violent and protracted, with many education activists being tortured, murdered, detained or incarcerated (Christie, 2016:434). A struggle ensued for liberation, equality and a just society for all South

Africans which was intensified in the 1980s, and continued until the 1990s. Prior to 1994, ideals of a non-racial, democratic social order stemmed from the South African liberation struggle (Christie, 2016:435). The dawn of the 1994 democratic dispensation ushered in a non-racial education system based on the principle of equity (Naong & Morolong, 2011:237).

2.10.1 The birth of a new education system

Development in post-1994 education did not occur in a vacuum. Educational reform was needed and academics and experts were engaged in discussion. As noted by Badat and Sayed (2014:127) education was to be the vehicle to redress and respond to the needs of all citizens, dismantling the old apartheid order and creating a new system which was responsive to the social and economic imperatives of the new state. The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), an anti-apartheid education organisation, adopted a concept: 'People's Education for People's Power', at its 1986 conference (Badat & Sayed, 2014:146). A formal education system was being discussed in the early 1990s, and an alternate radical, education system as Christie (2016:438) explains, ensured that learners and educators might become critical thinkers in a creative classroom. Chetty (2015:1) subscribes to this notion that the People's Education Movement provided a radically transformative point of departure for literacy development, emphasising Freirean principles of critical thinking, and learner-centred teaching approaches.

Between 1990 and 1994, the apartheid government under the Afrikaner National Party, started the process of desegregation in schools, by allowing black learners to attend previously whites-only schools. The Government of National Unity (GNU) under the leadership of President Nelson Mandela, was reluctant to act decisively to transform education too rapidly, due to the political negotiations and compromises which were being made.

2.10.2 Commitment to transformation

South Africa's new democratic government was committed to transforming education as well as the social and economic structures. The new South African constitution guaranteed equal citizenship for all, with education being declared as a basic human right. Discrimination in the form of race, gender, sexual orientation and disability was prohibited (Christie, 2016:435). The Ministry of Education commissioned a School Register of Needs; in 1996 it was found that 65 380 classrooms were needed, 60% of schools did not have access to electricity and telephones, 35% of schools were without potable water, and 12% did not have access to safe toilets while pit latrines were standard at 47% of all schools (Badat & Sayed, 2014:130).

Between 1994 and 2013 there has been a plethora of policies and green and white papers, acts and regulations which sought to effect the transformation of the South African education system (Badat & Sayed, 2014:131). The purpose was to support and transform disadvantaged schools, and to redress the inequalities of the past. The first White Paper on Education and Training was set out in 1995, emphasising human rights and economic development. The South African Education Policy Act of 1996 dissolved the racially-based education departments of apartheid, replacing it with one national department which set norms and standards for the new system as a whole. The country was divided into nine provinces, and each provincial department was responsible for the implementation of fair and equal schooling.

2.10.3 Free and equitable at last?

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 restructured school governance by awarding power and control to school governing bodies (Badat & Sayed, 2014:130). The Act, in addition, mandated educators, learners and community members to be involved in the governance of schools (SASA, 1996). The School Governing Body (SGB) constitutes five parents (in the case of a primary school), seven parents (in the case of a high school), two educators, one non-educator, one learner from the representative council for learners (in the case of high schools), and the school principal. Section 20 of the Act defines governance to include a host of duties such

as promoting the best interest of the school, adopting a constitution, developing a vision and mission statement of the school, supporting the principal and educators, administering and controlling school property, encouraging parents, learners, educators and staff, and making recommendations to the Head of Education in staff appointments. Section 21 of the Act stipulates that the SGB maintain and improve school property, determine the extra-mural activities of the school, purchase educational materials and pay for services to the school. The Act is rigorous in encouraging stakeholders to be involved in the life of the school. However, the Act does not make specific mention of exactly *how* parents, through their involvement, are expected to be involved in the basic foundation of education, which is literacy. As argued by Chetty (2015:18) curriculum reform in the form of Outcomes Based Education could not be implemented successfully in South Africa post-1994, due to the obstacles inherited from the apartheid system, and those still committed to it. Parents who were victims of a segregated system of schooling, where far less money was spent on black, mixed-race or Indian students than white students, were unable to assist their children to achieve the desired outcomes as prescribed by Outcomes Based Education or were so cowed by oppression that they had come to believe that they were ignorant. The Act does not take into consideration that many parents from disadvantaged schools, though eager to serve, are illiterate and lack the necessary capital to perform these functions.

As acknowledged by Naong and Morolong (2011:244) all schools in post-apartheid South Africa were compelled to elect school governing bodies, and were given the power to charge school fees. These two key elements within the Act, *parent involvement* and *charging of fees*, stand in contradistinction to the constitution of South Africa. First, it was initially promised that post-apartheid education in South Africa would be free, since it was prized as a basic human right (Christie, 2016:439). Second, the apartheid regime, before its power ceased, transferred the power to parents, to ensure that white schools would maintain their white privilege. Charging of fees ensured that ex-white schools were able to maintain a privileged status in the new education system because only an elite new group of multiracial students had parents who could afford the high fees. This marketisation of schools perpetuated social class distinctions, and failed to eliminate racial privilege, catering for the middle

class (Christie, 2016:440). A hegemonic culture was maintained since well-resourced English-language white schools attracted a new elite of multiracial learners, and better skilled educators, who were able to offer parents a substantial chance of employment later in life for their progeny. Parental involvement in such ex-model C privileged white schools, continues to flourish. Paying huge sums of money gives rise to parents having a vested interest in their children's education - they need to yield a positive return on their investment. Parents from disadvantaged schools, quintile 1-3, pay minimal or no fees, and parental involvement remains minimal. Inadvertently and unintentionally the quintile system which was designed to bring equality, has in fact rigidified and commoditised the elitist structures of colonialism.

Schooling in post-1994 democratic South Africa therefore remains unequal (Christie, 2016:435) and may be said to be increasingly divided. Over ten per cent of learners nationally suffer the effects of poor nutrition while pupils at entirely private schools such as Michaelhouse in Kwazulu Natal can choose from over twenty desserts daily on offer. This division is observed by Badat and Sayed (2014:134) who claim that in spite of having desegregated institutions, acute disparities and inequities still exist, coupled with poor academic results. No matter how excellent an institution or school may be, the trend remains, learners from middle class families enrol at historically white institutions, while those from working class and poor rural families are forced to enrol at historically black institutions. The South African social and educational landscape which was previously defined and distorted by race, now has to contend with a new kind of elitism and mercantilism. A new elitist financial apartheid has simply replaced the old system of segregation by skin pigment (Badat & Sayed, 2014:134).

2.10.3.1 Class inequalities and poor literacy levels

"While class is clearly connected to income and occupation, and there is ample evidence that income inequalities are widening, class must also be understood as practices of living – the social and psychic practices through which ordinary people live, survive and cope" (Chetty, 2012a:22). Priorities such as choice of schools, involvement of extra-mural activities, location and types of housing, support of

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education, the extent to which learners are prepared for admission into university, access to school-based counselling, and health care, are derivatives of this new kind of financial apartheid and class distinction on multiracial lines (Chetty, 2012a:22). A model C accent has become the new litmus test of class and the new ticket to a corporate life.

From a South African perspective, class differences continue to persist, as a result of poor literacy instruction and poor quality teaching. In democratic South Africa, unlike race, the constitution does not protect social class differences that are inadvertently exacerbated by the quintile system. There is no guarantee that those who are poor will have an equal opportunity to those who are rich (Chetty, 2012a:23). There is every chance that the boy from the Diocesan College will be employed for life, while the learner from Bonteheuwel may never receive a regular pay cheque. There are many programmes which have benefitted black children and women but there are few educational programmes directed at those who are economically disadvantaged. Chetty (2012a) argues that the levels of inequality in literacy achievement and attainment will persist, if socio-economic inequality is not addressed. Schools in South Africa where poverty-stricken Black and Coloured schools are located, lack the resources needed to enhance learning, such as qualified science and mathematics educators, adequate facilities for learning, books in the home, and parents who have the capacity and self-belief to help their children to read. Literature is replete with information which testifies that a large number of educators in South Africa display poor teaching qualities, with limited pedagogical content knowledge (Chetty, 2019a:1). The National Education Evaluation & Development Unit (NEEDU) found that the majority of Grade 6 educators in South Africa have inadequate subject knowledge in Mathematics and English to provide their learners with a principled foundation in these areas of learning (NEEDU National report 2012, 2013:26). In spite of this predicament, Chetty (2019a) is of the opinion that educators, teaching in disadvantaged schools, are not acknowledged for their work. In fact, he maintains that educators have not been trained to teach in disadvantaged schools, since the 'idealised norm' in teacher training remains the average suburban ex-white school. The curriculum rarely takes into consideration the realities of no playing fields or science laboratories, poorly nourished learners, ill-informed educators, and the

multitude of challenges experienced because of lack of resources such as secured computer rooms. It is incumbent on a country such as South Africa to face up to the socio-economic realities of schools and learners, question the efficacy of the quintile system, address the low levels of literacy pervasive amongst the majority of the population, and devise a curriculum and education system which finally raises poor schools and requires rich ones to assist in collaborative projects of upliftment (Chetty, 2012a:23). Low levels of literacy give rise to lower societal income and economic growth, an increase in criminality and public assistance. Failing to confront the material conditions of poor learners' lives condemns the literacy policy which is the main means of undoing the wrongs of apartheid. Lack of resources, limited support for educators, low levels of parental involvement, coupled with poor quality education, perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of poverty and an ingrained mentality of worthlessness and helplessness, irrespective of the learners' abilities or the efforts of their educators (Chetty, 2019a:2).

2.10.3.2 Bernstein's stance on inequality

While Bourdieu's framework conceptualises the home environment as a point of departure, with its notion of capital, Bernstein's work foregrounds the elements and properties of schools and institutions. His theory underlines the relations between social class and academic performance at schools (Harley, 2010:1). Bernstein (1971) concludes that the language of poor children is *context specific;* it occurs in specific relations, in a particular social setting, and is predictable. He speaks about two types of codes, *restricted* and *elaborated.* Within the restricted code, the speaker draws on background knowledge and shared understanding. Communication is short and condensed, and may lack detail. This type of code links a group of individuals who share a common interest, creating a sense of belonging. It can be viewed as an 'insider conversation'. Restricted code does not mean that the vocabulary of the individual is limited or restricted. The language of working class children or poor children is often restricted (Harley, 2010:1). The elaborated code gives full detail, much information, and thorough explanation. As Bernstein claims, the speaker who is oriented towards using an elaborate code requires a higher level of verbal planning, and organising, before communication can occur. The speaker explicitly

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puts into words, her purpose, intent and unique experience (Bernstein, 1964:57). Anyone who hears the conversation has an understanding of what is being said because the speaker is obliged to expand and elaborate her meanings with choice of words, vocabulary and sentence structure (Bernstein, 1964:63). For Bernstein (1971) the restricted and elaborated code cannot be defined as being better than the other. Society may place different values on the types of information elicited or experienced from the coding system, but the codes themselves, he argues, are generated by particular forms of social relations. It does not necessarily develop as a result of the speaker's innate intelligence (Bernstein, 1964:58).

Table 2.1 demonstrates the dichotomous view between restricted and elaborated codes (Harley, 2010:3).

Table 2.1 The dichotomous view between restricted and elaborated codes

Social class is …	POOR (WORKING CLASS)	MIDDLE CLASS
Spoken language is..	Context bound	Less context bound
Meanings are…	Particularistic	Universalistic
Principles are…	Implicit	Explicit
The code is:	RESTRICTED	ELABORATED

The underlying thinking of Bernstein's theory considers the physical and social environment which shapes the learning of children, and what conditions contribute to, or constrain, learning. For Bernstein, there is a discernible correlation between social class and use of either elaborated or restricted code. Bernstein (1964:58) notes that the level to which a speaker gravitates, is likely to be a result of intellectual ability but it is entirely dependent on the *sociological constraints* acting upon the speaker. Working class or poor learners are more likely to use restricted codes. This likelihood is as a result of (i) how individuals have been socialised or (ii) the kinds of agents (family) who influenced how they were socialised. Middle class children use both restricted and elaborated codes because they have access to high levels of capital; they are able to use elaborated codes to expound on sentences, giving detailed descriptions, and making use of uncommon words.

The correlation between social class and language codes is an explanation of why learners from advantaged backgrounds frequently outperform learners drawn from poor contexts in language studies. While meanings of words remain stable, it is important for the language educator to understand that literacy education is fluid. It is not purely a cognitive process but one which encompasses a host of factors, of which social environment is a contributing factor. As Bernstein (1971) suggests, the manner in which language is used within a particular social group determines the significance and meaning of communication, the code that they use, and symbolises their group social identity.

Chetty (2019a:8) notes in his reflection on teaching literacy in disadvantaged schools, that post-apartheid South Africa needs a curriculum which develops critical and independent thinkers, as opposed to transmission pedagogy, a tenet of the current curriculum. He asserts that there should be a cognitive, creative and higher thinking perspective to literacy teaching, with relevant and appropriate skills for teaching literacy to poor children. Schools should provide learners a safe space in which they can debate the underlying tensions, conflicts and social inequalities that exist. The curriculum should use literacy to build cognitive skills, and use literacy as a tool for personal growth and social transformation. Chetty (2019a) calls for a new model of socially responsible literacy, one that names and challenges inequality, and one which is crucial in a society emerging from four hundred years of systematic slavery, semi-slavery, oppression, mental humiliation and racism. Critical literacy has to be foregrounded as an important aspect of education in post-apartheid South Africa, and the voices of children should be heard, with higher thinking skills as a prerequisite in the classroom (Chetty, 2019a:8).

2.10.4 Poverty and education

The word 'poor' may be defined as *not having means to procure comforts or necessities* of life (Sykes, 1978:687). It is argued by Nortje (2017:52) that approximately 63% of children in South Africa are living in poverty and that high numbers lack adequate nutrition. Nortje (2017:58) found that there is a clear link between poverty levels in a country and the standard of education. Education, he

argues, may be used as a tool to reduce poverty, increase economic growth, and create better living conditions for all. Education can lead to economic growth *if* implemented correctly (Nortje, 2017:15). Children in South Africa have limited access to education, due to various factors such as living in impoverished households, poor infrastructure, lack of resources, school fee payment, as well as travelling costs. The education system in South Africa is of such a low standard that it is increasing poverty; fewer matriculants are employable, incomes are falling and the fortunate few at advantaged schools rise into a new elite. Learners often exit quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools without being able to read and write. This failure is attributed to the promotion requirements in Further Education and Training (FET) phase, which includes Grades 10, 11 and 12. Learners are awarded their Grade 12 senior certificate if they obtain (i) 40% in three subjects, of which one is an official Home Language subject and (ii) 30% in three other subjects (National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011:33). The low pass rate reduces the quality of education, resulting in individuals entering the work place without the basic literacy or language skills to perform their tasks (Nortje, 2017:56). Taylor, van der Berg & Burger (2011:1) corroborate this assertion, concluding that low quality education has prevented learners from historically disadvantaged communities moving out of poverty. In fact, it has not improved their social position nor reduced inequality, despite government spending being pro-poor.

Public spending on education has evolved from being highly unequal on the basis of race, to being targeted towards poor children (Taylor et al., 2011:3). Yet the poor remain poor and schools in more affluent areas continue to thrive because parents there are able to meet school fees.

2.10.5 Violence in the Cape Flats: an attractive lifestyle

De Wet (2016:3) postulates that the Western Cape is one of the richest provinces in South Africa but that the Cape Flats is one of the poorest, and most violent areas in the country. Bowers Du Toit (2014:1) notes that there is a full-scale gang war raging on the Cape Flats which debilitates the children, youth and elderly, the entire social

fabric. The forced removals of the apartheid legacy gave rise to the formation of groups or gangs, due to the socio-economic issues created by apartheid. Gangs provide potent role models for those rendered impotent by inherited poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Gangs target those who are most vulnerable, lack self-confidence and social support. Gangs, of which there are over a hundred, propagate the message that there is money and social power vested in these groups. As argued by Chetty (2015:58) gangsters or drug lords appear to be leading glamorous lifestyles, which boys aspire to, and girls idolise. Patterns of under-age pregnancy are linked to such models of male dominance. Gangs exert two types of power, coercive power which refers to the threat of violence and force, and the power to impress by being able to buy things, in order to delegate status, and rank (Bowers Du Toit, 2014: 3). These gang members become heroes to young learners who model their behaviour and the way they dress. Gang activities in the Cape Fats revolve around the supply and trade of drugs. Once young members are addicted to drugs, they resort to petty crime such as burglaries and robberies in their community, in order to sustain their drug habits (Chetty, 2015:57). Ramson and Chetty (2016:1) assert that the Cape Flats has emerged as having the highest levels of crystal methamphetamine use of any community in the world. Their study found that there were many high risk strains in the home environment that facilitated children's choice to use drugs and resort to crime. Communities where the study was scheduled had high levels of unemployment. Poverty was rife, there was a shortage of food and clothing, verbal abuse was common, and parents' rejection and neglect of their children were standard.

When learners are exposed to family and community violence, it results in a number of deleterious outcomes for young people which are usually emotional, cognitive and social in nature. Children who have experienced some form of violence, as victims or witnesses, are most susceptible to depression, poor cognitive abilities and low self-esteem. Their normal developmental trajectory is hampered by violence, and they are at risk of being bullied, and other forms of victimisation at school (DBE, 2015:11). In support of this assertion, Richter, Mathews, Kagura and Nonterah (2018:185) claim that when learners are exposed to violence, there are severe consequences such as extended periods of stress, powerlessness and depression which affect school and

social adjustment. Richter et al. argue that when learners are exposed to violence, they are at risk of becoming insensitive to future violent acts, become uncaring towards others, and may turn to violence themselves. As adults, these 'victims of violence' may suffer poor mental health, and become susceptible to drug and alcohol abuse, display unsafe sexual behaviour, and engage in criminal activities. The cycle of abuse continues: 'victims' perpetuate poor parental skills, becoming abusive parents themselves.

Richter et al. (2018:108) assert that violence contributes significantly to child mortality in South Africa. Their longitudinal study, referred to as the Bt20+, a study of children born in 1990, between pregnancy and 22 years of age, tracks exposures and outcomes in physical, education, social and psychological domains. Their data were divided into 7 categories which shed light on:

- Exposure to violence (seeing or hearing violent episodes in the community);
- Exposure to violence (seeing or hearing violent episodes in the home);
- Exposure to violence (seeing or hearing violent episodes at school);
- Exposure to peer violence;
- Direct experience of violence (excluding sexual violence);
- Direct experience of sexual violence; and
- Perpetration of violence.

Relying upon data from a national mortuary-based survey, Richter et al. (2018:108) found that three children a day are murdered in South Africa, and that three out of four children aged <5 who are killed, die as a result of fatal abuse at the hands of a carer in the home. Richter et al. (2018:108) claim that children are exposed to different forms of emotional violence and neglect. Their study revealed that high levels of violence occur in all spheres of children's lives, at home, in the community, at school, and among peers. In addition, children are routinely reported to be perpetrators of violence themselves.

2.10.6 Violence in South African schools

A study conducted by Netshitangani (2014:1400) involving four schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa, revealed that violence in schools is often a result of children perceiving of violent behaviour as 'normal', as a result of what they experience in the home. The study found that poor parental involvement leads to a decline in social and moral values on the part of learners, something which gives rise to disrespect and other disciplinary problems. Netshitangani (2014:1399) claims that children exposed to family violence have role models who demonstrate violent behaviour in order to solve problems. Children are likely to emulate this type of behaviour. Lack of proper parental involvement allows learners to access media, exposing them to violent television programmes, videos and games, which they frequently imitate.

According to Huesmann (1999) as cited by Netshitangani (2014:1399), research has revealed that children who are exposed to violent images on television, and who experience violence in their environment, are more likely to be aggressive. Based on what they are exposed to from their home environment, and different media forms, they replicate these violent acts, abusive language and behaviour on their peers. Her study revealed that learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds appeared to be more aggressive (Netshitangani, 2014:1400). This tendency Netshitangani attributes to lack of proper parental care, due to poverty, and a lack of control, due to low levels of education. Peer pressure was seen as a serious contributor towards the problem of violence in schools, because the majority of perpetrators outside the school are viewed as being successful heroes, as a result of their criminal activities, their behaviour, and attitudes are emulated by those inside the school.

There are a number of reasons why violence appears in school but it is evident that poor socio-economic factors lead children to engage in criminal activities, in order to meet basic necessities (Netshitangani, 2014:1400). Violence is a contributing factor which impedes learning.

2.11 Literacy and the South African curriculum

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) defines *home language* (HL) as the language that is spoken most frequently in the home, and *mother tongue* (MT) is referred to as the language that a learner has acquired in his/her early years, and which has normally become the learner's natural instrument of thought and communication. The terms home language and mother tongue in this regard can be used interchangeably. The language of learning and teaching (LoLT) refers to the language medium in which the learner is instructed, as well as monitored in, for assessment purposes (DBE, 2010:5).

The South African curriculum requires all learners to learn at least TWO official languages, defined as the Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL). The DBE (2010:5) claims that bilingual children perform better in schools when the school effectively teaches the learners in the *children's home language*, ensuring that effective literacy development takes place in that language.

2.12 The evolution of Literacy

Literacy as an academic discipline has evolved to denote far more than the technical skills required for reading and writing, and can be viewed as the vehicle which creates economic well-being, high levels of self-esteem, and opportunities for better jobs (National Literacy Trust, 2017). Keefe and Copeland (2011:97) have defined literacy as a fundamental human right. The Kangan Institute (2010) defines literacy as the ability to read, write and speak, which enable the individual to communicate effectively to different audiences, and to make sense of the world. Critical literacy researchers argue that literacy does not always create these positive outcomes but that literacy in fact has been used to oppress, stigmatise and compartmentalise individuals (Wickens & Sandlin, 2007:275). From the viewpoint of Bahruth (2005:511), literacy can be used as a tool which ensures that social divisions and inequalities are not perpetuated and entrenched. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991:4) regard literacy as political by nature since it is specifically selected, and reflects and serves somebody's interest, and somebody's belief of possessing 'legitimate' and

classifying knowledge. Bishop (2014:51) concurs with this notion and adds that literacy is a political 'battleground'. Apple (1979:63) contends that schools control people and meaning and meaning-making. The knowledge which Apple (1979) refers to, interrogates existing knowledge structures, determining whose knowledge is being presented or favoured. Central to this notion is the question of hegemonic power and culture, as well as the manner in which schools, through pedagogical activities, control, preserve or generate, disrupt or challenge, inequalities. It is evident from these debates that literacy is an important element in the lives of individuals, and that the school and the home serve as arenas in literacy development. Bahruth (2005:511) postulates that if educators fail to engage their learners in critical literacy, where learners learn to interrogate the multiple interpretations of a given text, as well as a deeper understanding of text, in relation to their world experiences and perspective, then literacy merely serves to perpetuate social injustices, never asking the key question of 'whose knowledge?'. Chetty (2015:2) in his critique of the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS), cautions educators against teacher-centred pedagogy, and urges educators to focus upon creating a 'student-centred educational environment, focussing on Freirean principles in the field of critical literacy'. Freire (1972:45) describes traditional perceptions of the education system as a 'bank'. Chetty contests this notion of knowledge as banking because such memorization/education becomes an act of depositing set amounts of 'facts' in which the learners are the depositories and the educator is the depositor, the educator knows everything and the learners are taught, the educator talks and the learners listen meekly (Freire, 1972:46). Chetty criticises this notion and is of the opinion that teaching cannot be a process where knowledge is simply transferred, as if it were a quantifiable entity. This attitude requires learners to memorise information, instead of questioning whether it is relevant, sound or memorable at all. As Chetty (2015:11) aptly summarises:

> The paternalism of this approach is essential to the maintenance of an oppressive political and social order (and of the neo-liberalism of the current dispensation): it ensures that students who complete the course remain passive and unquestioning, stripped of critical literacy.

Chetty (2015:6) claims that this type of transmission pedagogy places the educator as the expert in the classroom, who is solely capable of interpretation of texts. It is for this reason that Bahruth (2005:509) discredits reading schemes which promote literacy from a behaviourist perspective. He asserts that such a position creates *'literalcy',* where learners are able to answer 'trivial, pre-packed questions, with official right answers.' Behaviourism is typified by rote learning, drill-and-practice skills acquisition, and a punishment and reward system of learning, based on behaviour modification. By contrast, Socrates instituted interrogation and critical thinking in ancient Greece. But the return to memorisation is a perennial evil. Juxtaposing behaviourism and memorisation against Socratic questioning along Freirean principles shows the superiority of the latter approach. Learning is a process, where knowledge is presented, then shaped through understanding, discussion and reflection[2]. In this context, literacy has to be viewed through a critical lens. The next sections explore different approaches to literacy.

In his critique of literacy teaching in disadvantaged schools in South Africa, Chetty (2019a:2) recommends a new model of literacy that challenges inequality, and provides strategies, and sustained teacher support in disadvantaged schools. My study seeks to understand how parents, from disadvantaged backgrounds, can improve and enrich their children's literacy development. As learners are battling with literacy activities, I shift from the traditional views of literacy, and explore new literacy paradigms, as a means to suggest ways to bring about literacy improvement. Literacy in South African schools is often tested in terms of learners answering comprehension questions, reading a book or presenting an oral. The literacies which learners bring from their home environment are not considered or valued. Literacies have gradually shifted from a singular focus on school-sponsored learning to a more complex focus upon the practices of children across socio-economic contexts,

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[2]In his novel *Hard Times* Charles Dickens pillories the indifference of a wealthy elite in the south whose fortunes depended on the labour of the north. The rich intend to oppress the labouring classes further by imposing education that is devoted to facts only; workers are not encouraged to ask questions but to be obedient, grateful and industrious. To this end the teacher Mr Gradgrind insists at the very start of the novel: "Now what I want is facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts''. This preference for memorising facts rather than being prompted to ask questions is the difference between (i) the Outcomes Based Education system and (ii) the old apartheid behaviourist pedagogy which meant to instil education of obedience on the masses. CAPS as it is increasingly applied is veering dangerously towards a pedagogy of facts and social indifference at a time when the suffering of school communities such as that selected for this study cry out for a pedagogy of the oppressed.

leading to mutiliteracy perspectives. Literacy has evolved from psycho-linguistic perspectives, which focus on phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension, to socio-cultural approaches. Socio-cultural literacy regards literacy development and practice as the various ways in which people use literacy in their everyday lives. This approach makes literacy instruction socially meaningful and relevant because it recognises and incorporates learners' out-of-school literacy practices, decreasing achievement gaps for learners, since families and communities practice literacy in ways that may differ from those considered orthodox in mainstream education or in positions of power (Perry, 2012:51).

An underlying thread that runs through my study is the notion of how power and poverty shape the literacy development of learners in disadvantaged contexts. Socio-cultural perspectives of literacy in the form of critical pedagogy, critical literacy and multiple literacies are now explored.

2.13 Critical theory and critical pedagogy: paving the way for critical literacy

Critical theory is associated with theorists such as Max Horkheimer, Jurgen Habermas, Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Eric Fromm and Herbet Marcuse (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006:1). The philosophy of these critical thinkers is focused on creating a just society, in which people have political, economic, and cultural autonomy and control over their lives. This attainment of independence serves as the point of departure for critical pedagogy which is derived from the works of Paulo Freire (1972) who based his work on the principles of critical theory, and the long Socratic tradition of open enquiry generally. Freire (1972) viewed literacy from a socio-political dimension, teaching oppressed individuals how to read, by using everyday vocabulary which they were familiar with (Farjardo, 2015:29). Freire employed these words as a stimulus to create critical reflection about their oppressive realities, empowering them to liberate themselves, and take charge of, and transform their worlds (Farjardo, 2015:29). Freire views reading and writing skills as potential tools to bring about social transformation, in that they facilitate understanding of cause and effect of learners' lived realities (Farjardo, 2015:30). Imbued in Freire's (1972) teachings is the process which he refers to as

conscientisation whereby individuals become aware of their situation, and are able to own, then change their socio-economic situation.

Freire may be viewed as the key theorist of critical pedagogy[3]. His critical 'teaching method' is a form of theory and practice which serves to stimulate learners to become critically aware of society and the world, through the medium of open questioning. Freire claims that education can never be neutral: it serves to liberate or domesticate individuals. McLaren (1989:21) agrees that educators need to become aware of the role that society plays in creating injustice and inequalities, and the role that they as educators play, in the reproduction of these inequalities. Freire urges educators to develop a pedagogy which provides intellectual and moral resistance to oppression. This requires educators to move away from the transmission of knowledge and skills to the concept of morality and social accountability. McLaren claims that social awareness and responsiveness are the basis of critical pedagogy (1989:21). For these reasons a critical approach to education, and particularly literacy, has to be explored.

2.13.1 Critical theory, critical pedagogy and schools

Schools are political sites which do not always empower educators and learners, and often reproduce technocratic skills and ideologies which serve the interests of the dominant society. Educational programmes are frequently designed to favour the state, whose main objective is to maintain the status quo (McLaren, 1989:1). McLaren's argument is that not sufficient attention is paid to the purpose to which technocratic skills are put. Learners are encouraged to succeed in the competitive world, and to become compliant, productive and patriotic workers while concerns for becoming critical and committed citizens are often side-lined (McLaren, 1989:161)[4].

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[3] Freire is the most cited educational theorist internationally yet, despite the fact that (i) his concerns for breaking the domination of a wealthy elite markedly resonate with conditions in South Africa and that (ii) this correlation was sufficient to enshrine his teaching in the education mandated under Outcomes Based Education after liberation in 1994, his emphasis on a learner-centred classroom is being systematically eroded to make way for the habits of textbook instruction and testing which characterised behaviourist pedagogy from 1949 to 1994.

[4] Neoliberalism under Thatcher in the 1980s saw Britain's education system overtly committed to economic targets: the idea and ideal of a liberal education was surrendered to technocratic training for certain defined jobs or careers.

The imperative of critical theory is that schools are not job training sites, places of indoctrination or mass socialisation but a cultural terrain to encourage learners towards self-discovery, responsibility within a community and empowerment (McLaren, 1989:167). Apple (1993:222) contends that politics influences education, and that the curriculum is often tailored to present and promote the interests and mercantilist prerogatives of a particular interest group which requires unquestioning labourers of a certain kind to further their ends. Apple suggests that curricula are frequently selected for a specific capitalist and productionist purpose and formulated out of the cultural, political, and economic tensions which favour a hegemonic elite.

2.13.2 Critical Pedagogy: coming to terms with terms

At the heart of curriculum pedagogy is the desire to empower learners so that they have the capacity to transform society in the interest of justice and equality. The following terms will be presented, and discussed as key aspects of critical pedagogy; *knowledge, culture, ideology and curriculum*.

2.13.3 Knowledge

Critical pedagogy differentiates between various forms of knowledge; technical knowledge which can be measured, practical knowledge which is acquired through describing and analysing social situations, and emancipatory knowledge. Emancipatory knowledge is most prized because it helps to shed light on the manner in which social relations are manipulated or distorted by relations of power or privilege (McLaren, 1989:170). Knowledge is historically and socially situated, with a link between different power relations, as a result of the agreement or consent between individuals who find themselves in specific social contexts of race, gender or class. Emancipatory knowledge gives rise to action since it creates an understanding of oppression and domination, and equips the individual with a strong sense of self-worth and belief in interrogation, with the purpose of social transformation and community upliftment. Knowledge in this sense is treated as the cornerstone of social justice, equality and empowerment (McLaren 1989:171).

2.13.4 Culture

Culture, as defined by McLaren (1989:171) is the manner in which social groups, with their discrete values, ideologies and practices, live out and make sense of their individual lives. In terms of critical pedagogy, the relations between culture and power are analysed to illuminate who has the power and how it is reproduced; culture may be seen as a field of contestation (McLaren, 1989:171) in which the production of certain forms of knowledge is disputed, to determine legitimacy. The production of culture gives rise to dominant cultures, subordinate cultures, and subcultures. Dominant cultures refer to those groups in control, within a particular social class, whose values, interests and ideologies are indulged, preferred and entrenched as standard or orthodox. Dominant groups or officer classes exercise a position of power and create inequalities. Subordinate or subaltern[5] groups are those who live their social relations subordinate to the dominant group. Subcultures are formed by individuals within dominant or subcultures, who contest the cultural space, and adopt a distinct identity. Critical pedagogy raises pertinent questions around how dominant groups exercise domination over subordinate groups, and how they are able to maintain and sustain hegemonic control or authority of voice.

2.13.5 Ideology

Ideology relates to a system of ideas, values, and beliefs which are lived out and expressed by individuals and groups (McLaren, 1989:176). Ideology is presented as the manner in which we view the world, various types of social practices, and rituals which come to be regarded as natural.

2.13.6 Curriculum

Critical theorists attempt to determine the role which schools play in the transmission of the status and class positions of society (McLaren, 1989:186), as well as the

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[5] The distinction between an officer class and a subaltern class is of particular significance to this study. Key thinkers in subaltern studies include Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Spivak. Behaviourist pedagogy was employed under apartheid to create a white class of officers and keep in check a body of workers or subalterns. The idea of Outcomes Based Education was to break this separation by teaching the masses to think for themselves and gain autonomy. However CAPS replaced Outcomes Based Education and in many ways has returned to behaviourist practices of memorisation and textbook learning, and reconstituted a new multiracial officer class to rule the old subaltern mass.

manner in which schools are authorised to perpetuate or reproduce certain social relations and attitudes which support and favour dominant cultures, their financial priorities, land ownership, language, accent and gestures even. The curriculum in this context is an expression of cultural politics which prepares or perhaps grooms learners to assume positions of dominance, employment and significance, or subordination, humility and silence. The true objective of the curriculum is to ensure that learning takes place, where the individual learns to question and interrogate and own knowledge in an authentic way. Critical theorists acknowledge the role of the hidden curriculum, where knowledge and behaviour are constructed through processes which are not linked to learning and teaching material, or formal scheduled lessons. The hidden curriculum deals with how learners are socialised to behave or act in a particular way, and how messages are transmitted to them via the learning environment, educators, parents and government. At privileged schools this collective is termed the ethos of the institution.

From Chetty's (2015:6) perspective, an appropriate curriculum, to educate the learners should be based on, and derived from, the cultural capital already extant among the learners.

2.13.7 Critical literacy

Critical literacy, closely aligned with critical pedagogy, is intended to help the oppressed or marginalised to (i) become aware of social disparities, (ii) gain ownership of selfhood and then (iii) transform society through the empowering agency of literacy education (Lee, 2011:96). Gregory and Cahill (2009:7) suggest that in order to be literate in a democratic world, as envisioned by Dewey, there have to be ethical and political processes in place which are connected so as to achieve literacy. This process requires dialogue, a key component of critical literacy. The importance of critical literacy, as summarised by Blake (2016:1), is to empower learners to deconstruct power dynamics and disparities found in literature, various forms of media, and written or oral texts, pertaining to race, socio-economic status, gender, class, sexual orientation, gender, etc. Chetty (2015:6) points out that critical literacy mandates the reader of a text as independent, critical thinker. Farjardo

(2015:31) claims that a key feature of critical literacy is that the reader learns to scrutinise the text to determine for him or herself the politics inherent in and around the formulation of the text.

Individuals who have gained the skills and knowledge of critical literacy, as summarised by Blake (2016:1) are able to perform basic Socratic tasks of free enquiry:

- Challenge power structures that are presented in texts, recognising it and verbalising concerns, issues and opinions;
- Interpret messages through a critical lens by determining what the underlying message is, whether it wants to relay a positive or negative message;
- Recognise power imbalances within different social institutions;
- Understand social issues which may serve to create divisions;
- Recognise the power of language in politics and the role it plays in the construction of race, class and different power structures; and
- Engage in critical reading, by connecting different texts, and being aware of bias, stereotypes or prejudice.

Gregory and Cahill (2009:7) contend that the aspects of literacy which include reading, writing, speaking and doing are socially situated and constructed practices representing who we are. The language which is utilised, as well as the values and practices may differ from one community to the next. Some communities may be aware of the power of culture, while others remain quite unaware of their historicity.

Literacy practices which create critical awareness of positions and levels in society, with the focus upon emancipation and transformation, have to be at the forefront of teaching in post-apartheid South African schools. Those who are marginalised benefit from a Socratic environment of open dialogue and safe arena for debate, a dialogical space and dialectical analysis, around emancipatory constructs, far more than they do from discursive analysis and literacy audits (Chetty, 2012b:21).

2.14 Multimodality

Andersen (2013:277) notes that making meaning involves more than one mode. Language is one possible mode that serves as a resource for meaning making. Multiple modes of communication such as the printed word, speech, image, music, etc. can be used in the classroom to describe the multiple interactions in which literacies are articulated. Cope and Kalantzis (2013:5) advocate a multimodal pedagogical framework to accommodate and demonstrate the significance of different modes of meaning-making through text, audio, visual and behaviour, and how they are connected. Two dominant theoretical perspectives which deal with multimodality are Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Situated Literacies (SL). The former is influenced by the work of Halliday and the latter by the work of Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic. Both SFL and SL examine meaning from multiple perspectives within a given social context but the context is bounded differently (Anderson, 2013:278). SFL is primarily concerned with available resources and opportunities, and examines how language is used, the purpose it serves, how we achieve these purposes and how form has evolved to serve function (Halliday, 1973).

This study delves deeper into Situated Literacies because it is a strand of literacy studies that challenges traditional views of literacy as nothing more than a set of skills by which to learn to read and write.

2.14.1 Literacy as social practice

The notion of literacy as social practice has been influenced by the work of Street (1985) which was conducted in Iran. When Iranian villagers were termed 'illiterate', he studied the complexities of their literacy practices which involved religious customs, market-related activities and school-based performance. He described the various ways in which they used reading and writing for different purposes in their everyday life. He then called for a more nuanced conceptualisation of the theoretical and methodological issues in understanding and representing local literacy practices (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009:4). Street's theory contrasted autonomous and ideological models of literacy. The autonomous model of literacy views literacy as

simply and only a set of skills acquired and utilised from within any given context. This autonomous model is the environment in which formal literacy instruction is said to take place. It pretends to be a set of politically and ideologically neutral, technical skills, which one either has or does not have. Street (1985) criticised this autonomous model of literacy which suggests that literacy functions outside political contexts. Horn (2016:3) asserts that the autonomous model of literacy is most often relied upon in today's education system as a sort of failsafe because it supposedly prepares learners for standardised tests. It conceptualises literacy as nothing more than a skill to be mastered because without it an individual's social position cannot improve. The skills acquired are said to prepare learners for the academic rigours of standardised tests which Horn claims people generally prize in terms of literacy.

This notion of literacy, however, does not readily reflect, account for or explain the real-life situations of learners. Graff and Duffy (2008:1) argue that 'the acquisition of literacy is a necessary precursor to, and invariably results in economic development, democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward mobility.' Literacy skills from this perspective are viewed as important to advance academically, financially and socially. Literacy is viewed as the independent variable which leads those who are literate to success, and those who are illiterate to silence, ignominy and yet further marginalisation (Horn, 2016:4).

The notion of literacy development, through the lens of the autonomous perspective, seldom alters the social position of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who parrot the master's voice exactly. These learners do not quite perfect the literacy techniques that enable them to progress to full membership of the officers' club and be successful. This model of literacy as no more than a means to an end for aspiring wanna-bees; it is the mercantilist meal ticket by which Mrs Thatcher rose from being a grocer's daughter to a peer of the realm with a received pronunciation and the other trappings of a capitalist literacy. This is a narrow-minded view of literacy which does not credit literacy as a doorway to discovery of the universe, the realms of poetry, art, music and science. Literacy development in this study is regarded as a doorway to self-realisation, self-discovery and independent thought, the great 'know yourself' of the Delphic oracle, the ability to question authority and determine the

good of a community, the great joy of knowing and being yourself. The ideological model which this thesis follows stipulates that literacies are multiple, shaped by cultural institutions and their values, especially educational ones. They cannot be separated from political and ideological definitions in a given context, and are shaped by the specific uses to which they are put (Street, 1985). Literacy is social and cultural in nature which forms part of people's everyday life. Literacy is treated here as an array of practices rather than a box of skills (Perry, 2012:53). As Horn (2016:108) asserts, an individual's literacy development is uniquely influenced by social surroundings. In contrast to the autonomous model, the ideological model of literacy conceptualises literacy as a set of practices which are grounded in specific contexts, and which is linked to culture, and power structures in society (Street, 1985:433).

For Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic (2000:7) literacy as social practice is conceptualised as the link between the activities of reading and writing, and the social structures in which they are embedded, and which they help to shape. They view literacy practices as the general cultural ways of using written language which individuals draw upon in their lives, in other words, what people 'do' with literacy. Practices are not merely activities or observable units but involve values, attitudes, feelings and social relations including awareness of literacy, construction of literacy and discourses of literacy, how people talk about, and make sense of, literacy. These are internal processes within an individual. In conjunction with this, are the social interactions which connect each individual with one another, sharing ideologies and social identities, through cognition. Social rules shape the practices which regulate how texts are to be used and distributed, prescribing who may produce the texts and who has access to the texts. Literacy practices involve a clear distinction between both the individual and the social world, literacy practices may be understood as defining the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than within any individual. Such literacy represents a new tradition in considering the nature of learning, focusing not so much on skills acquisition, as in dominant approaches but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1985).

From this stance of literacy as social practice, the implication for methodology and curriculum delivery, depend on how educators and schools connect the world of the

learners, educators, and the community from these different spectrums. My study aims to understand how parents can enhance their children's literacy. This can be achieved only if the social contexts of learners are taken into consideration. This study therefore has to understand the context of children and their families, to determine how parents view literacy, and the types of literacy which they possess.

2.14.2 Multi-literacies

Another aspect to explore is the theory of multi-literacies, which was developed by the New London Group. Similar to literacy as social practice, it emphasises the real world context in which people practice literacy. It highlights how power relations shape literacy, and literacy learning (Perry, 2012:58). It differs from literacy as social practice, in that it suggests multiple modes of communication, and the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity. Notably, literacy as social practice underscores the importance of culture and language, yet the emphasis on multiple communication channels is different. Multi-literacies highlight modes of representation, and not the language itself. In the case of literacy as social practice, the *practices* that surround the *print literacy* take precedence. Kress (2000) criticises those who focus primarily on print literacy practices. Multi-literacies do not reject print literacy but definitions of literacy that occur solely in print or written texts. Schools tend to value print literacy above other forms of literacy, whereas multi-literacies view print literacy as only one form of representation for meaning-making. In a classroom situation, a multi-literacy approach enables the educator to use multiple modes and media for communication, to connect the relevance of situated literacies in the home environment with the school, being cognisant of the definition of literacy set out by Barton et al. (2000:8):

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices, these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts;
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life;
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relations, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others;
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices;

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- Literacy is historically situated; and

- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

Cope and Kalantzis (2013:5) advocate this approach as a means to integrate a variety of modes of meaning-making, where the text is linked to the visual, audial, spatial and behavioural. As argued by Perry (2012:59), 'the salient difference between theories of literacy as social practice, and multi-literacies, is how text is defined; multi-literacy theorists do not limit their definition of text to print but include a variety forms and semiotic systems.'

Researchers and theorists working within the framework of literacy as social practice often privilege the many ways in which various communities practice literacy, however, there has been less emphasis on implications for practice of literacy instruction. Multi-literacies on the other hand, focus primarily on literacy instruction, with its multiple modes of communication.

2.14.3 New Literacy Studies (NLS)

Gee (2015:35) notes that New Literacy Studies (NLS) encompass a range of research orientations and activities, stemming from linguistics, history, anthropology, rhetoric and composition studies, cultural psychology, education, and other areas. Gee (2015: 38) argues that it includes several founding works which helped initiate it into NLS: Ronald and Suzanne Scollon's *Narrative, Literacy and Face in Interethnic Communication* (1981); Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words* (1983); and Brian Street's *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (1985). It started in the 1980s, and not only came from different disciplines but was written in different theoretical languages that never became unified. However, it has emerged from older conceptualisations of literacy, to a shared view of literacy. NLS opposes the traditional psychological approach to literacy which views literacy as a mental or cognitive phenomenon. It views literacy as a process which takes place in the world, in society, and not merely in people's heads (Gee, 2015:35). Literacy is completely intertwined with specific social, cultural, institutional and political practices. Literacy becomes 'literacies', as

reading and writing are differently and distinctly shaped and transformed inside different socio-cultural practices. In addition, these socio-cultural practices bear inherent value-laden implications which determine what accounts for acceptable identities, actions and ways of knowing. These practices integrate language, both oral and written, as well as non-verbal activities through interacting, feeling, thinking, valuing and believing, as well as nonverbal symbols, sites, tools, objects, and technologies.   In this way NLS seeks to study literacy and literacy learning, as they are integrated with oral language, social activities, material settings, and distinctively cultural forms of thinking, knowing, valuing and believing (Gee, 1999:356). NLS recognise multiple literacies, varying according to time and space but contested in relation to power. It determines whose literacies are dominant and whose literacies are marginalised or resisted (Street, 2003:77). NLS moves away from literacy as a process, which involves cognitive skills, processes and understandings used to make meaning from texts, and has evolved to be perceived as a capacity to utilise symbol systems (e.g. alphabet, musical notation, numbers, etc.) for the purpose of meaning-making (Gee, 2008; The New London Group, 1996).

It is as Street (2003) argues when he claims that literacy is dependent on what happens within a given social context. Naraian and Surabian (2014:334) regard literacy development as taking place within a socio-cultural context, and the individual is viewed as having the capacity to utilise symbols (alphabet, musical notation, numbers, etc.) for the purpose of making meaning, which takes place within a social context, linked to specific practices. Words are never perceived as neutral, and despite having multiple meanings, words acquire stable meanings over time through a process of social negotiation. They use the word 'good' as an example to describe a learner in the context of the school. It is used to denote a student's ability, strength, and desirable behaviour in the classroom. It could evoke popular beliefs about appropriate adult-child relations, the meaning of intelligence, the role of schools in society, etc. so that the word 'good' is not a neutral term. Naraian and Surabian argue that the meanings of words are always rooted in culture, which implies that negotiations of those meanings emerge from social debates about beliefs, values and choices. NLS looks at literacy as a social practice, which involves more than actions with texts: it is shaped by values, attitudes, social relations. The

social relations involve literacy practices which are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals (Barton et al., 2000).

NLS raises pedagogical imperatives linked to this study. Literacy, with the notion of reading and writing does not take place in the minds of learners but in the world and in society (Gee, 2015:35). Therefore one has to consider which methodologies schools could employ to best enhance the development of literacy of learners. Equally important is consideration of literacy development in the home - the important role which parents play in how their children view themselves in the world, and what position they take up in society. Being a literate individual creates opportunities for personal transformation, where individuals are able to read the world, and make meaning of what is happening in it. Being a literate individual does not mean that an individual can regurgitate what has been read in a book but how the individual is able to read and improve the ambient world. As Baynham and Prinsloo (2009:1) have found, literacy studies have moved away from pedagogical and psycholinguistic processes of the individual reader-writer, to look outside the classroom, to study literacy in a social context. Literacy varies with regard to its forms, functions, uses, and values across social settings, which vary in social meanings and effects. Thus literacy cannot be viewed as a matter of generic skills, as a unitary process, where 'readers' and 'writers' are regarded as generalised subjects, without any social location, and who have more or less acquired the necessary skills to produce texts. Reading and writing are studied in the contents of social (cultural, historical, political and economic) practices of which they are part and are embedded in social spaces (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009:2).

2.15 Conclusion

The chapter outlined the theoretical framework, Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice, which demonstrates the social position of individuals, and how they appropriate the necessary capital. The theory extended to view school-learning-community partnerships in light of Epstein's model of parent involvement, and Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence, all necessary resources or capital to enhance

learning, and essentially literacy development. It defined parental involvement, analysing the benefits of parental involvement, as well as barriers. Within the context of the South African education system, this chapter considered literacy development, focussing on poverty, violence and mother-tongue instruction. It discussed literacy development, highlighting the importance of moving away from a 'transmission' pedagogy, to a more critical approach. Critical pedagogy and critical literacy from the standpoint of Freire and Mclaren were discussed, and enlarged to include situated literacy practices. Multimodal pedagogical framework was discussed to demonstrate different modes of mean-making, focussing on multi-literacies and New Literacy Studies, all of whom highlight that literacy is shaped within a social context, and that literacy has evolved from being just a technical skill.

The next chapter will focus on the methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLGY

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.
(Nelson Mandela quotes 2018)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology used in this investigation into the importance of parental involvement for the literacy development of disadvantaged learners at a selected primary school. The fundamental concern driving this study is how parents from low-income households can be taught to enhance their children's literacy development.

The chapter commences with pragmatism as a way of investigating the challenges of literacy enhancement, juxtaposing other methods of inquiry which include a *postpostivist paradigm, socially constructed paradigm*, and *advocacy paradigm.* The chapter then maps the research design and methodology. It delineates discussion of sampling, data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations that guided the study. Positionality is also highlighted, especially with reference to my position as principal of the school at which the study took place. The manner in which, when and where data collection occurred is set out in detail.

3.2 Research design

The design of any research is viewed as the plan or logical sequence in which a particular study is conducted. The design requires a research framework and the various tools and instruments employed to gather relevant data. Mouton (1996:175) states that the research design serves to 'plan, structure and execute the research', in order to maximise the validity of the findings.

3.2.1 Research framework: Pragmatic paradigm

The research design of this study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature, and may be viewed from the perspective of a pragmatic paradigm. A paradigm, as

described by Cohen and Crabtree (2006:1), is a model or framework which encompasses the common belief system (philosophy) of scientists, about the nature of knowledge and existence. The chosen paradigm guides how researchers act with regard to inquiry, to determine how problems are solved. Cresswell (2003:6) notes that a paradigm or *knowledge claim* is concerned with how a researcher starts a project with certain assumptions, based on how she or he will learn, and what is to be learnt during the inquiry. As Cresswell (2003:6) explains, the philosophy makes claims about *ontology* (the nature of being), *epistemology* (what is knowledge), *axiology* (what values go into it), *rhetoric* (how it is written) and *methodology* (the process for studying it). The school of thought, philosophy or knowledge claim in this study is *pragmatism*.

Pragmatism, as a formal means of enquiry into a phenomenon, is derived from the work of Peirce, James, Mead and Dewey (Cherryholmes, 1992). For pragmatists, research takes place within certain social, historical and political contexts. Pragmatism, according to Cresswell (2003:11), is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge about certain actions, situations and consequences which are currently occurring. As highlighted by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006:57), pragmatism seeks to answer questions which bring about improvement in our world. Essentially for pragmatists, the focus is on the problem at hand, and a means to try to determine solutions to the problem. Emphasis is placed on determining the solution to the problem, rather than the methods used for doing so, opening the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection, and analyses (Cresswell, 2003:12). Pragmatism favours mixed methods research.

3.2.2 Alternative knowledge claim positions

3.2.2.1 Postpositive paradigm: quantitative/reductive/empirical/theory verification

Postpositivism is often referred to as a 'scientific' method of undertaking research, one which focuses upon numeric measurements of observation and the study of the behaviour of individuals. It starts with a theory, where data are collected that either

support or refute the theory, followed by additional tests. Postpositive assumptions govern claims about what comprises knowledge (Cresswell, 2003:7). Data which are collected are considered to be adequate, and of a good quality if they can be quantified (Adams, 2014:6). The data harness multiple variables, and the correlation between them. Postpositivism is reductionist by nature because it seeks to reduce variables that constitute hypotheses or research questions into small, discrete sets of ideas (Cresswell, 2003:7). Postpositivism gathers quantitative data, with no attempt at triangulation (Adams, 2014:7).

3.2.2.2 Socially constructed paradigm: qualitative/social and historical construction/theory generation

Beaumie (2001:1) argues that social constructivism emphasises the importance of culture, and the influence society has in shaping the knowledge of an individual. These individuals seek to understand the world that they live and work in (Cresswell, 2003:7). The aim of the researcher is to understand the views of participants by engaging in meaningful interaction. Open-ended questions are posed, and the researcher needs to listen attentively and sensitively to what participants say or do, or do not say, always remaining cognisant of the historical and cultural settings in which interviews take place. Qualitative data are collected. Cresswell (2003:9) asserts that researchers recognise that their own personal, cultural and historical experiences shape interpretation. They position themselves in the research, being aware of how others interpret the world. Unlike postpositivism, with the point of departure being based on a theory, constructivism generates a theory or pattern inductively (Cresswell, 2003:9).

3.2.2.3 Advocacy / participatory paradigm: political / empowerment / collaborative / change-oriented

The main point of departure for an advocacy researcher is to work collaboratively with participants, in order to bring about change. The belief is that the research should be linked with politics and a political agenda, focussing upon social issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation. The aim of such socially responsive research is to appreciate and assess

the lives of participants and ultimately to facilitate improvements in their quality of life, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's knowledge. Such research can create a more conscious awareness of participants' mode of living and initiate improvement in the lives of marginalised or disenfranchised participants. The 'voice' of the participants becomes an integral aspect of the research, since they share their lived experiences, and engage actively in all aspects of data collection (Cresswell, 2003:10).

By drawing attention to these various philosophical knowledge claims or *paradigms,* I was able to link concepts from relevant literature and determine the best way to gather evidence, in support of the research questions. The table below illustrates the four philosophical knowledge claims.

Table 3.1 Juxtaposing various knowledge claims and method procedures

KNOWLEDGE CLAIMS/PARADIGM	RESEARCH APPROACH	STRATEGY OF INQUIRY	METHODS
Pragmatic	Mixed Method	Mixed methods design	Closed-ended measures, open-ended observations
Postpositivist	Quantitative	Experimental	Measuring attitudes, rating behaviours
Constructivist	Qualitative	Ethnographic	Field observations
Emancipatory	Qualitative	Narrative	Open-ended interviewing

What follows is an illustration of data collection procedures according to the various philosophies. It demonstrates how pragmatism lends itself to multiple methods of inquiry.

Table 3.2 Giving rise to method procedures

Mixed method	Quantitative	Qualitative
Statistical and text analysis open/closed ended questions, multiple forms of data drawing	*Statistical analysis* predetermined instrument based questions, performance data, attitude data, census data	*Text and image analysis* open-ended questions, interview data, observations, documents, audio-visual data

3.3 Research methodology

The research methodology refers to the research process, and the tools and procedures to be used (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:75). The central purpose of this study was to determine the nature of parental involvement in the literacy activities of disadvantaged learners. In order to meet the objectives of the study, I implemented a research strategy of triangulation, utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods, as indicated in table 3.2. The study deployed a number of tools to shed light on the main research question: (i) a validated standardised questionnaire, (ii) individual interviews (home), (iii) focus group interviews, and (iv) photographs.

3.3.1 Mixed method approach: qualitative and quantitative research

In order to gather knowledge, qualitative and quantitative data are collected sequentially. As described by Cresswell (2003:21), "the study begins with a broad survey in order to generalise results to a population, and then focuses, in a second phase, on detailed qualitative, open-ended interviews to collect detailed views from participants." The sequence of events of the study is elaborated below:

- *identified* 59 learners who were not passing the subject English;
- *circulating* PIRLS (2006) questionnaire to 33 parents who attended the parent/teacher meeting on 2 February 2018;
- 21 parents *returned* the questionnaire;
- 8 parents *attended* the first focus group meeting;
- 11 parents *attended* the second focus group meeting; and
- *interviewed* 9 parents in their homes.

A mixture of qualitative data and quantitative data was used. Yin (2009:63) claims that a mixture of research methods is effective for collecting a rich and reliable array of data, as opposed to a single method alone. In support of this hypothesis, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) claim that a mixed method is superior to a mono-methods approach since mixed methods have the ability to answer research questions that other approaches cannot, and can respond to simultaneously

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confirmatory and exploratory questions. Mixed methods can provide stronger inferences to complex social phenomena.

3.3.2 Sample

The first sequence of the research was to distribute the learning to read PIRLS (2006) survey, a standardised questionnaire used by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), to a sample of parents of Foundation Phase learners. Foundation Phase in South African schools comprises learners from Grade R (pre-school), Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3. Their ages vary between seven and nine years. Learners who obtained less than 50% for the June 2016 English assessment, were identified to be part of the study. These Foundation Phase learners totalled fifty-nine.

The Grade R learners were excluded from this study because in South Africa, Grade R or kindergarten education is not compulsory. Grade R is the year before learners in South Africa start formal primary schooling. No formal examinations are written but testing is done orally and learners are awarded a code (1 to 7) for literacy. Formal written examinations are, however, administered in Grades 1, 2 and 3. Learners who obtain less than 50% for English are considered to be under-achievers.

At the parent/teacher meeting held on 2 February 2017, thirty-three parents out of fifty-nine parents attended the meeting. These parents were approached to be part of the study. The prepared questionnaire focussing on parental involvement, pertaining to literacy activities, was explained, and parents were asked to complete the questionnaire at home, and to return it by the 12 February 2017, if they wanted to be part of the study. An in-depth explanation of the study was given to them, including an explanatory note, marked as Appendix A. The prepared questionnaire, the Learning to read PIRLS (2006) survey, sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IAE), was the first instrument used to gather data on literacy involvement in the home. This document is included as Appendix B.

Twenty-one parents returned their PIRLS questionnaire and indicated that they wanted to be part of the study. One parent called to inform me that he did not feel comfortable with the questions which were asked in the questionnaire, and did not wish to be part of the study. One mother mentioned that her partner did not want her to speak to the school, and so was unable to be part of the study. Three blank questionnaires were returned. Seven questionnaires were not returned. The response rate was twenty-one parents which totalled 64%.

Once the questionnaires were returned, these twenty-one parents who were willing to participate were contacted telephonically, a letter was sent to each person, (Appendix C) where they were required to indicate the most convenient Saturday to meet. Many parents were unable to attend both sessions due to work constraints or other commitments but opted to attend one Saturday session. The Saturday sessions were held on 10 June 2017 and 24 June 2017 respectively. Eight parents indicated their willingness to be part of the first Saturday session and eleven parents indicated that they would be able to be part of the second Saturday session. These parents then formed my two focus groups because (i) they were willing and eager to interact with one another and (ii) the size of the group was ideal for focus group discussions. The parents were drawn from the following areas in the Cape Flats: Delft, Gugulethu, Hanover Park, Heideveld, Khayelitsha, Manenberg, Nyanga, Phillipi, and Surrey Estate. I solicited nine volunteers from these areas for the home visits. Each volunteer had to give written consent (Appendix D) for home visits and photographs. The areas were listed on a flip chart and volunteers were asked to record their names and contact details, so that arrangements could be made for home visits. I included a transcript of a home that I was taken to by the guardian of the learner from Heideveld. Both parents of the child residing in Heideveld live in a house in Welcome Estate, and both parents are addicted to methamphetamine (TIK). The table below demonstrates the sample of respondents. A detailed description of each area is provided in the next chapter.

Table 3.3 Sample of respondents

Learners who obtained less than 50% in the assessment June 2016	Parents who attended the parent/teacher meeting 2 February 2017	Parents who returned their questionnaire - deadline 12 February 2017	Parents who attended Saturday session 10 June 2018	Parents who attended Saturday session 24 June 2018
59	33	21	8	11

3.3.3 Research site

The research site is a co-educational, urban primary school in the Cape Flats, in the Western Cape Province. The language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is supposed to be English yet only 25% of learners have English as their home language. The mother tongue or home language of the twenty-one learners in the study is presented in table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Home language of learners

English	3
Afrikaans	2
isiXhosa	15
Sesotho	1
Total Sample	21

3.3.4 The Quintile system

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) categorises schools into different national quintiles according to the socio-economic resources of the schools' geographic environment, and justifies funding per learner according to these quintiles. These quintiles range from 1 (poorest) – 5 (wealthiest). Schools in lower quintiles are awarded more money per learner than schools in higher quintiles. Schools are bound to raise funds, and charge school fees, in order to meet school budgets. Parents unable to pay school fees may apply for exemption from school fees. Table 3.5 ilustrates the National Norms and Standard School Funding (NNSSF) for schools in South Africa, and demonstrates in South African currency, the amount of money which is paid to schools per child, per year.

Table 3.5 NNSFS (DBE, 2017)

National Quintile (NQ)	funding per learner -2017	funding per learner -2018	funding per learner -2019
NQ1	R 1 243	R 1 316	R 1 394
NQ2	R1 243	R 1 316	R 1 394
NQ3	R1 243	R 1 316	R 1 394
NQ4	R 623	R 660	R 699
NQ5	R 215	R 228	R 241

The site of the study is a school allocated to the second highest quintile (NQ 4) because it is geographically situated in a highly industrialised area which, according to the DBE, suggests that it is a high income earning area. In fact, however, this particular school should be placed on a far lower quintile since many of the children attending the school, are drawn from low-income households, and are bussed to school. The current quintile level of the school dictates that the DBE is required to subsidise no more than the feeding of one hundred and forty children each school day, with meals ranging from porridge twice a week, and a basic lunch meal consisting of samp, beans, soya, fish or rice. Appendix E represents the daily menu. The school has adopted a policy of not excluding any learner wanting a meal, and feeds on average 500 of the 620 registered learners every school day.

According to Government Gazette 40818 (DBE, 2017) depending on the availability of funds, schools in NQ4 and NQ5 could make application for no fee status, which would come into effect in 2018. Application for lowering of the school's quintile level has been made, as well as a request to grant the school the status of 'a no fee paying school'. The result would be that parents are exempt from paying school fees, and the DoE would pay R 1 243 per learner, as opposed to the current rate of R 660 per child for NQ4 schools. Table 3.6 indicates the sample of learners who, in conjunction, qualify for school fee exemption, and receive a meal on a daily basis. In terms of Government Gazette 293311 (DBE, 2006) parents of learners at a school may make application for school fee exemption if:

1) a learner is an orphan or has been abandoned by his or her parents;
2) a learner receives a poverty-linked state social grant; and

3) a learner's parents have made application for school fee exemption, due to low-household income.

Table 3.6 Sample of learners who are exempted from paying school fees and who receive a meal

Sample of learners	21
Learners who receive school fee exemption	18
Learners who are fed daily	19

3.3.5 Data collection instruments

3.3.5.1 Quantitative data: questionnaire

Quantitative data were extrapolated by administering the PIRLS (2006) questionnaire which consists of twenty-two questions focused on parental activities concerning emergent literacy, parental engagement, and family literacy activities, as well as parental attitudes towards reading behaviour. Data from the questionnaire provided a holistic understanding of (i) the nature of parental involvement as well as (ii) the attitudes and behaviour of parents towards literacy activities. The questionnaire covered a broad range of information ranging from parents' qualifications, number of books in the home, and the types of work parents do. Respondents were asked to indicate by means of a tick, or by answering *yes* or *no* to questions, or circling the appropriate answer. The questionnaire consisted of rating scales of four categories, ranging from 'disagree a lot', 'disagree a little', 'agree a little', 'agree a lot', as well as 'never or almost never', 'once or twice a week', 'once or twice a month', and 'every day or almost every day'. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:327) note that use of rating scales creates a degree of intensity, sensitivity and differentiation of responses, while still generating numbers. Parents were asked to complete the Learning to Read PIRLS (2006) survey. Once these questionnaires were received, each parent was assigned a pseudonym. Parents were asked whether they needed assistance to complete the form but they all managed without my help.

Employing the PIRLS survey in this investigation created a reliable means of measuring levels of parental involvement and making comparisons between groups and individuals.

3.3.5.2 Qualitative data: focus-group interviews

Focus group interviewing constitutes a group interview; members in the group interact with each other. This type of interaction is paramount because the data gathered are vital, and would never have been revealed or become accessible without the interaction of members within the group (Morgan, 1997:2). Punch (2009:146) refers to focus group interviews as group interviewing because the researcher works with several individuals simultaneously. The researcher's role is to facilitate the discussion, posing questions or a topic, in order to direct the discussion.

Parents were invited to attend one of two Saturday sessions held at school from 09.30 until 11.00. These sessions granted parents an opportunity to meet in an informal manner, and to voice their ideas, opinions and concerns around parental involvement in the development of literacy activities.

Once parents arrived at school, they were thanked for their participation, and were again informed of the purpose of the study. They were reminded that the proceedings would be recorded, and that neither they, nor their children, would be disadvantaged in any way, if they did not feel comfortable to proceed. I created a relaxed atmosphere, offering parents a warm beverage, and encouraged them to talk to one another before we commenced with the actual recordings. I stressed that there were no wrong or right answers, and reminded them that they should not feel pressured in any way to speak but that they were entitled to share their thoughts, experiences or opinions. I was mindful of the ethical implications and considerations, and reminded parents that they would have access to all transcribed discussions. I facilitated the discussion by posing the following questions:

1) How do you think parents can help their children with literacy activities?
2) Why do you think children struggle with literacy activities?

3) What do you think the children need?

4) What should the school do to assist?

5) What prevents parents from getting involved in school activities; and

6) What can the school do to help parents to get involved?

The questions were short and specific. They prompted parents to speak freely and to share their ideas and opinions openly. Probing ensured that (i) a wealth of detailed information was gathered and that (ii) rich data could emerge through interaction and sharing of common challenges, relating to parental involvement.

3.3.5.3 Qualitative data: semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is a common method used in qualitative research: it allows the researcher to accumulate information readily and reliably. Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004:52) note that the main aim of gathering data by means of interviews is to highlight and bring to the attention of the researcher what the individuals feel, do and think. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were scheduled to take place in the home of respondents who completed the questionnaire. An address list, as presented in Table 3.7 representing the different areas/communities was compiled, and a parent, from each area, totalling nine indicated that they were prepared to be part of the home visit interviews. Home visits allowed me to meet with parents, gather information on literacy activities, and capture pictures of the home environment and the surrounding area. Parents were asked to indicate a suitable day and time for home visits. I ensured that I was prepared and punctual at each session.

The objective of the study was explained to the parents, as well as the purpose of taking pictures, and the use of the audio-recorder. Parents indicated that they were comfortable with the conditions under which these semi-structured interviews were to be conducted in English. Collis and Hussey (1997:167) view semi-structured interviews as a formal engagement between researcher and respondent. The respondent is asked a series of questions through an interview guide or schedule that has been developed by the researcher. I facilitated discussion by posing fifteen questions included as Appendix F.

Questions went through a number of iterations before they were finalised to ensure that the appropriate data were collected to answer the research questions. The questions were clear, short and specific. I piloted the question with a parent who visited the school but was not part of the sample. Minor changes were made to the instrument for the sake of greater clarity in language usage and to avoid ambiguity. Interviews with parents lasted for twenty to twenty-five minutes. I used both closed and open-ended questions. The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to initiate informal discussion between myself and the parent, in order to generate information that would provide authentic insights into parents' understanding of parental involvement, literacy activities, and the disposition of social, intellectual and cultural capital. Table 3.7 outlines the parents who completed the PIRLS (2006) questionnaire, the areas where they reside, as well as the homes, times and dates at which they were visited.

Table 3.7 Home environment

Parent	Grade	Focus Group	Area/suburb	Visited
Parent 1: Ms Pandor	1	10/6/2017	Nyanga	NO
Parent 2: Mrs Reagan	3	24/6/2017	Manenberg	23/07/2017 (15.30)
Parent 3: Mrs Jones	1	24/6/2017	Surrey Estate	NO
Parent 4: Ms Radebe	2	24/6/2017	Gugulethu	NO
Parent 5: Ms Njonga	1	10/6/2017	Gugulethu	10/06/2017 (14.00)
Parent 6: Mrs Kosa	1	10/6/2017	Phillipi	10/06/2017 (12.30)
Parent 7: Ms Sotsetse	2	10/6/2017	Gugulethu	NO
Parent 8: Ms Nkosi	2	10/6/2017	Khayelitsha	24/06/2017 (14.00)
Parent 9: Ms Fikile	1	ABSENT	Gugulethu	NO
Parent 10: Ms Kolweni	3	APOLOGY	Nyanga	NO
Parent 11: Ms Mdingi	2	10/6/2017	Delft	NO
Parent 12: Ms Bali	3	10/6/2017	Delft	24/06/2017 (12.30)
Parent 13: Ms Jika	2	10/6/2017	Khayelitsha	NO
Parent 14: Ms Tshabalala	2	10/6/2017	Phillipi	NO
Parent15: Ms Mtumtum	3	10/6/2017	Gugulethu	NO
Parent 16: Mrs Brown	3	24/6/2017	Surrey Estate	3/08/2017 (16.30)
Parent 17: Mr Bosch	3	24/6/2017	Hanover Park	2/10/2017 (16.00)
Parent 18: Ms Mali	3	24/6/2017	Gugulethu	NO
Parent 19: Ms Dube	3	10/6/2017	Nyanga	23/07/2017 (14.00)
Parent 20: Ms Zuma	3	10/6/2017	Khayelitsha	NO
Parent 21: Ms Smith	2	24/6/2019	Heideveld	2/08/2017 (16.00)

3.3.5.4 Qualitative data: photographs

The value of photographs as a research method has been noted by Schwartz (1989:119) and has been presented positively by a number of scholars (Bateson & Mead, 1942; Becker, 1974; Byers, 1964; Caldarola, 1985; Collier, 1967; and Wagner, 1979). Photographs provide information which reproduces the reality in front of the camera's lens, yielding unmediated and unbiased visual reports (Schwartz, 1989:120). A photograph provides information from which viewers derive meaning. Flick (2006:234) has found that cameras are used (i) to create a detailed recording, as well as (ii) to provide comprehensive and holistic presentations of lifestyles and conditions. Photographs render a detailed account of how conditions stand, and what changes or improvements there can be.

In this study, I used photographs as a tool to capture the setting of the home environment. Parents gave written consent to have their homes and surrounding areas photographed. I ensured that I did not capture pictures which could possibly expose the identities of the learners or their parents. The pictures indicated the home setting, the area where learners completed their homework, the environment outside the home, as well as areas where the learners played. Parents made use of social media such as Whatsapp, to share pictures with me, relating to violence in their immediate neighbourhood. The photographs were used to capture the home environment, view resources which were available inside and outside of the home, and to capture the space where learners completed their literacy, and other homework activities. Together with field notes, the photographs aided the reflection, provided an overview of the individual home visits, and ultimately ensured that the writing-up process was more accurate.

3.4 Data analysis

The process of data analysis involved understanding data and what information it presented in relation to parental involvement in literacy activities of disadvantaged learners. Mahlangu (2008:95) adds that data analysis is a process that involves the information to be organised in terms of what has been seen, heard, and read, so that

the researcher can make sense of it. When working with the data, the researcher has the responsibility to describe it, create explanations and develop theories. I made use of quantitative and qualitative data analysis to process the interpretation of the data about parental involvement in literacy activities. Using a mixed method research approach allowed me to deploy a number of methods to address the core research problem:

1) To what extent parents in disadvantaged contexts are able to assist their children with literacy activities; and

2) The level of competence/education of parents in order to offer support.

Mixed method research by definition is able to embrace, and take into account, differing epistemological and ontological assumptions while still being able to draw authentic and reliable conclusions from data (Brannen, 2005:173). Data collected by means of different methods cannot simply be added together to produce a unified state or as Brannen (2005) coins it, a "unitary or rounded reality". As argued by Brannen (2005:5) when methods are combined, it gives rise to a number of possible outcomes:

- Corroboration: The same results are derived from both qualitative and quantitative methods;

- Elaboration: Qualitative data analysis exemplifies how quantitative findings apply in particular cases;

- Complementarity: Qualitative and quantitative data results differ but together they generate insights; and

- Contradiction: Instances where qualitative and quantitative findings conflict.

Grafton and Lillis (2011:10) assert that mixed method research is viewed as contentious by some researchers such as the *incompatibility thesis* which articulates that mixing of methodologies and methods is impractical and unreasonable, and should not be practised. The incompatibility thesis contends that qualitative and quantitative methodologies do not study the same phenomenon, and draw on incompatible paradigmatic assumptions that prevent converging of two

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methodologies. In sharp contrast are the *pragmatists* who argue that mixing of methods and methodologies is productive, reliable and authentic. Pragmatists maintain that one should not limit mixed methods research to methods because one cannot separate methods from the larger research process. The research designs and methods are shaped by the research questions under investigation, and the research questions stem from the research purpose (Tashakkori & Cresswell, 2007a).

I first analysed the quantitative data, recording the findings immediately, before I immersed myself in the qualitative data. This process comprised one of the ways in which my subjective bias could be constrained. Using both methods involved considerable work but my goal was to combine the methods, to quantify, qualify and describe emergent literacy practices, parental involvement, and the home context of learners.

3.4.1 Data organisation

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:369) aver that it is essential to organise the data into workable units to facilitate coding. Codes are names, labels or tags which are assigned to segments of data. Data coding begins with the identification of small items of data that stand in isolation. These parts or segments may be individual words, small or large amounts of data (Punch, 2009:176). A code is a name or a phrase used to provide meaning to the segment, and can be an activity, quotation, relationship, context, participant perspective, event, process, action or idea.

3.4.2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data involve presenting data captured by means of the PIRLS (2006) questionnaire. I used a computer software programme (Microsoft Excel) to generate tables and graphs. These items created an opportunity to compare, identify patterns and highlight trends.

3.4.3 Qualitative data analysis

Data obtained from focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews had to be prepared before it could be analysed. Interviews which were recorded were downloaded onto my computer and saved on a flashdrive. This information was then sent for transcription to an independent source who works at a neighbouring university. Once I received copies of the transcriptions, I listened to the audio recordings, spending many hours listening to the interviews and making notes. The transcriptions were read in conjunction with the audio recordings. I referred to field notes and photographs, ensuring that transcriptions were accurate and reminding myself of the context of the interviews. This was the first stage before the actual data analysis commenced.

The next stage was categorising data into dominant themes and identifying patterns, and relations that became observable between the categories. Because qualitative data analysis is an inductive process, analysis started with the concrete, raw data, then was extended to higher levels of generalised abstractions. Analysis of qualitative data is on-going, and throughout the study I consciously and assiduously immersed myself in the data, reflecting upon the process, in an attempt to identify and articulate patterns or themes. The initial data were interrogated and categorisation of themes helped me to make comparisons, identify critical themes, and to engage in deep reflection.

3.5 Commitment to research standards

To ensure that any research study is credible, a researcher has to be rigorous in pursuit of the truth but has to abstain from being biased in the way phenomena are described and interpreted (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:273). Quantitative research relies on scientific and experimental studies, and data are viewed as objective, reliable and valid. Qualitative research, on the other hand, strives to capture the authentic, lived experiences of individuals (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006:49).

The fundamental principle of mixed method research involves combining both qualitative and quantitative data methods, approaches and concepts, which complements and strengthens the research process. As argued by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006:52) this integration creates its own problems with regard to *representation, integration* and *legitimation. Representation* is the manner in which the lived experiences of people are captured by using words (qualitative) and numbers (quantitative). Integration of qualitative and quantitative data could potentially create its own problems by (i) adding threats from one area (qualitative) or (quantitative), or (ii) multiplying threats from each area (qualitative) x (quantitative). *Legitimation* relates to the manner in which inferences from multiple data sources (qualitative + quantitative) which are problematic, give rise to inferences, producing credible, dependable, transferable and confirmable data. Legitimation refers to the notion of *valid* data.

3.6 Legitimation vs validity

In scientific and experimental research (quantitative), the credibility of the research is secured by means of objectivity, reliability and validity. Standardised instruments are usually utilised and data are calculated and analysed in a straightforward manner. In qualitative research the process is more complex, in that the researcher has to interpret, understand and derive meaning from interviews, discussions, observations, pictures, texts, etc. A central issue of qualitative research is the trustworthiness or credibility of the research which relates directly to the integrity and rigour of the data. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006:48) suggest that the validity of mixed method research be termed legitimation.

3.6.1 Legitimation

As noted by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006:48) mixed method research involves combining complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson identify nine types of legitimations which come to the fore when combining inferences from components of quantitative and qualitative research of a mixed method study. These types of

legitimation include: *sample integration legitimation, insider-outsider legitimation, weakness minimisation legitimation, sequential legitimation, conversion legitimation, and political legitimation.*

3.6.1.1 Sample integration

When a researcher makes statistical generalisations from a sample, and if a different sample of respondents is used to construct meta-inferences, problems are bound to arise, and the data production is usually of a poor quality. It is essential to consider how to select legitimately, combine individuals and groups, in order to construct meta-inferences which yield quality research. I used the same sample of parents to extrapolate quantitative data and qualitative data, so ensuring sample legitimation.

3.6.1.2 Insider-outsider

The insider-outsider perspective refers to the researcher forming an integral and integrated part of the whole research process, and the manner in which the data are accurately presented from the perspective of the insider's view and the observer's view. This integration of the researcher can potentially compromise the research, therefore the researcher engaging in mixed method research has to seek legitimation through the strategy of peer review and member checking. I engaged members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), colleagues who work at the school where the research took place but who are not involved in the study, to analyse the data and themes emanating from the data. Such members were given a brief outline of the study, and were critical and objective in their input. My supervisor shared his objections, queries, doubts and opinions. I informally spoke to participants about the research topic and probed members' point of view for further details on themes which emerged.

3.6.1.3 Weakness minimisation

By collecting, collating and interrogating both qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher can assess the extent to which the weaknesses of one approach can be

compensated for by the strengths of the other, then plan and design the study. Data from the PIRLS (2006) questionnaire created a reliable platform for a detailed approach, by utilising semi-structured and focus-group interviews. Information from the questionnaire created an opportunity to probe more deeply, and to gather personal accounts from parents.

3.6.1.4 Sequential

To ensure legitimation, the sequence or order of qualitative and quantitative data collection should not alter interpretation of the results. To test for legitimation, the sequence of the qualitative and quantitative could be oscillated. Conducting interviews before completion of the PIRLS (2006) questionnaire would not have altered the information collected.

3.6.1.5 Conversion

When quantitative data and qualitative data converge to provide inferences and meta-inferences, which have been scrutinised, and which give rise to high quality data, legitimation is ensured. The PIRLS (2006) questionnaire, information from focus-group interviews, semi-structured interviews, as well as field notes, and photographs were integrated and analysed.

3.6.1.6 Paradigmatic

The researcher is able to take a moderate position in order to make meaning, in view of epistemological, ontological, axiological, methodological and rhetorical beliefs. I relied on different viewpoints, focusing on objective and inter-subjective realities, values and standards of the research process as well as the manner in which I captured the data through my style of writing.

3.6.1.7 Commensurability

This type of legitimation obliges the individual researcher to change the perception from a qualitative lens to a quantitative lens, having a mixed world-view. This change is effected by means of iteration, whereby the researcher goes back and forth, viewing and reviewing data. The researcher breaks away from a traditional viewpoint which renders a well-informed third perspective. I constantly negotiated meaning from a qualitative, and quantitative perspective, going beyond the principles of both methods and trying to find common ground between the two, creating a middle-ground.

3.6.1.8 Multiple validities

The researcher ensured that legitimation of quantitative and qualitative components were adhered to, as well as legitimation of mixed methods, to confirm that it yields high quality meta-inferences. I embarked on the research process, ensuring that validity for qualitative and quantitative data ensued, and securing legitimation for viable, authentic mixed method research.

3.6.1.9 Political

When combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, there is a danger that power and tension come to the fore. It could be as a result of the different ideologies of researchers which give rise to conflict. There may be different perspectives about contradictions and paradoxes that arise when qualitative and quantitative findings are compared and contrasted. The researcher needs to value the meta-inferences stemming from both perspectives. I ensured political legitimation by accepting the notion of epistemological pluralism and value pluralism, accepting that some phenomena require multiple methods to account for their nature, as well as several values which are equally correct, yet in conflict with each other.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Within the scope of research, ethics define principles which are deemed as right and wrong. Rule and John (2011:111) argue that conducting research in an ethically congruent and sound manner, enhance the quality of research and contribute to its overall trustworthiness. It is argued by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:52) that the foundation of ethical procedures is to inform consent. The following principles are viewed as fundamental to informed consent:

- Competence
- Voluntarism
- Full information
- Comprehension

These principles imply that respondents in a research study must be *competent* to participate, and to do so *voluntarily*. The researcher has to provide the necessary *information*, and respondents need to *understand* what the research is all about. Appropriate steps were taken to adhere to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring the confidentiality, dignity, rights and anonymity of all respondents. Approval from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) was obtained (Appendix G) as well approval as from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape (Appendix H). Written consent was obtained from each of the participants and this included permission to capture photographs.

3.8 Positionality of researcher

I am the principal of the school where the study took place. Parents were assured that their involvement in the study was voluntary, and that their children would not be disadvantaged in any way. The study took cognisance of the principles guiding insider research (Costley, Elliot & Gibbs, 2010:25-43). Insider research is a form of research where studies are conducted at an organisation or area of work where the researcher is actively involved. Greene (2014:2) argues that both insider and outsider researchers have to contend with similar methodological issues. Greene points out

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that there are differences in how each position may be regarded, how each one affects the data that is gathered, and how the data are analysed. Greene argues that insider research is 'complex' but that it has many benefits and opportunities (Greene, 2014:11). She maintains that although much has been written about insider research, there is insufficient documentation on how to undertake this form of research step-by-step. Drawing on experiences of other researchers, Greene (2014:3) highlights the following advantages and disadvantages of insider research:

Advantages

- Insider researcher has intimate knowledge of the research environment and the respondents;
- Insider research may be more natural than that of an outsider who has to become familiar with the research environment and respondents; and
- Being an insider may mean easier access.

Disadvantages

- Insider research could be seen as too subjective; and
- Insider researchers may be seen as 'inherently biased'.

Greene (2014:5) points out additional methodological issues of insider research, with regard to how the data are gathered and analysed. These include:

- Objectivity may be difficult for an insider researcher, as a result of his/her involvement in the research environment and the respondents;
- Drawing on the work of researchers, and in particular Lincoln and Guba (1985), Greene points out that the inclination to 'go native' may be as a result of prolonged engagement with the literature (Greene, 2014:5). 'Going native' may therefore compromise the validity of the data;
- Gaining access could be seen as a problem because the insider researcher could be seen as too much of an insider. Disclosure of information may not be forthcoming;
- Confidentiality may be an issue; and

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- Power struggles could emerge.

The notion of reflexivity is critical for any research but more importantly for the insider researcher. The next chapter discusses the processes that I employed in more detail. These relate to being mindful of bias and being vigilant in assuming and presuming what interviewees mean.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the various knowledge claims and approaches of postpositivism, constructivism, emancipatory methods and pragmatism. By juxtaposing these contending paradigms, pragmatism was shown to be best able to conceptualise *parental involvement in literacy activities of disadvantaged learners.* The research design and methodological framework were then discussed. Mixed method research was utilised to gather qualitative and quantitative data. The chapter discussed issues around sampling, legitimation, ethical considerations, and my positionality as insider researcher.

In the next chapter, the findings derived from the data collected and analysed are discussed in detail.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

*When our focus is on improving achievement of children at academic risk,
partnerships with families are not just useful - it is crucial..*
(Susan Swap 1993)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings emanating from the study, and includes the
Learning to Read PIRLS (2006) survey, a questionnaire which provided detailed
information on parental involvement activities with regard to literacy. I then present
the comments and opinions of parents captured during focus group interviews. The
narratives of nine parents who were visited in their homes are included as findings.
Data from focus group interviews with parents are presented in the first person, as I
wanted to capture the authentic quality of their voices. This strategy provided an
opportunity to understand and appreciate their language usage.

4.2 Quantitative data: PIRLS (2006) survey

Parents were asked to complete the Learning to Read PIRLS (2006) survey.
Quantitative data were collected to provide an overview of the home environment,
and to reveal information on the social capital, cultural capital and habitus of families.
Some key findings in this chapter revealed that although eager to assist, frustrated
parents, working long hours, do not have the capacity when they return home from
work to assist their children meaningfully with school work. A language barrier exists,
since many of the parents' mother-tongue does not correspond with the child's
language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The language spoken by black African
parents in the province is isiXhosa and 'coloured'/mixed race parents generally speak
a dialect of Afrikaans called 'Afrikaaps'. Very few homes have books and learning
resources are rare, with children enjoying limited exposure to word games, story-
telling or reading. Parents themselves seldom read for their own enjoyment. Library
visits are few and far between.

The PIRLS (2006) survey highlights five themes:

1. Activities before learners start school/Emergent Activities:

    (Q2, Q3,Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7)

*   the language in which the activities are conducted;
*   the capabilities of learners with regard to emergent literacy activities; and
*   attendance at pre-school or crèche.

2. Homework and Literacy Activities: (Q8, Q9, Q10)

*   How often learners are spoken to about what they are reading;
*   How often learners are read to;
*   How often learners are taken to the library or bookstore;
*   How often learners are helped with reading;
*   How often learners complete homework activities; and
*   The language in which these activities take place.

3. Parents' opinion of the school: (Q11)
*   The school involving parents;
*   The school assisting the learners with reading; and
*   Whether the school cares about the learner.

4.   Literacy in the home: (Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16,Q17)

*   Parents' reading;
*   How parents value reading;
*   The number of books in the home;
*   How many children's books are in the home; and
*   The language the books are written in.

5.   Qualifications and socio-economic position (Q18,Q19,Q20)

*   Highest level of education of parents;
*   Employment of parents;
*   Types of employment;
*   Financial position of parents compared to other families.

6. Additional information (Q21, Q22)

*   Financial position; and
*   Time it took to complete survey.

Each question was completed and the findings were captured on a template. The findings are presented below.   (N = 21) represents the total sample of parents.

4.2.1 Quantitative data

Activities before school/Emergent Literacy activities

Data for the frequency of emergent literacy activities before school are presented in Figure 4.1. Most significant is that 76% of parents never or almost never visit a library, while 66% only sometimes read aloud and 62% talk about books to their children. A relatively low number (33%) often read to their children.

More than half of the parents sometimes play alphabet (57%) or word (48%) games, while 14% seldom or never play with alphabet toys, and a large number (42%) never play word games. However, a significantly high number (62%) often sing songs to their children.

Figure 4.1 Emergent literacy activities

Emergent Literacy Activities

Visit a library
- 16
- 5

Read aloud signs and labels
- 4
- 10
- 7

Write letters or words
- 4
- 11
- 6

Play word games
- 9
- 10
- 2

Talk about what you had read
- 3
- 13
- 5

Talk about things you had done
- 3
- 13
- 5

Play with alphabet toys (for example, blocks with letters of the alphabet)
- 3
- 12
- 6

Sing songs
- 3
- 5
- 13

Tell stories
- 2
- 12
- 7

Read books
- 2
- 14
- 5

Axis: 1 6 11 16 21

■ Never or almost never ■ Sometimes ■ Often

Data for Emergent literacy activities related to language are presented in Figure 4.2:

66% of learners completed activities in English, 24% in isiXhosa, 5% in Sesotho, and 5% in Afrikaans.

Figure 4.2 Language of literacy activities
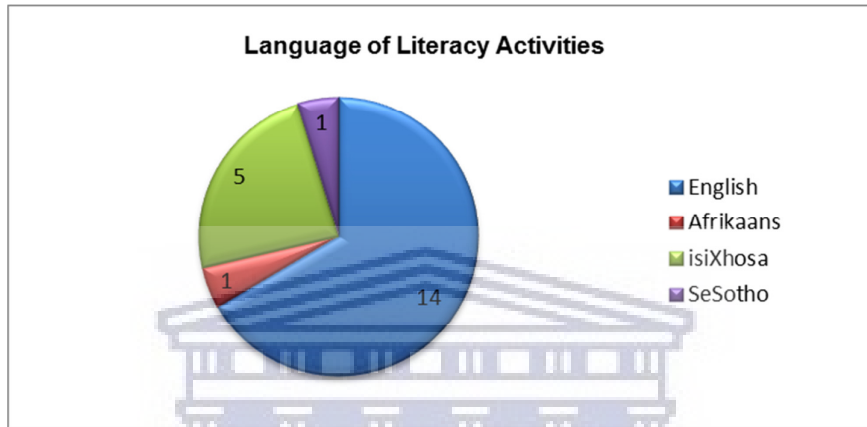
Data for the language learners spoke before they started school are presented in Figure 4.3:

53% spoke English and an additional language. A large percentage (47%) spoke isiXhosa only before school.

Figure 4.3 Spoken language before school
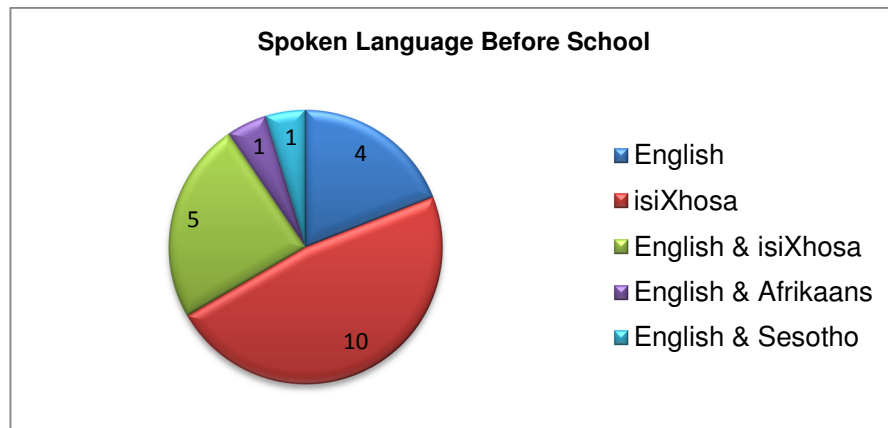
Data for the years spent at crèche or pre-school are presented in Figure 4.4:

All the children attended crèche or pre-school. The majority of learners (57%) spent at least three years or more at a crèche or pre-school before they started Grade R, the reception year.   28% spent between two and three years, 10% spent two years at a crèche or preschool.

Figure 4.4 Years spent at crèche
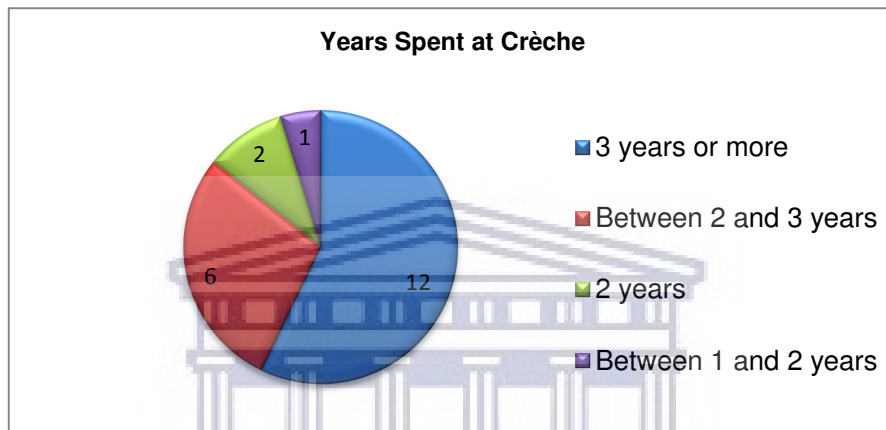
Data for the ages of learners when they started Grade R are presented in Figure 4.5:

All the learners were age-appropriate when they started Grade R. Department of Education (DoE) regulations stipulate that learners should be at least four and a half years old when they are enrolled for Grade R.

Figure 4.5 Age of learners when starting Grade R
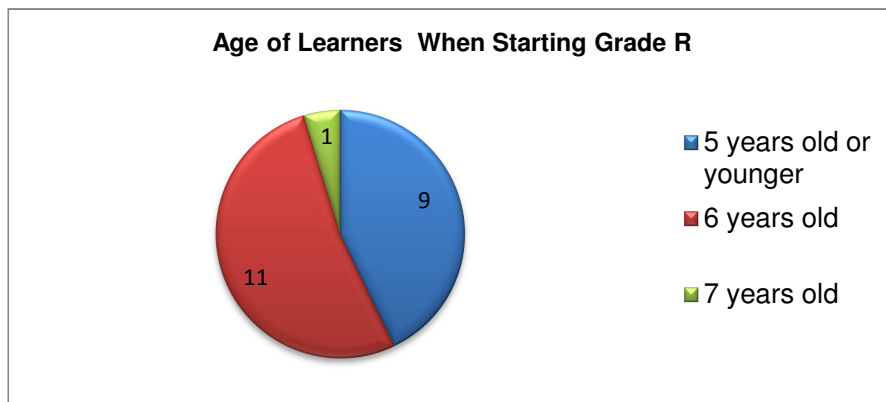
Data for the abilities of learners when they started Grade R are presented in Figure 4.6:

A high percentage (43%) could not read sentences and 33% could not write words at all. Just less than half (47%) could not recognise letters of the alphabet and 43% could not read words very well, whereas 38% could write letters and read sentences moderately well.

On the outer extremes, the same number could write letters (19%) or could not write letters (19%) very well, while one learner could not recognise letters of the alphabet at all.

Figure 4.6 Learners' abilities when starting Grade R
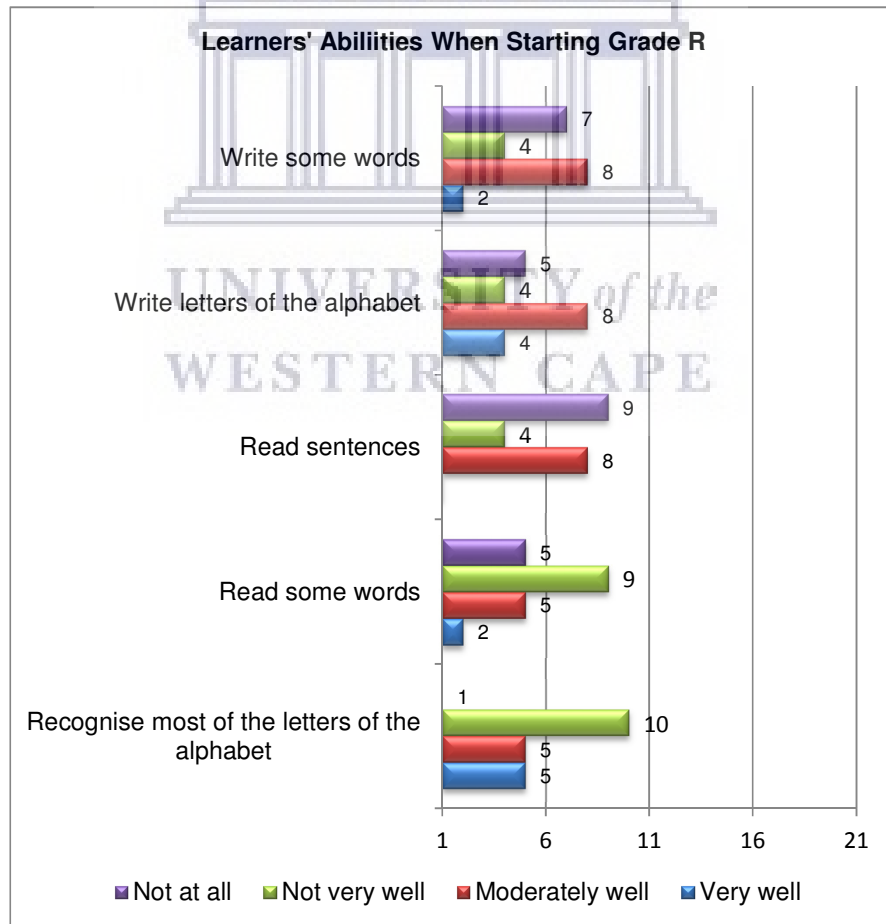
<u>Homework and Literacy Activities</u>

Data for the question: 'How often parents or someone else in the home assist', are presented in Figure 4.7:

More than half of the parents (52%) help their children with reading for school, and 48% help their children with reading once or twice a week. None of the children go to the library every day. With regard to library visits, 14% go at least once a week and 19% go once a month. Most significant is that 67% of the learners never go to the library.

With regard to parental engagement with their children's reading, 48% discuss the children's classroom reading work daily, while 14% never discuss the children's classroom work. A high percentage (62%) of parents talk with the children about what they are reading on their own at least once a week, while 10% never discuss reading with their children. A very high number of parents (76%) indicated that they listen to their child read aloud at least once a week
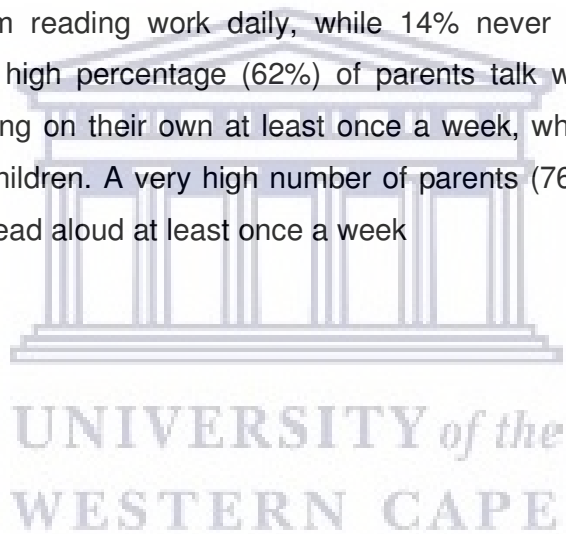
Figure 4.7 How often parents assist at home

How often parents/guardians assist at home

Help my child with reading for school — 10, 11

Go to the library or a bookstore with my child — 14, 4, 3

Discuss my child's classroom reading work with him/her — 3, 1, 7, 10

Talk with my child about what he/she is reading on his/her own — 2, 1, 13, 5

Talk with my child about things we have done — 9, 12

Listen to my child read aloud — 1, 16, 4

Legend: Never or almost never; Once or twice a month; Once or twice a week; Every day or almost every day

Data for the languages in which the activities take place are presented in Figure 4.8:

76% of parents assist with the activities in English, 19% in isiXhosa, and 5% in Sesotho.

Figure 4.8 Language of assistance at home

Language of Assistance at Home
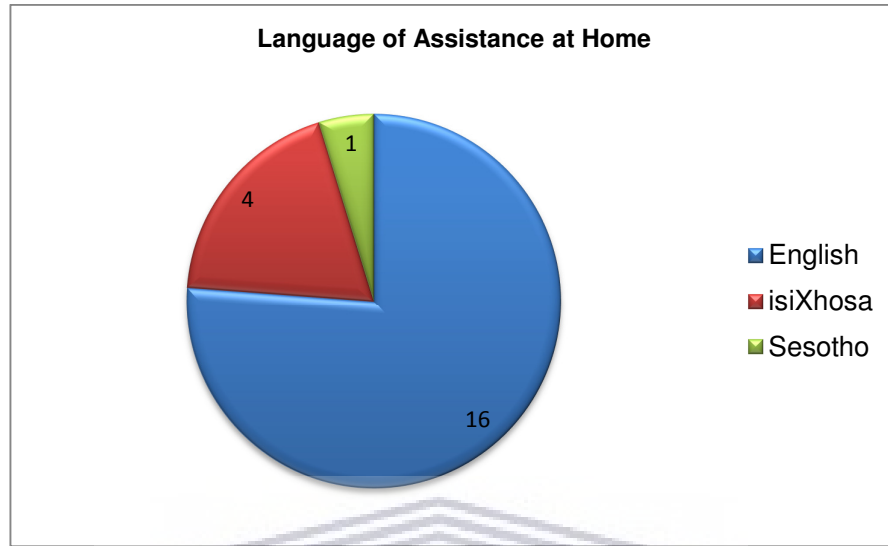
Data for the average amount of time the child spends on homework every day are presented in Figure 4.9:

The majority (43%) of children spend 16 – 30 minutes, 14% spend 31 – 60 minutes, 10% spend more than 60 minutes on homework in a day. 28% indicated that they do not have homework.

Figure 4.9 Time spent on homework

Time Spent on Homework
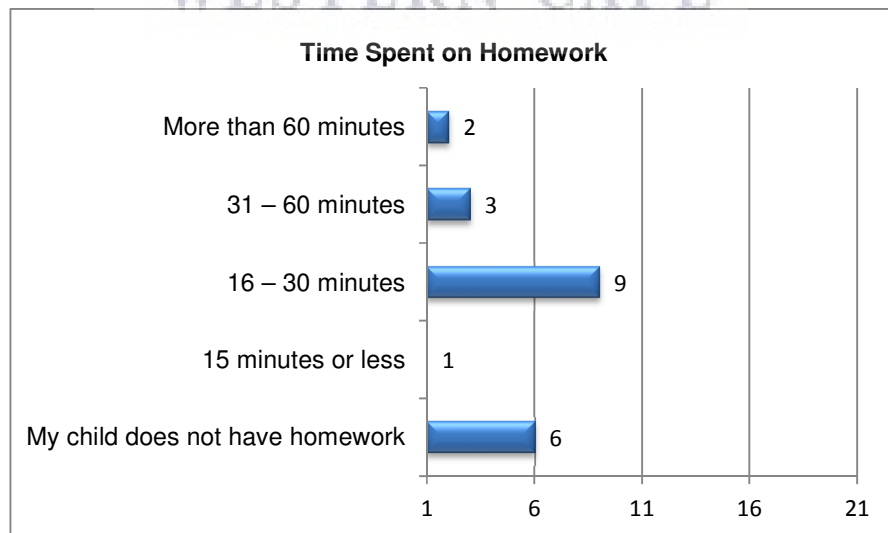
<u>Parents' opinion of the school</u>

Data for the parents' opinion of their child's school is presented in Figure 4.10:

All the parents agree that the school cares about the children's progress in school, while a high percentage (71%) agree that the school does a good job in helping the children become better in reading. However, 80% felt that the school should make a greater effort to include them in their children's education.

Figure 4.10 Opinions of child's school
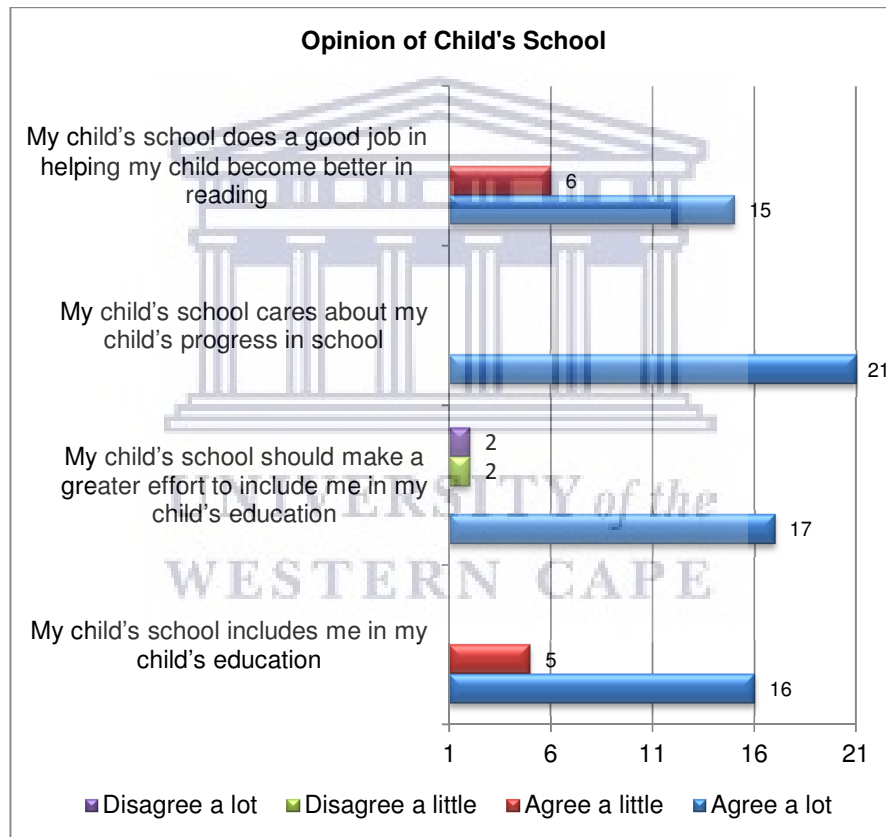
<u>Literacy in the home</u>

Data for the amount of time parents spend on reading books, magazines, newspapers, and materials for work in a typical week are presented in Figure 4.11:

Only one parent spent more than 10 hours a week on reading. Just less than half (47%) spend between one to five hours a week on reading, and 38% spend less than one hour a week on reading.

Figure 4.11 Parents' time spent reading
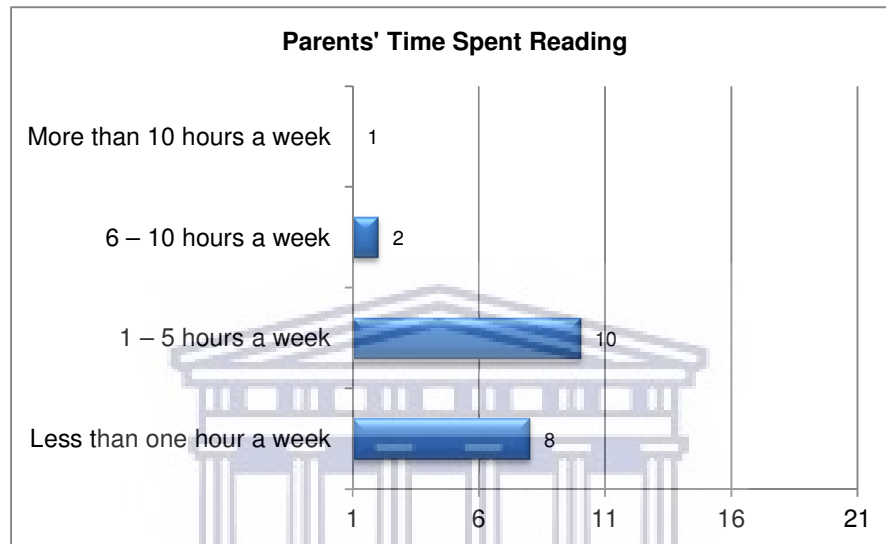
Data for frequency of parents' reading for enjoyment is presented in Figure 4.12:

52% of parents read for enjoyment once or twice a week, 29% read once or twice a month, and 19% read every day or almost every day.

Figure 4.12 Parents' reading for enjoyment
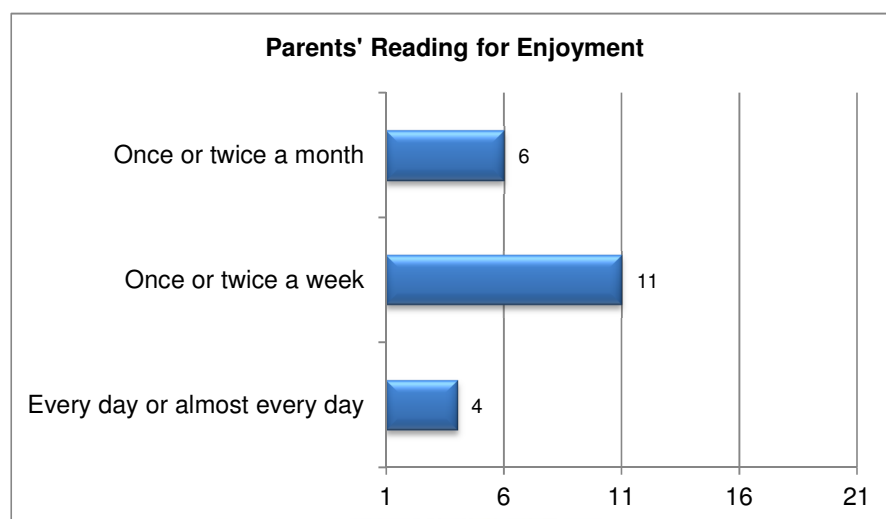
Data for parents' opinion on reading is presented in Figure 4.13:

52% agree that reading is an important activity in the home, while a significant number (57%) agree that they read only if they have to.

A fair number (38%) like to spend their time reading, and agree that they like talking about books with other people.

Figure 4.13 Parents' opinion on reading
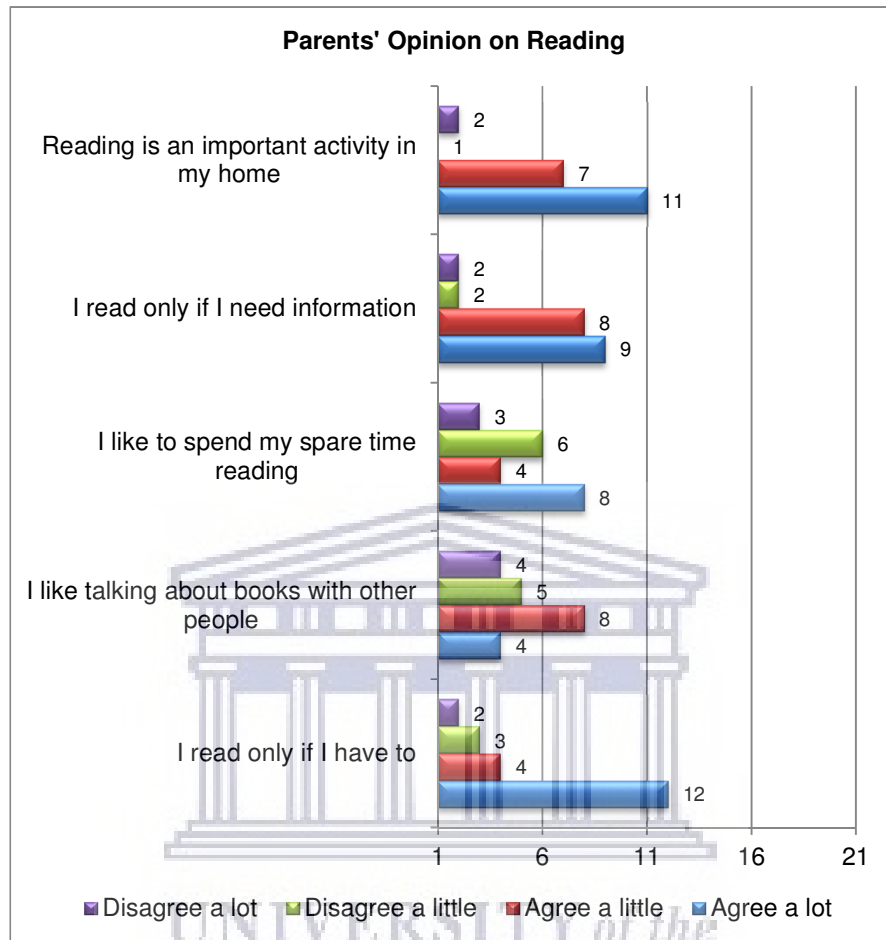
Data for the number of books in the home is presented in Figure 4.14:

A significantly high number (81%) of parents have between 0 - 10 books in the home, excluding magazines and newspapers. Only one household has between 26 – 100 books.

Figure 4.14 How many books in the home

Books in the Home

Category	Value
26 – 100 books	1
11 -25 books	3
0 – 10 books	17
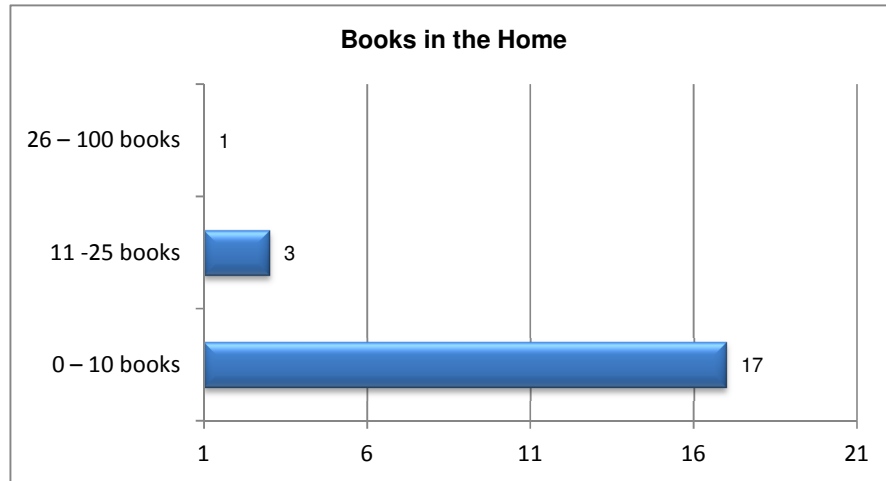
Data for the amount of children's books in the home are presented in Figure 4.15(a):

A high percentage (71%) of homes have between 0 – 10 children's books, and only one household has between 26 – 50 children's books.

Figure 4.15(a) How many children's books in the home

Number of Children's Books in the Home

Category	Value
26 – 50 books	1
11 -25 books	5
0 – 10 books	15
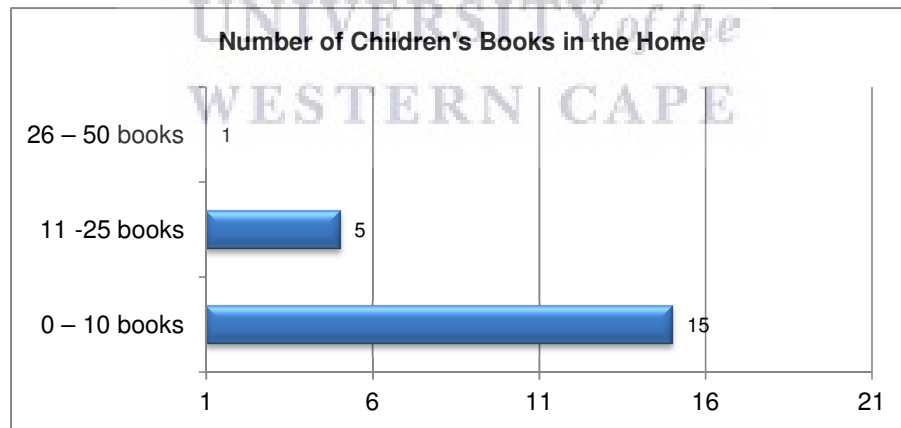
Data for the language of children's books in the home are presented in Figure 4.15(b):

The majority of books (90%) in the homes are in English, and 10% are in isiXhosa.

Figure 4.15(b) Language of children's books in the home
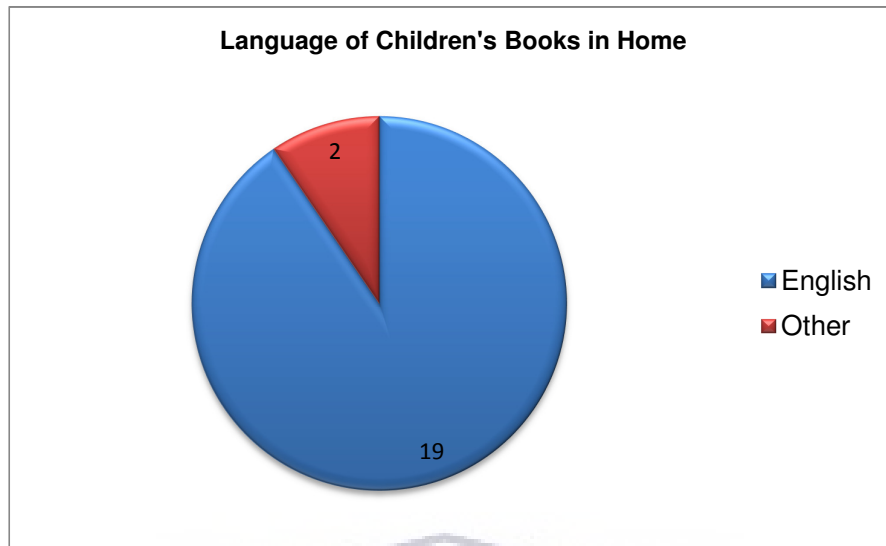
Data for the language spoken in the home are presented in Figure 4.16:

A high percentage (71%) of the fathers and 61% of the mothers speak isiXhosa in the home. Only 29% speak English.

Figure 4.16 Languages spoken in the home
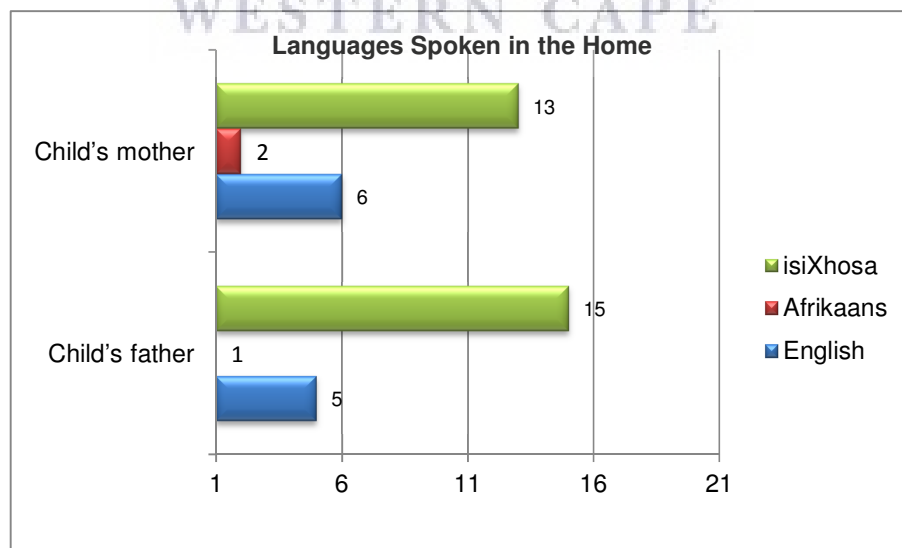
<u>Qualifications and socio-economic position</u>

Data for the parents' level of education are presented in Figure 4.17:

More than half of the fathers (52%) have the basic (Grade R to 9) level of education only, as opposed to 24% of mothers. 71% of mothers have completed further (Grade 10 to 12) levels of education, while only 28% of fathers have had further education. None of the parents has any tertiary education.

Figure 4.17 Parents' level of education
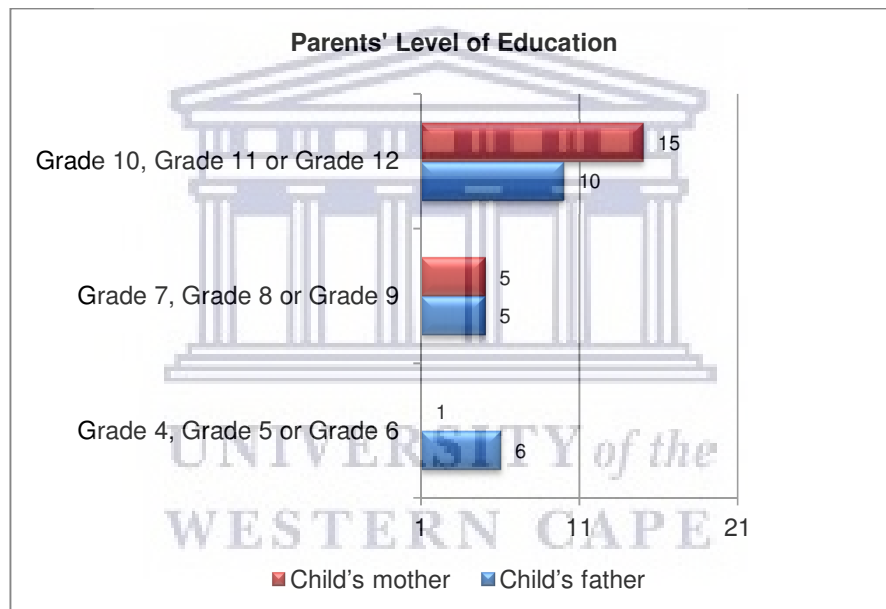
Data for the employment situation of the child's female and male parents and guardians are presented in Figure 4.18:

A high percentage of parents (23%) are unemployed and looking for work, 14% are working part-time, while only 38% are working full-time for pay.

16% did not answer the question and 10% indicated that the question was not applicable. One parent is studying.

Figure 4.18 Parents' and guardians' employment status
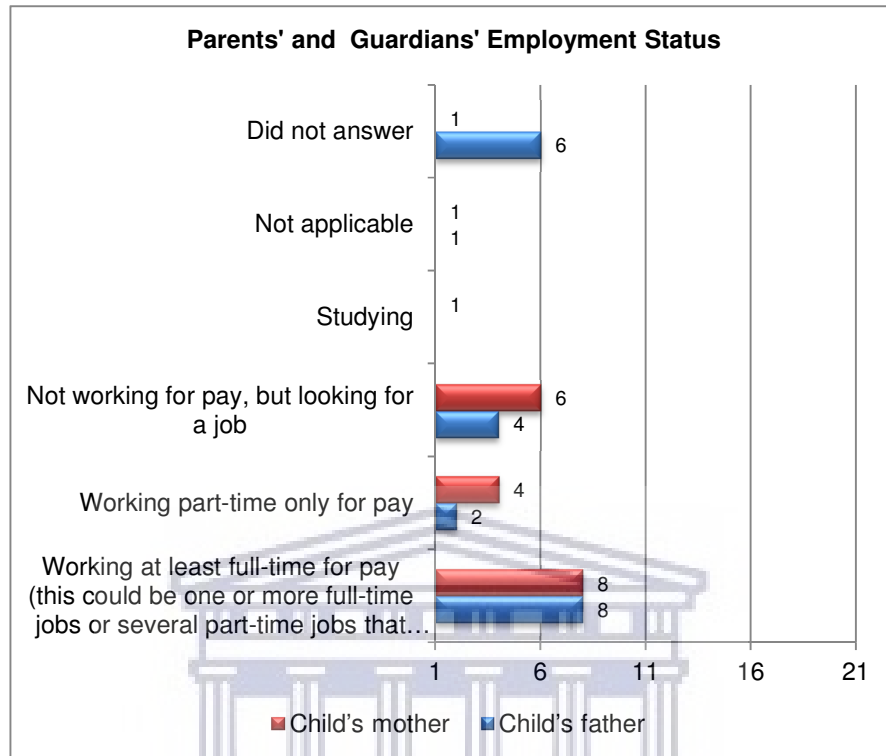
Table 4.1 indicates the nature of the work that the children's parents do.

Table 4.1 Nature of parents' employment

	CHILD'S FATHER	CHILD'S MOTHER
Has never worked outside the home for pay	1	1
Small business owner Includes owners of small business (fewer than 25 employees) such as retail shops, services, restaurants	1	1
Clerk Includes office clerks; secretaries; typists; data entry operators; customer service clerks	1	3
Service of Sales Worker Includes travel attendants; restaurant service workers; personal care workers; protective service workers; salespersons	1	4
Plant or Machine Operator Includes plant and machine operators; assembly-line operators; motor-vehicle drivers	2	1
General Labourers Includes domestic helpers and cleaners; building caretakers; messengers, porters and doorkeepers; farm, fishery, agricultural and construction workers	1	4

	CHILD'S FATHER	CHILD'S MOTHER
Corporate Manager or Senior Official Includes corporate managers such as managers of large companies (25 or more employees) or managers of departments within large companies; legislators or senior government officials; senior officials or special interest organisations; military officers	2	1
Professional Includes scientists; mathematicians; computer scientists; architects; engineers; life science and health professionals; teachers; legal professionals; social scientists; writers and artists; religious professionals	1	
Not applicable	3	4
Did not answer the question	8	2

Data for the financial status of families in comparison to other families are presented in Figure 4.19:

Only a small number (10%) felt that, compared to other families, they were very well-off, and one felt that they were somewhat well-off.

47% of parents felt that compared to other families they were average, while 38% felt that they were not very well off, or not at all well-off.

Figure 4.19 Financial status of parents

Financial Status of Parents

	Value
Not at all well-off	4
Not very well-off	4
Average	10
Somewhat well-off	1
Very well-off	2
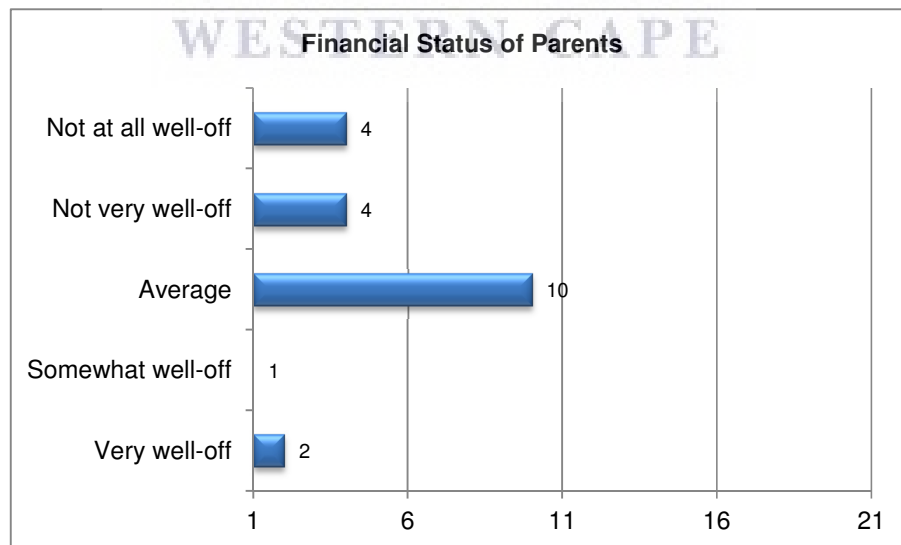
4.3 Qualitative data

The interview transcripts, field notes and photographs provided qualitative data on parental involvement, with their children's literacy activities. The questions which were asked to initiate conversation during focus group interviews are listed in chapter three (3.3.5.2), and one-on-one home visits are assigned as Appendix F. The qualitative process was designed to obtain a more in-depth understanding on literacy in the home, and to see what social networks were utilised. The data revealed that (i) poverty and violence hinder access to social networks, (ii) lack of language skills of parents create poor literacy development in their children, and (iii) the absence of resources further undermines language development.

To ensure that my data remained legitimate, and before I assigned themes and categories, I focused my attention on the theoretical constructs of this study: *social capital, cultural capital, habitus, family school relationships*, and *literacy activities* to link up with focus group interviews. I then present the narratives of parents, whereby an overview of the home context is sketched, and summarised in tabular form, giving rise to further themes and categories.

4.3.1 Focus group interviews: Theoretical Constructs

4.3.1.1 Habitus vs time and cultural capital

Habitus refers to ingrained habits, skills and character, which is shaped by personal experience. Bourdieu (1994) acknowledges that habitus is shaped by past and present circumstances, and it is where cultural capital is acquired. Cultural capital depicts the knowledge, education, skills, the manner in which we speak, style of dress, etc. all of which are linked to social position in society (Bourdieu, 1984).

The data from focus group interviews revealed that there is an absence of literacy activities in the home, to develop habits and structures around literacy. Parents do not have the **time or the ability** (cultural capital) to socialise their children to develop positive habits around literacy but they acknowledged the important role they play to

ensure that their children develop well in English literacy. Parents, however, want to be assisted, so that they in turn are able to help their children.

Time:

 Mrs Reagan

Ok, in my case, uhme, I'm working, so I don't always have the time to get to sit with Travis and do everything with him. There may be a night or two when I can't help him at all because I get home at quarter to six. Now I need to make food, I need to see that he's washed, I need to wash, I need to clean, I need to put everything right for tomorrow morning and all of that. And in the meantime while I'm doing all that things I still need to look at homework, what must you do? Ok, there are times when he says, "Mommy, it's fine, just check it afterwards." I don't have the time to sit with him (sighing). So understand. Imagine that is the problem I have at home.

Ms Njonga

Time. Our time with our kids I think is very limited. Because when you come back home and then you still have to cook and then you look there's books and then you look there's him as well, wanting the attention, everything. And then maybe you come home seven, eight. Nine you suppose to be sleeping. Maybe that's where we lacking as parents.

Ms Radebe

To my side, I do have about five kids, children. And then the time I came at home I came late, six o'clock and then they busy to play. I'm tired. When the time I'm inside to have my tea and then I call them. What are you doing, guys at school? I said everybody can speak English now. I will assist you guys, she can't speak in short sentences, wants a long sentence. And I say uhm you don't do this because she want to use that because.

Cultural capital:

Mrs Brown

I have two kids but literacy is a problem and Maths, since I did not finish school and sometimes I don't know because the Afrikaans, they do it in Afrikaans when I go to school. But now it's in English so it's versified for me to understand and to help them to make sense. So my daughter don't understand me because I do it in Afrikaans so I would like to be helped to know better.

Mrs Kosa

My one is the same. I am also working. I leave the house early in the morning and come back late. The other problem that I'm having is the way that they pronounce the alphabet is not the way that I use to know, so now I find it so difficult to help her. Sometimes she will correct me and say, "No, Mommy, it is not like that, so now, sometimes I feel I don't fit in. I can't help her because I don't know.

Mr Bosch

Parents need a crash course because we don't know how to teach so it's clashing.

Mrs Jones

The way they take it from the teacher, then we cannot help them. We have no idea. I feel like I must go back to school.

Ms Mali

I'm confuse. I don't know this Maths. Please, the English is hard, and the library and what-what and us to help them. I don't work but I can come. So the question to help him. And I give the books and bible stories.

Ms Njonga

When I am speaking to him in English he will say, "Mama, mind your tenses!" Then I decided to talk on the group chat so we (parents) *are assisting each other. Then I approached a tutor, then the tutor said my son is very clever but lazy. I want to help my son but he say, "Mommy, you not my teacher." So I am having that problem.*

4.3.1.2 Social capital

Social capital, according to Bourdieu, is the value that comes from social networks or groupings of people, which allow individuals to achieve things they could not do on their own. Parents and learners are unable to utilise resources in the community, due to violence and time constraints. They intentionally try to withdraw from community activities, as they fear for their safety.

Mrs Reagan

There is nothing here. The children of six years old, "I'm going to fetch my father for you. He will stab you with a knife." Like that. "Shoot you with a gun." What is the child to do? He can't say I'm going to fetch my father also. Because what is going to happen to my father, like that. You have to be so scared. Seriously, we have to be alert for every single thing. Nothing in the area where I stay in. Nothing like that. On a Saturday morning is the only time to take him for soccer. Nothing else.

Ms Pandor

In our community of Nyanga we have programmes and activities like dancing, singing and after school activities.

Mr Bosch

Nice, very nice that you have that stuff in your area. Manenberg, Hanvover Park you can't move around after school to take our children to places like that. Anytime you get shot. You get shootings and you don't know where's your child. You on your way to take your child to a community thing, nice, but there is such a lot of things that you are trying to protect your child from, to be exposed to. You can walk there, you will find children with guns, then you expose your child. We try not to let our child move too much around in the open. There is too much happening. Gambling on the corners, drug deals, killings. I will stay in the house and my children will stay in the house and we will watch tv. We are totally cut off.

(responding to Mr Bosch): Mrs Reagan

I know. I bought a second hand computer just so that he can stay inside and play games on the computer than play outside with the children. Stay behind the gate. I

mean. If here is a police van then he want to look. Because there is forever something going on.

4.3.1.3 Family-school relationships

Family-school partnerships are collaborative relations and activities between staff members, parents and family members. The partnership is effective if there is an element of mutual respect and trust, and if the relation is nurtured through constant interaction and communication between *all t*he parties. Parents acknowledge that they do not get involved. They value the work that educators are doing, and feel that their children are in a safe environment. The data reveal that they want the school to do more with after-school support in homework, and sport activities at weekends.

Ms Nkosi

Parents work. When can they get involved? Weekends it is other stuff. Maybe sports Saturdays.

Ms Njonga

The teacher, they know I'm coming to school every week because I'm not happy with the progress of my child but they will say, "No, he is still young. There will be some progress as the time goes by". But at least now I'm a bit easy but I'm not hundred percent. You know I even said to them if it's possible I can even get the tutors so that there can be someone that's professional, maybe that can take him through. I don't know what. Could there therefore be extra lessons.

Mrs Brown

You can see the stress of the teachers and the teacher need to keep up and they stress the children. Please, they mustn't stress the children. The teachers is so in a rush. Help them to slow down. Stop teachers.

Ms Mali

And the other thing, that I think will also encourage us as parents, if for instance the school is having activities, maybe sport, I know my son is playing soccer. Uhm and

then you've got a match maybe one Saturday. Parents will sometimes come on weekends. Maybe you've got free time then you can come. Everyone likes to support his or her child. Then you could come and maybe for you maybe you don't have a chance during the week. And that's a opportunity for you to meet the teacher, you see. Then something like that.

Mr Bosch

I sense a big problem with the curriculum. It smothers our children. A lot of pressure. We trying hard to catch up but CAPS is affecting the parents as well because the teachers are putting pressure on us to assist. This system is a lot of work. We need to let the education department know that with the everyday living conditions and processes we go through, with a system like that as well, that's why we really can't give the full attention to our children. The teachers can't give a little bit of attention of individual attention. And the classroom is huge. One teacher.

Mrs Jones

The definite thing that I can say with regards to parents getting prevented from coming to meetings is definitely transport. Another thing is they are not by the means and they give up. But you don't because you are strong and because of your child. And even if you don't have money, you ask, and you ask the person to bring you. Parents give up. "I don't have." "It is too late." "It is too dangerous." "I'm not going." I promise you that is definitely the problem.

Mrs Reagan

Maybe parents can help after school. For an hour or so. School is a safe environment then I know my child is on the school premises. It is a safe environment. And it will help with school work.

(responding to Mrs Reagan): Mr Bosch

They don't get distracted at school because they safe. They don't hear bullets and fighting. The teachers can help with homework also.

4.3.1.4 Literacy activities

Literacy encompasses a host of activities, contexts and philosophical considerations other than reading and writing but parents in the study relate literacy to reading and writing only. Data reveal that parents are frustrated and stressed because their children experience great difficulty with reading. Parents themselves do not know how they are able to help their children.

Ms Radebe

My child struggles to read but parents can help. When we give them time, then they listen. My son gets excited when I make time. He wants to share the book with me. I get home late from work. We have a challenge because we speak isiXhosa in the home but by speaking English in the home helps.

Mrs Jones

My little one, they doing every Friday a test and during the week I sit with her because I know they writing a test on Friday. And her problem is she can say the word but when she write the word but it is only a small word, or a three letter word, you know what she does? She does it, if it's like for instance **bus** *but she right a* **d.** *She must write* **pop** *and then she write* **dop.** *Because it's two ds instead of 2 ps and that is the thing that she's doing it wrong. And she will spell correct but like* **gun** *but she will make the* **g** *to the right and not the left but they know what it is but when they write it, it is wrong.*

Mr Bosch

My child, she is improving. In the beginning of her school career or school life, it was tough. O my goodness, it was tough! She is in Grade 3 now. Grade 3 started tough (oo). We had to, you know, when I see my child struggle I commit myself and I go totally overboard. I smother them because that is what they need. I need them to focus. I need them to read and read and read. Because I know my child can't focus long, I basically drain them, yes, my wife stops me. I can't stop if I see something isn't right with my child, with school related things. I'm working in that thing of me. I get very aggressively involved with my child. They know that. I cannot allow her not to so I approach it aggressively because if I'm going to go calm it is going to be slow.

Katherine responds to a little bit of pressure and gives results basically. It is tough to get her to a point where she really connect with what we are doing so the pressure and that… It's tiring to me. The whole time it basically become unpleasant to push your child the whole time because after school they need to be in a relaxing environment. Yes, but when it's school work then we take it too far. We end up with two to three hours being busy. It takes long for her to connect. And I don't even let that stop me evens. Then she cry, then she can't focus anymore because her focus is off.

Ms Mali

*It is difficult for our kids. The work is difficult to pronounce. Like **eight**. So the curriculum can be very difficult. There can be no time for them to read and be comfortable with the teacher. You see you don't have enough time to concentrate. They can make them to paint and relax to get the children to relax, besides the curriculum. Just to read. English is difficult to write.*

Mrs Reagan

When my son get a story to read on a A4 page, then he say it like a rhyme. He saying it but he is not even looking there. How can you do that? It's like a song. "I am Biff." I have a problem with that. And when you ask a question around that they will answer you about it because they know the story. Not the words. Spelling.

Mrs Jones

Parents must make time for their children, they must sit with that child, even if it's half an hour. At least that parent must sit every day and do activities like talking, reading out of a book. When that parent is reading, even like for instance homework, when they get homework like spelling, the parent must sit with, so that child can intake what is really the meaning of the word. Not just reading because reading is reading, you must let your child understand what that word means.

4.3.2 Narratives

Parents who volunteered for a home visit were given a time and date as to when the discussion would take place. The conversation was audio-typed and I made notes in a reflective journal. The home visits provided a window into the lived experiences of parents, and provided a detailed description of the home context.

Data revealed that poverty, crime and gangsterism are challenging issues for parents. Only three of the homes which were visited, have a father figure, of which one only attends school meetings. The data further revealed that resources in the home are limited, and that time, safety and transport prevent parents from utilising resources in the community. Children do not have a space to run and play. All the children in the study are forced to remain within the boundaries of their home. A significant number of parents are unable to utilise the social capital networks in their community, as a result of violence. Learners are socialised to be cautious, and to be alert.

The narratives provide information on *habitus, social* and *cultural capital*, as well as *literacy* in the home. These broad themes give rise to several sub-themes that focus on the complexities of parental involvement. The narratives conclude with a table providing an overview of the participants, together with the constructs of habitus, social, cultural capital and literacy, as well as sub-themes that emerged from the data.

Ms Bali
Delft
Grade 3

I am a single parent. I am twenty-four. I have Grade 12. It's myself and two kids, so we are three. I am working. I work for the African National Congress. I arrive after six because sometimes when I'm having the afternoon meetings I sometimes come home eight, nine. There is a lady who I asked when I'm not around to assist my kids with their homework. She's not staying far from here. And then when they come to school they'll change and then go to her so she can be able to assist them. Uh, I try and make sure at least we spend an hour doing the school work so that we can also

have extra time. Not unless we're having more work and then we can, it can be more than an hour.   I pay the lady to help the children and to look after them. We speak Xhosa but sometimes we speak English. We speak what's, you speak what you are comfortable with. We have story books. No computer and no dictionary. They read when they've got time. And they are the ones that they come with from school. We don't have the time to go to the library. We have books. Sometimes not, unless they are given projects that they can do and then we would look for the equipment that they must use so that they can be able to do.   They can't go to the library because of the area. There is not uh, it's a dangerous area. I can't allow my kids to there on their own. Uh, to be honest with you, there uh, for instance our, I would love as I mentioned earlier maybe if I could get some sport around here.   There are no activities like that but now I just found out there's a karate, there's a place that's doing karate. I was thinking of taking them there so at least there can be something that they are doing. I don't know of activities in the community. I don't think so even though for instance my kids will go to school and then come back. They know that when they come back they must be inside the premises because of the danger that is outside there. And then I don't think that what's happening outside could affect us. They must stay inside. There is some kind of gangsterism but sometimes it's quiet and sometimes when they fight, then it starts. I keep them inside. They travel to school. It is a distance but because we are, we want our kids to get the best education then we try to do our best.   As long as they go, we are going to get the good results at the end of the day. My kids are leaving at six o' clock uhm, but the driver told me that they are at school by seven o'clock. They get up in the morning at five. It is a very long day.

Nothing stops the children from getting a good education at school. By the programmes that they are trying to do assisting our kids like the interventions that they get on Tuesday and Thursday, I think that's something that shows that they are also assisting us as parents so that our kids could get a better education. And even the programme that we were invited to with the parents. It shows that they are trying to assist us. I'm happy for that.

Uh, nothing can stop me from getting involved. If I've got time I'm willing to assist because the challenge that we are having is time because you go to work and you'll see that you come home late and then you can't do some of the things. So if ever I've got time and then I can assist. I'm willing to. I get home maybe half past six or seven o'clock depending on what time the bus is.

Ms Mali
Gugulethu
Grade 3

We are nine people in the home. I'm forty-three. I passed standard 4 (Grade 6). The one that's in school, they are five. My husband is not with me. We speak Xhosa. Since we are Xhosa speaking people but now we want to not to be just on Xhosa only, that's why we want them to learn more languages also. I don't work. I help with homework. Maybe for one hour.

I'm a voluntary at Siyambibali. I attend workshops with them and I also got connections with them whereby I get books on literacy and I'm also involved with written club in the community. So I was a volunteer I was the library assistant in one of the schools there at the local school. But unfortunately we didn't have we did have the school's I'm sorry the books the shelves but the library was not working because of the funds so the governing body was still busy that. So I was involved in lot of literacy involvement. I want to help the school. I want to get involved. Because why the reason I was involved because I since I'm teaching two kids one whose a boy one whose a girl and they both herein this school. So sometimes I can see the difference because other one she very concentrate in the school but the other one is a little bit difficult. So now I did see the opportunity. I did see the challenge the children that do need to have someone to assist them. Especially about the books and the teachers don't do enough because of the syllabus and the must chase the syllabus and they don't have enough time to help to get the children to read the books; take the books home; to come back and tell them what the story so that's what my challenge was about.

The school can do more because sometimes the children don't have confident to speak to the teacher because most of the time the teachers are busy on the syllabus or writing the books. So there are other issues like other resources that you can help the children to concentrate. Help to make their mind relaxed and to make them confident about what they read. What they want to talk about; what they learn from the reading book. So most teachers don't make it a priority to make the children take the books home and bring the book back and concentrate. What did you read; what have your learnt from the book; what have you learnt from the story; what might did you think happened here you see all those things.

We don't have a computer or dictionaries. I've got lots of reading books, especially Foundation Phase because that's where I believe they must first have the basic foundation. So that if they can love to read at that early age then they can go far with the reading and writing and speaking the language. So we sing in English and Xhosa. If let's say till I'm busy with a this is a Foundation Phase so sometime they can speak English but the curriculum to write the English or to read the English to understand. So I've got big stickers like this is the fridge this is the window to help them. This is the door and I also got the puzzles that helps them to concentrate and how to solve the games problem.

In our community there is a foundation, like organisations like Amy Biehl. Where they help the children with games or at sports cricket and there's drama and there's singing. So they do attend thirty minutes of Amy Biehl project. Now the children can't go to the library. Now at the moment the library is in they are doing the renovations so they are always only open in… They just replacing the old stuff to the new so there's going to open soon.

In the community nothing stops the kids. The children likes to play. In the first place they likes to play. They like to have their own time because sometimes, most of the times the parents the community don't have enough time for the children. Like they don't even have enough skills to make the children concentrate because then we don't have enough skills to listen to the children. Make them play the games so that's what I was saying they don't have enough skills to even help the children.

Crime stops the children. Because if you go to the library, the library little bit far away, we have to cross main roads to get to the library. So the library is far away from where we are staying. So it's difficult, even for the child to go out because first it must be the safety of the road, secondly the criminals. Because the last time they going to attend the library, going to visit the library the school bags were taken, grabbed from them. Lucky there was police patrolling around but sometimes it doesn't happen like that. Not most of the time the police are there, but they were lucky that time, but that what I mean is that they are travelling a long distance to find the resources that will help them to grow.

I can wish there can be more resources for the children to help them to grow because now I can see that there's a mobile library that helps the children but the problem is they don't, if you borrow the child a book and you expect the her or him to read the book, you must also listen, what did he read from the book, what did he gain from the book, what lesson did teach the book, teach them so. In that way if you can just hear him out, Wow, did you enjoy this story, did you know danger in the story, then you can see why didn't he enjoy this story, why did you enjoy this, considering only the kids because but it's difficult for them, it's difficult for the teachers because they have to look out for the syllabus and they got forty kids in their classroom and these hard for them to make sure that every child is confident in what they are reading and it's very difficult for the children also, to depend on their teachers, especially because if we are if sometimes we read with errors, the children are reading with errors, sometimes they don't understand what they are reading they don't even understand where there's comma or a question mark they just read, read, read. So you see, so I wish there can be more on the Foundation Phase that will help the children in that age to help them to write to learn to read and write.

I think we can get parents in but the problem is little bit far away and most parents who can do this is not working so it's gonna be difficult for them to come every day or they'll come once a week because it's far little bit far and then their funds but I for one I'm got the resources like I was involved with the Centre for the book who are willing to help us with the books. I was involved with the Centre. Then there is centres who donate books they can donate, they teach you, they can show you how to be library

assistant, they can teach you how to help the children, they can train you to attend workshops where you can help the children, when if you want information on the computers, and they still do it now but they come with the principal and if the principal said I'm looking for this school, when I want one or five people every month then they can pay, half of the amount , they teach you how to be library assist, they donate books for you, they organize you the resources whereby you can meet the other people who can come and teach your children what's outside the box, not only what's in the syllabus because maybe sometimes we want to teach the children about the heritage, they want to learn more about, they do it. They donate the bus, then they can take the bus to the museum, so they got all those resources, I got all those resources, I can help the children to grow if there is a space for that. That would be I can't even explain it because most parents are working and they got someone there whose staying at the home with those kids, to help. Because in the book its only you and the books and there's no other person to help so those little things parent cannot know, how to concentrate and how to manage, so helping the kids with the lesson.

Mr Bosch
Hanover Park
Grade 2

We are four people. I am forty-nine. I have matric (Grade 12). It is me and my wife, Jasmine and Katherine. Jasmine in Grade 10. She is doing very very well. We speak English and Afrikaans. Me and my wife, we speak Afrikaans and the children, we speak English to them. They understand Afrikaans. We buy so many books and toys to keep her occupied. I am hectic. I drill her. Her mommy is too soft. I am so intense that she cries sometimes. She is so lazy and doesn't focus. Her mind is all over. She has everything. We have the internet, books, puzzles. I go overboard. I can't afford it but just to keep her mind focused and busy. She is a type of child who when she has enough she just switch off. Her sister wasn't like her. She is also very nervous. She can't deal with shouting and noise. She is nervous. So I must stop myself or my wife must stop me. She works on her tablet and she likes to read books. She doesn't like Maths. She also can't spell. I know that I go overboard with this child then my wife must stop me. My wife can't sit with her. They argue too much when she sits.   It is really tough. School is tough and I can't handle it if my

child is struggling. We both work and she won't sit with her sister. We spend about one, two hours. Sometimes not. Mostly we sit. We can't go to the Library in Hanover Park. There is too many killings all the time. She gets library books at school. At night you hear the gangs shooting. It is loud. It is in the next court. Not here by us but our children can't be outside. There's too many gangsters here. The army was here but it just stop for a short while. It is hectic, hectic, hectic. Katherine's nerves is shot! She is a nervous wreck. So that's why she can't play outside. She can only stay here in front or go next door. They can't even go to the Nadgies (Nigerians) to buy sweets. I freak out! The gangsters come anytime and chase other members and shoot. Every week somebody is shot. We see how the people just lay on the pavement. It is very bad. She leaves at seven o'clock in the morning and get home after four. I get home at about five. Both me and my wife go to all the meetings. It helps if you have a car. I will do anything for my children. They must get a good education. She is lucky. She has her own room with lots of books and toys. I will borrow money just to entertain my children in the house. Life is tough outside.

Ms Smith
Heideveld
Grade 2

We are two in my house and two in the shop. (one bedroom is rented out and used as a shop). I don't work, I am sixty-seven years old. I didn't go far in school. I did up to standard 1 (Grade 3). Her mommy is on drugs and her father. She's by me from one year old. She was sick when her mommy brought her here. That time I was working and afterwards I got sick, then I took her. She's been here for a long time. She is now seven years old. Sometimes I help her with her work or I ask the lady in the shop. If I don't understand then she go to her and finish her work there. She spend about twenty minutes with her work. She sits here by the kitchen table. We got a few books, about six. I also get the Athlone News (community newspaper - free). We sing hymns and I tell her a story at night. She also watch the soapies with me. Eight o'clock we switch off the tv. We don't have dictionaries. We go to the mobile library at school. I go to Arise in the community and talk to the social workers. The problem is she don't want to read and when I say, she runs to her mommy. Her

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mommy is on drugs. You must go see, please. She is not a mother for Tammy and the other children. Tammy got a sister and a brother. And Tammy go there every day. I hit her because 'sy wil by die ma wies' (she wants to be by the mother). She sleeps there Friday nights. There's men that's there. I can't stop her. I'm so worried about her safety. Yor, she say, "my mommy and daddy have sex. And then my mommy is on top of my daddy." I mean. It's tough. Ms Davids, what the children must see!. Tammy can tell you all about the drugs they smoking and that.

I think the school can do more to get her mind off her mother to do her school work. She was in after care but they didn't even read or do things. I wasted my money.

There is a few gangsters. Now and then you see them here. The men they sell the drugs but when the police come or we phone or sometimes they stand here by the shop to sell stuff. But then I tell them, "julle moet nie hier staan en julle goedjies verkoop nie." (you mustn't stand here and sell your stuff). And you must move. Sometimes she don't want to do school work. Then I must take the belt out. She must be home at 17.00, to eat and bath. Last night she came home 19.00. I looked for her and I look for her and I asked her mummy them then her mummy said by Heideveld Primary School they there. There was something there of the muslims, they were giving out food so the lady said she must come put on a doekie (scarf) and then she must go now with her, I said to the lady, "you must come ask me." Because something can just happen and the mommy let her then she came here and she was crying and crying. I don't know what happened there. Then she wanted to tell me and I said, "Ek wil niks hoor nie." (I don't want to hear anything). She and her sister were fighting and I told her, "I don't want you there but you don't listen!"

When I got sick, my grandson looked after her when she was a baby. I got a lump in my breast. I'm finish with my treatment. My daughter had HIV, she died. I see my other daughter some times. She works in the hotel. Sometimes they fetch me to show them how to fold the pillow cases. I show them. I show Tammy how to wash her stuff. When she is older she will wash her shirt. We don't have hot water. My brother put in a bath.

Ms Nkosi
Khayelitsha
Grade 2

I am a single parent. . I am thirty-five. I have Grade 8. We are four people in the house. Is one child and then my daughter is eighteen. And then my brother and me. During the week and weekends my brother's daughter comes along then we are five. I'm a single parent. His daddy don't support. He don't see his daddy. His daddy is far. There. And too much drink. I'm work, I was working but I finished my contract two weeks ago so now I'm going to look for another job. So at the moment, yes, I don't work. It's me who helps him with the Literacy. We sit here (pointing to the couch). Two hours because I used to arrive here round about half past six then I call him and let's say we start at seven or eight. Then we bath then we eat supper probably about eight or nine o'clock then nine o'clock we go to bed. In the morning the transport picks him up at half, twenty past five. He gets up at quarter to five. He is the first one to be picked up and the last one to be dropped. He gets here half past four, before five. Xhosa, we speak Xhosa. Bye, I'm buying books for him just to help him reading and growing books, just to meet the teachers half way. And a lot of him, his homework coz I love his teacher, he's giving the homeworks every day so that helps me at least I know what to do with him. I buy the books. No, I don't go to the library. It's very far and then I'm coming home late so I don't go to the library. He must go to a lady after school to look after him. I'm not having a problem with her, she can help them. But what I'm saying if maybe she can do some homework with them for three days, I could see that he understands even maybe when she's assisting them. I would go through the books, I would say, this is wrong. "But Mama, Sis Nela said this is correct." And then you know I don't judge her. I must correctify what is wrong and make it correct. She's not a teacher, she's just the lady that stay. She looks after them, yes. It is not easy to be a mother. We don't have a computer or dictionaries. Only reading books. Bring the books, yes, this I bought for you. Five books. Khayelitsha is big. I don't know where to start. We are in Town Two. There after Town Two is Macassar, there this side is Site B. We have a hospital and clinic and MY Citi for the people. Then also police station. There is no activity. No, not really because you only maybe they are playing soccer when there's a field there. Sometimes, I don't see the people there so I don't know, maybe they, that person is

doing a part-time job on them. So there's no activities. So there is nothing. Ja, I organized for him there at Monwabisi there's surfing and swimming , that is he goes on Saturdays. Yes, that is Saturday but now it's Winter, he doesn't want to go, he says it's cold. He plays inside. They don't play outside. See now like they are going to bath. Then they must go play outside till that person is finish bathing. They normally play on this field. There's a park there. It is safe for the kids because they always go there. No problems. But you must look at them. Must always watch them. It's not really quiet here because there are things that are happening so must be like watching them now and knowing where they are because you can't say it's quiet. Because things are happening. There is violence but not a lot, but because you are hearing things and seeing things on tv is bad. You can't be relaxed you must always look at them what they are doing and try to teach them every now and then must come back, show your face, maybe like don't spend an hour without showing your face. Then you must know okay, if it's two or three hours you must go look where is he.

Nothings stops him at school. He gets a good education. Now at least now that you are going to make a library at least it's gonna help him. Ja and the sport because there is no sport for him that he's doing. If there can be like soccer or something because I know he like soccer. So it can be soccer then I think it can help him.

Because the other kids they will mention maybe at their school we are dancing, we are playing soccer, we are playing cricket. Then for them, that was what I was mentioning earlier on, I don't hear him saying anything. Just saying, running, like those things then if there's going to be activities then it's gonna be fine. Here is nothing in Khayletisha . It's because there are no places. No, on my, on my, on my knowledge I didn't see the need for education around Khayelitsha. So that's why I mean I take him far because I want him to get better education. The only thing that I want uhm that thing that you started for me is going to be , is going to help us. That separate thing for me because sometimes I struggle and then I, then I'm stuck, I don't know where to help him. So now that you are going to help me then I'm going to help him. I like to talk to other parents. Coz I think is gonna help me because sometimes I get confused, I don't know maybe I don't mention the words the way you do then maybe even the spelling I do on the other side I do ABC. So now the other thing is gonna be easy for them to help him. And then maybe I'm going to see improvement

now. And then I can help on the other kids because there a lot of kids that are his age then maybe I can help them. Then maybe I can tell other parents that how do we do.

Mrs Reagan
Manenberg
Grade 2

Here by us it is only three people in the house. We share this house with sixteen other people on the property. There are three children. It is Travis and my sister's two daughters. The one is thirteen and the other one is eleven.

Me and my husband we work. I am thirty. I have standard 9 (Grade 11) I get home half past five and quarter to six, every evening, except on a Friday I'll be here by five, so five, after five. My husband gets home at six. It is his mommy who helps. Me. I, like I said, I don't always have the time to sit with him at night, due to the fact that when I get home it's food that needs to be done. I need to clean, I need to see that he's washed, I need to put everything ready for the following morning. Stuff like that so uhm I don't have much time to sit with, to sit really with him.   It's tough.

We speak English and Afrikaans. Mostly English.   I bought this second hand computer for him to work with. He actually knows more of that than I. Ja (yes), he's very good with it, ja (yes).   We don't actually have dictionaries.   We got reading books. I've got this Afrikaans books for him. I've got from someone so we go through this stuff so every now and then but it's Afrikaans so….We don't really have reading books and then we've got the You (magazine) and stuff like that that we keep for him. There is nothing in the community. Sometimes I take him to the library. The library is down here in Manenberg. Last time there was a gang fights and all this things so I couldn't take him. And then the one in Rylands. He can't walk to the library. Too dangerous.   There is nothing that keeps him away from a good education. There are times when they have gang fights here. Hmmm and they run over the field shooting guns here. Ja (yes), stuff like that here, sometimes that is bad. It is not safe for the children to play on this field. We have to watch the children when they do play on the field, coz here they soema (just) start anytime to shoot or,

uhm they get a argument over a simple thing and then it's just so… starting with stones or whatever with big people ja (yes). Ja (yes), so you have to watch the children. That's why you can see the burglar bars is here by us. It's closed. He gets a good education at school. He is actually happy to go to school actually. Yes, because if it's holiday then it's "when am I going to school?". He's very playful ja (yes). Ja (yes), the main reason, coz he's the only one also. He's very playful so sometimes he feel frustrated if he, he's got nobody to play with and stuff like that. And when he plays with this one and that one there's forever nonsense being catched on. A argument or whatever ja (yes). Stuff like that. Ja (yes) he likes to play, yor (wow), and active, yor (wow)! Very active! He likes playing soccer also, he's playing at the The Greens also. On a Saturday.

But now recently he's doing his work, he's telling me he's got work and without me coming in he just do his work and he just tell "mommy come and check me" or whatever and, but he's really happy at school now, I can see he's happy. He is looking forward to school.

Ms Dube
Nyanga
Grade 3

It is me and five grandchildren. I didn't go to school. I can't read or write. Me I'm doing the housework, I get up at four. I clean and wash and do everything. My daughter helps them. She works. She gets home pass seven. We speak English and Xhosa. They like the tv. They like Takalani. They have books but they bring it from aftercare. They go to the library. I say, "company together." So they must be safe. Once in the month they go. And sometimes where they are at aftercare. I am seventy years. I bought them a computer. Because the job they got from school they need a computer. Sometimes it's the typing. They can type also. Like the eldest one is sixteen but also that one, very clever. She does the own projects. They go to the aftercare. JL Swani, they help the community also. They help them into their homework also. Like they finish to the school, they start there at three o'clock, they first go and eat. There is a dining hall there. We can go together and I show you. I will show this is the dining hall, this is their classes. I don't know what they teach them, that I do not know. What keeps them from learner like finances, no

finances to give because like Saturday, the eldest one goes also, same, same aftercare, and they help him for Maths. But he must bring R75. I would like to help but I'm not learned. That like if the teacher like this one who is struggling, like I see to the Maths is struggling and other things, can connect with his mom and what what to give the job what he must do. I think that is the best. So the job of the school he must do this and this and this. Meetings please on a Saturday. Like, him, you know, eating a thing like sweets, he is hyper he. And normally before, I don't know if I'm calling it right, that Nutella. Now he is coming off it. I go to the market and buy fruit for them. If the teacher like helps with the Maths and struggling to give the mummy the job. Meetings also on a Saturday because she works.

Mrs Kosa
Phillipi
Grade 2

I live with my husband and two children.   We are four people. I am thirty-eight years old.   I have standard 8 (Grade 10).   My son is at high school. Noni is in Grade 2. We are both working. We only have magazines, I don't have books. No dictionaries and computer. He (she) only practice from the book he (she) get from school. He (she) don't have any other thing. The library is not far if you go that way. There is no violence here. It's a nice, quiet place. There is no violence there is nothing. There is a school here. The reason why I didn't send her in that school is because it's only the Black people that are teaching there so they are for the Black people, they are also explaining the English things with Xhosa so it doesn't help for the child because I experience from my side from where I came from because if you are maybe we are doing economics then the Black people they will explain the economics in Xhosa so it doesn't help when you go to the tertiary situation then you won't be able to understand anything.   My child only has school books. Homework is done here, on the bed. We have 1 room. My husband, it's him who help because he comes earlier than me and he is very willing to help her because he they are understand each other very quietly. We stay inside.   That is the only way.

Noni must go to school early. We get up at 5.00am. I work sometimes on weekends. We speak Xhosa in the home. I go to meetings at school. It is difficult at night. I like the school very much. Noni like the school. She's happy. Very nice teacher.

Mrs Brown
Surrey Estate
Grade 3

We are three adults in the house. It is me and my husband, and my nineteen year old daughter. I am thirty-seven. I have standard 5 (Grade 7). We have two children at St Theresa's Primary, and I look after my eighteen month old baby and four year old son. My husband does not work. He gets a disability grant because he is blind. We live with my husband's family, here at the back. We speak mostly Afrikaans. We speak Afrikaans to the children but they prefer to speak to us in English. I want the best for my children. They must get good education.

I try to help my daughter, Susan with her homework. She doesn't always get homework. She never wants me to help. She says that I didn't' finish with school, so I can't help her. She is eight but very rude to me. It really cuts me when she speaks to me like that. My eldest daughter tries to talk to her. Susan knows that her eldest sister has a different father. So she doesn't want to be helped by her either. She does her own work. Sometimes my husband wants to hit Susan and I have to stop him. Susan back-chats us all. It is not easy. Nie met so 'n kind nie (not with a child like this). Haar broertjie sien wat sy doen en dan gaan hy dit ook doen (her young brother sees what she does and then he will also do it).

I walk my two children to school every day, and I also fetch them in the afternoon. It takes us about twenty minutes to walk to school. I can't let them walk alone to school. It is too dangerous. I go to all the meetings at school. We don't got reading books. No computer. The children going to the mobile library by the school for the last two months. I read with them. There is nobody in the community that can help with school work. It is everyone for themselves. The children do not play outside. They stay in the yard or they watch tv. It is quiet this side where we live but the other

areas isn't. They play only in the yard. I am happy with the school. They are doing their best.

Welcome Estate
–continuation from Ms Smith
(drug house)

I am so pleased to meet you, Miss. Ma, said that you were coming. I am sorry the place is so untidy. Sorry. I am forty years old. Tammy's mommy and daddy is not here. They left early. I have seven children. They don't live with me because I am on drugs. But I am on the road to recovery. I'm originally from Healthfied, I have six boys and one girl. My children are not at school anymore, but my eldest boy is. He is in Standard 10. My children don't live with me because of my living situation. But as I said, myself and my partner we are trying to hit the recovery road and we are doing quite well. My kids from my partner are living in Hanover Park and I can see them every second week, when I have money to fetch them. The one is in Grade 3, the other one in Grade 4 and one in Grade 5. I started seeing them a month ago, when we tried to stop. Last week I didn't see them because my partner couldn't work. But what we don't like is the violence which is going on in the house when the kids are around. I can see how that affects them emotionally and when it comes to them to taking attention on what they need to take attention on, they won't focus. Even if you talk to them they ignore you. So for me their behaviour is not like a child should be. Honestly speaking, the little one is in Gr R and when she comes home I ask her, "do you have homework?". Then I tell her, "do your homework before you go play." "No, I don't have homework." But when I look in her homework book, the message that the teacher writes. When I try to help them, she can't concentrate. So the children don't do homework. The children must learn. I had a good education. My mommy is a school secretary in Heathfield. We don't have a tv or books. No books.

There are times when I need to speak to somebody and me cooping up my feelings, my emotions, is not good. Then I can turn back to drugs.

Bombshell (pointing to the room)…sorry… the kids sleep here with their uncle. Tammy sleeps here also. All the adults in the house take drugs. We wait till the kids are outside or when they sleep. There are six adults and four children living here. The adults all sleep in the lounge. Only my partner works. My partner works for a taxi driver. Sometimes he doesn't work because the van is broken.

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Table 4.2 Overview of narratives with constructs, themes and sub-themes

RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes
Ms Bali Delft Grade 3 Black	• Single (mother) • 3 members in the family • 24 years old • Grade 12 • 2 children • Employed • 2 bedroomed house, with dining room, kitchen and ablution facilities • Gets home late from work (18.00/20.00/21.00) • Payment to carer (neighbour) for after school support • isiXhosa is spoken • mother assists with homework • no books other than school books • no dictionaries, no computers • Does not go to the library- too far and too dangerous • No activities in the area • Children do not play outside • Small area to play (inside property) • Dangerous/gangs • Playing area is polluted with rubble • Children leave the home at 06.00 in the morning • Willing to get involved but get home late • Travels by bus	In-Home Environment (habitus) - Marital status - Family size - Parents' level of education - Employment status - Working hours - Parents' daily interaction with school activities - Resources - Space Outside-Home Environment - Violence - Littering - Polluted play area Social capital networks - Library - Sports & recreation - Hospitals - NGOs - Taxi services - Neighbour who is paid for aftercare services Family-school relations - Attends parent/teacher meetings - Low level of involvement Literacy activities - Helps with homework and projects - Pays the neighbour to assist with work - Children read when they have time	- Socio-economic - Family Ecology - Habitat - Time - Literacy practices - Resources in the home - Mother tongue vs LoLT - Violence - Pollution • Habitus • Social Capital • Family-school relations • Literacy activities

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RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes
Ms Mali Gugulethu Grade 3 Black	• Single parent (mother) • 9 members in the family • 43 years old • Grade 6 • 5 children attending school • isiXhosa • unemployed • mother helps with homework • 2 bedroomed shack with no kitchen and no ablution facilities (outside) • volunteers in the community • a few books • no computers • no dictionaries • Sings in English and isiXhosa • Amy Biehl Foundation (singing, drama, homework) • Does not go to the library • Dangerous • Crime • Wants to get involved but the school is too far • Travels by public transport	In-Home Environment (habitus) - Marital status - Family size - Parents' level of education - Employment status - Working hours - Parents' daily interaction with school activities - Resources - Space Outside-Home Environment - Violence - Littering - Play areas Social capital networks - Libraries - Sports & recreation - Amy Biehl Project Family-school relations - Wants to help. Wants to get involved - Teachers don't do enough. Educators focus too much on the syllabus - Educators don't make it a priority for children to read - Books and text books are not sent home (medium level of involvement) Literacy activities - Reading and singing activities - Labels/stickers with words - Puzzles - Wants more resources - Acknowledged the importance of reading for enjoyment	- Socio-economic - Family Ecology - Habitat - Time - Literacy practices - Resources in the home - Mother tongue vs LoLT - Violence - Pollution • Habitus • Social Capital • Family-school relations • Literacy activities

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RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes

Mr Bosch
Hanover Park
KS
Grade 2
Coloured
	• Married
	• 4 members in the family
	• 49 years old
	• Passed Grade 12
	• 2 children
	• Both parents work
	• 3 bedroomed house with kitchen, dining room and ablution facilities
	• Speak English and Afrikaans
	• Father assists with homework
	• Get home 17.00
	• Lots of books
	• Resources (computer/internet)
	• Toys
	• Desk (children have their own bedroom)
	• Stress
	• Crime
	• Gangsterism
	• No community activities
	• No library visits. Library is within walking distance but dangerous area
	• High level of involvement (2/3 hours)
	• Learner is nervous
	• Witness killings
	• Get home at 17.00
	• Have a car
	• Able to attend meetings, workshops, fundraising events, social events
		In-Home Environment (habitus)
		  - Marital status
		  - Family size
		  - Parents' level of education
		  - Employment status
		  - Working hours
		  - Parents' daily interaction with school activities
		  - Resources
		  - Space
		
		Outside-Home Environment
		  - Violence
		  - Littering
		
		Social capital networks
		  - Library
		  - Sports & recreation
		  - Clinic
		  - Neighbours who support
		
		Family-school relations
		  - Both parents attend meetings
		  - Regular meetings and interaction with educators (phone calls, letters)
		
		Literacy activities
		  - Drilling of sounds
		  - Reading
		  - Working on computer and table
		  - Homework supervision
		  - (high level of involvement)
			- Socio-economic
			- Family Ecology
			- Habitat
			- Time
			- Literacy practices
			- Resources in the home
			- Mother tongue vs LoLT
			- Violence
			- Pollution
			
			• Habitus
			• Social Capital
			• Family-school relationships
			• Literacy activities

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RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes
Ms Smith Heidevel Grade 2 Coloured	• Unmarried • 2 members • 1 adult (great aunt- retired) • Both parents on drugs • Speak English and Afrikaans • 70 years old • Grade 3 • Great Aunt helps with homework • Daughter died from HIV Aids • Walk to school • 1 bedroom, with kitchen and ablution facilities • A few books, bible, hymnal • Second room is hired out to neighbours for sleeping quarters and house-shop • Lady in shop helps with homework • No dictionaries or computer • No library visits • Arise NGO for counselling • Tammy's brothers and sisters live with parents who are on drugs • Threat of abuse • Outside the house are loiterers who sell drugs • Park with swings but adults are using it as a meeting place • School can do more with after school programmes and assisting with homework	In-Home Environment - Single, retired - Family size - Level of education - Employment status - Working hours - Parents' daily interaction with school activities - Resources - Space Outside-Home Environment - Violence - Littering - Play areas - Gangsterism - Drug peddling Social capital networks - Library - Sports & recreation - NGO Arise - Hospital - Neighbour (lady in shop) supports) Family-school relations - Attend meetings when invited - School should supervise homework activities Literacy activities - Create an environment and space for homework to be done - Outside help - Sing, tell stories - 6 books and community newspaper	- Socio-economic - Family Ecology - Habitat - Time - Literacy practices - Resources in the home - Mother tongue vs LoLT - Violence - Pollution • Habitus • Social Capital • Family-school relationships • Literacy activities

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RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes
Ms Nkosi Khayelitsha Grade 2 Black	• Single parent (mother) • 4 members in the family • Unemployed (contract just ended) • 35 years old • Grade 8 • 1 bedroomed house with dining room and ablution facilities • 1 child at school • Speaks isiXhosa • Mother helps with homework • 18 year old daughter and brother • Absent father • Homework for two hours • Leaves for school at half past five • Three books • No resources such as desk, computers, dictionaries • Library too far • Neighbour helps to look after child when Mom gets a job • Neighbour then helps with homework but it is often incorrect • Hospital • library but it is too far • Police station • When a member of the family bathes others must leave (no privacy) • Field to play on but have to be watched. • Violence Stressed because it is dangerous • Happy with the school • No recreational activities in the area	In-Home Environment - Marital status - Family size - Parents' level of education - Employment status - Working hours - Parents' daily interaction with school activities - Resources - Space Outside-Home Environment - Violence - Littering - Play areas - Park and field Social capital networks - Library - Sports & recreation - Police station - MyCiti transport - Hospital - No activities for the children - Neighbours who support Family-school relations - Attend meetings - Interacts with educators - Love the educator Literacy activities - Checks homework - Have neighbour assisting	- Socio-economic - Family Ecology - Habitat - Time - Literacy practices - Resources in the home - Mother tongue vs LoLT - Violence - Pollution • Habitus • Social Capital • Family-school relations • Literacy activities

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RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes
Mrs Reagan Manenberg Grade 2 Coloured	• Married • 3 members in the family • Mother helps with homework • 30 years old • Grade 11 • Both parents work • Get home at 17.30 – 18.00 • Speak English and Afrikaans • 2 bedroomed granny flat with kitchen, ablution facilities • 16 family members share the property • Not enough time to sit with work everyday • Work at kitchen table • Three books with second hand computer • No dictionaries • Nothing in the community • Can't visit the library – far • Very dangerous area • Limited space to play inside • Field but can't play- shooting anytime • Children in the area also fight • Burglar bars • Negative attitude towards community members and neighbours	In-Home Environment - Marital status - Family size - Parents' level of education - Employment status - Working hours - Parents' daily interaction with school activities - Resources - Space Outside-Home Environment - Violence - Littering - Play areas Social capital networks - Library - Police station - No activities for the children Family-school relations - Attends meetings - Interacts with educators - (high level of involvement) Literacy activities - Checks homework - Listens to learner read	- Socio-economic - Family Ecology - Habitat - Time - Literacy practices - Resources in the home - Mother tongue vs LoLT - Violence - Pollution • Habitus • Social Capital • Family-school relations • Literacy activities

RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes

Ms Dube Nyanga Grade 3 Black	• Widowed grandmother
	• 70 old
	• illiterate
	• 8 members in the family
	• 5 grandchildren (at school)
	• 1 bedroomed house with kitchen, dining room and ablution facilities
	• Her daughter is the breadwinner
	• Grandmother is illiterate
	• Children watch tv
	• Grandmother bought a computer
	• Children attend library once a month but they must walk together
	• Grandmother accompanies them to an aftercare facility each day which assists with homework and provides them with a meal
	• Nobody attends meetings
	• Would prefer it if meetings are scheduled for Saturdays
	• Unsafe environment but children must just be careful and not be on their own
		In-Home Environment
		  - Marital status
		  - Family size
		  - Parents' level of education
		  - Employment status
		  - Working hours
		  - Parents' daily interaction with school activities
		  - Resources
		  - Space
		
		Outside-Home Environment
		  - Violence
		  - Littering
		  - Play areas
		
		Social capital networks
		  - Libraries
		  - Sports & recreation
		  - Aftercare programme (JL Swani)
		
		Family-school relations
		  - Can not attend meetings at night
		  - Can not assist with homework
		  - Create a learning environment
		
		Literacy activities
		  - Accompanies children in the afternoon to after school facility
		  - Bought computer
		  - Watch Takalani Sesame Street
			- Socio-economic
			- Family Ecology
			- Habitat
			- Time
			- Literacy practices
			- Resources in the home
			- Mother tongue vs LoLT
			- Violence
			- Pollution
			
			• Habitus
			• Social Capital
			• Family-school relationships
			• Literacy activities

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RESPONDENT	Summary	Categories	Themes

Mrs Kosa Phillip Grade 2	• Married
	• 4 members in the family
	• Mother is 38 years old
	• Grade 10
	• 1 bedroomed shack
	• 1 room serves as bedroom, kitchen dining room
	• No kitchen/no ablution facilities
	• Both parents work
	• No books only a few magazines in English
	• No dictionaries
	• Library is far
	• Child leaves at 05.00 for school
	• Quiet area
	• Mother isiXhosa dad Zimbabwean
	• Family stick to themselves
	• Husband helps with work
	• No area to play
	• No space to do work
		In-Home Environmet
		  - Marital status
		  - Family size
		  - Parents' level of education
		  - Employment status
		  - Working hours
		  - Parents' daily interaction with school activities
		  - Resources
		  - Space
		
		Outside-Home Environment
		  - Violence
		  - Littering
		  - Play areas
		
		Social capital networks
		  - Isolated from community
		
		Family-school relationships
		  - Attends meetings if it is possible
		
		Literacy activities
		  - Father helps with homework
			- Socio-economic
			- Family Ecology
			- Habitat
			- Time
			- Literacy practices
			- Resources in the home
			- Mother tongue vs LoLT
			- Violence
			- Pollution
			
			• Habitus
			• Social Capital
			• Family-school relations
			• Literacy activities

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| Mrs Brown
Surrey Estate
Grade 2
Black | • Married
• 7 members in the family
• Both parents unemployed
• Father is blind (social grant)
• 37 years old
• Grade 7
• Backyard dweller
• 2 bedroomed granny flat with a kitchen and ablution facilities
• 2 children at school
• 2 children at home
• 18 year old daughter (unemployed)
• Speaks Afrikaans
• They don't always get homework
• Leave for school at half past seven
• Mother walks them to school and fetches them
• No resources such as desks, computers, dictionaries, books, pencils, toys
• Library too far
• Day Hospital
• library but it is too far
• Police station (far)
• No parks
• Small backyard to play
• Children watch television
• Quiet neighbourhood
• Happy with the school
• No recreational activities in the area | In-Home Environmet
- Marital status
- Family size
- Parents' level of education
- Employment status
- Parents' daily interaction with school activities
- Resources
- Space

Outside-Home Environment
- Quiet neighbourhood
- Littering
- No play areas
- No parks and field

Social capital networks
- Library (far)
- No sports & recreation
- Police station (far)
- Hospital
- No activities for the children
- Isolated from neighbours
"it is everyone for themselves"

Family-school relationships
- Attends meetings
- Interacts with educators

Literacy activities
- Very little homework
- Daughter angry
- Mother's qualification | - Socio-economic
- Family Ecology
- Habitat
- Time
- Literacy practices
- Resources in the home
- Mother tongue vs LoLT
- Pollution

• Habitus
• Social Capital
• Family-school relationships
• Literacy activities |

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4.4 Photographs

Photographs, taken during house visits, depict the home environment of learners.

Image 4.1 & 4.2 depict burglar bars and security gates

Many of the homes have burglar bars and security gates, as a means of protecting the inhabitants in the home from outside threats. Parents have instilled in their children the need to remain alert and cautious, with all of the parents indicating that their children are not allowed to venture outside the home environment. Children are expected to stay indoors at all times, due to the high levels of crime, and the threat of gangsterism. Table 4.3 reveals some of the crime statistics for 2018, in the communities where the study was conducted.

Table 4.3 Crime Statistics South Africa (Crimessa) depicting crime which occurred during 2018

PRECINCT	MURDER	SEXUAL OFFENCE	DRUG RELATED CRIME	COMMUNITY REPORTED SERIOUS CRIME	RAPE
Delft	195	236	3 756	6 380	196
Gugulethu	182	223	1 826	3 499	166
Khayelitsha	192	186	1 250	5 791	156
Manenberg - includes: Heideveld, Surrey -Estate Welcome Estate	51	112	2 232	4 043	65
Nyanga	308	308	2 911	7 943	210
Phillipi - includes: Hanover Park	87	88	1 760	2 789	51

Image 4.3 & 4.4 depict the few resources in the home

Resources such as books, dictionaries, stationery, computers and educational toys are limited.   Only three of the homes which were visited had a computer for learners to utilise, with only one home having access to the internet.

Image 4.5 & 4.6 depict spaces where homework is completed

Only one learner has a bedroom of her own, with a desk to complete homework activities. Two homes had a kitchen area where learners were able to complete homework activities. Learners who did not have access to a desk or kitchen table, had to complete their homework activities on the bed, on the couch or on the floor.

Image 4.7 & 4.8 depict areas where learners could possibly play (open spaces)

Learners had access to open space where they could run and play. However, these areas cannot be used as play areas because community members use it as dumping sites for garbage. These areas are hotspots for rival gang wars which occur at regular intervals. These areas are desolate. Adults and children are confined to their homes.

Image 4.9 & 4.10 depict areas where learners play (threat of gangs & germs)

Community parks are utilised by adults as an area to meet and smoke. It is an area where drug peddlers lurk. Children play within the confines of their neighbourhood, forsaking play parks, and opting to play near community toilet areas which are frequented by the community, where they would be watched by adults, and be safe.

Image 4.11 & 4.12 depict the community clinic with lush vegetable garden and dumping site next door.

One and two bedroomed brick houses are built within close proximity to their neigbhours. Many of the homes have shanties erected on it, which houses five to six families. The roads are lined with bricks and litter, with dogs and people walking around. Children play in the streets with visible signs of gang logos and graffiti on walls.

Image 4.13 & 4.14 depict back yard dwellers (occupancy+ 19 people)

Six of the homes which were visited had backyard dwellers. Not all the families had access to flushing toilets and hotwater. Families have to use the community toilets which are often 50 meters from their homes.

Image 4.15 depicts gang violence (in the neighbourhood)

Gang shootings, stabbings and murder are witnessed by community members on a daily basis. Children as young as eleven years of age are recruited to gangs.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the Learning to Read PIRLS (2006) survey which measured the frequency of literacy activities such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. I then presented focus group interiews, home visits, narratives and photographs which were captured. This joint information provided insight into the home environment of learners, focusing on resources in the home, safety, poverty and support with reference to literacy and parental involvement. This concern with the detail of socio-economic, historical, geographical and educational life are congruent with the need to consider literacy as a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon, especially in an area such as that selected for this study.   In the next chapter, the findings are discussed, with reference to the constructs, themes and sub-themes which emerged, to determine the nature of parental involvement in literacy activities.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The issue of social class inequality emanating from race and class discrimination
is a moral issue.

(Rajendra Chetty 2014)

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I presented data derived from the survey, focus group interviews, home visits and photographs. This chapter provides a discussion, analysis and interpretation of the data. The mixed method research approach generated data from different methods and was valuable in addressing the research problem.

5.2 Quantitative data

Quantitative data allows the researcher to make deductions and predictions irrespective of the context. I used Microsoft Office to generate tables and graphs. I highlighted commonalities and differences, linking these with the interviews which took place.

5.3 Qualitative data

I generated codes and themes from home visits, and used substantiating evidence from focus group interviews and narratives. I followed the process, as described by Crowe, Inder and Porter (2015:2) which involved the following:

- I read and re-read the interview transcriptions, keeping in mind the research questions;
- While analysing the data, I used the theoretical constructs and categorised the data into codes;
- I summarised the narratives, and then clustered ideas and codes into relevant themes. The themes were refined in relation to the overall meaning that was captured, and a definition for each theme was generated. The final presentation of the themes went through a number of iterations where I constantly read and wrote what emerged; and

- The final stage involved describing the process, taking into consideration the relations between the themes, and the context from which they emerged.

5.3.1 Summary of themes and codes

The following themes were identified from the narratives in Chapter 4 and recorded in table 4.2.

Socio-economic

- Family Ecology
- Time

the nature of parental involvement

- Habitat
- Pollution

- Literacy practices
- Resources in the home
- Literacy activities

in literacy activities

- Mother tongue vs LoLT
- Habitus

- Family-school-relations
- Social Capital

in context.

- Violence

5.3.1.1 Time, socio-economic and family ecology

Quantitative and qualitative data revealed that a high percentage of parents are unemployed, with the majority of homes headed by single mothers. If only one parent deals with household chores, and work-related matters, it is difficult for parents to spend quality time with their children. This situation is contrary to Epstein's theoretical model of school-family-community partnership which highlights the importance of a *shared* partnership between stakeholders allowing learners to maximise their learning abilities (Epstein et al., 2002:20). Parents in this study were unable to forge such partnerships with the school because they arrived home late from work, and utilised public transport. Those who are unemployed are available, and eager to be involved but they lack funds to travel to school. A shared partnership is improbable for poor

parents who do not have the time, money or the capacity to be actively involved in school activities. This condition, however, does not mean that they are uninterested in their children's education. A shared partnership assumes equal status among all stakeholders but parents know, and have mentioned, that educators know best. Their children remind them that they are not doing the work as 'teacher does it'. This makes them reluctant to become involved. In fact, they feel inferior to the educators, who, they believe, know more than they do. They acknowledge that their young, foundation phase children know more than they do. These oppressed parents, who left school at an early age, lacked the skills to encourage learning, tell stories to their children, or motivate them to learn. Home-school partnerships are integral to enhancing literacy achievement in poor communities. The model posited by Epstein et al. (2002) includes six types of involvement; *volunteering* in the classroom, where parents actively assist the school, *parenting, communicating, learning at home, decision-making* and *collaborating.* Parents in this study were largely unable to take time off from work to assist with school-related matters. Time-off from work means no pay.

The sample of children selected for the study was not meeting the literacy standard of obtaining 50% for English Literacy, and is viewed as failing literacy. With limited support from home, it would confirm why they were not mastering literacy. Their parents, however well-meaning, acknowledged that they did not have time to be involved, and that they did not know how to assist the children with their school work. Parental involvement, as defined by the literature of this study, was not taking place. As noted by Ms Bali:

"*Uh, nothing can stop me from getting involved. If I've got time I'm willing to assist because the challenge that we are having is time because you go to work and you see that you come home late and then you can't do some of the things. So if ever I've got time and then I can assist. I am willing to. I get home maybe half past six or seven o'clock depending on what time the bus is.*"

Parents who were unemployed, who had the time to get involved, were unable to do so since they did not have the necessary funds to travel to school. Ms Mali stated that: "*I think we can get parents in but the problem is little bit far away and most*

parents can do this is not working so it's gonna be difficult for them to come every day or they'll come once a week because it's far, little bit far and then their funds."

Wamba (2010:109) notes that both the home, and the school, bear the responsibility to ensure the development of literacy skills since literacy education plays an important role in moving people out of poverty, in order for them to become self-sufficient after graduation. In support of this assertion, Chetty (2014:89) argues that poor people view a university qualification as an escape route from poverty. Although school literacy equates with the acquisition of reading and writing, it is important to emphasise that literacy is a social practice. Children develop substantial literacy skills, and unique competencies, when they interact with siblings, and families. Schools need to build upon the literacy of the learners, and value all that they have accumulated in the home setting. If the development of literacy skills provides a way out of poverty, then reading and writing proficiency amounts to the acquisition of critical capital for children from low-income families (Wamba, 2010:110). This study has found, however, that low-income parents, with limited resources in the home, are unable to provide a strong foundation in literacy and that learners are, as a result, struggling to gain this foundational knowledge. Without a strong foundation in literacy, learners from low-income households are not accumulating the necessary cultural capital to move out of poverty, and accumulate economic capital.

Bourdieu (1986) asserts that economic capital is the most powerful form of capital because all other forms of capital are inherently linked to it. Economic capital refers to material assets which can be converted into money (Pinxten and Lievens, 2014:1096). An exploration of the data showed that high unemployment rates and pervasive poverty prevented parents from exposing their children to activities where they were unable to enhance their literacy skills. Consistent with Bourdieu's (1986) theory, parents who had access to money were able to purchase resources which could assist with literacy development, increasing the cultural capital of their children. Yet in most cases access to money was rare and home visits revealed an absence of resources, toys, books or games. The model generated by Epstein et al. (2002) termed *learning in the home* emphasises the value of support in homework and

assignments, and exposure to curriculum enrichment activities, such as family visits to museums. Family visits, and outings for enrichment purposes for the majority of families in this study, were an unrealistic expectation, because of financial constraints. Mrs Jones noted that*: "Money is short. I can't do what I want. Then we try to do the best. I support here by the school."* The learners were not provided opportunities to learn because poverty impeded learners from accumulating much significant cultural capital. Mrs Mali confirmed her financial position: "*I and five children. And the money. No outings, no money. And the taxi."*

Lack of economic power and funds prevented parents from exposing their children to activities where they might have been able to accumulate cultural capital. In addition, parents had to leave their communities, utilising public transport, in search of activities to enhance their children's literacy. Ms Njonga noted that: "*I go sometimes when we say once in a while we go to McDonalds and the park, there by Wynberg. So I'm having that problem. And when we want stuff for school, like Fridays for chip rolls and civvies, then I give. We don't always get money for other stuff so we stay home."* The mundane nature of everyday living in disadvantaged communities, with exposure to violence, pollution and poverty was broken with an infrequent visit outside of their space to a play park or take-away restaurant.

5.3.1.2 Habitat, pollution and habitus

Habitat may be defined as *the typical place of residence of a person or group.* Visiting the homes created an opportunity to observe neighbourhoods, view spaces where children from my school live, and scrutinise areas where they play, and engage with literacy activities. The qualitative and quantitative data accorded with what Bernstein (1964) affirms that the physical and social environment of learners both shape and constrain their learning. This study found that only *one* learner had access to her own bedroom, complete with a desk and a computer. Homes generally lacked electricity and it was revealing to observe the large number of learners who could not complete their homework because there was no light. More lamentable still was the fact that families had to use communal toilets which threatened both the dignity and safety of the children.

A key finding that emerged in this study was that the majority of children do not get an opportunity to play outside because parents fear for their children's safety. Chetty (2017:17) asserts that areas which have high poverty levels are fertile grounds for drug abuse and crime. The findings indicated that children had to play indoors, in small confined areas, where they were unable to run freely, as explained by Mrs Nkosi: *"He plays inside. They don't play outside. See now like they are going to bath. Then they must go play outside till that person is finish bathing."* The physical environment of learners constrained their learning and physical development. Bento and Dias (2017:157) describe outside play for children as an opportunity to move freely, to be exposed to sunlight, natural elements and open air. They argue that exposure to the outdoors promotes healthy bone density, creates strong immune systems, and encourages activity. The outdoors act as a stimulus which captures the attention and interest of children. Bento and Dias (2017) affirm that while exploring, and discovering the environment, children develop an emotional connection with nature. What then emerges are attitudes of respect and care for nature which are crucial in order to promote a sense of belonging, and which facilitate ecological and sustainable behaviour. The pedagogy of emergent literacy suggests that it takes place through play, community involvement and family interaction (Morgan & Chodkiewicz, 2009:264). Because children in this study were deprived of outdoor play, they did not have an opportunity to be exposed to nature.

The children were socialised in over-crowded and highly polluted environments, and the literacy which they experienced and acquired from home, were linked to high levels of pollution and poverty. This factor suggests that they too may be likely to contribute towards the corrosive cycle of polluting their environment. Le Roux (2016:96) postulates that high levels of child mortality and morbidity are a result of inadequate sanitation and drainage, lack of clean water, uncollected waste, inadequate housing, toxic waste, and threat of safety.

Habitus, as described by Bourdieu (1986) is dependent upon how individuals experience their reality, and how they live out their reality. Social setting shapes the manner in which they think and act. Qualitative data seem to suggest that parents in this investigation were seldom able to see their way out of the cycle of poverty. If

learners' habitus is not altered from its current state, they frequently imitate the position taken up by their parents, and the cycle of poverty continues. More importantly, the learners, given the grim reality of their socio-historic context, easily fall prey to gangs, and the scourge of drug abuse, in spite of the efforts of parents to keep them off the streets. Ms Bali strove to keep her children safe by keeping them off the streets: "*They know that when they come back (from school) they must be inside the premises because of the danger that is outside. And then I don't think that what's happening outside could affect us. They must stay inside.*" In the same way, Mr Bosch was determined to ensure that his daughter was entertained inside the home: "*There's too many gangsters here. Katherine's nerves is shot. She is a nervous wreck. So that's why she can't play outside…I will borrow money just to entertain my children in the house. Life is tough outside.*"

Research conducted by Chetty (2017:91) revealed that gangs provide youth with a sense of belonging in poverty-stricken communities, which lack recreational facilities, parks, efficient public transport, nature trails and trees, coffee shops and amenities that youth in advantaged communities take for granted. Chetty argues that poor youth become profoundly alienated, and are more likely to seek the status and respect in street gangs. The *impressive power* which gangs *exert* as a result of money, clothes and status, cause children and youth to idolise them (Bowers Du Toit, 2014:3). Many children and youth in poor areas are not shielded from gangster life, and succumb easily to the benefits, attractions and glamour of gangster involvement, in spite of parents trying to keep their children behind closed doors, preventing them from witnessing the violence, the drugs, and the gangsters. Ironically, the parents who attempt so desperately to protect their children, alienate their children, as they seek to isolate them from the 'outside world'. Chetty (2017:82) argues that a typical characteristic of a Cape Flats gang member is someone who spends a large amount of time on the street, hanging out with fellow gang members, being involved in drug peddling, and gang activities (2017:82). Children and youth witness a degree of *coercive power* wielded by gangsters as they hear the violence, see it, and experience it. Parents' efforts to contain their children inside the home, keep them off the streets, and prevent them from falling victim to *impressive* and *coercive powers* of gangs, as referenced by Bowers Du Toit (2014:3) are futile exercises for the majority

of parents. Parents cannot entirely secure their children from the outside world. Children and youth within high poverty contexts are singularly vulnerable, and quickly become embroiled with the selling of drugs, in order to generate much-needed income for the home. The habitus of the Cape Flats gangster is indelibly ingrained in their minds. Young learners strive to imitate them in the way that they walk, talk and dress. Chetty (2017:83) contends that often the only person within a community with money, status, cars, fancy clothes, jewellery and big houses are the drug-lords who are attractive to unemployed, unschooled youth lacking opportunities for advancement out of their poor disadvantaged lives.

While analysing and reflecting on the pictures which were captured of learners' home environments, it was evident in this study that learners did not have home environments that were conducive to learning. The neighbourhoods consisted generally of council houses, with many homes having backyard dwellers, living in shacks or shanties. In addition there were myriads of alleys which were ideal places for hiding or disappearing into when crimes were committed (Kinnes, 2014:20). Children and youth encounter gang members and unemployed neighbours gambling on street corners, smoking and chatting. They read the signs and symbols of the various groups which have been etched on walls and boards. Play areas designed for children have been taken over by adults. Their home environments were small but they know that it is *home*, an area where they had to remain, in order to be relatively safe. A typical bedroom, which houses five to six individuals, was not large enough for a desk or table, essential for the completion of homework. There was an absence of books and writing material. This observation correlated with quantitative data which revealed that not much time was spent on homework activities. A logical explanation could be that families, having one or two bedrooms, would not have viable space in which learners could study or complete homework activities. These children, who battle with school activities, are further disadvantaged. This is consistent with the findings of Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015:2) who found that, in most cases, children who come from print-rich environments, who are given the time and encouragement to read, did better at school when compared to children who did not.

Children in this study seldom had any access to print-rich environments. They were not given opportunities to read, due to an absence of books, library visits and a book culture.

Image 5.1 and 5.2 depict a typical bedroom which learners share, along with other members of the family
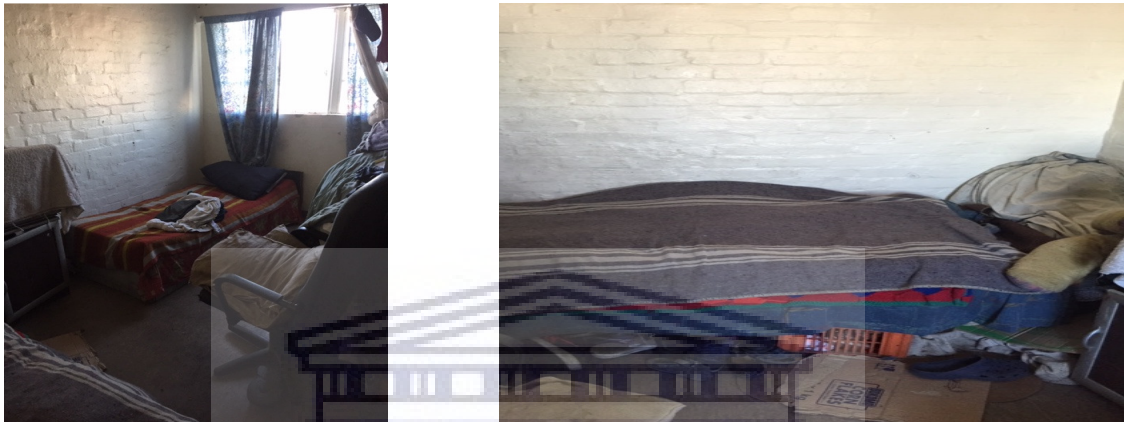
Many of the learners complete their homework activities at the kitchen table, on the floor, on the bed or on the couch. This habit could deter learners from getting into a scheduled routine. They are in competition for space with other family members.

Image 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 depict kitchen areas where learners complete their homework

Learners have to work in the kitchen to complete their homework activities.

Dishes and paraphernalia have to be cleared before they are able to work. Families with two or three children have to take turns to complete their work activities or learners have to share the (small) kitchen area with siblings. When parents are

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cooking, the table is used, making it difficult for children to do homework during cooking and eating times.

Image 5.6 and Image 5.7 depict shanties and a myriad of alleys

Image 5.8 and Image 5.9 depict illegal building constructions and graffiti

The Group Areas Act of 1950 forced people of colour to settle in urban ghettos, and townships, which were densely populated. District Six, a well-developed residential area, which was in close proximity to the city centre, Table Mountain and Cape Town Harbour, was declared a WHITES-ONLY area. Thousands of Blacks and Coloured families were forcibly removed from this vibrant community to the sandy, bleak Cape Flats from 1968 onwards in a series of harrowing and emotionally traumatic episodes that threatened the financial, geographical and existential security of countless families and communities. Many men, in particular, felt helpless, powerless and emasculated in the face of such evictions. Often anger turned to political protest or the founding of gangs to vent frustration against white brutality, insensitivity and

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greed. These socio-economic wrongs and sufferings are visible in conditions on the Cape Flats and in the psychological disjunction caused by segregation and forced removals.

Houses are often tiny in the depressed area selected for this study. Backyard dwellings appear, in which those who do not have accommodation rent space from family members and friends, and illegally erect shack structures. Houses which are closely located to each other create ideal hide-outs for gangsters. Building materials which are used to erect these dwellings are frequently health and safety hazards, especially when fires break out.

While an individual habitus is not fixed, Navarro (2006:16) argues that it can be altered, since it is dependent on social reality. The reality which children encounter when living in communities ravaged by poverty, violence and pollution, implies that the lack of cultural and social capital positions them as subordinate citizens or subalterns. Fine, Burn and Torre (2008:230) encapsulate how poor learners are able to name their reality, by speaking confidently about their knowledge, and skills of the street, accepting that they have different life experiences. Once learners leave the confines of their areas, however, "they describe themselves as academically handicapped by opportunities denied, ill-equipped to attend a real or serious college, embarrassed by their limited vocabulary, mathematics skills and exposure" (Chetty, 2014:91). Unless their social reality is improved, they will never be fully emancipated. It is imperative that poor children, living in poor contexts, are provided with the literacy skills and ability to think critically for themselves which allows them to change their position in society. Bourdieu's (1990) notion of social and cultural capital is a term used in schools to acknowledge learners who have high social capital (wealth) and often disregard those who have low social capital (poverty). Habitus encompasses attitudes, beliefs and experiences, promoting the idea among lower-class learners that they will not be successful because they lack the cultural capital that upper-class learners possess (Chetty, 2014:97).

5.3.1.3 Literacy practices, resources in the home, literacy activities and mother tongue

Although quantitative data from this study revealed that more than half of parents sometimes played alphabet games with their children, what is significant about emergent literacy practices noted in the area under investigation is that most of the parents seldom took their children to visit bookstores or the library, a practice which they still do not implement.[6] Emergent literacy practices are a prerequisite for literacy development. As argued by Goodman (1996) learners possess a wealth of literacy experiences, and implicit knowledge of language, which they have acquired from their home environment, before they start school. However, the data revealed that limited literacy media, such as books, cellular phones, computers, puzzles and writing material were found in the home. Shared reading, as well as speaking about books or reading aloud to children seldom occurred in the home. It may be deduced that an absence of books in the home meant an absence of a book culture. The result is, that children in their home environment, were not given an opportunity to acquire book-reading-behaviour, a love for books or an opportunity to be questioned about reading. The paucity of literacy resources in poor communities, and absence of school libraries contribute to poor literacy levels of South African learners. The 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessment paints a bleak picture of literacy in South Africa. Only seventy-eight per cent of Grade 4 learners reached the lowest benchmark, compared to 4% internationally.

Factors which contribute to these low levels were identified by the Western Cape Education Department's Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (WCED, 2006:6) as "poverty, lack of movement/motor development, lack of opportunities to play, poor language use by role-models, substance abuse by pregnant mothers, malnutrition, single-parent families, illiterate parents, lack of parental involvement, lack of engagement with books before school entrance" (Chetty, 2019a:2). It is incumbent upon schools to provide the necessary literacy support because if it does not happen in school, these learners are grossly disadvantaged. Limited literacy media or resources mean that the children's literacy world has not been broadened. Poor children lack literacy experiences, when measured against the availability of literacy

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[6] It should be noted that travelling libraries could in many ways address this difficulty.

media, i.e. literacy acquisition from a psycho-linguistic perspective. Learners in poor contexts do possess a wealth of literacy which they assimilate from their social context; what they see, what they hear and what they experience. The school appears not to value the experiences of these learners, since educators continue to implement methods of literacy skills, through rote learning and drilling methodologies, focussing on technical skills and ideologies which favour the dominant society which is now defined by wealth rather than exclusively whiteness.

The rhetoric of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), with its concept of 'Peoples Education for People's Power', called for a post-apartheid education system, whereby both learner and educator are critical thinkers. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) which was introduced progressively from 2012, had Freirean principles of critical thinking, and learner-centred teaching approaches. CAPS, which is drafted in accordance with the Department of Basic Education (2011:4), was set up to redress the imbalances of the past, ensuring that equal educational opportunities were provided for all sectors of the population, focusing on critical approaches to learning. CAPS was meant to embody principles of social transformation. Contrary to the principles espoused in CAPS, the day-to-day lives of poor learners in the area selected for this investigation have not been transformed, they still remain poor, and educators focus teaching time on knowledge accumulation, neglecting critical thinking and problem-solving, in order to keep up with the prescriptive work schedules, and teaching for assessment. In his study with educators of literacy in underprivileged schools in the Western Cape, Chetty (2019a:8) found that:

1) CAPS forces educators to align with capitalist ideology, and proposes the classroom as a site for memorisation;
2) CAPS gives little consideration to diversity of learning skills among children, especially those who are slower than their peers; and
3) CAPS creates a dependency on text-books, which is contrary to critical literacy, thus stifling creativity.

Parents raised their concerns about the curriculum, and mentioned that they, as well as their children, were under immense pressure, trying to keep up with the demands of the educators. Mr Bosch notes: "*I can sense a big problem with the curriculum. It smothers our children. A lot of pressure. We are trying hard to catch up but CAPS is affecting the parents as well because the teachers are putting pressure on us to assist. This system is a lot of work.*" Mrs Brown shares the sentiment when she adds: "*You can see the stress of the teachers and the teacher needs to keep up and they stress the children.*" Heavy homework over-loads did not produce better understanding, it rather discouraged learners and parents, as they experience little literacy progress.

The literacy levels of learners in South Africa are low. Various international studies attest to the poor quality of the education system in South Africa, with wide discrepancies between the performances of rich and poor learners (Rule & Land, 2017:1). Chetty (2012b:23) notes that South Africa has a bimodal education system by which there is a vast majority of poor working class learners, alongside the minority of privileged ones. Primary school minority learners obtain the required benchmark, while the majority of poor children who attend disadvantaged schools do not attain basic levels in reading, writing and Mathematics (Fleisch, 2008:2). The home context, prior to them attending school, gives rise to acute health issues from life threatening diseases, and common health problems, which result in neurological damage during pregnancy, and into early childhood, as a result of poverty (Fleisch, 2008:31). These poverty-health complexes give rise to learners' under-performance. In support of this observation, Chetty (2012b:24) postulates that poor children in South Africa suffer a myriad of health problems and suggests a strong link between poor health and learner failure. Schools should be a conduit for children out of poverty but the South African school system is strangling the life out of poor children who battle to measure up to the social standing of the privileged minority. Poor parents are helpless bystanders unable to afford the fees of quintile five schools and not in a position to offer the necessary support to complement lower quintile education in terms of housing, hygiene, nutrition, basic literacy and numeracy and homework activities.

Bagley and Beach (2015:424) contend that education in the 21st century has moved its focus away from creating a more inclusive, just and egalitarian society, focusing on the individual abilities of learners, schools and workers to compete in a global market economy. The consequence of this departure from fair education for all, is an absence of critical knowledge and awareness of the causes of structural and economic inequalities. In the Western Cape inherited conditions of segregation, poverty, emasculation created cycles of disadvantage and eroded the confidence of parents who would otherwise feel confident enough to protest.

Critical theorists such as McLaren (1989:186) question the role which schools play in the way in which the curriculum supports and favours dominant cultures. Marginalisation is defined as the process by which individuals are excluded from society based on a number of traits, including social class and race. Critical race theory explains *how* the process of marginalisation excludes people of colour from society, to maintain the dominant and inherited hegemonic power structures (Chetty, 2014:90). Poor children take on a subordinate role, replicating the subaltern social level historically accepted by their parents, and perpetuating the subjugation of non-white races. Their voices, and those of their offspring, are largely unheard, conditioned as they are to meek servility and silence. Educators fail to acknowledge their cultural capital. Chetty (2014:91) asserts that social class, exacerbated by the impress of capitalism, compartmentalises the social, cultural and material world in potent and dehumanising ways. His notion is that class is linked incontrovertibly to income and occupation, and he adds that income inequalities are widening, not narrowing as was the hope for a more egalitarian new South Africa. Class, he claims, must be understood as how people survive and cope, in relation to their economic standing, and how they live out their reality (2014:92). A few examples of classed experiences which he highlights are the schools which young people attend, the types of school-based interventions when they fail, the type of extracurricular activities they engage in, the area where they reside, and the types of homes they live in. Chetty (2019b:1) argues that if the lived experiences and conditions of the marginalised remain unacknowledged, the top-down structures already set into societal layers by colonialism are further reinforced. Schooling segregated by income

have simply replaced those once distinguished by race, ensuring that the hegemonic culture of capitalism is perpetuated.

A new rich multiracial class takes the place of a whites only class and creates a model of aspiration along income lines. Schools defined by income as in the quintile system control those whom they educate, a notion which Apple (1979) highlights. Fiscal imperatives, key features of marketisation and neoliberalism drive middle-class black and white parents, who are able to pay elevated school fees, to enrol their children in leafy suburban schools, which are in possession of the necessary learning and teaching resources. Poor black children from working-class backgrounds become victims of the poor-quality public education system arranged into income quintiles. Schools in quintiles one to three are characterised by poor buildings, over-crowding, lack of educational technology, textbooks, libraries, and basic amenities such as safe toilets with running water instead of pit latrines found still at rural schools. This discrepancy between quintile five and quintile one schools gives rise to low achievements in literacy, numeracy, and poor matriculation throughput rates. While the South African Schools Act of 1996 removed discriminatory practices with regard to access to schools based on race, black township schools are by no means marked by equity (Chetty, 2014:96). Giroux (2010:715) shares the notion that elitist education is aimed at meeting the demands and ideals of the 21st century corporate world, rather than focussing on issues of equity and social mobility. This privileging of the already privileged excludes the large body of talent that comprises the real wealth of a nation. Universities, he argues, provide the skills, knowledge and credentials which would be beneficial for the work force, and beneficial for countries such as the United States of America, to compete and maintain its role as the major global economic and military power. Higher education has been increasingly modified to suit a capitalist agenda for producing competitive professionals rather than critical thinkers interested in, and committed to civic, political and moral improvement. Repression of critical thought, critical thinking and self-reflection forms an elitist upper class of professionals who replace the landed squirarchy of Europe and its overseas colonies. Educators are rarely prompted to ask questions since they are being groomed to operate the new machinery of global technology. Schools are seldom asked to prepare learners to be informed citizens, nurture a civic imagination, or

teach learners how to be reflective about public issues, and be critical of the world in which they live. The officer class is being dragooned into the corporate life of IT.

This study has revealed that the context of poor children in South African schools is not taken into consideration. The children were not exposed to literacy at home, school or libraries, or even in extended home life experiences. Literacy in this sense was an autonomous model. The literature review of the study revealed literacy development as a social practice which varies from one context to the next, and not merely as an autonomous model which is an amalgam of cognitive and linguistic skills. Literacy as social practice reflects, and involves, literacy activities which correlate with the culture, the language, the values and attitudes of learners. Viewing literacy from this perspective leads to new ways of defining and understanding what counts as literacy, and how reading and writing has to be taught. It carries different values and affordances, which has implications for policy (Street, 2016:337). In the same way, multiple literacies highlight how power relations are shaped, with multiple modes of communication, and an emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity. As argued by Chetty (2019a:2) literacy should be a cultural practice, since children, ideally and initially, learn about reading and writing in their homes. The home environment affects children's literacy, and as noted in the literature, the difference between parents of good readers and those of poor readers, is linked to literacy achievement (Chetty, 2019a:2). In conjunction with the curriculum is the vehicle which should bring about critical awareness, problem solving, and the move out of poverty. **Literacy from these perspectives was not implemented at the school where the study was conducted**. This finding could hold true for many South African schools which would explain why so many children are not mastering literacy. The CAPS curriculum has deprived children of critical thought, and higher order cognitive skills, decreasing social mobility further and reinforcing income and social inequalities already entrenched by decades of colonial repression and stigmatisation.

5.3.1.4 Family-school-relations, social capital and violence

Critical pedagogy advocates a child-centred approach to learning, and an active learning curriculum. This approach proposes that the children's home environment

has to be valued in order for them to adapt and learn. There exists a dichotomous relation between the home environment and the school environment. Epstein's (1987) theoretical model which places the child at the centre of the spheres of influence (family, school, community) advocates that all the stakeholders should work together. The vast majority of the children in the current system have to leave their communities to get to the kinds of school they desire. They travel outside their domicile to 'remoter locations' (Fataar, 2010:14) in search of a better quality education, leaving the home as early as 6.00am and returning in the afternoon at 4.00pm. The few low-income children who are able to escape the violence, drug abuse, gangsterism and pollution of their home areas, and are able to pay transport costs and school fees, learn to absorb and replicate the hegemonic culture of the school. Confined to their communities, they are unable to enjoy activities which are offered, due to violence: some community projects are crippled as a result of vandalism and burglaries.

If the home environment is valued, the parents play an integral part in the literacy which is acquired in the home, and children do not have to leave their immediate communities in search of 'good schools'. If a home-school partnership existed, the school would ensure that parents are capacitated to assist their children with literacy activities. This collaboration is not occurring, and a shared partnership between family, school and community in the present study did not exist. The theoretical model of Epstein et al. (2002:25) promotes school-family-community partnerships and calls for parents, the community and the school to be actively involved in supporting the learner. However, the majority of the children in this study, as well as their parents, did not benefit from social capital networks in the community, and were completely reliant upon the school. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, which is grounded on the theory of social reproduction and symbolic power, recognises that resources (capital) are accrued by individuals as they interact with others in social networks. In this study a majority of parents indicated that there were no activities or social groups for their children in their communities which would benefit their children, or themselves, while a few parents acknowledged that community activities in the form of dance, singing, extra lessons, and sporting activities were available for their children to enjoy. All parents indicated that they would like the school to provide

extra-mural activities for their children, and would even value activities on Saturdays. They all indicated that they had peace of mind when their children were at school because they knew that it was one place where their children were safe. Deficiencies in social capital arise when families are disengaged in activities, as a result of violence.

On 18 July 2019 the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) was deployed to the Western Cape's worst-affected crime areas, as a means to combat crime and preserve law and order (Gerber, 2019:1). Five of the top ten crime-ridden areas are where the learners studied in this investigation reside. Guerra and Dierkhising (2011:1) confirm that community violence affects how children think, feel and act. It is more than likely that these children become ensnared in a cycle of violence which leads to future violent behaviour, such as aggression, delinquency, violent crimes and child abuse. Guerra and Dierkhising argue that violence contributes to mental health problems and psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety and posttraumatic disorder. When children are exposed to community violence, they argue, it prevents them from forging positive, trusting relations which are necessary for children to explore the environment and to feel secure (Guerra & Dierkhising, 2011:2).

Parents indirectly persuade children to be suspicious and cautious as a result of the violence which occurs. The majority of families in this study indicated that they were cut off from their communities and neighbourhoods, and that they stayed behind closed doors since they feared for their safety. Their reasons are legitimate. South African children should be regarded as the safest children in the world, since South Africa has a plethora of laws, policies, and processes aimed at protecting its children. These laws should, theoretically, ensure that children are safe in their homes, and communities but a spate of child murders during 2016/2017 gave rise to a commission of inquiry, led by the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture lobbying for a judicial commission of inquiry into the lack of child safety in the Western Cape. The People's Commission of Inquiry (PCOI) was established to highlight the vulnerability of South African children (PCOI, 2019:3). The inquiry revealed that a high percentage of boys were murdered as a result of gangsterism,

while girls experienced multiple traumas, as a result of being kidnapped and raped before their untimely deaths (PCOI, 2019: 5). Project Impi was launched in 2013 by police officials to investigate gun smuggling and produced findings which indicate that between 2010 and 2016, 262 children were wounded or murdered, while 1 066 murders were directly linked to these illegal arms (Dolley, 2018:1). Statistics for the period 2018, obtained from Crimessa indicate that murder, sexual offences, drug-related crime, community reported serious crime, and rape are dangerously high in the Cape Flats. Netshitangani (2014:1400) indicates that children who are exposed to violence on a daily basis, view it as the norm, while PCOI (2019:6) indicates that exposure to violence affects the behaviour of children. Children growing up under such conditions often become perpetrators of violence and crime, or victims of violence themselves. Children often display aggressive attitudes or behaviour which constitutes rudeness or naughtiness, as a result of trauma related to violence. Poverty and violence have lifelong consequences upon children's learning, and determine how they are able to cope. Literacy development and parental involvement alone cannot bring about the required level of development, if the plight of poor children is not addressed.

The volatile position of communities in these poor township areas on the Cape Flats prevents children, and parents, from formulating trusting relations with community members, preventing them from benefitting from social capital networks. A significant number of parents indicated that they were unable to assist their children with school work but did, however, engage in singing with their children. The language usage of parents is an indication that they find it difficult to speak English and cannot freely express themselves since their mother tongue is not English. Quantitative data reveal that the emergent literacy activities were conducted in English in spite of the fact that their mother tongue was not English. The Department of Education (DBE) is vociferous in their claim that children benefit from a bilingual curriculum if the learners are taught in their mother tongue (DBE, 2010:5) but parents opt to send their children to schools which offer English as the language of instruction. They doggedly believe that a good command of English ensures better jobs and can move them out of poverty. Mkhize and Balfour (2017:133) state that despite the fact that the majority of people in South Africa speak an indigenous African language, English and Afrikaans

continue to wield official power, and that the hegemonic status of these ex-colonial languages undermines the language rights of the other citizens. Stoop (2017:24) claims that the difficulties and poor school performance can be attributed to a lack of mother-tongue education. The DBE (2010:5) purports that when learners are not instructed in their mother-tongue, it results in low academic results. These viewpoints may prove valuable, however no regard is given to the effects of violence, lack of resources, curriculum overload, teacher pedagogy, lack of parents' capacity, learner culture and practice of literacy. These factors contribute to literacy under-achievement.

English as Language of Learning and Teaching in South Africa continues to be controversial, while some proponents claim that it contributes favourably towards international business, technology, science and travel, because of its linguistic kudos. In sharp contrast, others view its continued status as LoLT to be a way of perpetuating the elite and the dominant class. These opposing viewpoints are needed to create critical awareness since language learning is political and entrenched in ideology (Chetty & Mwepu, 2008:330). They share the assertion (2008:339) that educators need to have a new attitude to teaching languages, while emphasising critical educational studies. This attitude empowers educators to ask how meaning is produced and how power is constructed and reinforced in the classroom. Educators have to value the experiences and the social practices which learners bring to the classroom. A shift of attitude is required to a position where learners' culture, values and social position are acknowledged, and used as a platform for learning (2008:330). If schools continue to engage learners in literacy activities, with an emphasis on technical skills, the position of poor children is unlikely to change.

The data revealed that all the respondents in this study were drawn from poor communities, homes and family backgrounds. Nortje (2017:52) and Taylor, van der Berg and Burger (2011:3) posit that learners from historically disadvantaged communities seldom succeed in moving out of poverty. The learners are not mastering literacy. These learners remain trapped if their position in society is not

altered. With high levels of poverty, violence and limited resources, it is most likely that the position of the children will not change.

5.4 Conclusion

It is imperative for schools to be cognisant of the plight of poor children living in the Cape Flats. Home environments are bleak, small, overcrowded and polluted. Families are not able to benefit from social capital networks, being virtual prisoners in their homes, cut off from community activities due to pervasive violence. A paucity of basic literacy resources cripples literacy development. The larger school system seems blind to the plight of these children and their parents, continuing to demand that they meet the curriculum requirements, regardless of their home context. Poor nutrition, lack of motor development, high levels of violence and lack of resources give rise to parents and learners being under constant stress. These elements impede learning and prevent learners from mastering literacy. There is no synergy between home and school, widening the gap, where positive home/school partnerships are becoming ineffectual. Schools should be a safe space where learners are given an opportunity to discuss their underlying conflicts and social inequalities. When children are given a voice and agency, they are emancipated.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

A new model of literacy that challenges inequality is crucial in a society emerging from oppression.

(Rajendra Chetty 2019)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings, and explores recommendations based on the theory of parental involvement and the literature that was reviewed. The chapter concludes the study and proposes areas for future research.

The objective of this study was to assess parental involvement in literacy activities of disadvantaged learners in a selected area of South Africa, and to enhance literacy development and raise parental involvement. This study engaged deeply with theories on parental involvement and literacy development, specifically in disadvantaged contexts. This chapter confirms that the research problem has been addressed, and that the research aim has been achieved.

This study measures, records and analyses *the nature and amount of parental involvement in literacy activities of low achieving learners in disadvantaged contexts, at a selected primary school in the Western Cape*. Three sub-questions emerged from the main question:

I.   How do parents assist their children with literacy activities?

II.   How does poverty impact parental involvement in literacy activities at the selected primary school? and

III.   What kind of activities do parents take part in to assist learners with literacy at the selected primary school?

A carefully constructed theoretical framework guided interpretation of the findings and served as a critical lens for systematic analysis of the data.   Bourdieu's (1977) concept of social capital, cultural capital and habitus framed understanding of the home contexts of poor families. This concept provided information on how learners'

home situation impact upon their literacy development. Epstein's theory of parental involvement was explored and used to highlight the responsibilities of families, schools and the community. Parental involvement, its benefits and barriers, was defined within the context of South Africa and comparable situations overseas. The carefully architected theoretical framework explained why greater parental involvement, better-resourced schools, family and community collaboration improve learner achievement, self-esteem, school attendance, and positive social behaviour (Lemmer, 2007:218). This is the first research work to apply a socially resonant theoretical understanding of literacy to a particularly complex educational predicament. Literacy is defined in this research project as a gateway skill which exists socially, economically, historically, geographically and existentially to address these same facets of life in a selected area of deprivation. Colonialism and apartheid degraded the living conditions and job opportunities of citizens who did not belong to the white minority grouping in control. Education and literacy were perfunctory at best; disenfranchised non-white groups were kept as uneducated and often illiterate menials, and broken into obedience.

Studying literacy in terms of parent support within a school community which still suffers the aftereffects of white subjugation, necessarily involves an understanding of how such systematic humiliation affects the economic, social, historical, geographical and existential conditions of citizens and learners today. Many parents still struggle to gain an identity of dignity and self-worth as a result of segregation and oppression, just as many struggle to earn regular salaries owing to lack of education and literacy. Households which were forcibly removed from the slopes of Table Mountain to live on the Cape flats still feel the effects of geographical dislocation. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital provides a theoretical framework by which to examine these factors which surround the term literacy as it resonates in a community deprived of quality education, and the opportunities it brings for so long. Although studies have been conducted into immediate remedies for such school communities, this is the first full-length examination of literacy within a socially resonant theoretical framework which answers the predicament of the focus group in its various layers of deprivation, from the material to the existential.

The methodology for gathering data in this thesis employed quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data involved a standardised tool which gathered information on emergent literacy practices, as well as parental involvement activities. Qualitative data provided information from focus group interviews and home visits which deepened my understanding of home contexts. Key themes emerging from the findings were certain centring topics: time, habitat, literacy practices, resources in the home, literacy activities, social capital, and violence.

Most education authorities acknowledge the importance of parental involvement and have national reform policies to address the lack of parental involvement. South African parents have been awarded powers to serve as governors on school bodies, yet many parents still do not become involved or consider themselves worthy of involvement. This lack of confidence speaks to existential damage done to such citizens, parents and ancestors over centuries. The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 details the role and functions of parents in the running of the school. While parents as governors determine how money, policies and curriculum activities are structured, the management of the school and staff are solely the responsibility of the school principal and management team. Epstein (1995) notes that parents prefer to be involved in their children's learning, and not necessarily school governance. Epstein's model is a guide to demonstrate how schools can implement an effective programme to ensure parental involvement. But the specific socio-historical conditions of parent members of this specific school community chosen for study have to be borne in mind as they affect the confidence and readiness of parents to serve. While Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, and Van Voorhis (2002) highlight the various typologies of parental involvement, research in South Africa conducted by Van Wyk (1996), Singh, Mbokodi & Msila (2004), Lemmer (2007), Mncube (2009), Naong & Morolong (2011), confirm the critical role of parental involvement, and highlight the importance of building home-school partnerships. However, this study has revealed that no matter what programme or framework is in place, parental involvement is not going to bring about the dramatic results required for literacy development, unless poverty, social capital networks, existential aspects such as identity and self-worth, and violence in communities are addressed. Violence and poverty in communities like the Cape Flats form part of contemporary

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

debates and the national discourse; the military has been deployed in the Cape Flats for the latter half of 2019 due to extreme levels of violence. Not enough attention is drawn to the adverse effect of these factors upon learners and parents. What is of greater concern is that policies tend to side-line poor learners in disadvantaged communities, favouring the minority middle-class ex-model C schools, and holding them up as a standard to which lower quintile (majority black and disadvantaged) schools should aspire. Such injustice and insensitivity underscores and perpetuates the inequalities of the past.

The literature review pointed to the importance of family/school/community collaboration, and highlighted the central elements behind literacy acquisition - social class, capital and habitus of learners. These are fundamental elements which contribute towards literacy development or the lack thereof but such elements of literacy in a social sense may be acknowledged, appreciated and recognised as significant for this research; they have to be read, for the purposes of this investigation, in terms of ideal desiderata only because the socio-historical realities are so much at odds with them. The most important contribution of this research is to point out correspondences between Bourdieu's theoretical elaboration of social capital and literacy in terms of the contexts of such lack of capital concerning literacy in the selected school community. The strength and centrality of such correspondences ensure that literacy cannot be discussed in such poor communities in terms of a linguistic skill alone, this investigation shows that literacy has to be understood in a unique way – in a socially responsive and responsible sense.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Term Change – Parental involvement vs After-school engagement

The term 'parental involvement' has been presented as the panacea by policy makers and educators that will overcome all the educational inequalities traditionally attributed to social class differences. The term has its origin in the 1960's and 1970's in the United States and Europe. Programmes were devised to encourage active engagement in poor families, and ethnic minority parents. The aim was to

prevent educational delays on the part of at-risk children, and to prepare children for school success (Bakker & Denessen, 2007:188). The term parental involvement denotes various parental behaviours which directly or indirectly influence children's cognitive development, and school achievement.   These include attendance at parent-teacher meetings, being a member of a parent-teacher association (PTA), volunteering in school, helping in the classroom and with homework, discussing school activities, monitoring children's school progress, encouraging and rewarding good grades, reading to/with the children, modelling reading behaviour, taking children to the library, contacting the school in case of problems, monitoring children's out-of-school activities, and talking regularly with children. However, other behaviours which are not directly related to school or schooling may be relevant in the conceptualisation of parental involvement.   These include activities such as limiting television watching, strict rules on discipline, watching children play sports, and encouraging involvement in cultural activities (Bakker & Denessen, 2007:189). Argued by Bakker and Denessen (2007:190) quantitative empirical studies have been used to assess the level of parental involvement but there are many activities, and various ways of being involved which have not been recognised in empirical research to date.   These activities involve observable behaviours and parental beliefs, attitudes and values. While parental involvement is an accepted term to define the involvement of parents in their children's education, Georgiou (1997:206) states that parental involvement is a generic term with so many meanings that soon it will have no meaning at all.

When schools privilege the family culture, behaviour and involvement of middle class families as the ideal measure of parental involvement, while ignoring those who lack social and cultural capital, the term parental involvement becomes problematic. In areas of inherited social injustice such as that selected for this study, parents often lack the confidence to attend meetings or are semi-illiterate and unable to assist their children in reading. In this sense such parents are still the victims of inequality, they often do not believe in themselves, and have assimilated the derogatory propaganda of a racist past. Within the South African context, the term can become especially problematic, as many learners in such poor areas ridden with drugs, unemployment, gang-warfare and psychological insecurities, do not have parents, but reside with

grandparents, family members, and friends, or even more dangerously live with parents whose influence is criminal or destructive. In 2017, it was determined that only 34% of children in South Africa live with both parents, while 41% of all children live with their mothers but not with their fathers (Hall & Sambu, 2018:133). Male identity was particularly undermined under apartheid which sought to degrade non-white patriarchy and authority in a bid to install obedience behaviour. The family structure has been further eroded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, giving rise to an increasing number of orphans, and child-headed households. More and more fathers are absent, and a 'crisis of men' in South Africa seems to be perpetuating patterns of abuse and abandonment. Increasingly, there is a break-down of the family unit, where children are growing up in dysfunctional families (Holborn & Eddy, 2011:6). The South African education system does not have a policy on parental involvement, and teacher education does not equip educators to build family-school connections despite the carefully constructed models of researchers.

Parental involvement can take place in safe, better-funded areas but even then it often declines as learners grow older and progress to secondary school. La Bahn (1995:1) notes that the reason why parental involvement is not maintained at secondary level is frequently because there is a lack of understanding of non-traditional families on the part of the school system or because the work is too advanced for parents to assist. Divorce, death and poverty are contributing factors which constrain the efforts of parental involvement. Schools need to be sensitive to these changes, and understand that the lack of participation on the part of parents does not necessarily mean that parents are neglecting their responsibility (La Bahn, 1995:2). The term parental involvement if applied insensitively to all home situations can even pose a disadvantage to learners who do not have parents or those who have parents but who are unable to assist. Similarly, parents who acknowledge the important role of being involved, and who are unable to do so, due to lack of time, capacity, and inability feel worthless and hopeless, as their children continue to struggle with school activities. A neutral term such as *after-school engagement* may be more appropriate. The term signifies after-school engagement activities, which encompasses programmes and activities taking place within the confines of the school, and within the home but not dependant on parents per se, rather significant

adults in the life of the child. After-school engagement does not privilege those homes with two parents as the norm.

6.2.2 Extending the school day

Over-crowding at home and a lack of space in which to complete school activities is a reality for many poor children, who are in competition for space with other family members. Lack of appropriate learning and teaching material in the home such as books, desks, pens and paper, as a result of poverty, prevents learners from gaining a routine in which to complete work and assignments. Households which do not have electricity create problems when learners need to complete their homework at night. Added to infrastructural weaknesses such as lack of electricity, and overcrowding, is the fact that there are high illiteracy rates among poor parents and school language policy deters parents from assisting their children. With regard to the latter issue, many parents in the Cape Flats speak Afrikaans as a home language (mixed race or coloured parents) or isiXhosa (black African parents), while the language of teaching and learning at schools is English.

Extending the school day allows learners who need space, resources and assistance with homework, reading, and assignments to be offered the necessary support from educators after school hours. Longer hours ensure that children are kept off the streets in such poor areas. There is an assumption that extending the school day can guarantee that learners obtain better grades. However, there are those who have challenged this assumption. Assaf (2015:3) conducted empirical studies with five public secondary schools, involving 400 learners, to determine whether a relation exists between extending the school day, the academic year, and learners' academic achievement. He found that a weak correlation exists between allocated school time and learners' academic achievement. The purpose of extending the school day from a South African perspective is to primarily ensure that learners are kept off the streets, are provided with a space to do homework, and are offered learning support.

The Western Cape Government (WCG) launched the After School Game Changer initiative, to strengthen after-school services and outcomes for disengaged youth in

disadvantaged communities. In partnership with the Learning Trust, a non-profit organisation, the aim of the initiative was to seek and improve learning opportunities for learners, by funding and building capacity, through its education initiatives (The Learning Trust, 2016:1).   Seven priority intervention programmes or GAME CHANGERS were identified, to serve as a catalyst for improvement in the lives of children, especially the youth. The aim of the game changer initiatives was to accelerate economic growth, offer job creation, and increase social cohesion (WCG, 2017:6). The game changer initiatives include:

1) Expanding apprenticeships;
2) Achieving energy security;
3) Delivering high speed broadband;
4) Implementing quality e-Learning at schools;
5) Pioneering a major *Better Living Model* for community development;
6) Reduce alcohol related harm; and
7) **Expanding quality after-school activities.**

The goal behind expanding quality after-school activities was to contribute towards positive youth development, and to improve school outcomes (The Learning Trust, 2016:1). The afterschool game changer is aimed at learners in low-income areas in the Western Cape, to improve learner outcomes, reduce learner dropout rates, and to reduce the potential for violent behaviour. Afterschool activities involve four types of involvement, academic support, sport and recreation, arts and culture, and life skills. Partners and funders include the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, the Western Cape Education Department, Western Cape Department of the Premier, the Department of Social Development, and the City of Cape Town (Parenzee, 2018:4).

Each department has different responsibilities, with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport taking a leading role, and initiating several programmes. The Mass Participatory, Opportunity and Access, Development and Growth (MOD) is an after-school programme that provides children access to sport and recreation on a daily basis. Schools, hosting the programme, are referred to as MOD Centres. The aim of the programme is to keep school-going children engaged and productive after school, so that they are not lured into the world of gangsterism, crime, drug and

alcohol abuse. Learners in the neighbourhood of MOD Centres are encouraged to participate in the various after-school sport and cultural activities which are offered. The Year Beyond (YeBo) programme offers academic support. Unemployed youth between the ages of 18 – 25, in possession of a matriculation certificate are offered full-time volunteering positions at schools as tutors. These tutors receive the necessary training during the day, and are available in the afternoons to offer support in literacy, numeracy and homework to Foundation Phase learners. Tutors receive a stipend.

The Department of Education provides peer education programmes and supports programmes initiated by schools, while the Department of Social Development supports NGOs who have aftercare programmes, by providing financial aid (Parenzee, 2018:5).

6.2.3 After-school programmes - policy and implementation

The policy and directives for after-school programmes for learners seem to be a step in the right direction on the part of government. The policy implementation, however, has failed the masses due to a number of factors. The Learning Trust has identified ten key barriers to after-school success (The Learning Trust, 2016:9).

1) Fluctuating access to learners
2) Lack of parental involvement
3) Poor school involvement
4) Poor community involvement
5) Issues with school premises
6) Safety and security risks
7) Inadequate programme quality
8) Staffing challenges
9) Poor access to data
10) Lack of coordination among programmes

Some of the barriers identified overlap with the key findings of this study. There is often an absence of security measures in place for learners and staff who are at risk

in communities exposed to high levels of crime and gangsterism. A reluctance to participate is noted. Learners who commute to school often do not have transport which leads to poor attendance.   Poor physical school environments prevent participation because schools lack the necessary recreation fields or space to engage in after-school programmes. Lack of parental involvement and buy-in from parents result in learners who are not sufficiently motivated to be involved in these programmes. Failure to communicate and to engage with schools effectively has resulted in some schools not promoting these activities sponsored by the provincial government.

6.2.4 Policies and guidelines for parents – family literacy programmes

Family literacy programmes benefit the child and the parent, although the initial purpose of family literacy programmes was to improve children's literacy standards (Swain, Brooks & Bosley, 2014:87). The authors have found that parents with poor literacy skills were frequently exacerbating their children's educational difficulties. Their study revealed that family literacy programmes encouraged parents to play a greater role in their children's school work, and development. It ensured that parents became more capable to offer support to their children. Parents' self-esteem and confidence improved, and parents came to believe that they could improve their own literacy skills, placing greater value on education and learning. Barriers between the school and the home diminished, and better working relations between parents and staff took root. Language development improved, and good social and supportive networks emerged (Swain, et al., 2014:88). Family literacy programmes are crucial to improve literacy development. Yet, the South African education system lacks a designated policy which promotes family literacy (Le Roux, 2016:1).   According to Hanemann (2017:1) between 7.4 and 8.5 million adults are functionally illiterate often as a direct result of segregationist policies of the past which sought to disable non-white classes through poor education. Once again the new South African government has failed the masses by not investing adequately, and promoting family literacy programmes. NGOs have heeded the call for the development of family literacy. In the province of Kwazulu Natal, the Family Literacy Project is aimed at addressing low literacy achievements of pre-school and primary school children, and

to offer support to parents (Hanemann, 2017:1). In the province of the Western Cape, the Wordworks programme, a home-school programme is aimed at assisting parents, grandparents, and caregivers to support learning in the home.

Instead of the implementation of guidelines around parental involvement, family literacy programmes should be made available to parents, on how they would be able to enrich their own learning, as well as their children's learning. Workshops, advertising and community training sessions in collaboration with schools should be available to offer support to family members. Emergent literacy awareness, training and support at local clinics, hospitals and community centres should provide insight to parents on their role in their children's development in the form of a nation-wide campaign. Adult education in the form of support in reading, and language development should be available to parents, so that they in turn may support their children.

6.2.5 CAPS curriculum overload vs social transformation and critical pedagogy

The South African curriculum after liberation in 1994 espoused principles of social transformation, with equal opportunities for all sectors of the population. This promise has not materialised since poor and marginalised learners continue to be at a disadvantage, with many townships schools and rural schools in South Africa having inadequate ablution facilities, lack of libraries and quality educators. The curriculum focuses on technicist learning skills rather than critical approaches to teaching literacy and thinking. Teaching methodologies continue to focus on rote learning, textbook transmission and memorisation skills. Chetty (2019a:8) highlights the absence of cognitive stimulation in the classroom, where educators unreflectively produce and authorise particular forms of political, ethical and social literacy.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) curriculum with 4 subjects in the Foundation Phase (Home Language, First Additional Language, Mathematics, Life Orientation) plus a fifth subject being introduced in the form of an African Language may be construed as curriculum overload in this phase. It is prescriptive, and as a result educators do not have enough time to consolidate or prioritise thinking skills.

As Chetty (2019a:4) notes, educators have no choice but to adhere strictly to the work plans and time lines. The CAPS document stipulates the assessment tasks which need to be covered, and educators acknowledge that they systematically follow the class activities and written tasks as prescribed. This emphasis on fact-learning stifles creativity, and does not cater for individual development of learners. While the CAPS curriculum serves as a guide to educators, and makes it easier to devise lesson plans, the pace set for its implementation does not suit all the learners, and does not take into consideration the context and lives of poor children and slow learners (Chetty, 2019a:4).

6.2.6 Curriculum pedagogy and teacher training

Educators were confident to teach but they were frequently challenged when they encountered learners in Grade 4 who were unable to read or write competently in English.

> "My difficulties are about learners who can't read or write at Grade 4, their level is that of Grade 1 yet they have progressed to Grade 4".   (Chetty, 2019a:7)

Feelings of frustration were recorded by educators when schools failed to understand the difficulties which learners face, the lack of success despite attempts made by educators to use different techniques to teach literacy, lack of parental involvement, incomplete homework, and lack of resources in schools.

A more stream-lined curriculum is needed, where learners are provided with critical skills rather than being trained to regurgitate content from a text book. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy forces educators to conform to a capitalist ideology, and proposes the classroom as a site for memorisation. Chetty (2019a) argues that the curriculum post-1994 should provide a secure space for children to expose and debate the underlying tensions, conflict and discord of an unequal society. The curriculum should build cognitive skills and use literacy as a tool for personal growth and social transformation. With CAPS there is an emphasis on an over-reliance and utilisation of text books, which is counter to democratic principles of critical literacy. Educators should be empowered to understand, affirm and analyse

meaning, interpretations and experiences that children bring to the classroom. These experiences should form the basis of the teaching programme, so that learners have an active voice in the content imparted to them, as opposed to the pre-liberation approach of silencing them, and disregarding their cultural capital. The Outcomes Based Education curriculum mooted immediately after liberation did emphasise self-inquiry and critical thinking but the transition from the obedience mentality of white rule to self-inquiry was too sudden and logistically difficult. The vision of Outcomes Based Education was discredited and critics of Outcomes Based Education quickly returned to the habits of pre-liberation conditions. Nevertheless teacher education and professional development, especially in a country which has been exposed for centuries to white authority instruction needs to embrace an emancipatory pedagogy, whereby educators are empowered to create agency and voice.

Within a once colonised society, where levels of reading comprehension have been deliberately depressed, there is a cry for literacy education in a socially responsive sense, one which promotes social justice, and bring about equity and transformation. It is imperative that a new model of literacy emerges to build the confidence of parents and enable them to assist their own children, challenging the inequalities, oppression and racism caused by apartheid. Teacher education and professional development programmes for postgraduate studies should harness training around effective means in which educators engage with families around homework, learner development, and components of the curriculum. Courses or classes are needed to help educators and administrators to understand how schools could work productively with families and communities, and how policy, theory and practice could guide the implementation of family-school and community partnerships (Epstein, et al., 2002:37) which reciprocally benefit all parties.

It is incumbent on the state to recognise and devise solutions for provisioning of resources at disadvantaged schools. Schools in poor areas which have been marginalised for decades need libraries, with reference books and age-appropriate reading material. Both learners and their parents need support in reading. Education of both learners and parents would serve to reverse the downward patterns of illiteracy (Chetty, 2019a:9). Educational reform around the notion of critical pedagogy,

and family-school-community collaboration is essential for learners to be successful. **It is the main finding of this thesis that literacy in terms of historically marginalised school communities has to be understood in terms of such liberatory theorists as Bourdieu or Freire.**

6.2.7 Family-school partnerships

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) found that educators in South Africa acknowledge that learners perform better in school if their parents are actively involved in their education (NEEDU, 2018:15). The challenge, however, is to create, and sustain, involvement of parents. Research confirms that learners who receive the necessary support from home have better social skills, show improved behaviour, are inclined to have better results, and attend school regularly (NEEDU, 2018:15). If sustainable modes of literacy are to start in the home, then parents need to be the first proponents. A sustainable intervention framework/programme has to be devised where disadvantaged families are equipped to fulfil this important function.

6.2.8 Parental involvement and Family-school partnership

Parental involvement evolved out of a need to include parents in their children's education but in school pre-scribed ways. Parents and educators had separate roles and responsibilities for educating, and socialising learners. This type of involvement is synonymous with traditional, middle-class values about education (Virginia Department of Education, 2002:6) which are of little relevance or traction with areas such as the one selected for this study and which represent the majority of educational facilities in the province, and the country. NEEDU (2018:15) found that schools that were effective, adopted strategies to enhance parental engagement in their children's schooling, based on Epstein's (1995) framework of six types of family, and community involvement. These include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and community, through a shared partnership of decision-making, and community collaboration. Epstein et al. (2002:23) note that although some children may suffer neglect or have scant family support, they may

still be successful, if a school has an excellent academic support programme. However, if these learners obtain support from family, school, and the community they go on to feel secure, understand the goal of education, work towards their full potential and build positive attitudes and behaviour. Effective partnerships with parents, family and community are essential. Respectful partnerships effectively manage questions, conflicts and debates. These elements strengthen the partnership once differences have been resolved (Epstein, et al., 2002:24).

6.2.9 An intervention framework for family-school-community collaboration

The following framework, based on Joyce Epstein's (1995) model of involvement and the University of Minnesota's (2019) eight 'p' philosophy for effective school-family community partnerships has been used to devise a programme of involvement which may be used to enhance literacy involvement in disadvantaged schools.

6.2.9.1 Affirming parents' roles and responsibilities

Formal education supports learners to learn and develop but children begin to learn well before they start formal schooling. The home environment is integral, and families play a fundamental role in providing learning opportunities. By facilitating the multiple learning experiences and activities outside the school, families become an important factor in children's overall learning and education (Emerson, Fear, Fox & Sanders, 2012:7). Educators need to help parents to understand the important role they play in their children's success. They should give parents ideas and resources for helping their children succeed in school (University of Minnesota Extension, 2019:20).

The key to engaging families in children's learning is to ensure that family members who may have had bad experiences at school, or feel inadequate to assist, are affirmed in their role. They need to understand how they are able to contribute towards their children's learning. Through workshops, circulars, phone messages, meetings, and regular interaction, suggestions could be made around creating a home environment where learners can learn. Families and parents, who

are unable to attend some of the activities, should not be disadvantaged but should be provided with the necessary information. Multiple opportunities must be made available, and families and parents need to select activities which they feel would benefit them. They need a clear understanding, and knowledge around the developmental milestones which learners need to reach each term, for every grade, in order to be successful. Expectations from the home and the school need to be highlighted in order to affirm families in their role, short courses, programmes, information booklets around family support, which would include health, nutrition, literacy implementation, homework monitoring, etc. should be available to parents. Home visits, meetings with families and regular feedback between the home and the school would further capacitate families in their role.

6.2.9.2 Communicating with parents and families

Community liaison officers should be included in all meetings and gatherings. Communication between the home and the school should focus on sharing good news, and conveying positive messages, so that trusting relations can be forged. When negative messages are to be conveyed, the communication should focus on the facts, in order to avoid blame (University of Minnesota Extension, 2019:2). Honest two-way communication is essential (Epstein, 2002:48). Communication should focus on the interest, and knowledge of individual families. The culture and language of families need to be taken into consideration, and interpreters and translators need to be utilised when necessary. This factor is relevant to the Cape Flats where Afrikaans and isiXhosa are the dominant languages, but not the language of teaching and learning in schools. Communication can be in the form of phone calls, emails, letters, home-visits, notebooks, etc. The purpose behind communication should be to meet the needs of learners, to inform families about what is happening at school, and to maintain contact. In the same way families will be encouraged to communicate with the school around issues or events which affect the children.

6.2.9.3 Engaging parents and families

Many circumstances prevent families from becoming involved. Opportunities need to be created where families feel that they want to get involved since the activities are beneficial, stimulating and fun. Schools need to understand the needs of families, and develop out-reach programmes, and sporting activities which sustain engagement.   Activities should be an opportunity for staff and families to interact. School staff members need to understand that sharing power with families, and interacting with them does not diminish their role as professionals, but creates opportunities for children to learn, and to be successful. The aim behind family engagement in school activities is to motivate families to become involved and committed in their children's schoolwork. Bringing families and staff together in meaningful ways builds trusting relations, and is an opportunity for all the stakeholders to understand that learners will progress best if they receive support from everybody.

6.2.9.4 Welcoming ethos

The Oxford Pocket dictionary defines ethos as *the characteristic spirit or tone of a community* (Sykes, 1978:291). One could therefore summarise the school ethos as the climate or atmosphere, the unwritten personality, which includes norms and values (Maxwell, Reynolds, Lee, Subasic & Bromhead, 2017:2).   The authors maintain that there are multiple definitions of school climate, which makes it difficult to measure it accurately. However, the assessment or measurement of the school climate should involve all stakeholders; parents, learners, staff, and community. The ethos/climate/
environment of a school should enhance the culture, values, ideology, identity, and language of the learners it serves. It should, through practical means, empower learners to understand how they are able to make a contribution to the school, the home and society. Creating a safe and clean environment eliminates vandalism against school property, abusive behaviour towards school staff, and reduces conflict between peers (Mayer, 2007:14).   Learners should feel safe and welcomed. The school climate should extend to all stakeholders who need to feel welcomed, invited

and valued. Staff should meet and greet visitors in a friendly manner, and should be approachable. Community involvement should be encouraged, where the school actively engages in outreach programmes. Trusting, friendly relations should be forged with regular and consistent dialogue and interaction between the school and the home.

6.2.9.5 Designating a space for learning

In an area such as that selected for this study, few learners have home environments which are conducive to learning. Families need to be provided with guidelines to create a space for learners to complete work at home, as well as be provided with a list of basic resource requirements needed. Schools can become homework centres, where learners and parents are given support with homework activities at school (Emerson, Fear, Fox & Sanders, 2012:42). Families can be invited to parent workshops once every three months, where homework activities are explained and discussed. Those who require reading material or support in reading have to be guided and encouraged. Online communication via email and social networks can be used to reach those who are unable to attend meetings.

6.2.9.6 Creating and sustaining a true school community

Besides the home environment of learners, the school environment is not the only place which influences and contributes towards learners' academic achievement and psycho-social development (Emerson, et al., 2012:47). The neighbourhoods where the learners come from, as well as the area where the school is located influence their learning. Local businesses, community-based organisations, and support services could assist learners. Families should be encouraged to network with community groups. Schools should form trusting partnerships with the local libraries, health clinics, religious communities and local businesses, and be the conduit between the parent community and local community. Travelling libraries should be set up. These organisations could be approached to provide support and information to families who need assistance. When a community is faced with a crisis, the school needs to inform the learners and not rely on parents, television or radio to

inform learners. The learners need to be provided with the facts because the school is viewed by learners as a reliable source of information (Mayer, 2007:14). This contributes towards learners feeling safe.

6.2.9.7 Developing a programme for involvement

Epstein, et al. (2002:31) acknowledge that developing an action team is an appropriate way to build school, family, and community partnerships. While school principals, and policies, play an important role in supporting collaboration between stakeholders, an action team consisting of parents, educators, learners, and community members can take responsibility for organising, assessing and implementing activities. Members of the action team need to be trained on the principles and goals of a family-school-community partnerships. Teacher-education and in-service training can provide educators with the skills to work with learners, parents and community members.

6.3 Future research

First, a longitudinal study with a larger sample and a research design that includes the voices of children and teachers would be invaluable. This study was limited to the narratives of parents.

Second, a deeper engagement with emancipatory and radical perspectives and underpinned by Critical Race Theory is essential for comprehending literacy and the conditions under which it exists for poor and disadvantaged children in South Africa. Critical Race Theory (CRT) has its genesis in the 1970s, when legal scholars in the United States challenged the slow progress of racial reform. A continuous fight prevails, where politically there is a call to disregard race in favour of colour-blind meritocracy. A colour-blind approach to race attempts to deny the material and experiential consequences of racism, implying that there prevails an equal but different system of meritocracy, effectively ignoring the effects and historical aftereffects of discrimination (Mc Dowell & Jeris, 2004:82). CRT challenges this colour-blind approach in favour of racial equity which takes up the position that white

supremacy is ingrained in institutions and cultural practices, in myriad subtle ways. Such invisible supremacy sets up an invisible norm, against which all other races are measured (Mc Dowell & Jeris, 2004:83).

CRT draws on various disciplines to analyse the complexities of race, and relations and how real change can be effected.   It is a means to create self-awareness and to become an activist for racial equality. CRT can be a useful lens which educators can use to engage learners to critique Eurocentric curricula and the effects of colonialism. CRT foregrounds the importance of 'voice' and 'naming one's own reality', and marginalised learners can explore their identities, and the position they take up in society. Learners can be engaged in discussion about racism and social justice. CRT clarifies how racial powers are maintained over time. Future research on parental involvement should include the voices of children in disadvantaged communities, and illuminate how they perceive poverty, violence and marginalisation in relation to their situation. A longitudinal study should involve a programme for parents, consisting of workshops and training on emergent literacy practices, support in homework, and processes to enhance learning in the home, in conjunction with CRT. The efficacy of CAPS and the quintile system need to be interrogated.

6.4 Reflection upon the research process

While the research aims were achieved, the study enhanced my understanding of the learners' home environment, and allowed me entry into their world. Anderson and Braud (2011:28) note that a research project can bring about personal transformation of a researcher, and can create self-awareness and growth, resulting in changes in how researchers view themselves, the world and others.

This journey enhanced my knowledge of learners and their families and provided critical insights into their home context. I started the journey believing that parents were not interested in their children's education since many of them were not actively involved in school activities. I believed that the children were not mastering literacy because they were not given support in the home. I immersed myself in the literature on parental involvement and literacy but soon discovered the strong influence of

race, class, political and socio-economic factors on the lives of families. Interacting with parents, hearing their stories, visiting the homes, and seeing their starkness and hopelessness, dispelled my misconceptions of parental involvement. I discovered that parents do care and are interested. The school environment made parents feel inadequate. Parent meetings were more about informing parents about learner poor performance, and offered little help to parents on how they could assist their children. In the confidential environment of personal interviews, parents shared intimately about their lack of capacity to assist their children. Parents verbalised the constant fear which they had for the safety of their children. Children are virtual prisoners in their own home because violence pervades their communities.

I discovered that the children know a great deal about life and their world. The school and home literacies are dichotomous, yet children read and understand their real life situation. The school often does not understand the lived experience of the learners since their world is silent and silenced from the classroom. Throughout the research process, while interacting with parents, I felt a sense of hopelessness. The violence and deaths of young people, as a result of gangsterism was depressing.

In spite of this hopelessness, I concluded my research with a measure of hope, knowing that schools and families can make an impact on the lives of children, if they work together in a partnership. It has strengthened my resolve to work towards a solution for creating learners who can become critical thinkers and be able to change their world.

6.5 Summary of the study

This study has revealed that literacy in a poor area needs to be defined in a socially responsive and responsible way. The learners in disadvantaged communities have limited capital to enhance their learning. Their parents, being aware of the violence in the neighbourhood, are largely unable to form trusting relations with those in the community, and feel it necessary to remain isolated, to ensure the safety of the family. Children are 'remanded' in confined spaces, and are not allowed to play outside. Gang members, who spend a great amount of time on the streets with

unemployed youth and fellow gangsters, readily engage in gang and drug-related activities. Gang members set out to recruit new members, and resort to violence and killings (Chetty, 2017:82). Children's play parks are used as meeting points for adults to smoke drugs and drink alcohol. Open fields and potential areas to play are regarded as 'war zones', where rival gangs clash.

Children in disadvantaged communities who remain in the safety of their homes, are unable to benefit from social capital networks, and have limited cultural capital. Bourdieu's (1986) framework on different forms of capital demonstrates how dominant groups in society are able to appropriate, and monopolise relevant resources or capital, in order to maintain processes of social reproduction. Cultural capital is a result of early childhood socialisation, with parents as key role players. Habitus is attributed to the manner in which individuals behave or conduct themselves in a social setting. Schools or institutions implicitly shape the habitus of their learners to reflect the habitus of staff and middle-class learners (Donnelly, 2018:2).

This study has revealed that poverty and violence in disadvantaged communities frequently prevent parents from accessing social capital networks to aid learning and enhance development. It is evident that school environments and institutions are sites or fields where social class disparities are brought to the fore. The study has highlighted the unequal social, economic and educational settings which have been created by an unjust apartheid system, despite the advent of democracy twenty-five years ago. Most importantly, the study has provided evidence on the nature of parental involvement. Schools can be sites where learners understand the social inequalities which exist. Schools need to be cognisant of the home environment of learners, the nature and severity of the violence which children are exposed to, the possible trauma which they may experience, and the limited social and cultural capital in disadvantaged communities. School communities can enhance learners' literacy development by forming collaborative networks with families and communities.

Nelson Mandela had a vision that the education system, post-1994 would bring about social transformation, eradicate poverty and provide the necessary capital which citizens would need to change their world:

> Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of a mine, that the child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. (Nelson Mandela)

This has not yet materialised for the majority of children living in the Cape Flats based on the findings of this study, literacy levels are low, and parents are unable to assist their children. While South African education is facing many challenges, this study has revealed that parents want their children to be successful, and they want to be involved in their children's education. Mandela believed that the citizens could achieve the impossible:

> Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do. (Nelson Mandela)

The partnership and collaboration of family, school and community is crucial at this important juncture in South Africa's history as a realistic way of reversing the history of separation, isolation and disunity. A history that is characterised by deepened racism, increased violence (more recently the new trend of school violence) and the intersectionality of race and class, has amplified the differences between literacy achievement of resourced schools, and disadvantaged schools where mostly poor black and coloured learners enrol. The issue of educational inequality emanating from socio-economic disadvantage is a challenge to the new democracy in which education should be the major public instrument for equalising life's opportunities for the majority of children who still suffer the consequences of racial oppression and colonial injustice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to Parents explaining the study

> Rochelle Davids
> (Doctoral Candidate)
> Research Unit: Literacy development and poverty
> FACULTY OF EDUCATION
> UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
> BELLVILLE
> 8000
>
> Email: rdavids.school@gmail.com
>
> 20 January 2017

Dear Parents

I am currently doing my doctorate in education at the University of the Western Cape and form part of a research unit, focusing on literacy development and poverty. I would like to investigate the *nature of parental involvement in literacy activities of low achieving learners in disadvantaged contexts, at a selected primary school in the Western Cape.*

I would like you to participate in this study. I have received approval from the Western Cape Education Department and the Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Education for this research project.

If you agree to participate in this research you will:

- Sign a consent form to participate in the research;
- Complete a questionnaire;
- Attend TWO Saturday sessions and engage in discussion with other parents;
- Be prepared to be video-recorded and photographed for data collection purposes;
  (You will receive the transcripts and images to peruse before it is analysed.)

All information you provide will be strictly confidential and no names will be revealed, i.e. all participants are anonymous. Please bear in mind that you may, at any time during this research, withdraw and stop participating in the study. All information provided will be used solely for research purposes and that anonymity of all is guaranteed. Your children will not be disadvantaged in any way.

If you would like to know more about this research project, then please feel free to contact me.

I trust that the research will contribute significantly to literacy development in disadvantaged communities.

Yours in education

Rochelle Davids

Tel. (home)   : 021 713 1238
    (school) : 021 637 4020
    (cell)   : 083 275 9097

Appendix B: PIRLS (2006) tool

Please tick **ONE BOX IN EACH LINE**

Question 1

This survey was completed by:

	YES	NO
Mother, stepmother, or female guardian		
Father, stepfather, or male guardian		
Other		

Before your child began Grade R

Question 2

Before your child began Grade R, how often did you or someone else in your home do the following activities with him or her?

		Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
a	Read books			
b	Tell stories			
c	Sing songs			
d	Play with alphabet toys (for example, blocks with letters of the alphabet)			
e	Talk about things you had done			
f	Talk about what you had read			
g	Play word games			
h	Write letters or words			
i	Read aloud signs and labels			
j	Visit a library			

Question 3

In what language did most of the activities in question 2 take place?

English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa

Question 4

What language did your child speak before he/she began school?

If your child spoke more than one language at the same time, you can tick "YES" for more than one language.

		YES	NO
a	English		
b	Afrikaans		
c	isiXhosa		

Question 5

Did your child attend crèche or pre-school?

YES	NO

If yes,

How long was he/she in crèche or pre-school?

3 years or more?	Between 2 and 3 years	2 years	Between 1 and 2 years	1 year or less

Beginning Grade R

Question 6

How old was your child when he/she began Grade R?

5 years old or younger	6 years old	7 years old	8 years old or older

Question 7

How well could your child do the following when he/she began Grade R?

		Very well	Moderately well	Not very well	Not at all
a	Recognise most of the letters of the alphabet				
b	Read some words				
c	Read sentences				
d	Write letters of the alphabet				
e	Write some words				

Activities with your child more recently

Question 8

How often do you or someone else in your home do the following things with your child?

		Every day or almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Never or almost never
a	Listen to my child read aloud				
b	Talk with my child about things we have done				
c	Talk with my child about what he/she is reading on his/her own				

d	Discuss my child's classroom reading work with him/her				
e	Go to the library or a bookstore with my child				
f	Help my child with reading for school				

Question 9

In what language do most of the activities in Question 8 take place?

English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa

Question 10

On average, how much time does your child spend on homework in a day?

My child does not have homework	15 minutes or less	16 – 30 minutes	31 – 60 minutes	More than 60 minutes

Your child's school

Question 11

What do you think of your child's school?

		Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
a	My child's school includes me in my child's education				
b	My child's school should make a greater effort to include me in my child's education				
c	My child's school cares about my child's progress in school				

d	My child's school does a good job in helping my child become better in reading				

Literacy in the home

Question 12

In a typical week, how much time do you usually spend reading **for yourself** at home, including books, magazines, newspapers, and materials for work?

Less than one hour a week	1 – 5 hours a week	6 – 10 hours a week	More than 10 hours a week

Question 13

When you are at home, how often do you read for your own enjoyment?

Every day or almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Never or almost never

Question 14

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about reading?

		Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
a	I read only if I have to				
b	I like talking about books with other people				
c	I like to spend my spare time reading				
d	I read only if I need information				
e	Reading is an important activity in my home				

Question 15
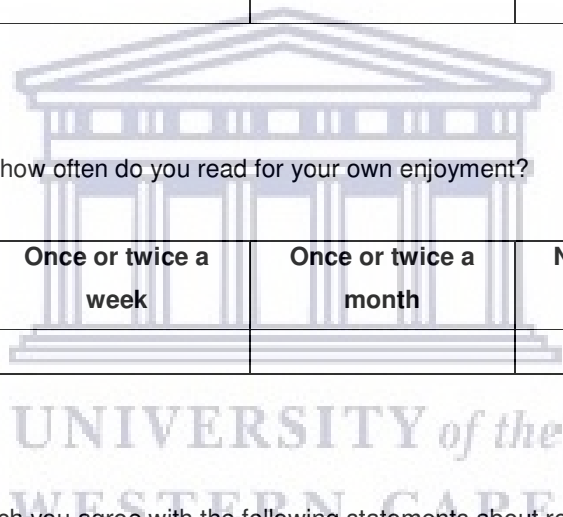
About how many books are there in your home?

(Do not count magazines, newspapers or children's books.)

0 – 10	11 - 25	26 – 100	101 – 200	More than 200

Question 16

a) How many **children's** books are there in your home?

   (Do not count children's magazines or school books.)

0 – 10	11 - 25	26 – 50	51 – 100	More than 100

b) Are these books mainly in English?

YES	NO

Question 17

When talking at home with your child, what language does the child's father (or stepfather or male guardian) use most often? What language does the child's mother (or stepmother or female guardian) use most often?

	English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa
Child's father			
Child's mother			

Additional information

Question 18

What is the highest level of education <u>completed</u> by the child's father (or stepfather or male guardian) and mother (or stepmother or female guardian?)

		Child's father	Child's mother
a	Some Grade R or Grade 1 or did not go to school		
b	Grade 2 or Grade 3		
c	Grade 4, Grade 5 or Grade 6		
d	Grade 7, Grade 8 or Grade 9		
e	Grade 10, Grade 11 or Grade 12		
f	First Bachelors Degree		
g	Beyond Bachelors degree, e.g. Honours		
h	Not applicable		

Question 19

Which best describes the employment situation of the child's father (or stepfather or male guardian) and mother (or stepmother or female guardian?

		Child's father	Child's mother
a	Working at least full-time for pay (this could be one or more full-time jobs or several part-time jobs that add up to full-time work		
b	Working part-time only for pay		
c	Not working for pay, but looking for a job		
d	Other		
e	Not applicable		

Question 20

What kind of work does the child's father (or stepfather or male guardian) and mother (or stepmother or female guardian) do for their main jobs?

For each, tick the box for the job category that best describes what he/she does. Each category has a few examples to help you decide the correct category. If the father or mother is not working now, think about the last job he/she had.

		Child's father	Child's mother
A	Has never worked outside the home for pay		
B	Small business owner Includes owners of small business (fewer than 25 employees) such as retail shops, services, restaurants		
C	Clerk Includes office clerks; secretaries; typists; data entry operators; customer service clerks		
D	Service of Sales Worker Includes travel attendants; restaurant service workers; personal care workers; protective service workers; salespersons		
E	Skilled Agricultural or Fishery Worker Includes farmers; forestry workers; fishery workers, hunters and trappers		
F	Craft of Trade Worker Includes builders, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc.; metal workers; machine mechanics; handicraft workers		
G	Plant or Machine Operator Includes plant and machine operators; assembly-line operators; motor-vehicle drivers		
H	General Labourers Includes domestic helpers and cleaners; building caretakers; messengers, porters and doorkeepers; farm, fishery, agricultural and construction workers		
I	Corporate Manager or Senior Official Includes corporate managers such as managers of large companies (25 or more employees) or managers of departments within large companies; legislators or senior government officials; senior officials or special interest organisations; military officers		

J	Professional		
	Includes scientists; mathematicians; computer scientists; architects; engineers; life science and health professionals; teachers; legal professionals; social scientists; writers and artists; religious professionals		
K	Technician or Associate Professional		
	Includes science, engineering, and computer associates and technicians; life science and health technicians and assistants; teacher aides; finance and sales associate professionals; business service agents; administrative assistants		
L	Not applicable		

Question 21

Compared with other families, how well-off do you think your family is financially?

Very well-off	Somewhat well-off	Average	Not very well-off	Not at all well-off

Question 22

About how long did it take you to complete this survey?

_____ minutes

Write in a number

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Appendix C: Letter to parents inviting them to Focus Group discussions

Rochelle Davids
(Doctoral Candidate)
Research Unit: Literacy development and poverty
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
BELLVILLE
8000
Email: rdavids.school@gmail.com

22 May 2017

Dear Parents

I trust that you are well.

You have indicated that you would like to be part of my study *The nature of Parental involvement in literacy activities of low achieving learners in disadvantaged contexts, at a selected primary school in the Western Cape.* We need to meet as soon as possible in June 2017 and then a follow-up session in July 2017.

Your attendance is required at school on:
(Choose 1 Saturday)

Saturday 10 June at 10:00 am until 11:30

        or

Saturday 24 June at 10:00 am until 11:30

The session should not be more than an hour. Please let me know which Saturday you will be able to attend.

Please confirm whether you are coming by completing the form below. Please return it by tomorrow. I am also going to start a WhatsApp group so that we can keep in touch, and so that you can contact me directly if you have any queries. Please let me have your correct cellphone details or contact details.

Yours in education

Rochelle Davids

I, Mr/Mrs _____ the parent(s) of

_____ in Grade _____ will be attending / will not be attending.

My preferred date is Saturday _____ from 10:00 – 11:30.

My contact details are: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Appendix D: Consent for home visits and photographs

Rochelle Davids
(Doctoral Candidate)
Research Unit: Literacy development and poverty
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
BELLVILLE
8000
Email: rdavids.school@gmail.com

5 June 2017

Dear Parents

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the study *the nature of parental involvement in literacy activities of low achieving learners in disadvantaged contexts, at a selected primary school in the Western Cape.* This letter serves to remind you that I need volunteers for the home visits. Part of the visit would be a one-on-one discussion, followed by photographs which I would like to take of your child's home environment and neighbourhood. You will be allowed to view all the pictures. The pictures will in no way identify you or your child. All information provided will be used solely for research purposes.

I wil speak to you before we commence the interview and you may withdraw at anytime if you are not comfortable.

I trust that the research will contribute significantly to literacy development in disadvantaged communities.

Yours in eduction

Rochelle Davids

Tel. (home) : 021 713 1238
      (school) : 021 637 4020
      (cell)   : 083 275 9097

*(please complete once you have listed your name on the flipchart)

I, Mr/Mrs _____the parent of _____
in Grade _____ do not object to the home visits and photographs.

*My preferred date is _____
Signature of parent: _____

Appendix E: School feeding menu

School Feeding Menu

MENU 1	MENU 2	MENU 3	MENU 4	MENU 5
MONDAYS	TUESDAYS	WEDNESDAYS	THURSDAYS	FRIDAYS
Rice	Samp	Rice	Rice	Samp
Pilchards in Tomato	Sugar Beans	Curry Soya Mince	Pilchards in Tomato	Savoury Soya Mince
Brown Lentils	Oil	Fresh Carrots	Fresh Cabbage	Fresh Carrots
Fresh Butternut	Salt	Salt	Salt	Salt
Salt	Fruit in Season	Milk	Fruit in Season	Oil
Breyani Mix		Fruit	Milk	

Appendix F: Home visit questions

Family details

1. How many people live in the house …
2. Do you work? What time do you come from work?
3. Who helps your child with Literacy (English/Afrikaans) homework?
4. How many hours does your child spend on Literacy activities?
5. How are you involved in your child's education? What do you do …
6. What language is spoken in the home?
7. What do you have in the house to assist with Literacy (sing, read stories, tell stories …)
8. What resources do you have in the home to assist with literacy?
   … books/dictionaries/computer/tablet

Community details

9. What activities or groups are there in your community or area which can help your child? (sports, clinics, library, NGOs …)
10. Does your child make use of these groups or services?
11. Is there anything at home which prevents your child from getting a good education?
12. Is there anything in the community which prevents your child from getting a good education?

School details

13. Is there anything at school which prevents your child from getting a good education?
14. Is there anything else which prevents you from getting involved in your child's education? Would you like to get involved? What should the school do?
15. Is there anything else which you would like to share with me?

Checklist

• Area/space to do homework/resources
• Library in the area and other networks to offer support
• Books/dictionaries in the home which offer support
• Pictures
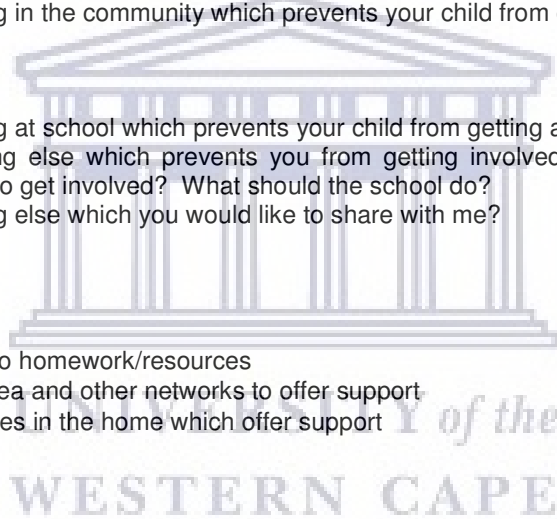
Appendix G: WCED approval
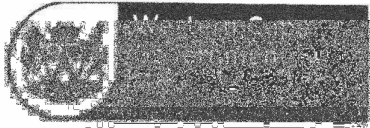
Directorate: Research

REFERENCE: 20181006-4815
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

7800

Dear Miss Rochelle Davids

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LITERACY ACTIVITIES OF LOW ACHIEVING LEARNERS IN DISADVANTAGED CONTEXTS, AT A SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:
1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from 16 January 2017 till 28 September 2018
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
     The Director: Research Services
     Western Cape Education Department
     Private Bag X9114
     CAPE TOWN
     8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 25 April 2018

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9272   fax: 0865902282
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
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Appendix H: UWC ethics clearance

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

20 July 2018

Ms R Davids
Faculty of Education

Ethics Reference Number: HS18/5/22

Project Title: The nature of parental involvement in literacy activities

Approval Period: 20 July 2018 – 20 July 2019

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.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE