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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK OF RURAL COMBINED SCHOOLS IN
THE KING WILLIAM'S TOWN EDUCATION DISTRICT

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Malixole Ivan Mbembeni, declare that this dissertation with the title, "PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK OF RURAL COMBINED SCHOOLS IN THE KING WILLIAM'S TOWN EDUCATION DISTRICT" is my original work conducted under the supervision of Mr. MAA Macanda and that it has not been submitted to any other university. All the assistance towards the production of this work and all the references contained herein have been duly accredited.

Mr. Malixole Ivan Mbembeni

Date:

ABSTRACT

While parental involvement in homework is significant, few parents are able to assist in rural communities. The purpose of this study was to investigate the way parents and/or caregivers in rural communities are involved in the homework of their children. The main question was to find how parents in rural communities get involved in homework. The study adopted an interpretive paradigm, a qualitative approach, and a case study design to guide data collection and interpretation. Data was collected in two public combined schools in the King William's Town District of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE). One-on-one semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from parents, educators and principals whilst focus group interviews were used with learners. Documents were collected for background context of the schools. Documents collected include the school journals, learner portfolios, staff establishment, and school timetable. Schools were chosen purposefully because of their rural context and convenience to the researcher. Purposive sampling was also used in the selection of participants. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, data sources were triangulated, participants were allowed to use their own language, data was mechanically recorded and transcribed and verbatim quotes were used in analysing data. The study found that all participants in both schools supported the need for parents to be involved in homework. Educators, largely, had a pessimistic view about parents; they felt that the parents do not meet their expectations in terms of assisting learners with homework. The study found that although parents see the need for their involvement in homework, in reality they are not always involved. Those parents who are able to assist with homework use a variety of strategies like assisting with the actual homework, referring their children to those who can assist, monitoring and supervising, assisting financially, and organising infrastructure. The study also found that there are several challenges facing parents in rural communities that hinder them from assisting optimally. These include negative attitude towards homework, lack of subject knowledge, irresponsibility, lack of finances and material resources, community commitments, not having enough time, family responsibilities, lack of commitment by learners, and homework overload. These challenges suggest that many parents in rural communities may not be able to provide the necessary leadership for modelling purposes to learners. This can be attributed to several exogenous and

exogenous factors that have an impact on homework completion by learners. This study, in addition, found that participants have a good sense of what can be done to improve parental involvement in homework. These include the revival of Adult Basic Education (ABET), the need for integrated efforts by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS), government departments, schools, and community organizations to improve infrastructure in rural communities, have awareness campaigns on the significance of parental involvement, provision of access to Information Communication Technology (ICT), establishment of homework support groups and quiz clubs, provision of incentives for parental assistance, and reduction of child labour.

Key Words: a parent, homework, parental involvement, rural schools, strategies.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my late parents, Mr. Mthutyana Mbembeni and Mrs. Nokwakha Julia Mbembeni.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult Basic Education
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BED	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CASS	Continuous Assessment
DoE	Department of Education
ECDoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
EDO	Education Departmental Officer
FET	Further Education and Training
GMRDC	Goven Mbeki Research and Development Centre
GET	General Education and Training
HIV	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information Communication Technology
LO	Life Orientation
MED	Master of Education
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NS	Natural Sciences
PAT	Practical Assessment Task
PTSA	Parent Teacher and Student Association

RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SS	Social Sciences
STD	Secondary Teacher's Diploma
TRSM	Tourism
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

During the time of the apartheid regime in South Africa, the role of the parent body, the 'School Committees' and the 'Parent, Teacher and Student Associations' (PTSAs) was limited to minor and almost insignificant activities. Jantjies (1995) and Mkhonto (1998) concur with this claim. They believe that the role of these structures were restricted to superficial duties such as dealing with learner discipline, the collection of donations towards fundraising activities, signing of the school cheque books, contract forms for newly appointed educators, and accompanying learners on excursions, tours or sports trips. The government of the day ensured that more substantive work was centralized and placed under the control of government departments (Quan-Baffour, 2006). However, the tide has changed with the emergence of the democratic dispensation. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) who are elected by the school communities are expected to play a more meaningful role in school governance have replaced the School Committees and PTAs.

In terms of section 20 and section 21 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, the School Governing Body (SGB) is charged with the responsibility to promote the best interests of the school. Amongst other things, it formulates school policy and the code of conduct, supports the principal and educators, buy teaching and learning resources and make sure that the schools have the necessary facilities, which make it worthwhile for both the teachers and learners to enjoy their stay at the school (RSA, 1996). In this way, the teachers would be in a position to exercise their authority without fear or prejudice. Common law delegates this authority to them whereby teachers are viewed as being in loco parentis position at school. As such, they represent parents and should act likewise. This does not require parents to abdicate their primary responsibility of educating and training their children. They play a key role in the development of their children and, as such, have a responsibility to give on-going care and love to and be involved in the educational practice their children undergo (Weeto, 1997).

A number of scholars concur with this claim. Oosthuizen (2003), for instance, believes that a parent is obliged to take care of the child's physical health and keep a watchful eye

on his/her school life so that the child may be protected against damaging and different spiritual and cultural influences. Christenson (2004) and Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, and Closson (2005), on the other hand, documented a number of advantages that go with parental involvement in children's education. Among these, they believe, parental involvement can enhance the quality of teaching and learning and improve the child's confidence in his/her schoolwork. It can also increase parent-teacher relations and boost teacher confidence in the performance of his/her duties, at the same time. Even the teacher-learner relationships can improve since the teacher would enjoy giving tutelage to well-groomed learners whose attendance and behaviour would be enriched by the parent's influence and guidance.

Fan and Chen (2001) and Henderson and Mapp (2002) have shown that students with parents who are involved in their schoolwork show better behaviour and acclimatize well at school. They also get higher test marks, which make it easy for them to be promoted and to register for higher-level programmes. These students would later add value to their communities since they have learned, among other things, better community and communal abilities. It can be reiterated that, apart from promoting a positive school climate by giving direction to the child's mental health and development as the child is working and attending school (Sussel, 1996), parental involvement also motivates the child and allows him/her to receive the best possible learning available. To this effect, parents go out of their way to get as many types of teaching and learning support material as it is possible (Hornby, 2000), as long as this improve the child's capability to learn. Oosthuizen (2009) adds that these actions can become of great benefit to the learner and his/her schooling. They provide the learner with extra expertise, relieve the teachers of a number of burdensome activities in the child's learning, improve the communication between home and the school, and eventually lead to increased success in learning.

It goes without saying, therefore, that parental involvement, particularly in the homework related activities, can lead to the child's success, not just at school, or in combined schools as this study argues, but throughout his/her entire life (Henderson and Bella, 1994). In other words, it can have a positive impact in the development of the child since it can lead to better learning, good behaviour and decreased laziness on the part of the

learner; thus decreasing learner dropout rate, and maximising improved school success (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2004; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

Therefore, it can be argued that parental involvement, specifically in the child's homework, is crucial to learning. It has the potential to improve learners' listening and reading skills and encourage them to do their work diligently (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001). Furthermore, it has been proved that homework can play a significant role in the learning process. It promotes independence and prompts the child to focus on outcomes just as it is required by the new curricula post the apartheid period. When coupled with parental involvement and support, homework becomes one of the key aspects to reinforce learning.

In fact, I have observed the predominant role homework plays in learner performance especially now that it has become part of Continuous Assessment (CASS) in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Homework carries a number of marks, as it is evident from activities such as projects, assignments, case studies, prepared speeches and essays. For example, looking at English First Additional Language in Grade 12, 150 marks out of 900 marks are for the year mark; in Grades 10 and 11 approximately 195 marks out of 700 marks count for the year mark. As argued, these marks include those awarded for homework a situation that assists the learner and allows for his/her promotion to the next grade even if he/she performs poorly in the examinations.

It is, therefore, imperative for the learners to harness parental assistance when completing their homework while doing their best to work diligently and independently, at the same time. A number of scholars agree with this argument. Bandura (1997), for instance, is of the opinion that parental involvement in learner's homework has a potential to make a helpful change in his/her life. Bailey, Silvern, Brabham & Ross (2004), Levin, Levy-Sheriff, Appelbaum-Pelled, Katz, Komar & Meiran (1997), Cooper, Jackson, Nye and Lindsay, (2001) on the other hand, suggest that homework which is interesting to parents can help to increase parental involvement and communication. This can also lead to timeous completion of homework, allow closer home-school relations, and improve learners' performance in class and examinations.

However, failure on the part of the parents to recognize the importance of their involvement in homework can become detrimental to the children's development and may delay children's capability to fruitfully finish homework timeously and correctly (Bailey, Silvern, Brabham and Ross, 2004). Furthermore, children's test scores would also not improve since successful performance of homework is regarded as one of the activities that can boost learner performance (Chew, Teong & Ishak, 2012). As indicated earlier, children's ability to prosper at school relies on, among other things, how productively they are monitored by parents at home. The home is regarded as a place from which learners' study abilities, methods and manners are built and developed in order for them to become useful and successful learners (Vellymallay, 2012).

1.2 Problem Statement

Teachers from rural combined schools complain that most learners do not complete homework. If they do, the homework is, in most of the cases, incorrectly done. This is an indication that parents are either not involved in their children's schoolwork or the learners are apathetic and lack the seriousness required in performing these tasks. Yet homework plays a pivotal and a critical role in learner performance and achievement. Some of these tasks, including among others, case studies, assignments, letters, compositions, researches, projects, worksheets, summaries and practical work, assist towards improving learner attainment; they count towards the learners' year mark. This problem has also been identified by a number of scholars also identified this problem; they viewed parental involvement in learner attainment as crucial. Cooper (1994) and Plato (2000), for instance, viewed parental participation as having a particular part in whether children finish their project or not.

Therefore, parents are expected to assist learners in order to complete their homework successfully. Some parents hide behind illiteracy and lack the necessary skills and knowledge to assist their children, yet the mere showing of interest in the child's school work may suffice to encourage the child to work diligently and independently. It is not known if and how parents in the rural areas get involved in the homework of their school-going children. It is also not known if parents have the will and capability to meet the demands of homework in terms of the new curriculum policy. This gap in knowledge and

my experiences as a teacher in one of the schools in lower-socio economic settings motivated me to undertake this study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find how parents get involved in homework of rural combined schools in the King William's Town Education District. The study seeks to establish whether parents see the need to be involved in their children's homework. If they do, the study will examine the strategies they use when assisting with homework. If parents do not get involved in homework, the study will investigate the challenges and suggest ways of ensuring that parental involvement in homework becomes a reality.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 Key Question

How do parents get involved in homework of rural combined schools in the King William's Town Education District?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- a) Do parents in rural communities see the need to be involved in homework?
- b) What are the specific strategies that are used by parents in rural communities in assisting their children with homework?
- c) What are the challenges that parents in rural communities face when they assist their children with homework?
- d) What can be done to maximize parental involvement in homework?

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings and recommendations of this study have practical and theoretical significance. For instance, parents, particularly those who will read this study, will be aware of the important role they can play in changing children's attitude towards their work, their behaviour, attendance to school as well as in improving their academic performance. They will also be able to know and understand that their involvement in learner improvement is as critical as that of individual teachers. Therefore, they will, like

the teachers, strive to be directly involved in building and enhancing a better future for their children. Furthermore, parents in the rural areas will come to know and understand that allowing their children more time to perform schoolwork is fundamental to their success. In fact, it is a specific and a significant strategy they can use to ensure that children improve their performance.

This study suggest that parents take responsibility for the education and homework of their children. In the process, they could be exemplary since children learn better and understand procedures, ideas, and even their individual capabilities through observation. On the other hand, the findings of this study could persuade educators, school management and the school governing bodies to devise measures and mechanisms to strengthen relations between the school and the parent through homework.

This study may influence policy makers and district officials to propose policy changes and amendments to legislation and policy that could lead to effective and optimal parental involvement in homework. They may also come up with plans and resources that may equip and empower rural communities to deal better with homework demands. Lecturers in tertiary training institutions are likely to help pre-service educators in finding strategies for involving parents in rural settings to be involved in homework. At a theoretical level, this work will add to the small body of knowledge on homework in rural communities in South Africa by providing grounded insights about homework that confirms or refute homework theorizing provided by the endogenous-exogenous model and the modelling theory.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

There are few studies that have been undertaken on homework in South Africa, particularly in the rural contexts of the Province of the Eastern Cape where parental involvement is least apparent. Many of the studies have been conducted in developed countries such as the United States of America, Japan, New Zealand, and China. The Eastern Cape is one of the poorest rural provinces in South Africa. The contribution by Ndebele (2015) is significant; however, it is focused on socio-economic factors in suburban, inner city and township primary schools and not in rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Therefore, having drawn subjective information from the rural communities, this

study contributes largely towards the improvement of parental involvement particularly in rural schools. In the process, the lives of the children and the society will be improved since parental involvement in children's schoolwork will inject not only the courage and motivation for them to perform well and achieve their goals, but it will also add a sense of commitment and independence that will ensure they lead successful lives in the future. Furthermore, since this study is one of the few in this field, it will evoke some interest among scholars and serve as the basis of further research.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

Data for this research was collected in two public combined schools situated in rural communities of the King William's Education District. The study focused on the General Education Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) bands of both schools. Participants who were involved are teachers, parents, school management team (SMT) members, learners as well as SGB parents. The total number of participants in the research was 58, made up of 36 learners (focus groups), 14 parents and eight educators. Data collection took approximately two months to complete.

1.7 Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to clarify how they are used in this study: a parent, parental involvement, homework, rural schools, combined school, and strategies.

A parent: Section 1 of the South African Schools Act define a parent as (a) the parent or the guardian of a learner, (b) the person officially allowed to the safekeeping of a learner, or (c) the person who agrees to fulfil the duties of a person mentioned in (a) and (b) to the student's education at school (RSA, 1996) in homework of rural combined schools in the King William's Town Education District?. Ramirez (2001, p. 113) defines parent as "the child's natural parents as well as other family members and any other individuals who take special importance and support the child to develop and know the life beliefs and to make own beliefs". In this study, a parent is any person who may be a natural parent, an uncle, an aunt, cousin, a neighbour or any community member who may not be connected to the child and who takes charge of the children's schooling as well as homework. A parent can be understood as a caregiver.

Parental involvement: It is “is the extent to which parents are interested in, knowledge about and willing to take an active role in the day-to-day activities of their children” (Wong, 2008, p. 497). In this study, parental involvement means the parent’s responsibility of helping, supporting, and funding homework activities to improve children’s education.

Homework: This can be defined as “any work given to the child by the teacher to be finished either at home or at school during non-teaching hours” (Cooper, 2007, p. 4). Homework is a specific task in that it is planned at school but completed at home (Katz, Kaplan & Buzukashvily, 2011). In this study, homework should be understood to mean any work such as project, letter, assignment, project or case study given to a learner by an educator to be done at home or at school during non-tuition period.

Rural schools: These are schools that are located in rural communities or villages and pull learners to them. They are typified by low financial position, poor infrastructure and at the stage of simple service delivery. They normally fall under the control of traditional leadership (Quan-Balfour, 2006).

Combined School: In the study, a combined school is a school that combines a primary and a senior secondary school managed led by principal. It has all the phases of a school: foundation, intermediate, senior and FET.

Strategies: In this study, strategies should be understood to mean any means or ways of assistance or efforts towards improving and helping the learner in the process of undertaking or completing homework.

1.8 Chapter outline

The next chapter, Chapter 2, is a review of relevant and related literature on parental involvement in homework. The chapter is structured along the lines of sub-questions, namely need for parental involvement in homework, strategies used by parents in homework, challenges faced by parents in homework, and improving parental involvement in homework. This chapter argues that, whilst there is sufficient international body of knowledge on homework, however, it is not based on experiences of rural communities.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework of the study. The endogenous-exogenous model and the modelling theory guided the researcher in developing research instruments and interpreting the data. Chapter 4 focuses on how the study was carried out from a methodological point of view. The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm, a qualitative research approach, a case study design, sampled school and participants purposively selected, data collected through semi-structured and focus group interviews and documents collection, and adopted a variety of qualitative strategies of enhancing the validity of data and analysis.

Data is presented and analysed in Chapter 5. It is presented per school and then across the two schools. Data was transcribed, read several times, patterns that emerged were categorised according to themes in line with the sub-questions of the study. The theoretical framework assisted in giving meaning to the findings resulting from the analysis. Chapter 6 is the last chapter of this study. It focuses more on the interpretation of the key findings, which are compared with literature. The last sections of this chapter deal with areas of further study and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Failure to complete homework by a number of learners has become rife in many rural schools in the Eastern Cape Province. Learners either refuse to do their homework or fail to do it to completion. If they do it, they do it incorrectly. The parents, who are supposed to be assisting them with homework, appear to be neglecting them either through ignorance or through illiteracy. The strategies offered in a number of research work from abroad fail to arrest and remedy the situation in this part of the world; the conditions are altogether different. Even the contribution by South Africans such as Ndebele (2015), Smit and Liebenberg (2003) fail to describe the conditions in rural Eastern Cape Province. Ndebele's work is more focused on socio-economic factors in suburban inner city and township primary schools in the Gauteng Province, while Smit and Liebenberg (2003) focus on the realities and dynamics facing parents when attempting to be involved in their children's schooling in extreme poverty context in Cape Town.

However, in reviewing the literature, a number of the relevant and related literature towards parental involvement in homework have been taken into consideration. The review has been done based on the research questions. It starts with the main question on the extent to which parents in rural combined schools communities are involved in their children's homework. Subsequent to this question are sub-questions on whether or not parents in rural communities see the need to be involved in their children's homework; the strategies they use when assisting with homework; the challenges parents encounter in the effort to get involved in their children's homework; and the extent to which parental involvement in homework can be maximized to ensure that learners perform well in schools.

2.2 Parental involvement in homework

It has been argued that parents are either involved or not involved in their children's homework. Yet their involvement is critical for improved learner performance. Cooper (1994) and Plato (2000) concur with this argument when they posit that parental participation is having a particular part in whether children finish their project or not. What Cooper (1994) and Plato (200) emphasise in this argument is the fact that parents will

always have an influence on their children's performance. Therefore, it is important for parents to keep in mind that they have an obligation to assist and support their children in the completion of homework. Oosthuizen (2003) simplifies this when he suggests that a parent is obliged to take care of the child's physical health and keep a watchful eye on his/her school life so that the child may not become unprotected against damaging and different spiritual and cultural influences.

In the main, the parents ought to remember that they are the key role players in the development of the child; without their loving care, support and well-intended discipline, future communities and leadership would be a failure. For this reason, Weeto (1997) is correct to argue that parents have a responsibility to give on-going care and love to and be involved in the educational practice their children undergo. Other scholars such as Christenson (2004) and Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, and Closson (2005), documented a number of advantages that go with parental involvement in children's education. These advantages are explained in Chapter 1. While they would not be discussed in this chapter, it suffices to note that they have a potential to bring stability to the education of the child. These advantages would further strengthen the relationship between the teacher, child, and that between the parent and teacher, and learning would become an enjoyable experience.

In agreeing with these scholars, Henderson and Mapp (2002), Fan and Chen (2001) argue that the behaviour and performance of learners excels when they are assisted in their schoolwork by their parents. These parents, according to Sussel (1996) do not only develop their children to be high achievers at school but also to become citizens of a high calibre and integrity throughout their lives (Henderson and Bella, 1994) and become eligible to add value to their communities.

Parental involvement is therefore crucial to every learning experience. It can develop the child in his/her entirety; thus taking care of and decreasing learner dropout rate, and maximising improved school success (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2004; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

2.3 Need for parental involvement in homework

It has been observed that a number of learners do not do their homework and if they do, the homework is in many cases done incorrectly. This is a cause for concern, particularly now that there is strong suspicion that some parents do not involve themselves in learner education; let alone the performance and completion of homework. However, some scholars agree that there are few parents who value their involvement in homework. These scholars maintain that such parents realise how crucial a role their involvement can play in learner performance and success. Bempechat (2004) cites the motivational effect of parental involvement as key to parents' willingness to assist their children. He is also of the opinion that such willingness encourages student-learning success and preparedness to work hard and independently. This is supported by a number of scholars who observed that learner success, change in their behaviour and manner of communication, together with the increase in their knowledge entice parents to get more involved in their children's homework. These factors are discussed further below in an attempt to explain their impact on parental involvement.

2.3.1 Learner Success

Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burrow (1995) and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) believe that parents' participation will make an on-going difference in children's future. This argument is supported by Bandura (1997) who claims that parental involvement in homework will make a helpful change and difference to the child; it is likely to set higher goals for the child. In addition, it has been observed that children who are assisted by their parents perform well in their studies. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997), Cooper, Lindsay, Nye, & Greathouse (1998), Ames (1993) and Sanders(1998) take this further by arguing that parental participation in children's homework influence student outcomes; it serves as a model, a reinforcement and order that supports the improvement of tactics, information and manners that are associated with successful school performance.

Furthermore, parental involvement in homework is viewed as a leading factor towards successful educational functioning both for students who have the ability to work independently and those who require parental support to complete homework tasks (Cooper, Jackson, Nye, & Lindsay (2001); Epstein (1988); Hoover-Dempsey et al.(2001).

It has been proved that some students require parental involvement in homework to improve their abilities and methods helpful to student success and school learning (Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, Dejong and Jones (2001); Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Whetsel, Sandler, Green, Wilkins and Closson (2005). Nyarko (2011) goes on to suggest that as parents take charge of their children's homework, supervise how they use their time at home, go to learning programs with them during weekends or in vacations, they are guiding and instilling in them the importance of education. Education will finally lead them to a brighter future. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) adds that parents who are better prepared and qualified are more likely to have a positive impact on their children and help them succeed in life.

It can be concluded, therefore, that parental involvement may help the child obtain good results and have long-term success in education (Zimmerman, (2000) and (Chen & Stevenson, (1989). Sapungan (2014) concurs with this argument when he says that parental involvement in the child's learning experience offers many opportunities for educational success. This has, in fact, been proved to be accurate particularly with the children from well-to-do families and gifted learners, as Kay, Fitzgerald, Paradee, & Mellencamp (1994) and Levin (1997) have argued: successful learner development is dependent, among other things, on the quality of parental involvement in children's homework.

2.3.2 Change in behaviour

It has also been argued that parental involvement may lead to a change in children's behaviour. Scholars such as Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burrow (1995) and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) share the same understanding that parents have to support their children in homework if they are to behave well or sustain good behaviour. They also believe that children who are supported and given feedback on their homework by their parents behave well. Balli, Demo & Wedman (1998) reported that both the parents and learners gain more confidence at the work being done when the two work together and assist each other with homework.

The following scholars attach different qualities to parental involvement. Leon & Richards (1989), for instance argue that parental participation has a potential to support positive

student feelings towards learning. Xu (2005), on the other hand, believes that parental involvement in homework can help instil positive qualities such as honouring time and having ability to express oneself. Xu and Corno (2003) view family participation in learners' schoolwork as related to control of conduct in homework completion. However, it can be argued, while these qualities can mainly be associated with more positive student attitude, they also have a potential to improve learner behaviour since they would be rules and regulations governing the process. For instance, one has to listen when he/she is spoken to; he/she has to keep to time. In the same way, children have to listen and respond when spoken to by their parents; they also have to ask questions where and when necessary. This interaction, the parents' ideas together with the attitudes they display enhance children's abilities and their motivation levels in school performance (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). They may end up performing better and achieving better results that will enable them to further their education, compared to their lesser advantaged counterparts (Breen, Luijkx, Muller, & Pollak (2009) and Von Otter (2014).

2.3.3 Communication

Parental involvement in homework improves important connections and communication between families, students and other adults who are helping in improving learner performance (Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel & Green (2004). According to Grolnick & Slowiaczek (1994), the mere fact that a parent engages the learner, opens the way for the learner to share ideas – the relationship between the two of them is sound since they know each other well. This paves the way for the communication between the learner and the teacher to remain open as well as that between the parent and the teacher. Even if parents never went to school, supporting the child in any way possible becomes paramount in a strategy to instil in him/her the value education. This, in itself, has a potential to pave the way and enhance the level of sharing ideas between the child and parents. Eventually, the child would start to see the value in performing homework as well as the broader value of education.

It is, therefore, very important that there exists amicable collaboration and interaction between the parents and learners, particularly when dealing with homework. This may likely ensure that both the school and the parent understand the level of children's

knowledge the subject matter (homework) at hand (Hoover-Dempsey, 2001). It should be taken into consideration that not all of the homework activities are easy to complete; some are complicated for learners. They may require interaction between the parents and the child to be completed successfully. No doubt, this would enhance learner performance and success (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008) since it would improve learning, reinforce the relationship between school and home, and promote motivation (Bempechat, 2004). Madjar, Shklar & Moshe (2015) further states that communication between the parent and the child can be used for various reasons and aims rather than just homework. These would include, among others, self-development, ability to restrain and control oneself as well as establishing the level of the learner's level of understanding and reinforcing such understanding in some areas.

2.3.4 Knowledge increase

It has been observed that parental involvement in learner homework remains significant in enhancing both the knowledge of the parents and learners regarding the subject matter. On the part of the parents, they would begin to see and understand learner shortcomings on the basis of which they may plan intervention strategies to correct these. On the part of the learners, they will have an opportunity to develop and increase their learning capabilities. As a result, they would perform well in their studies and achieve their goals and aspirations (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Hoover- Dempsey & Sandler, 1997); particularly now that their parents would be serving as role models. Cooper (2001) and Cooper, Robinson & Patall (2006) and Epstein (2001) are, in fact, of the opinion that homework rates among the best instruments to reinforce learning; it helps promote proper study methods and learner independence. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) and Epstein and Sanders (2000), on the other hand, view it as the most convenient entry point for successful parental intervention into learner's performance.

Xu (2005) shares the same view that parental involvement in homework allows parents the opportunity to have a better understanding of what goes on in the classroom. This would inspire and enable them to support and supply meaning to school knowledge. This will be done in ways that motivate and encourage learners to improve on their self-regulatory strengths as they go about performing their daily tasks such as exercising their

responsibility to complete daily assignments or observing, carrying out and exercising laws that regulate their lives (Costa, Cardoso, Lacerda, Lopes & Gomes, (2006).

Apart from this, it should be reiterated that some parents do not become comfortable with mediocrity. As a result, they allow learners to probe problems independently through trial and error. Some of these projects are more complicated for learners to complete on their own (Gonida & Cortina, 2014). In elementary classes (primary schools), parental involvement adds to children's improvement in literacy and numeracy. It is believed that when parents are involved in reading-related activities of a primary school child, his/her reading act is likely to improve; similarly his/her knowledge and language skills together with general love for reading will increase (Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006; Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider and Simpkins (2004). This is more predominant with knowledgeable parents who add value to the education of their children by guiding and using different methods to resolve learning problems. While this may appear as a challenge to some parents, especially in rural settings, it can be of great assistance to children. It may allow them the opportunity to see and view the work at hand in a different and more advanced view. Consequently, children would be enabled to perform all tasks diligently and successfully (Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, Dejong, & Jones (2001).

2.3.5 Opposition to homework

While a number of parents see the need for parental involvement in homework, there are those parents who fail to realise the value of assisting children with homework. It is believed that failure emanates from illiteracy and lack of knowledge. Warton (1998) agrees with this belief when he argues that parents who are opposed to helping their children with homework lack the understanding of what homework stands for. They may also not be knowledgeable of the aim of assisting children with their homework. Other parents view their involvement in children's homework as a waste of time since they are not the ones studying. This point of view may be arising from the belief held by Murray, Woolgar, Martins, Christaki, Hipwell, & Cooper, (2006) and Patall et al. (2008) who argue that parental support is a normal time-consuming task which often leads to embarrassment, nervousness, and disagreement in the family due to the fighting that

tends to occur when homework is being done. Solomon, Warin & Lewis (2002), cited in Forsberg (2007), concur with this claim. They believe that parental assistance in homework creates problems since some teenagers refuse to be helped on the pretext that parental involvement stops their developing creativity. Westlund (2004) further states that large quantities of homework stresses children; they tend to develop a negative attitude towards it, particularly, once parents appear to be nagging them to do it.

However, it may also be argued that exhaustion may also lead to reluctance by parents to assist children. Some parents work and in some cases come back home tired and unable to assist their children with homework. When this is coupled with lack of knowledge, a stressful situation can be created between the parent and the child. Moroni, Dumont, Trautwein, Niggli, Baeriswyl (2015) and Cooper, Lindsay, & Nye, (2000) concur with this argument when they state that while homework may be helpful to learner development, it can also become detrimental to their educational growth. Similarly, Hill and Tyson (2009) argue that homework assistance is the only type of involvement that is not always linked to educational success.

On the contrary, while Moroni, et al (2015), Cooper, et al (2000) and Hill and Tyson (2009) may hold this negative view about homework, it becomes difficult to believe these scholars' argument since homework has been proved valuable and necessary for improved learner performance. Lack of parental involvement that may be detrimental to the child's development. That is, if a parent does the homework for the child instead of guiding and giving support to him/her. However, no parent in his/her right frame of mind would spoil the child to an extent of depriving him/her of his/her independence and a brighter future. No wonder, then, that parental involvement should take place when it is needed – the child ought to be left alone to fend for him-/herself otherwise his educational development capacity will be hampered; his/her ability to work independently may not be an exception.

In conclusion, that parental involvement has become a necessary intrusion in children's education and performance of given tasks for homework; it can have positive spin-offs to learner performance and success (Echaune, Judah, Ndiku, & Sang, 2015). In other words, parental involvement can lead to better understanding and commitment to school

work. Scholars such as Cooper (2001), Murray, Woolgar, Martins, Christaki, Hipwell, & Cooper (2006) and Patall, Cooper, Robinson (2008) are supportive of this argument when they posit that parental involvement improves learner understanding and learning success. Madjar (2015) further adds that the goals parents and children follow while working on homework projects play an important part in addition to the role of power and time spent.

It needs to be reiterated, however, that some parents do not see the need for involvement in children's homework. They claim that it is time-consuming. Yet, scholars such as McGregor & Knoll (2015) agree that lack of parental support in particularly homework may have unpleasant outcomes for a child's educational success. It takes away the need and interest on the part of the child to commit him-/herself in his/her studies (Mcdermott, Goldman & Varenne, (1984) and Xu & Corno, (1998)). No wonder, then, it has been argued that children whose parents display an interest in their homework activities perform well and are well behaved while those children whose parents show no interest in their homework fail to do assigned homework tasks and end up failing or repeating grades. This, in turn, may lead to children dropping out of school. Apart from this, these children may develop permanent communication and heart breaking problems in the future (Hornby, 2000).

To avoid situations of this nature, therefore, homework ought to be well designed as Walker et al, (2004) have argued: a well-designed homework supports the school and home studying. It also enable parents and teachers to understand the extent to which the child has learned and understood the learning experience so that they (the teacher and parent) may be able to further guide and assist the child to improve on his/her studies. It should also be emphasised that assisting and supporting the learner does not amount to doing his/her work for him/her. If it does, it would destroy the child and his/her ability to work independently. Cunha, Rosário, Macedo, Nunes, Fuentes, Pinto and Suarez (2015) concurs with this argument when he argues that doing the children's homework is understood as an unsuccessful approach, as children will not learn to take on accountability and independence in their homework.

2.4 Strategies used by Parents in Homework

It has been argued that some parents see the need for their involvement in children's homework. This has also been suggested by the literature that has been reviewed. Therefore, in a bid to strengthen this interest and ensure that learner performance improves, it has become prevalent for some strategies to be put in place. To this effect, the literature suggested time management, suitability of the place, responsibilities, supervision and monitoring, and material resources that are discussed below.

2.4.1 Time management

Time management is key to learner success; failure to manage time by the learners, teachers and parents may hamper learner progress. Therefore, all these parties need to take cognisance of this fact. Specifically, the parents ought to reduce the daily chores of the children, thus allowing the children the opportunity to do their homework during their leisure time. This implies three things: that the parents should see the need for homework; they should value it; and they should cherish its intended outcomes in the education of their children. Scholars such as Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) and Xu & Corno (2003) approve of this intervention by the parents. They believe that parents should be exemplary and control their children's time, simplify tasks and commend good work while disapproving of and criticizing poor performance. To succeed in this effort, parents have to assist the child to set time and spaces for homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001); they should also guide the learners towards the achievement of goals through proper means of time management (Xu & Corno, 2003).

2.4.2 Suitability of the place

It is important for parents to ensure that the spaces children use for homework are conducive for the purpose. In other words, they should be clean, spacious and well ventilated with enough light and the necessary resources and furniture. Furthermore, the place used for homework activities should be free of noise, detractors and time-eaters such as cell phones and television (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall (2006) and Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers (1987). In line with these scholars, Margolis, McCabe & Alber (2004) and Hutsinger, Jose, Liaw, & Ching (1997) argue that parents should plan and organize the environment for their children's homework activities. Echaune, Judah, Ndiku & Sang

(2015) on the other hand, are of the opinion that parents play a significant role in ensuring that the learning environment for each learner meets the required standards. Similarly, Thelamour and Jacobs (2014) and Delgado-Gaitan (1992) argue that parents have a duty to advise and prepare a place that is conducive to learning. This will ensure meaningful learning since the child will realise the interest and caring attitude parents display in their learning.

It has also been found that well-to-do and educated families provide better learning environment for their children (von Otter, 2014). In fact, it has been argued that these families are prepared to go out of their way to ensure that their children receive all the necessary resource material and expertise that can enrich their learning and future ambitions. In other words, organising and finding a place that would be conducive to learning and doing homework for these families would, therefore, not be a problem. They would, in fact, be willing and prepared to sacrifice their house's comfort for the sake of their children's education. This would involve, among other things, sacrificing their lounges, dining rooms or bedrooms and personal enriching and fascinating television programmes for purposes of learning. This thinking could have been influenced by Gonida and Cortina (2014) who view parental involvement in learners' homework as a multi-component arrangement involving both quantitative and qualitative features. These parents would undergo all these sacrifices in order for their children to do homework peacefully, without any interruption.

Whilst parents have this duty, it is unclear what parents in rural and underprivileged communities do to prepare a suitable environment for homework.

2.4.3 Responsibilities

It has been argued that parental involvement is, in itself, a display of a caring and responsible attitude towards children's learning and success. It consists of the use of strategies aimed at making a fitting illustration or demonstration between the child's ability levels and duty needs. This may involve breaking down and shaping homework tasks into controllable duties and needs to fit the child abilities while not losing sight of the child's capability and understanding levels, at the same time (Rogoff, 1990).

It is a proven fact that every parent wants to see the best out of his/her children. In fact, parents require their children to lead successful lives in the future. To this effect, parents take the responsibility to encourage children to continue doing homework in order to fulfil curriculum requirements and their future ambitions and dreams. This does not only apply to knowledgeable parents; even those parents who are illiterate and have no clue of what the homework is all about have to show interest in their children's school work and homework, in particular. Such parents may seek assistance from people who are knowledgeable and understand what the homework is all about. This would, without doubt, convince the children that their parents want the best for and out of them. As a result, they would not hesitate to approach their parents for assistance when faced with problems (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001).

In line with this argument, Tam & Chen (2009) conceived that parents have a duty and responsibility to support and monitor their children's homework activities. However, as argued earlier, in doing so, they should not have to overstate their authority and dictate terms; they should be considerate of learner needs. Dictatorship may harm the relationship between the learners and parents; thus causing conflict and misunderstanding between the two parties. Parents should, instead, try to reason with the children even though they know they carry the responsibility and are answerable for the children's performance at school. Corno (2001) supports this suggestion when he argues that parents should support, control and calm down their children unhappy attitudes coming up during homework time. To succeed in this effort, parents should play a guiding and supportive role in children's decision-making strategies and attempts to complete homework and other organized learning tasks successfully. In addition, parents should strive to strengthen the relationship between learners and themselves as well as that between themselves and the teachers. This would assist in getting to know these two parties better so that together they may be able to address the children's individual educational strengths and weaknesses for better performance and successful learning (Sapungan, 2014).

2.4.4 Supervision and monitoring

While supervision and monitoring may form part of the parents' responsibility as indicated in the previous section, it is worth being discussed as a singular strategy that parents ought to use in enhancing their involvement in children's homework. Apart from the teachers, parents are duty-bound to ensure that their children do their homework and do it correctly. In other word they have the responsibility to supervise, monitor, advise and give guidance and support to children's homework, where and when necessary. In the process, they have to observe how much attention children give to their homework activities and, on the strengths of this observation, offer support and motivation for improvement purposes (Xu & Corno, 2003). Apart from supervising and monitoring the child, Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2001) add that parents should at all times check and show higher thinking capabilities that would assist the learner improve in his/her performance. Thus, overseeing, controlling and getting convinced that homework is completely and correctly done. Doing so can have a positive impact in the child's schooling and performance of homework activities.

It also implies that while learners should be encouraged to do work on their own, meaningful intervention by the parent can lead to learner progress and quality performance particularly with homework activities. In other words, supervision and control can help in speeding up learning since. It has the potential to improve even the total time students spend studying and doing homework (Van Voorhis, 2011). The authority invested in parents to set rules and give direct assistance to their children (Patall, Cooper and Robinson, 2008) enables this. Proper exercise of this authority can have a positive impact in the children's development and future engagements in life (Madjar, Shklar & Moshe, 2015).

2.4.5 Material resources

It has been argued earlier that some parents are prepared to go out of their way to ensure that their children get all the resources necessary to improve their performance. Material resources, such as reference books, magazines and even knowledgeable people, form part of these resources. Making these resources available to the children, therefore, would improve and bring success to learner performance and completion of homework.

This becomes more necessary now that the schools in questionnaire renowned for short supplies in material resources. Hutsinger, Jose, Liaw and Ching (1997) and Cooper (2006) encourage parents to help their children with both human and other physical resources to improve in situations of this nature; they should also allow their children to visit libraries, go to excursions, use telephones and internet or call upon knowledgeable people to assist them in pursuit of their goals. These initiatives, according to Nye, Turner, & Schwartz (2006), can stimulate interest in reading and language thus laying a foundation for the child becoming a lifelong learner.

Indeed, arranging for and supplying children with these resources will bring stability to their learning experiences. Consequently, there would be no excuses for children's failure to do homework or for doing it incorrectly. Even the parents would not be bothered to account for non-performance of homework, instead they will continue encouraging children to work harder and minimise the number of house chores children have to do. In the process, parents should continue restraining themselves from doing homework for their children; guiding and supporting their children should be fundamental in their intervention. Doing the child's homework, according to Cunha (2015), is understood as an unsuccessful approach, as children will not learn to take responsibility and be accountable for their studies; they will also lack the capability to work independently. Al-Mahrooqi, Denman and Al-Maamari (2016) concur with this argument. They further suggests that parents should be kept abreast of and be updated with the new developments and best practices in parental involvement in learner homework. This will empower and help them realise the significance of the role they ought to play in the education of their children (Enemuo & Obidike (2013) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009). This is critical because some parents do not understand the importance of their involvement in their children homework (Kidwell, 2004) cited in Kukk, Rajalaane, Rei & Piht (2015).

2.5 Challenges faced by parents in homework

Although some parents assist their children with homework, there are problems that they have to overcome. Some children lack interest in learning and so continue to procrastinate and not perform their homework in time, while others forget to do so. These

children, it appears, perceive homework more of a burden rather than a learning activity. This becomes annoying and stressful to the parents who are prepared to assist their children in every respect of their schoolwork and homework. This is, of course, an expected reaction from a person committed to assist, as Epstein (1988) and Levin, et al. (1997) have once argued: helping with homework increases stress between parents and children. In fact, they argue that the lack of willingness to do homework by the learners discourages parents; it upsets them at the worst. Similarly, Markow, Kim & Liebman (2007) found that homework was a major cause of worry; while Westlund (2004) argues that homework shapes borders between home life and school life.

Dauber and Epstein (1993), on the other hand, identifies poverty and the inability to buy additional learning materials as one of the challenges faced by parent in assisting with homework. This is supported by Murray, et al. (2006), Cowan, Traill and Naughton (1998) and Levin (1997) who identified, among other things, the lack of space for homework, poverty and shortage of resource materials, as main causes of worry in family lives. Similarly, Ozer & Keskin (2015) found that parents face a number of complications, which make it difficult for them to supply learners with the necessary materials for homework. At times, these parents a predicament of whether to prioritise helping an individual child with resources for homework or taking care of the family, on a broader scale. Most of these parents are unemployed and live on social grants.

The other challenge facing some parents is the lack of knowledge on the role played by projects in the education of their children and the role parents have to play in these projects (Kay et al., 1994). As a result they often feel self-pity and helplessness at having to assist their children with things they have no clue or understanding of (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Burow, 1995). This is so because parents become unhappy when they are unable to help their children with homework (Ozer & Keskin, 2015). Eccles & Harold (1993) concurs with this point of view when they claim that parents are burdened by their incapability to assist their children; some end up doubting their worthiness to parenthood. This becomes worse when they find difficulty with helping in the primary school classes (Murray, et al., 2006).

Some parents are prepared to undergo training or study further in a bid to improve the level of their education so that they may be able to assist their children. While this is mainly done by enlightened parents, it becomes necessary for all parents to make an effort in developing themselves and improving their educational qualifications in order to be able to minimise these challenges.

In addition, educators should be close to parents and continuously inform them about the developments in education. This would help them in dealing with problematic situations as they help learners with their homework (Warton, 2001). Bempechat, Drago-Severson and Boulay (2002) believe that parents become discouraged when children seem to undermine their capabilities, particularly when they fail to explain or clarify the subject matter to the learner's satisfaction. This is exacerbated when children are either playing or busy with something else and have no interest in doing homework; they disregard parents' calls and the assistance they render (Leon and Richards, 1989). It has also been found that children disregard their parents when they have no clue of the homework and the task at hand.

This is probably the reason Solomon (2002) warns against too much parents' control. Dictating to children can have debilitating effects on their development. It can be perceived as one way of undermining children's capability to perform tasks on their own; thus depriving them of their individuality and independence. Therefore, parents should allow learners to exercise their creativity and solve problems on their own. This is even more necessary now that it has been discovered that children's perceptions and understanding differ greatly, from that of their parents, particularly during homework time (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995). However, this does not, in any way, mean that parents should abdicate their responsibility to supervise and control their children's homework. They are the masters of the disciplinary processes and, as such, they should take responsibility for the learners' performances at school and home. Nonetheless, it has been found that some parents have made it, solely, teachers' responsibility to look after their children's performance at school and at home; they do not allow themselves the opportunity to look into and control their children's homework (Ndebele, 2015). It becomes ridiculous when parents claim that educators are being paid to look after and teach their children, while,

in essence, they have to make sure that their children do their homework and all schoolwork to the best of their ability.

It is understood that unless parents acknowledge and accept their responsibility to look after their children's education, the challenges prevalent to our education system and the performance of homework would never be minimised. The efforts aimed at decreasing these challenges would be in vain. Much focus has been directed on the role played by teachers to improve parental involvement in homework rather than what parents ought to do to minimize these problems. Yet, it is a parent's duty to arrange time in his/her busy schedule to attend to children's homework and other school related matters. As argued earlier, placing responsibility solely on the teachers' shoulders would harm the relationship between teachers and parents. In the process, teaching and learning processes will suffer; performance of homework would not become an exception.

Apart from this, parental involvement in children's homework would become meaningful since parents would become better equipped to deal with it and other educational activities. This assumption arises from my observation that fully involved parents in homework activities can be motivational to children. It can lead to learners becoming more interested in their schoolwork while viewing homework as an activity that adds value to their learning and educational experience.

2.6 Improving parental involvement in homework

Literature reveals that there are a number of ways that can be explored to maximize parental involvement in homework. Al-Mahrooqi, Denman & Al-Maamari (2016) are of the opinion that parental involvement in their children's education is one of the most important characteristics that are linked to learning achievement. Berthelsen and Walker (2008) go on to relate parental involvement with the quantity of positive results of school attendance, extra assistance for home education, better interaction with the school or education source, and upper stages of public change and educational success. Similarly, Clark (2009) views it as the advancement of learners' better cognitive ability, improved problem-solving expertise, and less student behavioural disorder, at school.

Emerson, Fear, Fox and Sanders (2012) equates parental involvement to academic socialization principle which can be reached through the parents' connecting capabilities concerning the education of the child; stressing equally the importance and the satisfaction that can be gained during study time, debate and proper learning methods. In simpler terms, parental involvement appears to be a strategy that is capable of setting up a link between schoolwork and actions occurring in the child's life, thus making home learning environment a motivating and supportive factor towards the child's educational growth and ensuring that he/she meets the goals at his/her disposal. It can also be argued that parental involvement has the capability to ensure that acts that have a potential to build the child's sense of independence and learning capabilities are employed.

Parental involvement in homework can be viewed as a voluntary and value-laden exercise, which is linked to educational success and mental happiness (Emerson, et al., 2012). Therefore, it needs to be encouraged and supported by all educational stakeholders. It is not surprising, then, to learn of the suggestion by Margolis (2005) that educators should play a key role in supporting and stressing the significance of their availability in the lives of children's education. Cancio, West & Young (2004) add that teachers should supply parents with the necessary information regarding teaching plans that may enhance students learning. Hong, Milgram, & Rowell (2004) together with Van Voorhis (2001) advise that parents should be encouraged to meet with teachers to discuss problematic areas in homework activities. This would, no doubt, lead to learners attaching value to homework activities and getting encouraged performing these activities timeously to the best of their abilities (Van Voorhis, 2001). It would also promote and boost parental participation, thus accelerate closer home and school relations for the benefit of the child (Bailey, Silververn, Brabham, and Ross, 2004).

While some scholars believe that teachers must be encouraged to help parents with information and supporting skills that would enable them to assist their children with homework (Dornbush, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; and Steinberg, Elemen, & Mounts, 1989), teachers should also inform the parents about the indirect teaching methods and teaching approaches that would be beneficial to the learners

(Walker et al., 2004). Apart from this, Walker et al. (2004) is of the opinion that parents should be advised to form smaller care groups which would work collaboratively in making sure that learners learn and perform given tasks timeously and correctly. In addition, Allington & Cunningham (2002) and Baker (2003) believe that parents should be encouraged to inform teachers about the problems they experience when assisting children with homework. These scholars are of the opinion that such a report should be in writing, noting and reporting both the children's strong and weak points; it should also be acknowledging the assistance rendered to the children by appending a signature in the homework diary.

In return, teachers have to give feedback and further advise parents on additional steps to be taken where and when necessary (Bongfilio, 1988). This may be followed by one-on-one discussion between the teachers and parents on the problems the parents have experienced while supervising and monitoring learner homework activities (Nelson, Jayanthi, Brittain, Epstein, & Bursuck, 2002). During such meetings, teachers may advise parents to plan for child support or set time frames for effective interventions that would improve learner performance in homework activities (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001, Van Voorhis, 2001). Hong, Milgram & Rowell (2004) further suggest that teachers may be instrumental in organizing and drawing this connection program for parents who are keen and capable to participate in assisting with homework.

As indicated earlier, this step can be beneficial to the children since it would reinforce parental involvement, the strategies they use to assist as well as their capability in assisting with homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Furthermore, this step would also narrow the gap between the parents and teachers as they continue with attempts to improve learner performance and their development to adulthood, thus clearing teachers of alleged 'abdication' of their duties when requesting parent to assist with homework (Munk, Bursuck, Epstein, Madhavi, Nelson and Polloway, 2001). Such a rapport between the parents and teachers would be welcomed since it would have a potential to improve the performance of the child in his/her schoolwork (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005). In the process, non-performance of homework together with learner misbehaviour would be minimized; and assisting learners would be more enjoyable to both parents and

teachers (Ndebele, 2015). It is, therefore, not surprising for Ndebele (2015) to urge educators to assist in the fight against learners' misbehaviour. Community values and beliefs play a major role in the development of a child's character and behaviour.

Nyarko (2011) concurs with this argument when he states that educators and other educational stakeholders should arrange sensitization programs to capacitate and empower parents about the responsibilities and roles they have to play in improving learner academic performance and performance in homework activities. When coupled with workshops and open nights or classes, these programmes would promote quality performance in both school and homework (Ndebele, 2015), reinforce parents' understanding of the importance of homework and allow parents, from poverty-stricken communities, the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges as they guide and monitor their children's homework. It is important to note that workshops and open nights or classes have a potential to augment teacher assistance in terms of engaging and teaching parents strategies that are employable towards improving learner performance (McGregor, 2015).

In the light of this argument, Echaune (2015) encourages teachers to motivate parents who do not involve themselves in learner homework activities, to do so. He also inspires the parents who already involve themselves in learner homework to continue doing so. As this proceeds, teachers ought to guide and support the parents with proper guidance for the betterment of children's behaviour and attitude to their schoolwork and homework, in particular. It would not matter even if the teachers attend to individual parents at a time; the key idea is to make sure that each parent is empowered with proper guidance to involve him-/herself with learner homework.

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that the quantity of homework given to the learners should be reasonable (McGregor, 2015). This will ensure that learners perform these activities with enthusiasm and success, particularly now that it is notable that more than one homework can be given to a learner at a time. In fact, there needs to be a workable homework timetable at the learners' disposal so that clashes in homework activities can be avoided; while overload can be prevented. Again, there should also exist strong communication lines between parents and teachers for the enhancement of quality

learning. This would motivate and encourage learners, including those who lack interest in performing homework activities, to perform these tasks diligently and successfully; the parents who lack interest in involving themselves with homework activities would not be an exception.

2.6 Conclusion

It has been argued that there are few studies done on homework in South Africa and more specifically in the rural contexts of the Eastern Cape Province. A few studies that have been undertaken concentrate on cities and townships; not on the rural outskirts of South Africa. One of such studies is the one undertaken by Ndebele (2015) which focuses on socio-economic factors in suburban, inner city and township primary schools in the Gauteng province. The other is a study by Smit and Liebenberg (2003) which focuses on the realities and dynamics facing parents when attempting to be involved in their children's schooling in extreme poverty context of Cape Town.

Yet the study I am undertaking is based on rural public combined schools, where parental involvement in homework is minimal: very few parents take interest in their children's schoolwork. Scholars such as Singh, Mbokodi and Msila's (2004) view parental involvement in learning as important; this becomes more important when it comes to homework. These scholars further argue that parents with little participation or no role to play in learners' homework add to poor performance by these learners. This, however, does not mean that these parents have no ambition or do not want their children to study. They just do very little, if anything, to make sure that their children perform to the required standard.

Nonetheless, some parents view parental involvement in homework as crucial. This may be arising from the belief that parental help is a leading factor for successful educational functioning of the learner. It leads to success while non-involvement may lead to failure precisely because those parents who lack the necessary skills and strategies to assist the learner with his/her studies either refuse to get involved or lack the necessary knowledge to do so.

A number of challenges to parental involvement have been identified together with those factors, which have a potential to deepen and reinforce parental involvement. To this effect, it has been concluded that the quantity of homework tasks should be reasonable, while there needs to be a homework timetable to regulate and prevent overcrowding learners with huge quantities of homework.

Therefore, it can be concluded that parental involvement, specifically in the child's homework, is crucial to learning. It has the potential to improve learners' listening and reading skills and encourage them to do their work diligently (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2001). Furthermore, it has been proved that homework can play a significant role in the learning process. It promotes individual and independent work; it also prompts the child to focus on outcomes just as it is required by the new curricula post-apartheid period. When coupled with parental involvement and support, homework becomes one of the key aspects to reinforce learning.

It has been argued that very few studies in this field have been undertaken in South Africa. Most of these studies have been about urban, city or township schools. Rural schools, the subject of this study, do not feature in these studies. As a result, this study had to rely on studies from western societies, which express different expectations from those of the rural areas. These studies place emphasis on different aspects of parental involvement in children's upbringing. Some deal with parental engagement in academic socialization, reading development, socio-economic status of parents in education, helping with dinner and school trips, parental involvement in school activities, parental help in preparing for tests and parenting styles (Moroni, 2015); while others deal with frequency of parental involvement in homework instead of studying the way in which parents become involved (Moroni, 2015). The study by Smit and Liebenberg (2003), for instance, focus on the realities and dynamics facing parents when attempting to be involved in their children's schooling in extreme poverty context in Cape Town.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the theoretical framework that has been applied by the researcher in studying parental involvement in homework. A theoretical framework is a lens to lead the investigator as to what problems are important to study, the people that need to be examined, and the adjustments that are needed (Creswell, 2003). The chapter focuses on the endogenous-exogenous model and the modelling theory.

3.2 Endogenous-Exogenous Model

The endogenous-exogenous model of homework that has been used by the researcher in investigating parental involvement in homework, has been chosen from, amongst others, e.g. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model, Eccles and Harold's model of parental involvement, and Grolnick and Slowiaczek multidimensional model (Cooper, 1989). Endogenous means beginning or rising within an organism or matter or having no obvious external cause. Exogenous means beginning outside an organism or structure. This model of homework recommends that the success of homework may be inspired by three groups of variables, namely, family variables (e.g. sex, capability, and financial background), adult inspection (e.g. family project support and educator remark), and the part played by learners during homework assistance (e.g. homework usefulness, task curiosity, project controlling). This model was developed in the United States of America (USA) and there is no evidence to prove that it has been applied in South African rural context.

However, noting that homework is a complex and challenging activity in home-based situations and schools (Cooper, Lindsay, & Nye, 1999), the researcher thought it wise to use the endogenous-exogenous model in this study. This decision was influenced by factors such as the resource material and the environment rather than teaching activities (Cooper, 2001). No wonder, then, that Cooper (1989) once suggested that learner capability, inspiration, ranking standard, and other separate distinctions, like learner financial backgrounds, are exogenous elements that may inspire various results involving homework completion. The endogenous model, on the other hand, divides the homework process into assignment characteristics (homework process and communal context), first

classroom elements (e.g. supply of resources), communal factors (family setting and others' participation) and the classroom improvement (e.g. teacher comment).

Parents and other adults always gain from understanding what kind of observation is suitable for learners with special individual requirements (Hong & Lee, 2003). For example, the learners who are easily disturbed or lack interest in learning and, therefore, fight against it, may want to gain or simply gain from close supervision. This is, in fact, may be true of learners who enjoy studying close to adults with an intention to gain from their criticism and comments. Such learners are usually strong-willed and have a strong sense of self-control. More importantly, such learners are likely to be independent, thus gaining more from self-education; free form directs supervision by the teachers and parents. However, this does not mean that these learners do not need support and guidance from the adults. Helpful monitoring and guidance is always necessary to focus learners' attention on the important issues (of learning). This may be achieved through asking questions or giving clarity to complex issues (Hoover-Dempsey, Wilkins, Sandler, & O'Connor, 2004).

3.3 Modelling Theory

The second theoretical framework for this study is Bandura's (1997) modelling theory. In terms of this model, parents regularly work as leaders from whom children learn. It should be stated up-front that, more than often, children learn through observation. It is, therefore not surprising to learn that this model requires learners to obtain understanding of abilities, procedures, ideas, and individual abilities through observation and inspection. In studying parents' involvement actions, then, children learn procedures including responsiveness, memory, and illustrative representation of practical events and production of linked manners.

Modelling is, in fact, mostly persuasive when models are observed by learners as able and influential, having skills and capabilities that the learners regard as important. Learners tend to construct and reconstruct these observations to suit their own world and that of fellow learners. Again, modelling is mainly convincing when projects at hand are either new or not directly followed by visible outcomes. This situation is closely related to and resembles the activity that takes place at school where learners are often confronted

with new and complex and challenging topics or learning material. It can, therefore, not be denied that closeness as well as common history of background and experience often functions to make the parent mainly relevant and strong example for the child (Bandura, 1997).

Parents and other adult people are the role models of their children. As such, they ought to be exemplary to them and should play a leading role as children also learn by observing them. Parents who are good role models to their children tend to influence their children for the better. They change children's attitude towards learning and performance of homework; they also change children's behaviour and attendance to school, thus leading to improved performance. It can be concluded, therefore, that good role modelling has a potential to develop a learner for the better: he/she may gain better understanding of the subject matter and devise learning strategies that would lead to his/her success, and empower to construct and reconstruct the learning matter to suit his/her understanding better. Indeed, a role model has the capacity to lay the right kind of foundation for the future of the children. Hence, parents who play little or no role in their children's education and homework are likely contribute to poor performance by their children at school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001).

It has been proved that parents who spend quality time with their children tend to have a good influence on them (Ngoqo, 2016). Similarly, learners from unstable families tend to perform poorly at school; they also neglect given tasks and end up dropping out from school (Ngoqo, Foncha, and Abongdia 2018). Children are more likely to follow on the steps of their parents as they grow up: they are likely to be good readers if their parents are good readers; they are likely to be creative if the parents are creative. It is, therefore advisable for parents to lead a good life and be exemplary to their children if they want them to lead good lives. For example, children are more likely to perform given tasks and assignments if parents have a habit to enquire on the daily school activities. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, (1997) share the same idea when they argue that disputes between parents and children can be avoided if adults and caregivers see the importance, observe and direct their children's work on projects.

3.4 Conclusion

The two models guided the researcher in drafting and probing the interview questions. The intention was to find endogenous or exogenous factors that have a bearing on homework in rural combined schools and communities. It was also intended to find out whether or not parents were able to provide leadership and become role models for their children. All these were pursued in line with the sub-questions that guided data collection. The models were further utilized in analysing and interpreting data and findings. The researcher examined the body of data, made specific observations and looked for common themes that appeared in the data; with lens being provided by the endogenous-exogenous models, and modelling theoretical framework. As observed by Yin (2009), two models provided useful lenses for explanations and interpretations of data and findings.

Furthermore, the study found that involvement of parents in homework is a universal problem. It is important that homework theories are studied so that parents can understand their responsibilities and take rightful ownership of the education of their children in the home setting. Theorists such as Bandura (1997) and Cooper (1989) guided the researcher in classifying different views given by the participants. Their contributions have been a revelation and a remedy towards overcoming obstacles in parent involvement in learner homework.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the way parents in rural communities of the King William's Town District are involved in the homework of their children. This chapter focuses on how the study was carried out from a methodological point of view. It deals with the research paradigm, research approach, research design, sampling, data collection methods, data analysis method, validity, and ethical considerations. The chapter suggests that the appropriate methodological choices for this study were interpretivist paradigm, a qualitative approach, a case study design, purposive sampling, semi-structured and focus group interviews, and qualitative analysis.

4.2 Research Paradigm

While a paradigm may be viewed as a set of views, worldwide factors and orders which may be used by the researcher for managing how the research should be done and how the results should be understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), Maree (2007 p. 47) defines it as “a set of expectations or beliefs about important views of reality which give rise to a specific world vision”. As such, a research paradigm is an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approaches and tools (Ngoqo, 2016).

The researcher used the interpretive paradigm for several reasons. One of these is the interest he had to know the world of human understanding. To succeed in doing so, the researcher had to keep record of his findings, particularly now that the subject of the investigation will require subjective contribution from the participants in the research. Cohen, Manion, and Keith (2000) submit that it is hard work to get inside the person and to know him/her from the inside. In line with this argument, interpretivists believe that reality is not something out there to be measured objectively; it lies in the subjective understandings of the participants. By applying the interpretive approach, therefore, the researcher got the opportunity to know better the participants and to understand what they think, their feelings and experiences about homework (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). The interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to create an environment of openness and trust with the interviewees (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). The paradigm

assisted the researcher to probe questions to the participants in order to get perceptions and beliefs about homework. In this way, the researcher was able to understand a number of factors through interpretations ascribed to by the participants themselves (Cohen, 2000; Creswell, 2009).

4.3 Research Approach

The research approach means the selection of appropriate instruments that will gather data to answer the research questions (Cohen, 2000). The researcher used the qualitative approach. Qualitative research presents information as a story with words (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The qualitative approach is largely an investigative process in which the researcher slowly makes sense of a social occurrence by opposing, linking, copying, arranging and sorting the object of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Creswell (2009, p. 232) defines qualitative research as “a way for finding out and knowing the sense of individuals or collections given to a social or human problem”.

The researcher used the qualitative approach for several reasons. He came closer to the natural setting to get the information verbally and directly (face-to-face) from the participants in the schools under review. Using face-to-face approach allowed the researcher the opportunity to delve deeper into the research process. This paid dividends as, in the end, the researcher could establish a number of facts that have a bearing on parental involvement in learner homework. Among these, facts about issues that influence parents not to involve themselves in their children homework and the challenges confronting them when helping with homework, together with the recommendations to the contrary, took the centre stage.

In essence, the researcher found that the schools in question were operating without homework policies. As a result, consideration of whether or not parents were actively involved in assisting and guiding children in homework, was non-existent. Parents were, therefore, assisting learners out of their own volition. Those who were not interested simply disregarded the call. Thus confirming the researcher’s assumptions regarding the lack of parental involvement in learner homework. On the other hand, it paved the way for the implementation of strategies, which can assist in maximizing parents’ involvement in homework, as required by the qualitative research approach (Leedy & Omrod, 2005).

In other words, the qualitative research approach helped the researcher in getting first-hand information and ideas from parents regarding their involvement in learner homework.

4.4 Research Design

Research design is a strategic framework or plan that guides research activity to ensure that sound conclusions are reached (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). Research design is a plan or scheme of how a researcher aims to run a research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). On the basis of these definitions, the researcher opted to use a case study design in forwarding his/her argument. Terre Blanche et al. (2006, p. 460) define case studies as “ideographic research methods, that is, methods that study the individuals as individuals rather than as members of a population”. A case study can also be defined as the analysis of a single example of some common event such as a village, a family or a young team (Babbie, 2007). Merriam (1995) in Patton (2015) and Creswell (2014) defines a case study as a process of investigation in which the researcher studies in-depth a program, occasion, performance, system or one or more persons, using a mixture of data collection methods over a repeated periods. It derives its strength from allowing the use of many methods of data collection such as interviews, focus groups, and collection of documents (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). These benefit the case study as it strives for a full understanding of how members of the community talk and act as they attempt to make meaning of the events under study.

A case study also allows for new information and suggestions particularly when such information and suggestions are detailed and have been carefully thought out (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2014). This goes well with the different types of case studies, which are appropriate for investigation purposes. These include explanatory or causal case studies which informs the readers and the researcher how or why certain system of events happen or do not happen). The descriptive case studies, on the other hand, explain an event in its real world context while exploratory case studies find the research questions or methods that can be used in an investigation, which may or may not be a case study (Yin, 2014).

The descriptive case study was found to be the most appropriate for this study since it assisted the researcher in getting subjective views and experiences from the various participants. Babbie (2007) prefers to call these subjective views and experiences 'real-life information' in a communal environment. It becomes important to add that the descriptive case study allowed the researcher the opportunity to have a direct, face-to-face interview with the participants. This helped him deepen the investigation further and be able to elicit real-life information about parental involvement in the homework of their children in the two schools under review – an exercise that would have been impossible if the subjective views of the participants have not been considered. Most importantly, the researcher could also get clarity on issues he could not understand; it does not matter whether these were of contemporary or historical value. Perspectives of parental involvement in homework.

It can be concluded, therefore, that using the case study design helped the researcher to get first-hand information he required. The face-to-face interviews allowed them the space to be free and open to the investigation. In addition, the researcher was able to meaningfully analyse and glean the large amount of information received from the research project for the relevant responses to the topic under discussion (Yin, 2009). Indeed, the one-on-one semi-structured interviews and focus group enabled the researcher to understand the extent to which parental involvement in homework was cherished in rural combined schools; particularly when socio-economic issues and the background of these rural communities are taken into consideration.

4.5 Sampling

Sampling is the choice of research members from the whole community. It involves judgments about which people, locations, actions, or common practices to study (Terre Blanche et al, 2006). It is not surprising, then, when Babbie & Mouton (2001) define a sample as a special sub-group of a population observed in order to make interpretations about the nature of the total population itself. Considering the objectives of this study, the researcher found purposive sampling the most appropriate to use. The researcher wanted a small group of participants who were likely to provide more knowledge on parental involvement in homework of rural combined schools in the King William's Town Education

District. Practically working with a small group is less difficult than a study sample of a large group. This is catered for in research as Babbie & Mouton (2001) have argued: purposive sampling refers to the sampling method in which the researcher uses his or her own judgment in the selection of sample members. This allows the researcher to use his/her discretion to select the participants based on his/her knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The selection of the panel took cognisance of gender issues. As a result, both males and females were selected in the panel. Learners were selected from the three phases in each school while the whole panel comprised of two principals, six educators from both schools (two teaching in intermediate phase; two teaching in senior phase and two teaching in FET band), fourteen parents (two per phase per school) including one SGB member and 36 learners (three focus groups per school, i.e. six learners in intermediate phase, six learners in senior phase and six learners in FET band) were involved in the study. As indicated both the RCL and the SGB formed part of the sample.

The aim of using different participants was two-fold: to ensure representativity of all the community groups and to ensure that the researcher receives a wide range of responses, which would give him an in-depth understanding of the extent to which parental involvement in homework, is given consideration in the two schools. This would, later, allow him to draw conclusions about the relevance of his assumptions and the contributions of his participants (Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

The two rural combined schools in the King William's Town education district were also purposefully selected based on their geographical nature and structure. They cater for both the (GET) and (FET) phases. It was also convenient for the researcher to carry out a research in these institutions since they were in close proximity to each other; furthermore, the researcher is currently employed as a teacher in one of the combined schools. Therefore, he/she would not have to spend a lot of money travelling; even the participants were people he/she could get access to easily (Creswell, 2013). This would allow for a free flow of information from both the researcher since the two parties know each other. Furthermore, the information gained from the interviews, however subjective,

would be more reliable or, according to Davies (2007) closer to the truth of the interviewees' life.

4.6 Data Collection Methods

The researcher used semi-structured interviews, the focus group and the tape recorder to collect data. A semi-structured interview is the kind of interview where the investigator develops an interview schedule (or a list of key topics and possibly subtopics) in advance (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). Semi-structured interviews are aimed at giving the researcher the opportunity to elicit as much information as he/she possibly can about the topic at hand. The questions asked by the researcher arise out of need outside the variety of questions predefined by the researcher in carrying out the study (Creswell, 2012). This kind of interview helped keep the researcher focused. It was a face-to-face interview, which requires his full attention since it allowed for maximum participation and information sharing between the participants and the researcher. Face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to observe the participants directly and encouraged them to provide historical and current information (Creswell, 2003).

The planning of the interview process and the interview questions were drafted with the assistance of Cooper's (1989) endogenous-exogenous model while both Cooper's (1989) endogenous-exogenous model and Bandura's modelling theory assisted the researcher in developing the different styles of probing questions to the participants as the interview process heightened. Cooper's (1989) endogenous-exogenous model further helped the researcher to differentiate between the learners, parents and educators during the interview period. The interview went on smoothly and the researcher managed to get responses to all the planned questions.

A focus group, on the other hand, is a carefully planned discussion arranged to get views on a defined area of interest (Kruger cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). According to Morgan cited in McMillan & Schumacher (2009, p. 300) a focus group is "a research method that collects data through group contact on a topic controlled by the researcher". It allows the researcher to question many people at the same time (Babbie, 2007). The focus group aims at encouraging participants to share views and opinions, not limited to the questions, during the interview process.

The researcher used the focus groups to elicit quick results and to minimize costs. The method is a widely adopted research method taking real-life information in a public environment (Babbie, 2007). A tape recorder was also used in order to help the researcher in capturing data accurately. This was supported by the hand-written notes the researcher took in case the tape recorder failed.

4.7 Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed and organised the data for purposes of analysis after going through the data to ensure that he captured every response from the participants correctly. He also arranged for follow-up sessions with the individual participants, should there be a confusion or a question of clarity. Common ideas and patterns that were relevant to the topic were highlighted, categorized and placed together. Data was, then, analyzed according to the subjective views and interpretation of the participants. Different types of responses from participants were written down and highlighted for issues of validity (Koshy, 2010). Verbatim quotes were noted in the context of each as well as in cross case analysis for both schools. School documents such as school journals, attendance registers for both teachers and learners and learner portfolios, among others, were analysed, as well. Document analysis refers to a detailed and systematic examination of documents on a particular organisation (Leedy, 2012). This was intended to verify the authenticity of the findings from the participants, particularly the principal and teachers. In other words, the activities purported to have been done, particularly, for homework purposes, should appear in learner books and portfolios. The teachers' portfolios and preparation books were also examined in the same way; that is, they should match the learners' portfolio of activities. The time table was also examined to ascertain if it complied with the CAPS policy documents; it also assisted in finding out the subjects taught by individual teachers. All these documents, according to Creswell (2005) represent documental basis of data, which assisted the researcher in understanding the proceedings of each institution. The document on staff establishment assisted the researcher in knowing the quintile of each school, their sizes in terms of learner, teacher and non-teaching staff numbers for cross-case purposes.

4.8 Validity in Qualitative Research

Validity refers to the point at which the explanations of the events match the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In the context of this study, validity means the accuracy of the information supplied by the participants. The researcher used multi-method (triangulation) to ascertain the validity of data. The data was collected from a number of different participants in order to widen the scope of information sharing and ensure that suggestions arising from the interview session becomes helpful in improving parental involvement in homework. Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more ways of data collection in the study of exact characteristics of human conduct (Cohen, 2000).

Furthermore, participants were allowed to use the language of their preference. This was aimed at allowing all the participants to express themselves freely and eloquently without any barriers. Again, this ensured that there was no ambiguity in every member of the panel so that they could give a clear and appropriate response or responses to the questions posed. As a result, the researcher ended up getting valid information from his participants. Parents used isiXhosa only in responding to the questions; the teachers and learners used both isiXhosa and English. As argued earlier, allowing the participants to use their own language enhanced the aim of the study: the researcher could reach out to every member of the panel and they responded subjectively but positively to the questions.

The use of the tape recorder assisted the researcher in recording all the participants whilst the interviews were in progress. This ensured that the precise responses of the participants were registered; no one was misrepresented from the interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Lincoln and Guba, 1985 and Cohen, 2000). Furthermore, the recording served as a worthy back up to the researcher's note taking: it filled the gaps prevalent with note taking. As a result, listening to replays from the audio recording enriched the researcher data collection process; particularly in cases where he slipped off and missed a possible fertile hint (Davies, 2007); thus improving on his data collection standard and rendering it trustworthy.

While this was not intended, the researcher found himself taking process notes by jotting down things that he thought might not be clear from the recording and on ideas that arose during the course of the interviews (Terre Blanche, 2006). These notes would make it easy for him to identify participants when playing the tape recorder during the transcription process – the transcription had to be accurately done, as well.

The researcher examined the validity of data using the triangulation method, that is, informal observations in the field and conducting ‘deep’ interviews. He, then, looked for common themes that appear in the data collected, using triangulation. Cohen et al. (2000) point out that validity might be spoken of through reliability, deepness, success and collection of the information, the member’s development, the point of triangulation and the non-involvement or fairness of the researcher. However, he goes on to say that the validity of data cannot be altogether accurate; it should then be seen as a matter of degree (Gronbunt, 1981, in Cohen, et al. 2000). According to Cohen et al, (2000) trustworthiness is concerned with precision and accuracy even though some of its features cannot be measured. For a research to be reliable, therefore, it must demonstrate exactness if it were to be carried out with a similar group of respondents, in a similar context.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

In terms of ethics, the researcher is bound by the research code of ethics of the University of the Fort Hare (2008) to subscribe to the ethical code. An ethical clearance certificate from the university Ethics Committee is attached (see Appendix G). For the researcher to be able to collect data from the schools, he needed authorization from the Department of Education (DoE) which was granted (see Appendix A). Permission was also needed from the school principals to use the schools as a sites for data collection. Furthermore, the participants should also agree to participate in the project while the learners need approved from their parents or guardians for their participation. Learners are regarded as minors and can, therefore, not take decisions on their own.

On meeting with the participants, the researcher had to introduce him before explaining the mission of his visit to the participants: that he/she was conducting a research and that their contribution, in terms of information, would be used for research purposes only. He

informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time during the course of the research.

Finally, the researcher had to make sure of the participants' safety during the interview session. To this effect, the participants had to keep the researcher informed of any discomfort experienced on a continuous. When all the participants had agreed to participate, they were required to complete a consent form and sign it before the commencement of the interview session (see Appendix H & F). The researcher assured the participants of their anonymity while their contribution was treated with confidentiality. The researcher further informed the participants that the research was for study purposes only, with the University of Fort Hare. He also explained that the use and purpose of using a tape recorder in the study was for quality and precision purposes. Consent was also sought for tape recording.

4.10 Limitation of the Study

This study has limitation that are inherent due to methodological choices. The study is limited in that the choice of the interpretivist paradigm lends the study to interpretations that may be seen to be subjective. The qualitative approach and case study design limited the scope of the study to few schools and to data that is not numerical. The findings of the study cannot be generalised to represent overall parental involvement in homework, in the King William's Town district due to the nature of the design and sample size of the participants. A case study design is not intended for generalisation of the finding, it focuses on the depth of the issues. In the course of the study, there were practical challenges like some participants who could not be available and had to be replaced by others.

4.11 Conclusion

Although there were some methodological limitations of the study, overall, the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative approach, descriptive case study design, purposive sampling, documents collected and interviews conducted made it possible to get rich and in-depth data that helped to show how parents in combined rural schools get involved in homework of their children.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

4.6 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse data collected from learners, parents, educators and principals from the two rural combined schools. The researcher examined the body of data in search for specific observations, common patterns and themes that appear in the data with lenses provided by the endogenous-exogenous, and modelling theoretical framework. All interviews were recorded electronically using a dictaphone and transcribed. The researcher repeatedly listened to the dictaphone after transcription in order to identify missing information from the hand written copy. Data is presented per school and then across the two schools. A brief context of each school is presented, followed by the analysis of data in line with the key questions of the study.

5.1 School A Context

School A is public combined school, which is situated in a rural area about nine kilometres from town. It starts from Grade R to Grade 12; and is a quintile three school. Quintiles are school ratings marking the poverty levels of the areas in which the schools are situated. Quintile 1 refers to the worst scenario and a quintile five referring to a well-off school and its surrounding area. By implication, therefore, a quintile three school reflects a school in a relatively poverty-stricken area, which is slightly better off than a quintile 1 and 2 schools. However, like a quintile one and two, quintile three is also a 'no fee' school.

It boasts active and functional School Governing Body (SGB) made up of seventeen members: nine parents, three teachers, three learners, one general worker and the principal, as ex-officio member. The school has a staff complement of thirty-five teachers: the principal, a deputy principal, five Heads of Department (HODs) and twenty-eight post level one educators. There are two administrative clerks, and a general worker. The student body is made up of 1130 learners, both males and females, led by a Representative Council Learner (RCL) of 14 learners who are functional, particularly in the secondary school phase.

The total number of participants in the study was twenty-nine (29): eighteen (18) learner participants, nine (9) male and nine (9) females; seven (7) parent interviewees, six (6)

females and only one (1) male; four (4) teacher participants with two (2) females and two (2) males. Parent qualifications ranged from grade five to grade twelve. However, one of the parent-participants managed to get to tertiary education, even though he/she did not complete his/her studies. Educator qualifications varied from Secondary Teachers' Diploma (STD) to Master of Education (MEd).

5.2 Need for Parental Involvement in Homework

5.3.1 Learners

All learners confirmed that their educators gave them homework. They mentioned the following as examples: looking for meanings of words in the dictionary, a learner said that “KwisiXhosa kuye kuthiwe masilentoze kubhalwe isentences ogqiba kuthwe masikrwelele izichazi” [wirting sentences and underlining nouns in Xhosa]. “Kwi Arts and Culture kuthwe masenze loo nto ngodongwe kuthwe masenze umntu ngodongwe” [moulding a person with clay]. “Kwi Natural Sciences (NS) kubhalwe imibuzo kuphendulwe” [they are given questions to answer in Natural Sciences]. “Kwi Social Science sinikwitextbook ogqiba kuthiwe masibhale iinotes pha” [they are given textbooks in Social Sciences to write notes from it]. “KwaMaths kufakelwe amanani ashiyiweyo” [filling in the blank spaces in Mathematics]. Learners indicated that they are given homework in the form of research, assignments, case studies, drama, business plans, solve for X, projects, investigations, practical assessment task, compositions and essays. The learners reported that homework was given daily, after one day, after two days, after four days, weekly, two per week and also quarterly especillay in the form of projects and assignments. They said that more homework was given in Mathematics, Xhosa, English, Geography, Tourism, Mathematical Literacy, History and Life Orientation.

Learners mentioned several reasons as to why homework is important and should be given. They said homework helps children to be taught at home. They indicated that homework boosts the year mark, which contributes towards promotion from one grade to another. They know homework as increasing learners' knowledge and understanding. Learners stated that homework makes learners practice without help. Some indicated that they do not always need assistance; they need only help when homework is difficult. They

sometimes do homework on their own in isiXhosa and Mathematics. Some learners stated that sometimes their parents could not help them.

It is evident that homework is indeed given by educators in many subjects. Learners view homework as beneficial in their studies and it sometimes helps them to be independent. Some learners do not always expect to be assisted by parents especially if it is the subject matter they can handle themselves.

5.3.2 Parents

All parents said that homework is given almost every day at school. They stated that homework given to them includes matching columns, looking for meanings of words, “bakrwelele amagama” [underlining nouns], “babhale inotes” [writing notes], “banikwe benze into” [art work], filling in blank spaces, business plans, “benze izibalo” [calculations], research projects, assignments, case studies, drama, practical tasks, “izincoko neeleta” [compositions and letters] and translation of months from English to isiXhosa e.g. from January to uMqungu) and vice versa. Parents mentioned Maths, English, Xhosa and Science as the subjects in which their children are given most homework.

Parents stated a number of reasons as to why there is a need for homework to be given. A parent in the intermediate phase learner said “Ihomewekhi yenza ulwazi lwabantwana lwande bazimisele ekusebenzeni” [homework increase learner knowledge and makes them to be diligent in the school work]. They went further to say that homework makes learners improve in reading, writing and study skills. They informed that certain work that has not been done in school is covered during homework time. Homework makes learners to pass with flying colours, strengthens communication, and increases working relationships between parents and their children. Some parents said that learners work independently and get prepared for the tests when doing homework.

Parents said they are able to identify their children’s weaknesses and strengths as well as careers for children when assisting with homework. Some parents had a view that learners who are slow learners are identified during this time. Parents kept on saying that homework makes learners to be assisted by their parents and encourages a learner in

school work and not to forget it. Parents said homework make a learner always think about schoolwork. Homework makes learners to study and pass the grade.

5.3.3 Educators and the principal

Educators reported give many activities to learners as homework. They include compositions, research, idioms, essays, projects, certain events (fathers' day), calculations, plotting angles, life orientating, assignments, practical investigations, reading and summarizing. They further mentioned designing, composing, forming sentences, drama, oral work, comprehension, map work, storytelling, experiments, meaning of words, idiomatic expression, culture, comprehension, forming sentences, and life skills exercises as other activities they give as homework.

Educators identified various reasons for giving homework. They said that learners work independently at their own pace and understanding increase. They indicated that strength and weakness are discovered and working relations and communication increases. They said that syllabus is finished and learners get prepared for tests and exams. Educators stated that homework reinforces the work done in class and develop research skills. They said that learners read ahead of the lesson to so that they ca have prior knowledge and be able to ask relevant questions. Educators also pointed out that homework develops learners to be able to allocate time for homework in their home timetables.

Educators reported that they expect assistance from parents in the form of supervision, research for children, asking other people to help their children, e.g. neighbours, formulating questions, reading timetables, making the homework environment favourable, signing homework books, helping children financially, showing children how homework is done, giving learners enough time for practicing, checking if learners have done their homework. They said they help children when they come across a problem. Educators said that some of the parents see the need for homework to be given to learners because parents give learners material needed for homework, they make homework places comfortable and quiet with no television and radio, and parents can see when their children need more time to work.

The principal also was of the same view that some parents see the need for homework to be given to their children although parents do not give learners time. He supported his statement by saying that parents want to see their children reading during and after school hours. The principal carried on saying that parents want to see their children occupied with books, progressing with education and to see these somewhere in future. He also said that parents want their children to feel as learners seeing them able to read, because parents want their children to see the value of education knowing what career they will follow and to develop their homes.

Both educators and the principal had a view that some parents see no need to be involved in the homework of their children because most learners do not do their homework. According to the principal's understanding, lack of knowledge and understanding lead to parents being unable to assist children with homework. The principal informed that parents do not see themselves as the ones who are responsible and therefore who can make any changes for the education of their children through homework. He indicated that some learner are capable of doing their homework and may not need parents to be involved.

5.3.4 Findings

It is evident that teachers give homework and its frequency depends on the nature of activities. For example, assignments and projects tend to be given more time for completion whilst in subjects like maths and languages homework tends to be given more frequently. All the participant are of the view that homework is beneficial and that parents should be involved in homework. The educators and the principal are of the view that some parents, although they want to see their children getting the benefits of education, they do not actually help with homework. They deduce this from the fact that most learners do not complete their homework. In line with Bandura's modelling theory (1997), children may not find role models at home to emulate.

5.4 Strategies Used By Parents for Homework

5.4.1 Learners

Many learners were of the view that parents assist with homework in different ways. Learners said that one of the ways is that “babhal’encwadini endala wen’ukhuphele”, [parents write in an old book and they copy the work]. In some instances, the learners said “okanye uxelelwe” [a parent tell you the correct answer]. An intermediate learner reported that “owam uyamvul’owam’ubhaka akhangele incwadi zemisebenzi ajonge uba andinikwanga homework na” [her parent opens the school bag and to find out if homework was given] and “abuze uba uyigqibile na ihomework” [and ask if I completed the homework]

Learners said parents assist them financially to buy stationery, they give them money go to the library, money to make copies of reading materials, buying charts and airtime. Other learners reported that their parents do research work for them. They go to the library to research on behalf. A senior phase learner said “andincedise xa ndingayazi” [will help me when I do not understand]. They further do practical work such as wooden chairs and fishing rods for them especially for the intermediate and senior phases. If parents do not know they ask others to assist and even hire other people in the community to help with homework. Learners also indicated that there were few parents who were helping them to make the environment (furniture, ventilation and light) at home conducive for homework purposes. Parents also set rules like switching off cell phones and radio and not moving in and out during homework time. Those learners who do well get rewards like snacks and reduction of domestic chores.

5.4.2 Parents

Parents indicated that they assist with homework in different ways including checking if they had homework so that they may make sure that it is done. Some claim they allow their children time to do homework after watching certain TV programmes at night; they also assist learners with calculations, showing them the short (easy) and long methods of calculations. They also confirmed that they assist children financially for purposes of photocopying, paying for transport to go to the library, buying food and stationery, paying for practical and other necessities. A senior phase parent said “Ndiye ndiqinisekis’uba

igumbi eli lakhe le-homewekhi liyalayita na” [she makes sure that the homework room has electricity or paraffin for light]. She added that she would ensure the room is lit even when there was no electricity available. Another parent claimed she makes sure that the room is well organized with a chair and table, and that cell phones and TVs are switched off for the child to do his/her homework. Parents indicated that some of them do the research work for learners; they even borrow books from the library for this purpose. They further supervise their learners when doing homework while others simply draw conclusions on their behalf.

Other parents confess: “Ukujonga ihomework kaloku mna njengomnt’ongafundanga mna ndiye ndithi ithini le-homework yakho ubuyenz’izolo, ithini, ndijonge ub’imakishiwe ke ndizajong’imikorekisho ngoba akhonto ndiyaziyo ndizojonga”, [as an uneducated person I ask for the previous homework and look for the correct markings because I do not know, I look for the markings]. The parent continued “uba hayi ukorekishiwe utheth’ukuthi uright noko” [if the marking are for a correct answer, then I can see that he/she is correct]. Another parent said “babuze izinto zakudala into zesiXhosa iswenye yintw’enjani funeka ucacise ezazinto eze nazo iswenye yintw’ethile nentw’ethile ngumbona owomisiweyo oxhonywayo ubotshwe ngamaKhasi” [they ask about Xhosa heritage, like dried maize corb - a seed for the next planting season]

A parent of a Grade 11 learner indicated that “xa banikwe ihomework yesiNgesi mna andiyijongi noyijonga ngoba kaloku andifundanga kodwa ke ndiye ndithi kuSphosethu, Sphosethu mncedise uSanelisa kule homework ba mna andiyazi noyazi” meaning, [when they are given homework in English, I don’t even look at English it, I ask the older sibling to assist because I don’t know it]. Another parent said, “Mna andizazi kodwa ke uyeza nazo phaya endlini qha ke ndicele umnt’osaziyo isiNgesi makamncedise” [I do not know, he/she brings homework, but I ask a person who knows English to help].

The data above suggest that some parents assist their children with homework. They use different strategies such as supervising, look markings, assist with money, doing homework for them, borrowing books, asking for help from other people in the community, setting rule and organising the homework place.

5.4.3 Educators and the principal

Educators reported that parents in the community are actually involved in the homework of their children. They employ a number of strategies including showing them other methods to complete given tasks (e.g. in mathematics). Educators stated that parents do house chores by themselves and buy materials for their children. They reported that parents assist learners with certain skills (e.g. stopping for a while in reading showing that there is a coma). They also reported that parents ensure that rooms children were using for homework purposes were conducive for such purpose: they were spacious, had enough light, table and chair. Educators kept on saying that parents organize knowledgeable people (e.g. neighbours) to support children with homework. They even pointed out that parents go to school the minute a child drops in performance and ask for extra reading books, especially the foundation phase parents.

In contradiction, the principal claimed that parents come to school only when the educators have invited them. He further argued that they could not assist with homework because they were not knowledgeable. Educators confirmed that parents were doing research on behalf of their children. They also agreed that parents showed children other methods of dealing with homework, which were different from those of the teachers; they give children more time to do homework while they, themselves, were performing some house chores for the children. Educators confirmed that parents also assisted their children by giving answers to questions telephonically.

Educators reported that they advised parents that they did not need to buy everything needed by the school; instead they should improvise or request other parents or guardians to assist in some instance. They advised the same to parents who do not have time to attend to learner homework. Most importantly, educators advised parents to approach the school about the progress of their children; they should also use school holidays responsibly and profitably for the benefit of the learner. They further suggested that parents should decide when it is opportune for the learner and that they must help children with indigenous language and cultural activities. To those learners whose parents are illiterate or live on their own, an advice was to commit themselves in their work and make sure they do homework timeously.

Educators stressed the importance of homework timetables. They even advised parents to communicate with schools on how the negative impact of/on homework can be minimized or avoided. Both the principal and teachers acknowledged parents problems such as inability to assist learners with homework but insisted that they should at least find time acknowledge having looked into learner work by appending a signature on homework books as a sign that they have seen the homework. Educators further advised the differences between the parents should not affect learner performance. At best, learners should not be part of these differences. One of the issues that concerned teachers more was learner ill discipline. Learners were reportedly attending taverns and shebeens and come back home late and drunk. They, therefore, advised parents against learner neglect; they must reprimand if not talk to their children about these issues. They further claim alcohol abuse by parents was sometimes the source of this problem.

Educators reportedly had continuously invited parents and educated them about the importance of homework. They even guided parents to attend adult learning centres, which would assist with awareness about the new developments in the education system. Teachers further reported their intention to involve parents in school activities. They also availed some classrooms for the community use when a need to do so arose. The intention is for the community to own the school. In the process, they reportedly hope, learner ill discipline would improve and homework would be completed correctly too. The teachers further emphasised allowing learners the opportunity to read their books and do their homework because the cause for poor progress was the failure to read and doing their homework.

From the point of view of the educators, parents assist financially, with skills such as reading and using alternative multiple methods to solve problems, researching for learners. They also reported that parents show responsibility by helping with infrastructural issues and suitable spaces for studying. Educators were also of the view that some parents fail to strategize on their children's behalf due to illiteracy, family and alcohol abuse.

5.4.4 Findings

It is evident from all that participants that those parents who assist with homework use a variety of strategies. They indicated that these strategies involved assisting learners financially and otherwise to ensure that they do their homework. In some cases, parents end up assisting by supervising and monitoring learner progress and even doing the work on behalf of the child. They reportedly found that parents do research, set rules, tell learners about originality, assists with other methods and draw conclusion when supporting their children. Participants added that parents organize, control, help with skills and refer learners to other people when they are unable to assist themselves. Educators in particular were critical of other parents who do not strategize for the betterment of the children's education due to various reasons such as house chores, illiteracy, family conflicts and alcohol abuse. In line with Cooper's (1989) endogenous-exogenous model, these findings point to a number of exogenous factors that emanate outside of the learners. For instance, lack of adult inspection and family variables such as incapability to assist with homework may explain why some learners are unable to complete homework. In the same vein, the strategies used by other parents may help explain the exogenous factors that help learner to complete their homework.

5.5 Challenges Faced By Parents with Homework

5.5.1 Learners

According to the learners, parents face a number of problems when assisting with homework. Learners believe that learner actions and attitude towards homework lead to parents' temperament being tested. As a result, parents tend to become angry when children display negative attitude and do not do the homework as advised and instructed by the parents. Learners have observed that some parents who are illiterate or lack education ignore their children; they do not show interest in learner homework. For example, a senior phase learner reported that her parent got disgruntled when she asked for assistance in doing her homework. Her mother allegedly exclaimed, "Hayi wethu uyandibhora lo mntana" [the child is boring me]. Another learner from the senior phase complained at his mother's attitude when she responded to his request for assistance. She said, "Zange sizifunde ezinto nizifundayo ngoku" [we did not what you now learning].

This may be an indication that these parents are not, at all, prepared to assist their children. It seems they would rather bash their heads off instead of doing so. In some cases, a parent would accept the document with the homework activity, browse over it and throw it down without commenting or doing anything about it. The next moment they would angrily refer the child to somebody else whom the child may not be really acquainted to.

Some parents would also be angered when the child continuously do homework, even if he is not asked to assist. This anger may be arising from the fact that the child would be kept busy by homework instead of the house chores; it may also be directed at the teachers who appear to be stifling children with homework and, in the process, abdicating to parents who have to do their (teachers') duty at home. In essence, parents complain that educators give continuous homework without considering the busy schedule of parents at home. For example, a parent of an intermediate phase learner said to her child "Nabatitshala bayadika bayinikisa qho ihomewekhi" meaning that she is fed up with these teachers who give homework continuously. Parents also become angry when homework is given in all or almost all the subjects and they have no clue what some of the homework activities entail.

At the same time, the parents who are keen to assist their children tend to be angry when the child has neglected his/her homework or has forgotten to do it instead of reasoning with the child beforehand. These parents are angered even when the child has failed to inform them that he/she has homework to do.

Learners believe that parents' anger is exacerbated when they are called to account at school for a child's failure to do homework. In cases of this nature, some parents punish their children and ground them for a few days. Some parents get angered at work and when they get home and find the child waiting for his/her attention in a homework activity, the anger experienced at work tend to spill over to the child. However, parents of this calibre are quick to pardon themselves when they are sober from the fit from work.

5.5.2 Parents

The majority of parents indicated that they are faced with many challenges when dealing with homework. These challenges arise first from their lack of knowledge in the new curriculum; some parents are illiterate and have not been to school. At the same time, lack of interest and keenness to do homework by the learners also lead to anger. A parent of a grade eight learner reportedly expressed frustration at his son's failure to do or understand the homework activity at hand. He argued, "Umntan'am eze nehomwekhi xa ndimbuza uba yenziwa njani athi akayazi, yintoni ke leyo ndamnceda njani ke mna ke ndingafundi nje" meaning that his child has been given a homework and he has no clue how to do it. The frustration the parent endures lies in how he is going to help his son if he, himself, has no idea of how to do the homework. The following are some of the comments by the various parents when asked to assist with homework: "Asinanto zakwenza kuba kaloku asiphangeli" meaning that the parents have nothing to do since they are unemployed. A parent of a senior phase learner complained that "Sifumanan'ingxaki uthi umenzisa abe yena esozela kuba uyixela ngoku kuzawulalwa, uphume wayokudlala ugqibakwakhe ukutya" meaning that parents encounter a problem because his child failed to do homework in time and now that the parent is assisting him, he is drowsy because he preferred to go and play. A parent of a grade nine learner reported that "Ndivuka ekuseni ndibuye ngokuhlwa ndidiniwe kuba ndivela emsebenzini". This means that he works and has to wake up early in the morning and come back late at night, tired. Some parents pointed out that they are busy with household chores (e.g. fetching water from the river, preparing supper and attending community meetings) while others are care giving to their parents. Some of the parents claim that learners are only given homework when they have to prepare school uniform and this makes it difficult for these parents to assist their children with homework.

Generally, parents complain that they cannot afford some of the specialities connected with the homework activities because they live on pension grants. For instance, transporting learners to a library or purchasing stationery and other learning materials poses a problem for them. Some are lodging single roomed houses and can even not afford to have furniture or electricity in their homes; they use candles. This makes life

difficult especially when these parents are labelled as failures who do not really take care of their children while, in essence, they cannot afford to do these things.

It should also be remembered that the curriculum has changed drastically since these parents' schooling time and new subjects or learning areas have been introduced. They, therefore, find it difficult to help children in these subjects. This is worsened by the reluctance by some of the learners to do their homework. It is, therefore, not surprising when parents argue that "Siyaxabana nababantwana kuba sibenzisa ngohlobo esasifundiswe ngalo asilazi olu labo siphela singayigqibi le homewekhi kuba babeka le siphela singafuni kubanceda ke ngoku", meaning that they clash with their children because they help them using the old methodology and end up being of no assistance to them. It follows, then, that parents lack current teaching skills. For example, an SGB parent commented, "kuba yenesemncinci esenza engekabi active to ekukhatheni, kuye kufuneke ndincedisane naye ayibon'idirection xa ekhatha lo nto funeka eyikhathile then ayipeyiste", which means because she is still young and not able to cut and paste I had to help and show her how to cut and paste.

5.5.3 Educators and the principal

Educators and the principal blame the high level of illiteracy for the failure of parents to help their children with homework. This is prevalent in cases where the learners' real parents are not around and the grandparents take care of these learners. The learners, on the other hand, appear to enjoy the lack of supervision as they go along doing as they like: they watch TV and listen to the radio instead of doing their schoolwork.

They also argued that poverty limits these parents' capability to control children's homework. They do not have material resources and show no interest in children's education. Most of these parents end up drinking and abusing alcoholic drinks. Their houses are small and poorly furnished. It becomes clear from a distance that no proper control of children is taking place in such homes. These parents cannot afford to take their children to information centres such as libraries for research purposes and it is evident that poverty limits their thinking. Some of these parents keep themselves busy with community issues and they do not even care about the children's education.

Educators learned from the learners that their parents do not have time to help them. Some claim that they are tired and cannot waste time assisting with homework. For example, a senior phase learner reported to his educator that his parent said, “Ndiyeke mna ndilale ndidiniwe ndivela emsebenzini” which means she should be left to sleep because she is tired from work. The same has been reported to the principal.

The parents, according to the educators, appear to have a negative attitude towards their children’s education. They blame the teachers for abdicating their responsibility to teach when requesting parents to help children at home. Teachers further suspect that these parents were themselves bad students. The principal had a different view from that of the teachers. He commented, “These parents’ attitude is not bad, they simply lack of knowledge. Furthermore, they cannot afford all the school needs. The little grant they get for their grandchildren is really not enough to fulfil all these needs”.

Some of these parents, according to the educators, are knowledgeable and have the ability to assist with homework but they do not avail themselves. It appears that these parents were never supported in their education when they were young and they do not see the need to help their children. The principal said “ulwazilona banalo into abangayaziyo kukulusebenzisa olu lwazi ke ngoku ungaphetha usithi abanalwazi, intenayo qha kukonqena” meaning that parents do have knowledge but they do not know how to use it so you may end up saying they are not knowledgeable, yet, they are just lazy.

Educators indicated that there are few parents who avail themselves to assist children with homework and they do not even come to school. The teacher who finds a learner with a homework problem, reports the case to the principal who then calls the parent of the learner to discuss the matter and show him the importance of homework. In some cases, educators make sure that homework is done at school during the afternoon; they request learners to stay behind for a few moments and do their homework under their supervision and control.

Educators stated that most parents do not see the need to communicate with the school; they do not even come to school unless they are invited. Only a few parents communicate with the school. These parents visits the school regularly and speak to the class and

subject teachers. It is also evident from learners that their parents assist them with homework – the children’s positive answers indicate that they have been assisted. Educators also see when learners do not do homework totally or when learners have not done simple tasks. Educators reported that learners tell educators everything when they are asked about poor performance. Educators informed the researcher that they receive letters with negative responses from parents when they give children a research project to do. For example an intermediate phase educator received a letter from a parent saying “ucing’uba umntana wam uzayifumana njani lo nto leyo, mna andinalo ixesha lokuhamba ndiy’elayibri” which means how do you think my child will get that, I do not have time to go to the library.

5.5.4 Findings

What is coming out from the data presented above is that there are many challenges that are faced by parents when helping with homework. These include, among others, house chores, community rituals and ceremonies, lack of knowledge, Illiteracy, tiredness, and poverty and unemployment. These parents could, therefore, not afford to cater for all that is required to ensure their active participation in children’s homework. Those who can afford claim that their children are overloaded with homework, as a result they had to organize material resources, suitable environment for homework or refer their children to knowledgeable people.

Some interviewees cited lack of information centres (e.g. libraries for research) as contributing to the problem since learners would not be able to research or read extensively about given issues. Participants added that some parents do not assist because of tiredness, alcohol abuse and family conflicts, which paralyses any assistance by the parents. The worst is the fact that some learners take advantage of the grandmothers who look after them. In fact, it was reported that these children overpower their parents, particularly grandparents. The study found that parents display a negative attitude towards homework; they even claim that teachers are abdicating their responsibility when they give learners homework. The case of parents who work far from home is understandable, however, it is not acceptable that parents simply neglect learners and concentrate on personal issues and tasks. A number of learners improve

on their work simply because parents show interest in their work. Finally, it is advisable for parents to take note of Cooper's (1989) endogenous model, which is of the opinion that homework processes involve communal factors, classroom elements and the classroom improvement for its completion. It can be noted that endogenous factors emanating from the learners themselves explain why some learners may not complete homework.

5.6 Improving Parental Involvement in Homework

5.6.1 Learners

Learners suggested several ways of improving parental involvement in homework. They proposed that parents should make it a habit to check whether the children have been given homework. One of the learners proposed, "Izikolo kufuneka zibize imeeting edibanisa umzali umntana notishara ukuze abazali bajonge incwadi zabantwana babo". This means that the school must hold a joint learner, parent and teacher meeting where parents will be asked to look at their children's book. She added, "Abantwana bangacela abazali babo uba bancedise iitshomi zabo ezingancedwayo kwamawazo", which means that learners must ask their parents to help their friends who are not assisted by their family members. The other suggested, "Abantwana bacebise ukuba kuxelelwe ootitshara ngabantwana abangancedwayo kwamawabo", meaning that educators must be informed about children who are not helped with homework in their homes. "Abantwana funeke bechazele abazali ngokubaluleka kwehomewekhi", meaning that learners should inform their parents about the importance of homework. Learners advised other learners to advise parents to ask children for homework immediately they get from school. They also advised that the School Governing Body (SGB) together with teachers must, likewise, call parents and inform them to take care of homework because of its importance.

The Representative Council of Learners (RCL) proposed two points that can be used by the learners to be assisted by parents. Firstly, they advised that learners request educators to write letters inviting parents to a meeting where the class representatives will talk to parents who are not helping their children with homework. Secondly, RCL advised learners to visit all parents in the village after school to encourage them to help

their children with homework. Learners expressed that the school governing body has to appeal and encourage parents to make sure that there is enough food at homes so that learners can have strength for the work that lies ahead, the homework.

Learners advised educators to ask parents to write their name down and sign for each homework done. This would show that they care. They advised educators to inform parents to come with children when collecting report forms at the end of each term so that the child can answer in front of the parent about his/her performance. The parent should also be accountable for poor learner performance.

Furthermore, community organizations should be requested to build libraries so that learners can have access to them; they should also support poor families who struggle to make ends meet. If possible, they must buy groceries and other necessities for them such as furniture to make sure that the environment is favourable for doing homework.

5.6.2 Parents

Parents suggested that the problems they encounter could be resolved only if each parent become responsible for and supportive to whatever his/her child is doing; making sure that they do school work. They thought it wise to up skill themselves and improve their level of education in order to be able to assist children with homework. Abazali bacebise uba abazali batyelele ezikolweni umzali abone umntana wakhe efunda, emamele, ethetha ze ambone ebhala”, parents recommended that they should visit the school and observe their children’s reading, listening, talking and writing skills.

Parents proposed that the Education Departmental Officials (EDO’s) should talk to teachers and advise them to keep in contact with learner parents on a continuous basis, especially when there is a problem with his/her education or homework. Parents should do likewise; they can even ask teachers if whether or not homework has been given for that day. To bring a stop to non-performance of homework, parents proposed that learners who fail to do homework must be removed from the class during that period. Like the learners they found it advisable to further their education so that they may be able to help with homework; they also recommended that the schools invite parents to meeting once or twice in a month. This, they believe, can solve the homework problem.

Parents advised “Abazali bacebise intoba ootishara banokhawuleza babize amapolisa xa bebona umntana ongancedwanga nokuba akenzanga homewekhi”, which means that parents should call the police if a child has failed to do homework or it is evident that he/she did not find help from home. Parents even suggested that “Abazali bacebise intoba otishara besoloko betreyinwa malunga nehomewekhi ukuze ingxaki ezinxulumene nehomewekhi zizokwehla”, meaning that parents advised that teachers undergo regular training in homework so that homework-related problems can be minimised. They added that the schools should compose and act out dramatic works in homework in a bid to emphasise its importance and non-performance thereof.

To learners, parents believe they can improve if they commit themselves in their homework. Parents will be eager to assist if they find them working hard. They also think that parents who fail to assist with homework should be reported to social workers; while they encouraged each other to help children with homework. The school and the SGB’s were requested to approach parents to minimize house chores for school children.

To the Department of Education, parents recommended that they should make sure that teaching and learning material reaches the schools in time. This will ensure that schools teach on the first day of schooling and homework and/or practical work is also done on the first school’s day. They also advised the Department to support the schools with computers so that children can research from within the school; particularly, those learners whose parents cannot afford sending them to libraries. In this way, the school environment will be favourable for teaching and learning. The school nutrition programme ought to be up and running so that learners do not fail to do homework because of hunger. However, in the main, the parents advised the DOE to stress the need for parents to take responsibility for their children.

Parents advised that “Abazali bacebise intoba icommunity ixelele abazali bajonge uba mngakanani na umsebenzi owenziwe esikolweni”, meaning that parents advised that the community must tell parents to check how much work children did at school. “Bacebise intoba inkampani zingaqeshi abantwana ekufanel’uba basesikolweni funeka zibabuze ukkuba abantwana kutheni bengekho sikolweni”. They made a proposal for companies not to employ children who are supposed to be at school. They must, instead, investigate

why the child is not at school. Parents also suggested that community churches should involve themselves in encouraging parents to help their children with homework. They also called on NGOs to support the (poor) parents with learner needs; they should have sessions and campaigns in which they train and explain clearly to them the importance of homework for children.

5.6.3 Educators and the principal

Educators suggested that there should be continuous communication between parents and educators. Parents should be informed of whether or not the learners have been given homework. If they are unable to help children with homework or cannot afford to assist, they should get assistance from neighbours and knowledgeable people. They proposed that churches should have special programmes for parents to take care of their children and help them with homework. They also proposed that campaigns about the importance of homework should be held. The principal emphasised the need for parents to know the role they are supposed to play in the education of their children.

Educators and the principal suggested that quarterly school meetings be held to ensure that the school communicates with parents; they will also be giving out progress reports during this time. The ongoing means of communication through letter-writing and telephone calls would remain intact. Educators and the principal urged the community organizations to talk to parents who do not involve themselves in homework and the education of their children; the same should be done by the school and the governing body: they should meet with the parents and deal specifically with homework, urging them to keep assisting learners with their homework. The SGB should inform parents about the importance of homework and how it contributes to the pass rate of the learners.

The educators and the principal recommended that awards be given to learners who perform well because of parental support. They highlighted the importance of parental involvement in school activities (e.g. open days and assembly). The participants advised parents who are willing to assist should be given a chance to teach certain subjects or areas where they have expertise (e.g. poems) during extra or Saturday classes, thereby helping the school to improve its performance. They also suggested that schools should

establish adult learning centres within the institutions and involve churches and other community structures to assist in the process.

The principal and the educators proposed that the Department of Education should involve the NGOs (e.g. municipality can supply with the library) in improving parental involvement in homework. The Department of Education should hold meetings with learners and their parents to discuss homework related issues through subject advisors and inspectors. Coupled with special programmes such as awareness campaigns, this can assist in improving the school results particularly when the teachers play their part as well and inform the parents about the importance of giving homework and urge them to give children sufficient time for homework.

One educator indicated that the school has a homework timetable and assessment plan stating what homework is given on a certain given day, which tasks and the number of tasks being given. Educators informed the researcher that they are guided by the curriculum and the amount of work they have to cover and the weight of the subject in giving homework.

5.6.4 Findings

The data presented above indicates that there are many ways that can be used to improve parental involvement in homework. Participants suggested that parents ought to avail themselves in monitoring and supervising children's homework and to make sure that learners are not starved. Interviewees suggested that schools, SGBs and community organizations hold information sharing meetings and awareness campaigns in which parents would be informed of the importance of homework in the education of learners. They advised that community organizations could be asked to support needy families with furniture and infrastructure. They suggested the opening of adult learning centres where parents could further their education. Participants proposed the reduction of child labour by the companies and advised learners to be committed to their schoolwork. Participants further encouraged the education stakeholders to work together in improvement performance in schools; they may even form homework helping clubs. They further recommended awarding learners who are doing well in homework. All the above suggestions are in line with Cooper (1989) model, which suggests that learner capability,

inspiration, and other separate distinctions are exogenous elements that may inspire various results involving homework completion.

5.7 SCHOOL B CONTEXT

School B is a public combined school, which is situated in a rural area about 20 kilometres from town. It starts from Grade R to Grade 12; it is a quintile three school. The school has a staff complement of 19 educators i.e. the principal, a deputy principal, 2 HODs and 15 post level one educators. The school had also one general worker, one-security personnel, one administration clerk and one grade R practitioner. The student body has 418 learners, both males and females, led by RCL of 14 learners who are functional, particularly in the secondary school phase. Learner participants were from the intermediate phase, senior phase and FET band.

The total number of the participants from this school was 29 i.e. 18 learner participants, nine males and nine females; 7 parent interviewees, 6 females and 1 male; 4 teacher participants, two males and two females. Parent's qualifications ranged from Grade 6 to grade 12. However, two parent-participants managed to get to tertiary education, even though one of the participants did not complete her studies. Only one parent was working and was cooking for learners at school. Educator ages ranged from 30s to 50s and their qualifications varied from Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) to Bachelor of Education Honours. Educators had from 11 years to 22 years of experience.

5.8 Need for Parental Involvement in Homework

5.8.1 Learners

Learners at school B reported that their educators gave them homework. They mentioned many activities given as homework such as investigation about culture, case studies, practical, project, reading, analysing books, comprehension, home tests, calculations, forming sentences, drawing, matching words, building sentences, rhyming words, prepared topics, art, analyzing poems, life orientation related questions and practicing dancing. Learners indicated that homework was given - after one, three, four or five days, after two or three weeks, and quarterly; mainly in Maths, English, Xhosa and Accounting.

Learners mentioned a number of reasons for them to be given homework as well as why parents are needed. A Grade 9 learner said about homework “Mna titshala ndicinguba ihomework le nto funeka siyinikwe funeka singasebenzi sodwa khe sisebenzise nabazali bethu”. This means, I think the reason for homework is for us not to work alone but with our parents. A Grade 8 learner said, “Titshala iyakongeza nakula nto ubuyifundile umhlambi umisi akufundise okany’utitshala uphinde ke ngoku akunik’ihomework athamb’ozenzela ngokwakho intokuba ibonakalis’uba ufunde ntoni”. This means that the teachers adds homework on what you learnt in order for you to demonstrate what you have read. They added that homework trains learners to research and be able to do things on their own without the help from educators or parents. They claim that they learn and become knowledgeable and gain more understanding of concepts and learn to work collaboratively as a group. They further indicated that homework prepare them well for tests.

Learners stated, “Iyakunceda titshala ukwazubhal’ iexams ungalibali ezanto ubuzifundisiwe”, means that homework prepares for exams so that you may not forget what you have been taught. It revitalises learner memories, enabling them to use new resources, and remembering all they have done at school. A Grade 9 learner reported “Titshal’ihomework siyinelw’uba khe singab’estratweni noba kwenzek’izinto khe ubesendlini usenz’ihomewekhi”. This means that homework saves learners from doing wrong things; to remain home doing homework. Learners continued saying that homework allows them the opportunity to get used to learning. As senior phase learner said, “Xa siyenzileyo ihomework titshala siye singabethwa, siyasinda naseswazini”, meaning that they are not punished when they do homework. They further claim that they do not ask for help at all times they do homework on their own when they understand it.

5.8.2 Parents

Parents were of the view that their children were given homework almost daily at school. They mentioned many activities given to their children as homework. “Umzekelo kuye kuthiwe esiXhoseni mababuze inyanga zonyaka, umzekelo inyanga yomthupha”, meaning that in Xhosa they are asked about the months of the year e.g. September. “kufunwe amaxabiso ezinto koomyfriend, babuze oomyfriend i-airtime bazithenga

ngamalini". This means that they research about prices for stuff like airtime from shops owned by foreign nationals. They said "kubuzwe intsingiselo zamaqhalo" they are asked meanings of idioms. Parents also said, "kuthwe kufunwa izinto zakdala izinto ezazisenzeka kudala". Meaning that they are also asked about heritage and cultural practices. "Xa befun'ubalisw'iMaths" hlambi ngelinyixesha uyadibanisa ngeliny'ixesha uyathabatha" baxakane nazo izinto zamaqhezu ifractions". Parents said they assist in Maths with additions and subtractions and with fractions which can be confusing to their children.

Parents said that in English their children are given homework on creative writing, letter writing, proverbs, tenses, noun, classes, abbreviations, and other grammatical issues. Parents further informed the researcher that learners are asked about good nutrition, contraceptives, first aid and timetables in LO while they are required to place words in the correct and chronological order, and complete puzzles or interpret cartoons in History. In Natural Sciences, they are asked about handwork, percentages, experiments, weather forecast and case studies. In Accounting, they are given calculations, projects, advertisements and researches. These, according to parents, are given mostly in Xhosa, Mathematics, and English.

Parents stated that there are many reasons for giving homework to children. Among these reasons, teachers want parents involved in their children's education. "Uyaimprover kwimaksi zinyuke azopasa", this means that they improve their marks and ensure children pass. A parent of a Grade 9 learner said, "Ihomewekhi abantwana ibanceda bangakhawulezi ukulibala into ebebeyifundisiwe esikolweni", meaning homework helps learners not to forget easily what they were taught at school. "Ibanceda ukuba bakwazi ukuhlengahlengisa amaxesha abo ze bangashiyeki nakwisilabhas". Homework helps learners to manage their time and not to be behind in syllabus. Homework makes learners stick to their work and be able to teach one another. "Ibaluleke ngohlobo loba uyakwaz'ungayi understendi let's say akayiunderstendi xa ititshwa pha eskoweni but x'azenayo endlini ayinikeze kwabany'abantu abayiunderstendayo le subject let's say kuloo Maths ayinikiweyo". This means that homework is important in that learners may

not understand a subject like Maths whilst taught at school but may understand it when assisted by someone knowledgeable at home.

One parent said, “Uba namhlanje uyinikiwe ihomework yeyentw’ethile so uyibona khona ke ngoku unayo ihomework then ke ngoku ukwazi umncedisa khona”. It helps parents to see and be able to assist with homework if given. A parent of a Grade 5 learner said, “Ihomewekhi inceda thina bazali uba sibone uba lo mntana unayo na inkqubela phambili kunye nolwazi na” sikwazi nokufaka umsebenzi ozabaright ezimisini”, meaning homework help parents to know if a child progress or not, and further ensures that parents submit correctly done work to teachers. Parents believe that learners improve on their performance when parents are involved in their work. When learners are given homework, parents make them read and write clearly and become ready to help others. “Ihomewekhi yenza abantwana bakwazi uziphandela bona ngokwabo xa banikwe umsebenzi wesikolo” This means that homework makes learners to research on their own when given homework. Parents indicated that homework allows parents the opportunity to research on behalf of their children because they want to see them promoted. Parents confirmed that homework assists in limiting the habit of playfulness among the learners. Thus, homework serves as a tool for discipline because it instils a sense of responsibility in the child. Regular performance of homework has a potential to assist the learner progress to the next grade and be able to help other learners. This is what parents want. They want their children to commit themselves in their work and it is only then that they can support whole-heartedly with their homework.

5.8.3 Educators and the principal

Educators provided several reasons as to why homework is important. One of these reasons is to allow learners to work at their own pace outside the school environment. This builds their confidence and the learners develop the ability to work and explain to other learners freely in the absence of educators. They also become aware of the importance of involving their parents and other people in homework and their education in general. Educators believe that homework educates the learners about time management and it helps them to see if they understand the work that was done on the day. If they do not, they may ask for clarity and explanation. In essence, the teachers

view homework as a tool that acquaints the learners with questions that may be asked in tests and/or exams. As a result learners ought to keep on doing homework to keep abreast with the requirement and developments in education.

Educators also viewed homework as a booster for their continuous assessment marks. It advantages the child to go through to the next grade without hustles. In other words, it pushes him/her to excel in some subjects. Educators perceive homework as helping learners to easily grasp and remember work done easily. It also helps the learners to acquire useful language skills like reading, writing and speaking. They identified homework as teaching learners a sense of responsibility, values and attitudes.

Educators indicated that they give homework according to subjects and mostly give the same type of home works. They give homework in novels, drama, use of dictionary, reading, prepared topics, and comprehension in languages. In Social Sciences (SS), they give projects, case studies, researches, making posters, climate, the meaning of words, and collecting pictures. In commercial subjects they mentioned debtors collection schedule, bookkeeping, collection of old receipts, and slips. In Mathematics, they stated pricing, calculations, and basic operations, and interpretation of data; while in Natural Sciences (NS) they give written reports, practical, and cartoons.

Educators believe that parents should be involved in children's homework in many ways. They should ask knowledgeable people to help their children with homework when they do not understand it. Educators suggested that parents should ensure children do their work and as proof of having gone through this exercise, they must append their signature on the page where the homework has been done. They should spare some time to visit the school to find out if their children are doing well in their schoolwork. They further claim they need to see parents assisting their children financially (e.g. transporting children to libraries, buying bundles and buying materials). Educators stated that they need parents to give children enough time to do homework and help them when necessary. Educators said parents need to help teachers by making sure that the work is corrected before submitting it to the educator.

On the contrary, most educators were of the view that the majority of parents do not see the need for their involvement in homework. They pointed out that learners do not submit

homework on time; very few learners actually do homework. Other learners submit wrong and incomplete work. This suggests a lack of monitoring of homework by parents. They also requested parents to abstain from making negative comments about the teachers and homework tasks.

5.8.4 Findings

Participants mentioned the examples of homework given as well as subjects where homework was mostly given. They stated the need for homework as a means of improving learner performance, increased memory and a sense of responsibility on the part of the learners. They mentioned that parents would be able to see progress when they help with homework. They further stated that homework improves working relations between the school and parents. Participants reported that learners ask for support only when homework is difficult.

Most educators had higher expectations of parents regarding homework. They indicated that they expected to see responsible parents who give learners enough time for homework, supervising them, and helping learners financially. This is in line with Bandura's (1997) modelling theory, which suggests that children obtain understanding of capability, procedures, information, and individual abilities through inspection. However, it was also regrettable to find that some parents do not see the need to be involved in their children's homework.

5.9 Strategies Used By Parents for Homework

5.9.1 Learners

Learners indicated that their parents assist them with homework in many ways. Learners said, "baxelele abantwana amagama abangawaziyo esixhoseni", meaning that parents tell learners the words that they do not know in Xhosa. Learners confirmed that their parents assist them with homework in "izibalo" calculations, "ngezembali" history and "ngocalucalulo" apartheid. Learners stated that their parents "benze izilungiso" meaning that parents assist them with corrections and revision, particularly before and after writing a test or an exam.

Another contribution by the parents involve correcting learners with their pronunciation. This was confirmed by one of the learners who claimed, “Abafundi baxele intoba abazali bayabakorekisha abantwana phambi kokuba bakorekishwe ngootishara”, meaning that parents correct learners before they are corrected by the teachers. “Bathe abazali bayabanyanzela uba benze ihomewekhi xa benayo”. They said parents instruct them to do homework when they have it. While this is not bad, they become happier when financed by their parents. For instance, they do not hesitate to buy children school needs, give them money for photocopying, and give them transportation money to go to the library. The learners confirmed that their parents do research on their behalf; sometimes parents seek for assistance from knowledgeable people in the neighbourhood.

The learners complained that in assisting them, parents force them continuously to give correct answers, as if they were in an interrogating room. Yet, as indicated, learners should be given an opportunity to learn on their own pace. Learners also claimed that parents help them with practical: they make mats from reeds or plastic, sew dresses and sometimes cut grass with them. Parents also assist with measurements and designing. At the same time, parents make sure that the homework room is well prepared for homework purposes: the room is clean, cosy and quiet; there is a table and chair, enough electricity and learning material and stationery. A grade 10 learner said, “Ngokuthi xa umhlambi umzali ubone ndidlala kakhulu phandle andihoyanga zincwadi uyakwazi andibize ahlale nam phantsi athi ngoku bekufaneluba lixesha lokub’ujong’incwadi ngoku uyekudlala kakhulu”. This means the parent calls the child when he/she plays non-stop and tell him/her that she is supposed to be reading instead of playing.

5.9.2 Parents

Parents said that they assist their children with homework in many ways. These included, among others, helping them with mathematical calculations, reading skills and punctuation. They also up skill them in writing essays and answering questions the best way possible. To ensure that they do not fall short in these efforts, the parents also support the learners financially so that they can get all the resources necessary to improve their performance; they also make them aware of the health hazards involved.

For instance a parent of a grade 6 learner commented, “Heke nezempilo ke hlambi ngeliny’ixesha abuye hlambi eze ne-abbreviations ezithile mhlamb’ ooHIV ne AIDS funeka ngoku sibagqibezele ngamagam’apheleleyo”. This means that sometimes learners come with abbreviations that we have to write in full for example Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Somehow, the parent submits that he/she is also not aware of all the health hazards involved. She argued, “Kwezinye ke ngoku ndimxelele kwezinye ufumanise ukuba andizazi kuba zezakudala kakhulu ndimgqithise kwabanograde 12”.

Apart from this, some parents remained positive towards assisting their children with homework: they make sure that the room used for homework is spacious, it has all the reading material, electricity, a table and chair and it is quiet with no TV or radio. There is also a heater to warm the room during cold days and a fan for hot days. Similarly, they support their children with handwork, but continue to ensure that order and orderliness remain a priority. In other words, rules and regulations apply at all times. For instance a learner would not be allowed to go and play before completing homework; they should also do house chores before doing homework. Likewise, parents would skill learners on how to tackle and answer questions as well as in doing collaborative work or working in groups.

5.9.3 Educators and the principal

Educators confirmed that parents in the community involve themselves in the homework of their children. This arises from the understanding parents and educators have sealed with each other. For instance, parents continue to ask whether their children are given homework on an ongoing basis; they also explain to them how homework is done instead of just giving them answers. In other words, parents are aware of their children’s progress, hence, they are able to advise them in educational issues; they are even aware of the homework activities given on a daily basis. Based on all this, parents are able to teach their children instead of simply assisting them with homework. They note whether the teachers control learner work – this is indicated by the teacher’s signature on the tasks given. They even ensure that children have homework timetables in their houses. To

show that parents recognise these timetables, they minimise the number of chore learners have to do and give enough time for homework.

Referring children to knowledgeable people such as their siblings, friends, teachers and neighbours is a wonderful undertaking, which shows that parents care about their children and want the best for them. Above all, these parents also visit the school to ask if their children are complying with the school rules accorded to homework. They support their children with handwork and subjects like NS, Technology and Arts and Culture. Where more problems are encountered, learners are referred to relevant websites for more information.

Educators agreed that parents assist their children financially: they transport to the library, pay for photocopying, buying cell phones and airtime and for doing practical work. Sometimes parents approach other community members to assist the learners with their work when they are not able to do so themselves. However, no parent complained about teachers' abdication of their duties and responsibility as the parents at school A did. They simply co-operated with the teachers for the benefit of their children.

While some parents see the value of assisting with homework, others did not see the value attached to homework. Educators blame illiteracy and lack of knowledge as the source for this because some of the parents in this predicament are alleged to have never gone to school or have never been exposed to the curriculum being done presently. Therefore, they remain in the dark, knowing nothing about assisting learners with homework. Other parents in this group blame fatigue for their inability to assist their children with homework. These parents claim they work until late and get home tired while others, in the same group, claim they are involved with community structures and can, therefore not assist their children. A small group of these parents is allegedly misusing money and can, therefore not assist their children with homework.

Other children live with grandparents and other members of the family and society as guardians. These children struggle to get the necessary support from their guardians. In some cases, the guardians request older children to take charge and monitor the progress of younger children; they even ask classmates/class house cleaners and neighbours to help these children with homework. In the main, nothing seems to work out in these

categories. Children remain irresponsible and fail to do homework; others end up dropping out from school simply because they do not comply with the school rules and regulations.

Again, the educators urged the parents to keep communication lines between themselves and the school open. In cases of 'overload', the educators suggested ways of avoiding this: they have to reduce household chores for children; they should also support the learners and not do their work for them. In general, the educators confirmed that parents communicate with the SMT and they got advice about improving the performance and completion of homework. The key issues or pieces of advice were around having a homework timetable and making sure that learners adhere to it: they should limit the number of TV programmes they watch and drill them on time management.

5.9.4 Findings

Participants found that some parents take responsibility for the performance and completion of homework; they also teach, instruct and entrust responsibility on learners for the performance of homework. They also agree that parents assist learners financially and ensure that the room used for homework is conducive for the purpose; they also advise, monitor and supervise learners to do homework correctly at all times. Without doubt these findings are in line with Cooper's (1997) modelling theory which is of the opinion that modelling is mostly influential when models are seen by the learner as able, influential, having skills and similar to individual situations often relating to parents and children. However, it needs to be highlighted that some parents are not helping learners with homework as they are supposed to do. Some of the reasons tabled for this discrepancy has no validity; they are excuses, which serve no purpose. It is, therefore, required of all parents to assist their children particularly with homework if they are to succeed in their effort to improve their lives and that of the society.

5.10 Challenges Faced By Parents with Homework

5.10.1 Learners

Learners mentioned many problems that face parents when assisting with homework. They claimed that parents have a difficulty of children who do not come straight home from school leading to homework being done at bedtime or not done at all. Poverty and

tiredness appear to be key among the problems leading to non-performance of homework. They went on to say that, parents are stressed by the problem of having little or no money to assist with material things that would cheer the child up and encourage him/her to improve on homework performance.

Lack of knowledge has also been identified as an obstacle to homework performance. It has been mentioned earlier that parents who have not done the subjects in question struggle to assist learners in them. Therefore, to succeed in this process, a Grade 12 learner argued, “funeke athathe hlambi abantwana abaku grade 12 okanye abesebegqithile abasenolwazi kule subject ikuxakayo okanye kulendawo ikuxakayo eskolweni”. This means that parents should have Grade 12 learners or learners who passed Grade 12 to assist their children. It should be noted that this is not the only responsibility of parents; they have household duties, as well.

Learners informed the researcher that parents complain when the children continuously come with too much homework at home. They moan when the learners are marked wrong continuously for the work they have done with their parents. Yet, they believe, the children’s are not heeding what the parents have said. Nevertheless, they keep on blaming teachers even though it is at times clear the learners are not focused on their work. Learners, on the other hand, blame their parents for failure to assist them with homework. They claim their parents are not knowledgeable with the new curriculum; some have a language problem and they find it hard to interpret English words. They do not understand the methodology used in the new curriculum – this was evident when a parent could not calculate or solve a homework (Mathematical) problem.

Learners also reported that parents do not avail themselves when requested to do so by the school and learners blame this to unidentified stressful situations, drunkenness, illness which is probably faked and family matters such as death of family member. This, according to learners, may be the result of a lacking skills. The learners revealed that their parents do not keep to time; they do not meet due dates either – they claim they do not have time.

5.10.2 Parents

On the contrary, parents claim that they do not assist learners with homework because they play for long periods and only request for homework late at night. At times, the parents claim, they have to help with homework whilst they are busy with household chores. Therefore, they find it hard to complete some homework given to children because of the little time at their disposal because their children are not assisting with household chores. A grade 9 parent confirms this when she argued, "Ngamany'amaxesha asizigqibi ezihomewekhi zabantwana xa thina bazali nabantwana ngokwabo bengawazi umgaqo omawulandelwe xa kusenzwa loo homewekhi naxa kungekho xesha loneleyo (umzekelo xa kufuneke siye kwinkonzo zethu zecawe neentlanganiso). This means that they do not finish homework when they, together with do not understand the method of doing the homework and they have to go to their churches and meetings. They even confessed that they just stop helping their children once they are confronted with methodologies they do not understand. This causes confusion, which creates conflict between parents and learners particularly when parents claim lack of knowledge, themselves, and end up doing nothing about that as the researcher observed. Further, the parents do not avail themselves when they come home tired from their working places and rather complain that their children do not do homework before taking off their school clothes.

Parents also claimed they have the problem of searching how knowledgeable their children are before doing homework; let alone helping them out with homework, which involves practical work and drawings. In fact, they do not even have enough money to assist them in this regard. Yet, the parents who assist their children are somehow delayed in helping with homework when children lose or forget certain reference books at school. Some of the parents live in one-roomed houses where there is not enough space, no electricity and at times, there is no furniture at all. These parents struggle to accommodate their children for homework purposes. They would rather arrange with friends or neighbours to assist in accommodating their child; a school may also be used.

5.10.3 Educators and the principal

Educators indicated that parents are faced with many challenges when helping their children with homework. These challenges included illiteracy and lack of knowledge because most parents never attended any school and others dropped out early in their schooling years, so they find it hard to assist with homework. The same applies to parents who are not familiar with the new curriculum; while the parents who are working leave their houses early in the morning and come back late from work, tired, to an extent that they cannot assist. It should be added that a tired educator might develop a negative attitude towards assisting the learner. Furthermore, a number of learners do not live with their parents; as a result, parents have to arrange for these learners to live with their grandparents, family members and even other members of the society. Another problem involves parents who keep themselves busy with community issues and end up being unable to take care of their children.

The other category involves parents who are lied to by their children who would claim they have no homework while in essence they have. These learners may not be keen at doing homework and by lying, they may be avoiding being caught out. Therefore, it is advisable for parents to be on the lookout for such excuses. At the worst, such learners could be seeing the homework as a burden.

A few parents claim 'object forgetfulness' as a reason for failure to assist with homework. Parents argue that they tend to forget about homework when working hard. This was confirmed by the senior phase educator who received a report from the learner that some parents say "nguwe ofundayo" it is you who is a learner. Some say "andiyazi le nto mna kuba andifundanga" meaning that "I don't know this because I am not educated". Negativity was also reported to play an important role in this instance. The child whose parent uttered these words appeared embarrassed but could do nothing about it; neither the principal could say anything except for encouraging such parents to see the value of homework assistance by a parent.

Educators also pointed out that some parents have a negative attitude towards homework. They often say that children must do household chores before doing homework but this could be because children start working late. Negativity is confirmed by a statement from an intermediate phase learner who reported that sometimes parents

say, 'Ewe soloko usenza lo msebenzi uwunikwe ngutitshala wakho kodwa mna andiboni nkqubela ngokwalapha endlini kwaye sizakutya ukutya asizokubhaka ihomewekhi', which means the child is always busy with the homework while she noticed no progress in the household. She added that they would not eat homework but food. Negative attitude was also confirmed by a FET educator's report that a parent said to her child, 'Andingotishara mna ngumsebenzi katishara lowo ungakhe ulinge undifundekele mna', which means she is not a teacher and it is the work of the teacher that she was doing, therefore, she must not make noise to her". Educators further indicated that parents still have a negative attitude and are not willing to help the child with homework on isiXhosa culture. They do not even approach their neighbours for assistance on their children's behalf.

It has been noticed that a few parents, who communicate with the school in connection with homework, only do that when called by the educators.

Educators reported that some parents do not have material resources to assist with homework because they are not working; they depend on pension grant they get from the government. They, therefore, borrow money in order to assist their children with homework needs. It has also been reported that some waste money on petty things and end up not affording to assist the child. Other parents simply do not care; they perceive teaching or education for that matter, as the responsibility of teacher.

5.10.4 Findings

What is coming out from the data presented above is that there are various challenges facing parents when assisting with homework. Participants indicated that parents have a challenge of learners who are irresponsible, ill disciplined and not committed to their schoolwork. This leads to some parents losing interest in assisting learners of this calibre and assign them to other people. They reported that the lack of support from some parents is prompted by hard work and tiredness, illiteracy and financial bankruptcy. Some participants observed that some parents are young and are capable of helping their children but are stressed by family issues; and they are sometimes busy with their professional duties while others are busy abusing alcohol drinks. Furthermore, all the interviewees agree that time constraints, overload, lack of skills and other material issues makes it difficult for parents to achieve their goals when helping with homework.

In addition, interviewees were of the same viewpoint that some parents are more concerned about community issues rather than their children's education, to an extent that they do not have sufficient time to support children with homework. On the other hand, most children have poor memory and need to be reminded timeously about methods and instructions when busy with homework. Parents have to organize a suitable room for homework purposes. This is in line with Cooper's (1989) endogenous-exogenous model, which argues that homework success may be motivated by family plan support.

5.11 Improving Parental Involvement in Homework

5.11.1 Learners

Learners suggested that they should give help to parents whenever they need assistance so that parents may help children in return. Learners proposed that parents must be given a mandate to sign on homework books after the completion of homework.

A learner advised, "Xu umhlambi moneer kukho lo mntana umaziyo aph'eklasini intokuba imisebenzi yakhe ayingeni ngokwexesha, uhamb'uyothetha nomzali wakhe uba mama okanye tata umcele ngesihle uba makazijonge iincwadi zomntana". This means that if there is a learner who is known for not submitting given tasks, his/her parent should be summoned and advised to look after that learner's books. Other learners pledged to work collaboratively and encourage each other to tow the line. However, should one get out of the line, his/her parents must be informed immediately. This will show that the learners care about each other. Learners proposed that the RCL should inform parents that they have the right to visit the school whenever they experience problems concerning homework. Learners recommended that the RCL must request parents to allow a child to play after homework is done. Learners advised that SGB parents may go door to door to see if learners are assisted and if not they must encourage parents to do so.

Learners suggested that SGB members hold regular parent meetings to keep parents abreast with school developments and homework related matters such as the importance of homework as well as the duties and responsibilities of parents in learner homework. They also advised educators to encourage parents assist their children with homework.

In the process, they need to make the aware of the repercussions of the failure to assist with homework. In line with the view of other learners, a grade 7 learner suggested, “Abazali mababizwe ngekota ze baxelelwe ngenkqubela yabantwana uze babenomdla woncedisa”, thus enhancing the call by the other learners for the parents to be summoned even though, for him, parents need to be informed of the school progress. This means that educators should invite parents quarterly and inform them about learner progress so that they may take interest in their children’s performance; they may also assist with homework.

Showing interest in their studies and homework, learners suggested that the SGB extends the afternoon study with thirty minutes, which would be allocated for homework. They also proposed that the SGB decide on a punishment directed at the parents who do not assist learners with homework. These parents should further be reported to the Department of Social Development. Furthermore, parents should plan activities to develop learners and inform the parents about the financial implications of such activities.

Seeing that non-performance of homework becomes habitual, the learners proposed for the formation of a homework committee that would be responsible for the performance and non-performance of homework by the learners. To minimize this further, the learners urged the community to approach the municipality for purposes of building a library. This would cut down on the costs to transport the learners to and from the library and make it easy to research for homework. This exercise would not go smooth without the co-operation and support of the community and community organizations. They need to motivate the learners and parents to commit themselves to homework. They should also assist the schools by making sure that each parent monitors the movement and performance of their children, particularly, in the performance of homework. This would improve the overall performance of the school because learners will abstain from absenting themselves from school because of the failure to do homework.

5.11.2 Parents

Parents, like the learners, emphasised the importance of collaborative work in schools. This would ensure that problems regarding content gap and non-performance of homework are resolved since the school authorities would be working hand-in-hand with

the community and other interested parties. In the process, both parents and learners would be encouraged to commit themselves in their work. Even those parents who show little or no interest in the education of the children may change heart and join those people who continue to assist their children particularly with homework. It is also likely that people would take care of each other and ensure that every one leads a happy life: there would be employment opportunities for all and the financial burden of the majority would be buried in history.

To strengthen this unity, learners must also become part of the group even if they do so as the school's RCL members. What is important is that all the school community would be represented in the committee and the decisions made would be binding to all. Among these rules, learners would be expected to perform their tasks diligently and timeously, whether it is classwork or homework. The parents, on the other hand, should always assist their children where and when necessary.

The introduction of KARIGUDE can also assist in enlightening parents and they can use the present technology in searching for information. An FET phase parent stated, "Baworkshophwe abazali baboniswe imfuneko yokokuba abantwana benziswe ihomework", meaning that parents need to be workshopped and be informed about the need to assist children with homework.

It was further advised that parents whose children are doing well in homework should be appreciated. This can have a positive impact on both the learners and their parents: they will complement each other in performing their homework tasks and improve in their overall school performance. The suggestion to establish internet cafés in the communities; and find computers and laptops sponsorships for the two schools would enhance their performance even further. Parents encouraged sponsors to donate as much equipment as possible for the two schools; this will add value to the two schools under review. A parent of a learner in the FET phase said, "Abazali bakutsho bancede ababantwana banabazali abaphangelayo nabangaphangeliyo". This means that the initiative would assist not only the learners of working parents but also those whose parents are not working.

What would assist the process more is pro-activity of the school community. For instance the parents advised the educators to have a homework timetable while the SGBs and the Department of Education were tasked with the responsibility to ensure that each learner had a textbook and a teacher in front of him/her. Above all, the two schools should ensure that parents are informed about the progress of the learners on a regular basis. These initiatives, among other things, would ensure that parents become responsible and assist the learners with their work and homework would be done, diligently too. A parent argued, “Urhulumente makasinike kaloku ifurniture, kuze sizokwazi ukuncedisa abantwana kakuhle, nyhani ngeliny’xesh asinazo nezotafile”. This means that the government must supply us (the schools) with furniture so that we can be able to support the children, we also do not have tables (desks). “Yona imibutho engekho phantsi korhulumente kufuneka ibhatale abantu abatitsha kwaKARIGUDE ze abazali bazokukhuthala ekufundeni bazokukwazi ukuncedisa kwihomewekhi”. This comment by one of the parents was directed to non-governmental organizations such as KARIGUDE to play their role and ensure that parents study so that they can assist with homework. They should also sponsor schools with books, computers and any other equipment or resources needed like the library, the laboratory, etc. so that all types of homework can be done efficiently.

The community organizations were also tasked to encourage both educated and non-educated parents to assist with children’s education. Neglecting this important role would be disastrous and learners would lose interest in their own education. This, it was suggested, needs to start small by the community organizations taking care of seemingly unnecessary tasks of fencing the schools, to make sure that homework is done in safe environment; even during weekends. In addition, “Abazali bangaqomisha igruphu ngokwe learning areas abanezakhono kuzo bancedisa abantwana ngokwe grades zabo”. This statement calls for parents to assist learners in the various grades by forming groups according to their areas of expertise.

Parents pointed out that the DoE, NGOs and other governmental departments can meet and build libraries and sponsor schools with furniture, computers and laptops so that learners can be enabled to perform their homework efficiently. On top of this, they should hold information sharing and motivational meetings with parents where they would talk

about the parents' roles and responsibilities in the education of the children. They should also advise parents to form homework support groups, which would look after homework activities and the performance thereof. They further recommended the revival of KARIGUDE, which would, as argued earlier, empower the parents to deal with more difficult situation in the education of the child. The homework timetable should be made available to the parents so that they may know what the learner would be doing at given structured times. This would prevent the overload parents have complained about during the interview session.

5.11.3 Educators and the principal

The educators and the principal value homework very much. To this effect, they suggested that learners doing well in homework should be rewarded and that their parents thanked for the active role they have played in learner homework. This initiative, they believe, would encourage both the learners who do not perform well in their homework and their parents to improve and take homework seriously. In a bid to empower the parents, the educators would advise the Department of Education to revive Adult Basic Education and Training for the parents to register and improve their qualifications. This would ensure that the intervention they undertake with the learners becomes efficient and effective since they will be better qualified to do so. Educators further invited the parents to visit schools during specific times of the day to check on the progress of their children.

An intermediate phase educator applauded this invitation since she has not been receiving positive feedback from parents in this regard. She believes that while the children need to do their household chores, they also need time to perform their school and homework; they also want to play. Other educators echoed what this teacher has said, adding that while parents are invited to meetings about the progress of their children at the end of the quarter, very few of them attend these meetings; even the one-on-one meetings between the teacher and individually parents are not well attended. The other educator further argued, "Isikolo asifanesithethe nabazali malunga nehomekwekhi sisuka nje sinike ihomekwekhi ebantwaneni engajongwayo noba bancedisile okanye hayi na". This means that the school does not usually communicate with parents, they simply give

homework to the learners; they do not monitor whether or not the learners have been assisted. The educators thought it wise, therefore, to issue or allow each learner to have a diary in which the parents would sign to indicate that they had monitored children's homework.

Some educators were of the opinion that parents assisted the learners when their homework activities were correctly done. This seemed the case particularly when learners were consistently completing homework and approaching certain questions correctly. Yet, nothing showed that they did, hence the suggestion for each learner to have a diary. A senior phase educator captured this correctly when she argued, "Abagail abazisayini ezadayari xa bengakhange bancedise", meaning that parents do not sign the diary when they did not assist (with homework). Other learners, presumably those not assisted by their parents, consistently get wrong answers to homework questions; even easy questions, while a few of them do not perform or finish homework.

Again, when educators request learners for reference books and other necessary resources, those learners who heed the call usually are assisted by their parents while those who do not prove the opposite. A senior phase educator confirmed this assumption when she claimed, "Ekhe nje umntana akayenza ihomewekhi loo nto ibonisa uba akhange ancedwe", meaning that once a learner does not do homework, an indication is given that he/she was not assisted (with homework).

This shows that the attempt by the school to call parents to meetings in order to inform them about the importance of homework and the role they ought to play in the education of the child has been futile; even the advices and motivations by the SGB to award those learners who do their homework for merit have been fruitless. No wonder that one of the educators commented, "Isikolo siyababhalela ileta abazali sibacele uba mababancedise abantwana babo kwihomewekhi kodwa bangayenzi loo nto", meaning that the school write to parents requesting them to assist their children, in vain. This makes the campaigns aimed at educating communities about the importance of homework inevitable. The parents ought to realise that their involvement in their children's education is not negotiable; it is obligatory. The same applies, then, with homework. They have to make time and assist their children when a need to do so arises.

In addition, subject advisors have to visit schools and assist the educators in situations where they identify a short fall, particularly, now that it has been found teachers experience a content gap in a number of subject. They should also share good practices from other schools. It is believed that practices of this nature would, without doubt, improve the conditions in these schools: both the learners and the parents would improve their commitment to, particularly, the performance of homework and other school work.

It would also work to the learners' benefit if the DoE can form partnerships with other governmental departments. Together with these departments, the DoE would ensure that it delivers on its mandate; thus carrying out its responsibility successfully by making sure that the basic needs for education are distributed to these schools without delay.

Once this happens, educators will be able to do their work without any hindrances hence the comment by an intermediate phase educator, "Khesihlale hlambi singootishara sikhe siyi-adrese kakuhle indaba yonik'ihomework yabantwana, hlambi apho besizakuthi ke xa sihleli sibonisane that uba siyabanika masibenetime-table hlambi indlel'esibanika ngayo". This means that once the authorities play their role, they will be able address the homework problem and ensure that there is a timetable for homework. It is apparent at this point that failure to do homework contributes to poor performance in the two schools.

Educators also suggested the introduction of afternoon classes, which, they believe, would assist in guaranteeing the performance of homework timeously. Apart from this, learners would have the opportunity to share ideas with other learners and, together, learn to share ideas and improve their performance. Therefore, this would minimize the parents' 'burden' in helping with homework. On the other hand, the school's homework policy would work out as intended: homework would be done by all learners especially now that the learners have requested for the extension of school time for homework purposes.

5.11.4 Findings

Participants in the research project indicated that there were various ways of improving parental involvement in homework. They suggested, among other things, that the DoE, NGOs and other governmental departments work together in improving the conditions in the two schools under review. Together with these stakeholders, the Department of Education may be able to fulfil its promises as tabulated in the Constitution of South

Africa: it would ensure that schools have the necessary basic facilities and that they are supplied their basic needs. Among these, in the main, learners should have stationery, textbooks and a teacher for every subject they learn. Above all, the classrooms must be conducive for teaching and learning; with both the teachers and learners feeling safe within the premises. These stakeholders should also hold information sharing sessions and motivational talks to ensure that parents are aware of the importance of homework and they accept their role and responsibility in their children's education.

Interviewees advised that schools should assist parents in forming homework support groups and quiz clubs that could be funded by the DoE. They further recommended the revival of ABET so that parents can improve their education and be able to assist their children with homework. They further proposed for the establishment of homework timetable and afternoon classes, which would improve learners' performance and do away with the burden of 'overload' parents claim to have. They further advised that the DoE, together with the other stakeholders to conscientize both the learners and parents to see the value of homework and ensure that parents accept their responsibility to assist learners with homework. To motivate learners and parents who do not understand the value of homework within the schooling experience, a suggestion was made to for the learners to be awarded while a word or a token of appreciation is given to the parents. They also advised that the parents who do not assist their children with homework, be reported to social workers.

5.12 CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

5.12.1 School A & B in Context

Both schools are public combined schools catering for male and female learners from Grade R to Grade 12. They are situated in a rural area, with the nearest town being nine kilometres from School A, and twenty kilometres from School B. These schools are in a quintile three category – an indication that poverty levels in both areas are high since most of the community members are unemployed and live on pension and child welfare grants. However, the management at both schools is up to the required standard: they boast an active and functional School Governing Body (SGB) and Representative Council

of Learners (RCL) membership. The RCL is made up of secondary school phase learners only – as determined by the South African School's Act (SASA, 1996).

In terms of numbers, School A is bigger than School B. It has 1130 learners and 35 educators while School B has 418 learners and 19 educators. Apart from the principal, deputy principal, HoDs, the (assistant) teachers, the two schools also have a Grade R practitioner, administrative clerks and general workers. The general worker at School A also plays the role of a security guard; while School B has a separate security guard.

In terms of population and sampling, the study opted for a total number of 29 participants per school. It was noted that School A had only one male parent participant while the parent participants in School B were all females. Learner participants were selected from the intermediate phase, senior phase and the FET band in both schools. Whereas the sampling was purposely done, there was a concern from the principal at School A that his/her school community was not supportive of the school activities.

School B had Physical Sciences subjects with chemicals kept in the principal's office. Both schools had computer laboratories that are not in use and libraries that are not functional – only old books were kept in both libraries.

Regarding qualifications, the education level of the parent participants from School A ranged from Grade 5 to Grade 12, with an exception of one parent who managed to get to tertiary education, even though she could not complete her studies. A similar trend obtains at School B, whose parent participants' education ranged from Grade 6 to Grade 12; with one of the two parents who managed to get to tertiary level completing her studies and graduating. Among these parents, only 4 parents were employed: 3 worked at School A as meal servers while 1 was employed at School B, also as a meal server.

The educators' qualifications varied from Secondary Teachers' Diploma (STD) to Master of Education (M.Ed.) at School A. Their teaching experience ranged from 11 years to 35 years. On the other hand, the qualifications for educators at School B ranged from ACE to BEd Honours, while their experience varied from 11 years to 22 years. The majority of educators are staying in the villages close to the two schools.

5.12.2 Need for parental involvement in homework

It was evident from the participants from both schools that homework was given to learners regularly. The participants even gave an example of homework activities given and the subjects in which homework was mostly given. Learners concurred with parents and further explained that they ask for assistance from their parents only when they experienced problems and when homework was difficult to complete. However, some learners indicated that not all the parents could help them with homework. One of the reasons, according to the participants, was that not all the parents were educated or had the required content knowledge. Many of them did not go through secondary school education.

It was also impressive to learn that the participants in the research project were aware of the reasons for teachers to give homework to the learners. These reasons, according to the participants, included the need to instil parents as well as learners' responsibility in schoolwork, to ensure syllabus coverage, to ensure parental support and identification of learner's abilities. Learners from school B added that they viewed homework as a means of improving their diligence and increasing their memory retention capabilities. They further believe that homework is one way of informing the parents about the learners' progress and level of understanding.

Largely, all the participants condoned the involvement of parents in their children's homework. Concisely, they argued that certain skills, which lead to the promotion of learners, are learned and developed during homework time. They even suggested that homework has a potential to build and encourage collaborative work. To this effect, they encourage learners not only to commit themselves to their work and work independently, but to interact with other learners, parents and teachers during this time. This, according to the participants, would lead to parents becoming accountable for their children's education. As such, they would go out of their way to organise and prepare a favourable environment for homework purposes and allow learners enough time for homework.

Most educators from the two schools observed that while there were a few parents who were aware of the importance of homework and, therefore, saw the need for their involvement in their children's homework, some parents did not. Firstly, they claimed, they were unable to meet teachers' expectations such as assisting learners financially. Some

of them were uneducated and could not see the need for them in getting involved in the education of their children. Secondly, some parents simply did not care about their children's education. Instead of assisting them with homework, these parents preferred to insult teachers for demanding their involvement in learners' homework activities. Thirdly, other parents blame their inability to assist learners with their homework on exhaustion from work and house chores. Fourthly, they blame their children for the lack of commitment and determination to work hard. In this regard, these parents believe, their children were more interested in community and playful activities than to their schoolwork.

Among all these reasons, it can be argued, the common denominator seemed to be illiteracy, alcohol abuse and lack of commitment to perform from both the parents and the learners. These variables have a potential to destroy a child. Indeed a parent is supposed to support and supervise them; they also ought to allow them enough space and time to perform assigned tasks, thus satisfying all the children's school and study requirements.

5.12.3 Strategies used by parents for homework

Participants indicated that parents in the two schools used different strategies in helping learners with homework: some gave children financial assistance, organising and making sure the environment and homework or study room is conducive for the learning and performance of homework activities. Other parents allow time for monitoring and supervision of learners' work; they also research, collect and organize suitable material resources and advise their children of possible ways of approaching the different tasks assigned to them as homework. They even set strict rules and control the performance of homework. Some parents even go to the extent of destroying the child's development by doing the homework for him/her. This is not acceptable because it can lead to these children becoming failures or dropouts since they would not have learned to be independent.

5.12.4 Challenges faced by parents with homework

Participants across the two schools indicated that there were many challenges facing the parents when helping with homework. As argued earlier, these challenges include the busy schedule parents have at their work places and home family conflicts, coupled with

some community engagements and obligations. This leaves the parents with little or no time to support with homework. A few other parents are illiterate and lack the necessary knowledge and skills to assist their children; while another group is driven by negative attitude, use alcohol and simply do not care. This group views learner homework as an added burden, which requires them to ensure that the learners receive the necessary resource materials and a place conducive for homework.

The interviewees further informed the researcher that some parents' challenges were financial, with a good number of them being unemployed and living out of child and old age pension grants. They could not afford to buy their children resource materials that would enhance their learning. Added to poverty, the areas at which these children reside lack a number of facilities such libraries, laboratories and internet cafes. As a result, these learners found it hard to carry out researches or just read for fun. Furthermore, parents claim they were faced by homework overload, fatigue or exhaustion, and have to refer learners to knowledgeable people. Worst of all, it appeared that these parents found it hard to discipline their children and ensure they commit themselves to their work. Like their parents, these learners seemed excessively involved in community issues, rather than their studies; they could not even assist with household chores after school. They appeared to be doing everything as they like, without heeding the instructions of their parents. As such, these learners appeared to be overpowering their parents – a recipe for disaster since disrespect of older people has a potential destroy a child.

5.12.5 Improving parental involvement in homework

It is evident from the data presented that there are many ways to improve parental involvement with their children's homework. One of the ways to do so is make sure that parents avail themselves and show interest in their children's work. They should not only establish whether the children have been given homework; they should also make sure that they do homework. In other words, parents should monitor, supervise and comment on any piece of work children have done as homework. This initiative will help the learner perform better since he would become aware that his/her would make quality checks parents on a regular basis. This can motivate the learner to commit him-/herself on his/her work.

The participants advised that learners should not be starved since doing so would harm their levels of concentration and lead to poor performance. Learner without good nutrition at home should be reported to social workers for support.

Parental involvement in homework would also be improved if schools, the SGB, the DoE, and community organizations could hold information sharing sessions and awareness campaigns, which would ensure that parents realise the importance of homework activities in the education of the child. While these sessions would be mainly about informing and advising parents, it would be necessary for the parent to be vocal and have inputs in the education of their children. This would ensure that everyone, the parents included, owns the outcomes of these sessions since they would be exposed to and learn about the roles, responsibilities and obligations they have in the enhancement of the child's education.

The DoE, NGOs and community organizations would, apart from monitoring the process of teaching and learning, ensure that teachers are appointed and learners are taught and the stationery and textbooks are supplied to schools. It is a fact that parental involvement can be improved if community organizations can ensure that homework is performed in a conducive and secured environment. In addition, these community structures or stakeholders should uphold the dignity of every learner at all times, regardless of his/her origin, colour or creed; they must also make sure that there is adequate furniture at school. Other facilities such as computers or laptops, laboratories, libraries together with the infrastructural facilities should also be made available since they would motivate the learners to commit themselves to their work and complete homework timeously and correctly.

Of great importance, as well, would be the opening of additional ABET centres which would encourage older people to further their studies and become abreast with the new developments in education. From these schools parents can also be encouraged to form homework support groups that would look after and ensure that homework is done by all learner correctly.

It would also help having a radio and TV homework publication programmes from which parents can learn. This would empower them to monitor homework with better

understanding, particularly if he/she follows the best practices by other schools and educators. In addition, the parents would learn to appraise and encourage their children so that they may enjoy and do their homework regularly and timeously. Finally, it is important to ensure that the place, from which the homework is done, remains conducive for the purpose; it must be free of any noise that may disturb the learners.

5.13 Conclusion

The semi-structured and focus group interviews, in particular, produced rich sets of data from the two school. The data was analysed in line with the sub-question of the study. It is apparent that almost all the participants believe that parents should be involved in homework. However, not all parents are actually able to assist with all homework and at all times. Those who are able to help adopt a variety of strategies, which suggest that even parents who are uneducated may help when they have the will to do. Some parents are unable to assist, have legitimate socio-economic obstacles that hinder them. There is also evidence, which suggest some elements of negligence on the part of some parents. The participants proposed measures that can make them to contribute more effectively in home.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the data and analysis presented in the previous chapter. The theoretical framework will guide the discussion and it is structured in line with the research sub-questions. This chapter will, for each sub-question, restate some of the key findings interpret them using the theoretical framework and relate them to the literature review. Finally, the chapter will suggest the areas of further studies make recommendations and draw up a conclusion.

6.2 Key Findings

The study found that homework was given regularly and examples of subjects where homework was mostly given were Mathematics, English, IsiXhosa, Accounting, Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation, Tourism, and History and Geography. This is affirmed by all participants in both schools together with the requirements of CAPS. The study also found that most participants in both schools saw the need for parents to be involved in homework. These participants were of the view that parental involvement helps learners to commit themselves in the homework activities while completing them diligently and timeously. To succeed in this exercise, the learners have to remember what they have been taught, enhance their reading, research skills, revise and work collaboratively with other learners, teachers and parents.

Parental involvement would help learners to do well at school and be promoted to the next grade. In the process, they will get an insight on the progress of their children at school; the careers they could potentially follow will not be an exception.

While most participants viewed the homework as having prospect of improving the performance of the learners, there were few from both schools who had a different opinion. They argued that most parents do not see the need for them to be involved in homework. They ended up not assisting the learners with their homework. As a result the homework activities for these learners were not correctly done. In other words, the quality of the homework submitted by learners were devoid of parental involvement: they were incomplete and incorrect while others were not even submitted. It was, however,

encouraging to learn that some learners indicated that they generally do homework independently, without the assistance of parents until there was a difficulty they could overcome and the homework was difficult.

It was also found that there were parents who are prepared to assist learners with their homework while others were not. Those who assist strove to use a number of strategies that would make their undertaking easier and more profitably to the learners while those who are not interested in assisting found every possible excuse to support their claim. Some of those who were involved provided the learners with answers to the questions and allow them to write or copy these out. In essence, they were giving them answers instead of supporting them. As argued earlier, this is not acceptable because it has the potential to rob the learner of the ability to work independently of his/her parents. Furthermore, this also robbing him/her of valuable knowledge that the learner may have gained if he/she worked independently. In the same way, those parents who do not assist learners with their homework to the child of the valuable information he/she would have gained if assisted.

Parents also provide indirect assistance to homework. They buy data bundles for research purposes, pay for transport for learner to go to the library, and they give them money for lunch, buy electricity and the resources the child would use while studying or doing homework. Others reduce household chores so that their children can dedicate more time to homework. They also make sure that the study room is conducive for homework, organise material resources, and spend their time in monitoring and supervising learners performing their homework. However, these parents are quick to set rules for homework completion. For instance, they constrain the learner from engaging in other activities apart from reading or doing homework: learners are not allowed to play, watch television or listen to music before they finish homework.

This study also found that parents in rural communities face a number of challenges when dealing with homework. Some of these challenges deny these parents the opportunity to be involved in homework whilst others experience these problems when they are directly involved. Another group of parents find it difficult to assist with homework while they are busy with their own household chores such as fetching water from the rivers, washing

clothes, cleaning the house, cooking, collecting wood from the forest, collecting livestock, and gardening, hence the use of the word 'overload'. As a result, these parents complain about being too exhausted to assist with homework. A small group of parents, the professionals, bring their own work at home and find it difficult to assist effectively in homework, while others undertake to attend to community engagements and obligations like meetings, visits to bereaved families, church services and, therefore, find it difficult to support learners in terms of homework. The rest of the parents, it is reiterated, are faced with problems related to content knowledge and do not know the answers to questions since they either never went to school or did not do the subjects or reach that grade they had to assist with. They, therefore, view homework as burden and one way whereby teachers abdicated their responsibility. This becomes more burdensome when parents have children in many grades and cannot afford to meet the needs of these children, financially and otherwise.

Other challenges with homework relate to irresponsibility and negligence since the parents involved indulge in drinking tendencies and do not look after their children while other problems are learner related. Learners often prefer to play and attend community rituals and other ceremonies instead of doing their homework.

This study found that there were various ways that could be used to improve parental involvement in homework. Among these parents should ensure that they make time to attend to their children's homework. Availability should not always be interpreted as an ability to answer questions. It could be as simple as asking if homework was given at school on a given day. It is important that parents should not be easily satisfied, because they may be misled by the learners who are lazy to do homework. They should insist to see the child's schoolbooks for evidence of the claim.

The research indicated that monitoring and supervision on the part of the parent might yield positive result since the learner will continue doing his/her homework because the parents will, anyway, check on homework and other schoolwork. It has also been found during awareness campaigns and information sharing sessions that vocal parents about learner care can increase parent participation in homework – it would influence and arouse other parent's interest in learner homework.

In addition appointing teachers who are knowledgeable and capable can add value to parental involvement in homework. This could be coupled with the supply of the necessary textbooks and stationery to ensure that nothing is lacking and can hinder the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the availability of school furniture, computers, laptops or tablets with internet can be of help since the suitability of the environment is key to successful teaching and learning; the same should be the case at home for purposes of homework. Facilities like laboratories and libraries have a potential to increase learner interest and commitment in their schoolwork; this can drive them to do homework without being pushed from behind.

Apart from this, educators should recognise and defend the dignity of each learner regardless of origin, colour or creed. This, on its own, can make a difference in a learner's life and attitude to homework. If filtered to the home environment, it can enhance the learner's interest in learning and perform homework activities diligently – parents will respect him/her and allow him/her the opportunity to work independently.

Similarly, opening of ABET for parents to improve and further their education would add value to parental involvement in homework since the support parents give to learners will become more meaningful and informative – the parents would be having more knowledge and, therefore, better equipped to deal with different parent/child relationship. This will also strengthen the existing homework support groups or help to establish these where they are not available. It would also help to have a radio and TV homework publication programmes from which parents can learn.

The other benefits for the learner can be derived from supplying them with healthy and nutritious food – no learner can study on an empty stomach. It has been proved that nobody can work efficiently when he/she is hungry. The reduction of child labour can also be beneficial to learner performance; this will ensure that the learner is focused on studying and doing homework instead of work that is supposed to be done by adults. Drawing of the homework timetables can increase learner performance since it would stagger his/her study period beautifully, allowing him/her time to rest and to read vastly or do homework in the various school subject. Parental involvement will also take place

according to the timetable rather than being random and disruptive. As indicated earlier, this would make parental intervention fruitful and empowering.

6.3 Link with Literature

Literature is the major source to reveal why parental involvement is necessary and should be upheld in parental involvement in homework. According to the review in this study, literature has a potential to developing better understanding of concepts and their use. In this study, it emphasised the importance of homework and the reasons why parents should engage with learner homework. It has equipped the parents with ways and strategies that they can follow in order to make a success of their intervention. In the process, learners will know better and skilled in performing homework and other schoolwork. The study goes on to explain that homework has a capability to shape and promote collective work. This is confirmed by Cooper's perspective (2001), according to whom homework has an immediate effect on the retention and understanding of subject matter and improves pupils' study skills. Nye, Turner & Schwartz (2006) and Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins & Weiss (2004) concur with this point of view when they argue that when parents are involved in reading-related activities outside of school, children's reading act is likely to improve, along with knowledge and language skills, and a general love for reading.

The study further found that parents encourage learner's commitment and independence as well as interacting with other learners, parents and teachers during homework time. The statement is supported by Walker et. al (2004) who says that parental involvement in homework improves important connections between families, students and other adults who are helping. Mcdermott, Goldman & Varenne, (1984) and Xu & Corno (1998), on the other hand, recommend that when parents are involved in homework, students show more active study actions. They further indicate that parents become accountable, organise infrastructure and prepare favourable environment for doing homework. Yet, most educators argued that most parents do not see the need for their involvement in learner's homework. The reasons they detailed include financial limitations, illiteracy, lack of learner's commitment and dedication, family conflicts, inability to fulfilling educator's expectations and fatigue from employment (work) and household chores.

The finding that relates to poor co-operative between educators and parents as well as parents' poor behaviour is sustained by Warton (1998), Murray et al (2006) and Patall et al. (2008) when they argue that some parents are not sure about the aim of homework as a result they understand homework as a normal time-consuming task, which often causes embarrassment, nervousness, and disagreement in the family due to fighting over homework.

In addition, the educators claimed, these parents do not see the need for them to be involved in homework. This was evident in the quality of homework the learners submitted at school. These homework activities were either incomplete, providing incorrect answers while the others were not submitted. Some learners indicated they do not always need parental assistance in homework; they only need parents when homework was difficult.

The findings above, especially those relating to the support of the need for parents to be involved in homework, suggest that there is a good normative will for co-operation between the schools and parents. This vision is consistent with the leadership role in Bandura's (1997) modelling theory that ought to be expected of parental role in homework. Whilst this is the dominant view, some parents are perceived as being uncooperative. This perception is in sharp contrast with the expectations of Bandura's (1997) modelling theory. In the same vein, parents may not be able to model good behaviour that may be observed and adopted by learners. This may result in poor performance by learners in homework and continuous assessment; and the result may failure. This behaviour may be indicative of the underlying challenges faced by many parents in rural communities. The exogenous-endogenous model by (Cooper, 1989; 2001) show a web of factors that influence homework completion by learners and expected support from parents. As it is illustrated in the section under challenges, parents have to mediate and reconcile aspects emanating from the schooling system, the children, the parents themselves and the broader community in a bid to harmonise the situation.

It may be a fair comment and fair inference to suggest that the parents who do not see the need for their involvement in homework, may be those who do not co-operate with the educators and rather continue to demonstrate an unsupportive behaviour. It has been

argued earlier that those parents would find it difficult to model and demonstrate leadership that would assist learners to do well in homework (Bandura, 1997). It has also been argued that there are complex factors and variables that may explain this phenomenon in Cooper's (1989; 2001) exogenous and endogenous model. On the positive side, there are a few parents, who would not abdicate their responsibility and simply allow the educator to take care of their children even if they are burdensome and irresponsible. The parents are prepared to go out of their way to demonstrate and practise what can be emulated by other parents in rural communities. The patterns that are emerging from the strategies they use show that assisting with homework is not a bed of roses. No one can simply jump up and monitor learner homework. It involves and requires the will, knowledge, supervision, time, resource to do so; there are also financial or monetary implications involved. These may either be internal or external matters that affect the completion of homework and the support from parents.

Able parents try their best in planning for the homework of their children. In reducing daily family duties and allowing time for homework is an indication that parents value the education of their children and, therefore, see the need for homework to be given at school. This argument is supported by Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2001) who state that parents set time and spaces for homework. However, it is still necessary for schools to make parents aware of their roles and responsibilities in homework. This has a potential to improve learner performance in schools.

Furthermore, the DoE must assist in opening Adult Basic Education centres so that adults may be motivated to improve or further their education. Once this is achieved, parents would be able to support and use different skills in assisting the learners with homework. This is in line with Coopers (1989) endogenous-exogenous model, which suggests that homework completion may be influenced by adult monitoring, motivation and the role of students in the homework process. This model further suggest that homework is a complex and difficult process in the situations of school and home, therefore parents should be supportive to learners. In line with the statement above, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2004 state that adults may also help students avoid unnecessary time on assignments. Parents who do not do make an effort in supporting their children with

homework are not good models for their learners and this is contradictory to Cooper's (1989) endogenous-exogenous model. It is also in contradiction with Bandura's (1997) modelling theory which states that parents and other adult people are the role models of their children, so they must be exemplary to them and should play a leading role as children also learn by observing them. The model continues to say that parents who are good role models to their children lead to children's improved attitudes, behaviour and attendance to school the behavioural activities, which lead to improved or quality performance.

Some of the strategies parents used as they were monitoring homework involve financial assistance, organisation of infrastructure and making sure the rooms used for homework are conducive, clean, quiet for the purpose and warm. This is in line with scholars such as Cooper et. al, (2006) & Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers (1987) who maintain that parents ought to make sure that the room is clean and quiet by turning off the TV and saying no to telephone calls during homework time. Margolis, McCabe & Alber, (2004) and Hutsinger et al., (1997) puts this in simple terms when they argue that parents plan time and organize the environment for their children. It has also been found that some parents allow time for monitoring, supervise learner's work, collect suitable material resources, control, advise, set rules, research and assist learners with homework. This finding is consistent with Tam and Chen (2009), Thelamour and Jacobs (2014), Delgado-Gaitan (1992) and Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2001) who claim that parents prepare, advise place, set time, control, support and monitor children's homework. In addition, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) and Xu and Corno (2003) believe that parents control children's time by giving them examples, simplify tasks and correct incorrect answers when doing homework.

It was also suggested that the few parents supporting their children in homework should be encouraged, but those who see no need should not be left behind. In other words, all the parents should be given support immaterial of their present condition because all need to be made aware and be informed of and be knowledgeable about the various methods they can use to improve learner performance in homework. The above findings are supported by Cooper's (1989) endogenous-exogenous model, which states that

homework is a broad and difficult process in the situations of school and home. This is also in line with (Cooper, 2001) who says that homework is affected by many factors including resource material and location than any other instructional actions. Furthermore, it is believed the mere idea of being 'aware' of these strategies encourages the parents to operationalise their roles and responsibilities as they assist learners with homework.

The ABET centres and homework support groups may enhance the initiative. This finding is supported in Bandura's (1997) modelling theory which suggests that homework interferences can be avoided when parents and caregivers respect, check and guide their children's work on given assignments; be these classwork or homework. It goes without saying, therefore, that modelling becomes more convincing when models are observed by the child as capable and powerful, possessing skills and abilities that they value, and similar to self-conditions often relating to parents and children.

Some of the ways found that could improve parental involvement in homework include, among others, parents' availability and interest in learner's work. This is in line with Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) in their statement that teachers can tell parents that their involvement is always welcome, expected and appreciated. Echaune (2015) further adds that parents who are not participating in homework of their children should be influenced while those who are involved should be encouraged to continue.

Monitoring, supervision and commenting can also influence parents for the better. Xu (2005) supports this statement when he suggests that homework enables the families to evaluate, exercise, and support what students studied in class. It is, therefore, necessary to hold continuous information sharing sessions and awareness campaigns with the parents; such meetings prompt them to take care of their children. In the process, they assist the learner in completing his/her homework.

This is consistent with Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2001) who argues that common discussion with teachers on helping children with their homework helps to reinforce parental involvement; it improves their strategies and abilities as well. It is, therefore, not surprising when Ndebele (2015) advises that schools should organize workshops to make

parents understand the importance of homework as well as how to they get involved in it. Such workshops would allow parents the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges in monitoring and supervising children's homework.

The study also found that it would be futile to encourage parents to assist learners if teachers do not play their part. In other words, teachers should teach if they want parents to assist the learners with homework. Munk, (2001) and Nelson (2002) argue that parents often complain that teachers do not lead or talk continually enough about ways of defeating homework problems. Margolis (2005), on the other hand, is of the view that educators must stress their availability to help and support parents. In addition, teachers should walk the talk and ensure that the ABET centres they want revived come to fruition so that the capability of parents to monitor and assist with homework can be improved. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) support this idea when they argue that parents are more likely to give their children help with homework assignments when they are better prepared and qualified to do so.

6.4 Recommendations

In order to improve the parental will and involvement in homework, parents need a constant reminder about the significant role they can play in the education of their children, in general and more specifically in curriculum and homework. It is, therefore, of great importance that the awareness campaigns and homework support groups are brought into fruition. These will enable the parents to see the value of homework in their children's education. Schools together with DoE should motivate learners and parents to co-operate and consistently work together in the pursuit of education and a brighter future – this starts with homework. There is need to demystify the perception that only educated parents can assist learners. As argued earlier, there are many ways parents can give support to their children. Merely asking the learner about their daily school activities is, in itself, one way of supporting and getting involved in the child's path of education – it means one is interested in the child's schoolwork. Asking whether children have been given homework speaks dividends; that shows interest and it is involvement in his/her homework activities. Therefore, one does not required subject content in order to be involved in the child's homework.

It is also recommended that the school and the SGBs solicit the expertise of retired professionals to come and assist in schools specifically in homework so that even those parents who have valid reasons for not helping can be accommodated. Retirees could form part of the homework support groups as a way of ploughing back to their communities. Again, information sharing, awareness campaigns and workshops become necessary at this stage. It is through meetings that the parents can be empowered on different strategies that can be used in assisting with homework. It is where the parents can be advised about the different ways of supporting learners in homework besides those that require financial assistance.

Individuals, who grew up in these communities and have managed to do well in education and can be engaged to have sessions and share their experiences with the communities. Community leaders may be lobbied to regulate some of the community ritual and cultural practices that hinder educational efforts. The integrated rural development strategies may be harnessed in order to resource a cluster of villages for educational support purposes.

The community organizations, schools, SGBs and the departmental officials should advise parents on how to overcome some of the many challenges in rural contexts. This will equip them with the necessary skills to exercise their roles and responsibilities successfully. They should also remind parents that although they may have added responsibilities and other commitments, they ought to prioritise the education of their children. Children are a very delicate asset that needs to be handled with care. Supporting them with homework, therefore, will be one way of moving a step towards the achievement of their goals.

The DoE, NGOs and other government departments should supply schools with libraries and laboratories together with computers or laptops or tablets with installed internet equipment. This will enhance learning since the learner would not have to travel far to seek assistance for his/her schoolwork and homework. While both the researcher and the participants in the project are aware these cannot be obtained over night, it is suggested that mobility towards having them should be visible. In other words, the DoE, the NGOs, the other governmental departments and community organizations should

show the will and preparedness to embark on these things – keeping in mind that basic education is a human right and not a privilege.

The Department of Education must also make sure that schools have the full complement of their teaching staff, with every child having the necessary textbooks. This will ensure that learning takes place and homework is done. Parents will enjoy to assist with homework if these resources are in place. Again, to ensure that parents are up to the task confronting them, the Department of Education must bring ABET centres to fruition. This will encourage older people upgrade themselves and become well-informed about the new developments in education. As argued earlier, the Department of Education should publicise homework in radio and TV programmes so that parents can have access to it.

It is also advisable for schools to draw up a workable homework timetable and make this available for the parents. This will assist in making sure that learners do not default in doing his/her homework and the parent will assist with this. In the end, everybody will be happy because all will be working towards the success of the child. To encourage the learners to perform homework diligently, schools should award learners who perform well in homework and show appreciation to parents for their contribution. This will inspire and arouse the interest of the other parents to commit themselves in homework, as well. Coupled with the introduction of afternoon study time, this will make a success of the learning experience.

6.5 Areas of Further Study

The following topics are recommended for further research in order to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning parental involvement in homework.

Digging deeper into the will of the parents who are more cooperative in homework.

Reports of regularity on homework and doing in-depth document analysis of the homework books.

Behaviour of learners who do not get any support from their parents on homework. It may not be useful to conclude that all do badly; other learners may actually do well under unsupported conditions.

The effectiveness of particular homework strategies in rural communities.

The relations between learners and parents during homework time.

Overcoming successfully some of the homework challenges that are pertinent in rural communities, especially those that are related to domestic chores and child labour.

The alternative means of accessing resources where there are no libraries, poor ICT connectivity, and unreliable electricity to ease homework.

Traditional limitations that could be the obstacle even for parents who are able to support with homework in the rural communities.

Efforts that can be done in attracting a big number of parents or guardians in the rural communities and the systems that are in place in education in decreasing costs for parental involvement in homework.

Taking into account the role which communities could play in planning the education of their children and changing attitude of parents in homework.

6.6 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the way parents in rural communities are involved in the homework of their children. The main question was to find how parents in rural communities get involved in homework. Although parents in the rural communities see the need for them to be involved in homework, there are those who do not see the need for their involvement. However, it has been found that some learners actually request for parental assistance only when homework is difficult to complete.

Parents who see the need for involvement in homework argued that their involvement encourages learners to work hard so that they can be promoted to other grades. They also use different strategies in making sure that homework is completely done and submitted on the due date. These parents are prepared to sacrifice their time and resources so that they can support, monitor and supervise their children during homework time. This would also avoid complaints from school about poorly completed or incomplete homework. They are also prepared to reduce the learners' daily chores so that they may have more time to do homework. In addition, the parents make sure that the homework

or the study room is suitable for homework: it has the necessary furniture; it is well ventilated and is free of noise and any kind of disturbance. However, this does not mean the parents would allow the learners to do as they please. They set fair rules and regulations that would ensure learners do their homework and improve their performance. For instance, the learners are not allowed to watch TV or play music before homework is completely done.

Parents who do not see the need for getting involved in homework, use all kinds of tricks and excuses to avoid assisting the children. Some blame illiteracy and lack of knowledge while others direct the blame to the learners, themselves, claiming that they lack discipline and commitment to do their work. A good example in this regard is that of a parent who questioned how she would be expected to be able to help her child if he did not know what the homework required. Yet, the learners have been loud and clear that they only ask for parental involvement in homework when they did not know how to do the homework.

However, it has been argued there are challenges that face some of the parents in the rural communities during homework time. These challenges are either domestic or community based. The domestic challenges range from household chores to family matters such as cleaning the house and customary activities; while the community based range from personal interests to morally bound responsibilities such attendance to church and attending to community meetings, funerals or weddings. All these necessities are bound to compete with the homework time since they are rarely separable from each other.

It was, however, heart-warming to learn that while these competing interests exist, some parents are determined to improve their involvement in homework of their children. Indeed, parent's availability in a child's life is needed directly, for those who live with their children or indirectly for the others who are farther away from home.

It was also suggested that the teachers draw up a homework timetable and make this available for parents. This would make it easy for the parents to monitor the learners' performance; they will also know when to assist the learners with homework. The NGOs, DoE, SGBs, schools and community organisations, on the other hand, would work

collaboratively to improve parental involvement in homework by engaging the parents in information sharing and awareness campaigns; thus allowing parents to learn and share good practices which would make parental involvement in homework worthwhile and practicable. Apart from this, the engagement would ensure that parents become aware of the importance of homework; it would also ensure that parents fulfil their roles and responsibilities in assisting learners with homework.

It was also found the working relations between schools and the communities were not sound even though interventions by the teachers appeared to have normalised the situation.

In conclusion, while parental involvement in homework of rural contexts is not easy, it is encouraging to learn that an improvement is noticeable. A number of parents bore testimony to this when allegedly went out of their way making sure that they assist their children with homework; some sacrificed their time to assist their children. They even reduced the household chores children have to do and ensured that the rooms children used were conducive for studying and doing homework. In other words, these parents' willingness and preparedness to go out of their way to assist their children gives hope parental involvement in homework in a broader and larger scale; even those parents who abdicate their responsibility may be roped in and change. The modelling theory by Bandura (1997) and the exogenous-endogenous model by Cooper (1989, 2001) provide a useful frame for understanding some of the relevant and complex factors in the involvement of parents in homework.

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8. LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Permission letters



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

45 Eales Street, King William's Town, 5600, Private Bag X74445, KWT, 5600
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za

E-mail:

Ref. No.

Tel.: 043 – 604 3216

Enquiries:
N.M.Plaatzje

Fax: 0865486397

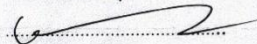
Mr M.I MBEMBENI
P.O. Box 3347
KING WILLIAM'S TOWN
5600

Dear Madam

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research in schools in the King William's Town District for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements for a masters Degree in the Faculty of Education at Fort Hare University.
2. Please be informed that permission is only granted provided that school activities are not disrupted.
3. We wish you well in your endeavors.

Yours faithfully


FC SOKUTU
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

building blocks for growth


Ikamva eligqoka

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Principals

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS

A. Introductions

Researcher

I am Malixole Mbembeni an educator at Isihobothi Public Combined School. I am a Master's student at the Faculty of Education at Fort Hare University doing a research in parental involvement in homework in the rural combined schools of the King William's Town Education District. The purpose of the study is to find out how parents and/or caregivers in rural communities are involved in the homework, factors that enable or hinder parental involvement in homework; it also seeks to find a way of encouraging them to be more involved in homework.

I must inform you, upfront, that your participation is voluntary. Please let me know if there is something that makes you feel uncomfortable during the interview. You have the right not to answer questions with which you are not comfortable. You also have a right to withdraw from participating at any time during the interview. The information that you will disclose to me will be used only for research purposes and for the requirements of this study. I will keep the information you supply to me confidential and no one will know about your contribution in the research project. There is a consent form that I would like you to read and sign before the start of the interview.

Principal

Now it is your turn. Please introduce yourself:

- Years of training and training institutions
- Schools and context of schools
- Experience in teaching
- Experience as principal
- Grades and subjects taught
- Age group and gender
- General view of parental involvement in school

B. Need for parental involvement in homework

- 1) Is homework important?
 - How is homework important to learners?
- 2) Do you and your teachers give homework to learners?
 - Give examples of activities that are given as homework to learners.
- 3) Do you expect parents to assist learners in homework?
 - What kind of assistance do you expect from parents?
 - Please give examples
- 4) Do you think parents having children in this school see the need for homework to be given to learners?
 - What makes you to think that parents see the need for homework to be given to learners?
 - How do you respond to parents who see no need to be involved in the homework of their children?

C. Strategies used by parents in rural communities for homework

- 1) Do you think parents in this community are actually involved in homework?

If YES:

- What are the specific strategies they use?
- Do parents communicate with the school about homework?
- What do parents do if they do not have the required knowledge to assist with homework?
- What are parents to do if they do not have the material resources to assist with homework?
- What do other parents do to assist with homework when they do not stay with their children?
- What do busy parents do to assist with homework?
- What do parents do when their children are overloaded with homework?

If No, move to Section D.

D. Challenges faced by parents in rural communities with homework

1) What do you think are the challenges faced by parents with homework?

- What are these problems?
- How do you come across these challenges?
- Do they have time and energy?
- What is their attitude towards homework?
- Do parents have the material resources for assisting with homework?
- Do parents have the knowledge for assisting with homework?
- Are parents available to assist with homework?

E. Improving parental involvement in homework

1) What do you think needs to be done to improve parental involvement in homework?

- Does the school communicate with parents about homework?
- How does the school check if parents are assisting?
- What role (support and assistance) can the school and the governing body play to improve parental involvement in homework?
- What role can be played by the Department of Education in improving parental involvement in homework?
- What role can be played by individual educators in improving parental involvement in homework?
- How does the school look at the quantity of homework given to learners?

Do you have any other question you thought I would ask?

Thank you very much for your time

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Educators

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

A. Introductions

Researcher

I am Malixole Mbembeni, an educator at Isihobothi Public Combined School. I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the Fort Hare University, doing a research in parental involvement in homework in the rural schools of the King William's Town Education District. The purpose of the study is to find out how parents and/or caregivers in rural communities are involved in homework, factors that enable or hinder parental involvement in homework, and to find a way of encouraging them to be more involved in homework. I would like to inform you that your participation is voluntary. Please let me know if there is something that makes you feel uncomfortable during the interview. You have the right not to answer questions with which you are not comfortable. You also have the right to withdraw from participating at any time during the interview. The information that you will disclose to me will only be used for research purposes and for the requirements of this research project. I will keep the information you supply to me confidential and no one will know about your contribution in the research project. There is a consent form that I would like you to read and sign, before the start of the interview.

Educator

Now it is your turn. Please introduce yourself:

- Years of training and training institutions
- Years of teaching experience
 - Schools and context of schools
 - Grades and subjects taught
- Age group and gender
- General view of parental involvement in school

B. Need for parental involvement in homework

- 1) Is homework important?
 - How is homework important to learners?
- 2) Do you give homework to learners?
 - Give examples of activities that you give as homework to learners.
- 3) Do you expect parents to assist learners in homework?
 - What kind of assistance do you expect of parents?
 - Please give examples.
- 4) Do you think parents having children in this school see the need for homework to be given to learners?
 - If yes, what makes you to think that parents see the need for homework to be given to learners?
 - If no, how do you respond to parents who see no need to be involved in the homework of their children?

C. Strategies used by parents in rural communities for homework

- 1) Do you think parents in this community are actually involved in homework?

If Yes:

- How do they involve themselves?
- What are the specific strategies they use?
 - What do parents do if they do not have the required knowledge to assist with homework?
 - What do parents do if they do not have the material resources to assist with homework?
 - What do other parents do to assist with homework when they do not stay with their children?
 - What do busy parents do to assist with homework?
 - What do parents do when their children are overloaded with homework?

If **NO**, move to section **D**.

D. Challenges faced by parents in rural communities with homework

1) What do you think are the challenges faced by parents with homework?

- What are these challenges?
 - Do they have time and energy?
 - What is their attitude towards homework?
 - Do parents have the material resources for assisting with homework?
 - Do parents have knowledge for assisting with homework?
 - Are parents available to assist with homework?
- How do you come across these problems?

E. Improving parental involvement in homework

1) What do you think needs to be done to improve parental involvement in homework?

- Does the school communicate with parents about homework?
- Do parents communicate with the school about homework related issue?
- How do you find out if parents are assisting with homework?
- What role (support and assistance) can the school and the governing body play to improve parental involvement in homework?
- What role can be played by the Department of Education in improving parental involvement in homework?
- What role can be played by individual educators in improving parental involvement in homework (nature of home vs. indigenous knowledge)?
- How do you minimize homework overload on learners?

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Parents

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

A. Introductions

Researcher

I am Malixole Mbembeni, an educator at Isihobothi Public Combined School. I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the Fort Hare University, doing a research in parental involvement in homework in the rural schools of the King William's Town Education District. The purpose of the study is to find out how parents and/or caregivers in rural communities are involved in homework, factors that enable or hinder parental involvement in homework, and to find a way of encouraging them to be more involved in homework. I would like to inform you that your participation is voluntary. Please let me know if there is something that makes you feel uncomfortable during the interview. You have the right not to answer questions with which you are not comfortable. You also have the right to withdraw from participating at any time during the interview. The information that you will disclose to me will only be used for research purposes and for the requirements of this research project. I will keep the information you supply to me confidential and no one will know about your contribution in the research project. There is a consent form that I would like you to read and sign, before the start of the interview.

Parents

Now it is your turn. Please introduce yourself:

- Number of your children in this school:
 - Grades they are doing
- Do you stay with your children?
- Level of education:
 - Types of training (formal & informal)
 - Number of years
- Employment status:
 - Kind of work doing
 - Years of experience

- Place of work
- School involvement:
 - SGB membership & role
 - Other
 - Committees
 - Extra-mural activities
- Community involvement:
 - Association/ organization and role
- General view about parental involvement in school

B. Need for parental involvement in homework

- 1) Do your children come from school with homework?
 - How often is homework given to your children?
 - Give examples of activities that are usually given to your children as homework.
 - In which learning area or subject is homework given most?
- 2) Do you see the necessity for homework to be given to your children?
 - How is homework important to your children?
- 3) Do you see the need for yourself to be involved in the homework of your children?
 - Why is it a need or why is it not a need?

C. Strategies used by parents in rural communities for homework

1. Do you assist your children with homework?

If YES:

- How do you assist?
 - Content issues (knowledge)
 - Supervision (checking)

- Financial assistance
- Material resources
- Infrastructure
- Request for assistance elsewhere (initiatives)

If NO, move to section D

D. Challenges faced by parents in rural communities with homework

1) What problems do you come across when dealing with homework?

- Your availability (time and energy)
- Being busy
- Content knowledge
- Finances
- Material resources (facilities)
- Infrastructure
- Homework overload, and other

E. Improving parental involvement in homework

1) What are the possible solutions to the problems highlighted? How do you deal with them one by one?

2) What else needs to be done to improve your involvement in homework?

3) What else can be done to improve involvement of other parents in homework?

4) Any envisaged role that can be played by:

- a. School and SGB?
- b. Education Department?
- c. NGOs?
- d. Community?
- e. Other

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Learners

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEARNERS

A. Introductions

Researcher

I am Malixole Mbembeni, an educator at Isihobothi Public Combined School. I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the Fort Hare University, doing a research in parental involvement in homework in the rural schools of the King William's Town Education District. The purpose of the study is to find out how parents and/or caregivers in rural communities are involved in homework, factors that enable or hinder parental involvement in homework, and to find a way of encouraging them to be more involved in homework. I would like to inform you that your participation is voluntary. Please let me know if there is something that makes you feel uncomfortable during the interview. You have the right not to answer questions with which you are not comfortable. You also have the right to withdraw from participating at any time during the interview. The information that you will disclose to me will only be used for research purposes and for the requirements of this research project. I will keep the information you supply to me confidential and no one will know about your contribution in the research project. There is a consent form that I would like you to read and sign, before the start of the interview.

Learners

Now it is your turn to introduce yourselves

- Name
- Grade
- Subjects doing (Grade 10-12)
- Living with (biological/guardian) parents
- Involvement of parents in school

B. Need for parental involvement in homework

- 1) Do teachers give you homework?
 - Give examples of activities that are given as homework?
 - How often are you given homework?
 - In which subjects do you get more homework?
- 2) How is homework important in your studies?
- 3) Are you able to cope with homework on your own?
- 4) Do you usually get assistance with your homework from parents?

If **Yes** move to **Section C**

If **No** move to **Section D**

C. Strategies used by parents in rural communities for homework

- 1) What kind of assistance do you get from your parents? Give examples
 - Content issues (knowledge)
 - Supervision (checking)
 - Financial assistance
 - Material resources
 - Infrastructure
 - Request for assistance elsewhere (initiatives)
 - Any other assistance (i.e. other learners)

D. Challenges faced by parents with homework

- 1) What are the problems that you face when you need parental assistance in your homework?
 - Parental attitude
 - Parental complaints (i.e. cost of time and energy)

- Knowledge
- Availability
- Resources

E. Improving parental involvement in homework

1. What can be done to make sure that your parents are able to assist you in your homework?
(plenary discussion based on key problems highlighted by learners)
 - Your role as learners
 - Role of RCL
 - Role of SGB
 - Role of educators
 - Community organizations

Appendix F: Declaration by parent/legal guardian for minors

Declaration by parent/legal guardian

By signing below, I (*name of parent/legal guardian*) agree to allow
my child (*name of child*) who is years old, to take part
in a research study entitled (PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK IN RURAL AREAS)

I declare that:

- I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and that it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- If my child is older than 7 years, he/she must agree to take part in the study and his/her ASSENT must be recorded on this form.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to let my child take part.
- I may choose to withdraw my child from the study at any time and my child will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)

.....
Signature of parent/legal guardian

Signature of witness

Declaration by investigator

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understand all aspects of the research, as discussed above

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)

.....
Signature of investigator

Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Certificate



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number: MAC021SMBE01

Project title: **Parental involvement is homework of rural schools in the King William's Town.**

Nature of Project: Masters

Principal Researcher: Malixole Ivan Mbembeni

Supervisor: Mr M.A.A Macanda

Co-supervisor:

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Appendix H: Confidentiality & Informed Consent Form



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Ethics Research Confidentiality and Informed Consent Form

I am a master student at the University of Fort Hare conducting research regarding parental involvement in homework in rural schools. I am interested in finding out more about how parents and or caregivers in rural communities are involved in homework. I am carrying out this research for the fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters in Education. The findings are more likely to help schools in encouraging parental involvement in homework.

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not to take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the questionnaire and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around 45 minutes. I will be asking you a questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong

answers. When we ask questions about the future we are not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen.

If possible, I would like to come back to the district once I have completed our study to inform you of the results and discuss my findings and proposals around the research and what this means for the district and schools.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding parental involvement in homework. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

.....

.....

Signature of participant

Date

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

.....

.....

Signature

Date

Appendix I: Language Editing

East London

5241

29 May 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have edited the following master's thesis using the Windows "Tracking" system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action:

Parental involvement in homework of rural schools in the King William's Town education district by MALIXOLE IVAN MBEMBENI, a dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Fort Hare.

BkCarlson

Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)

Professional Editor

Email: bcarlson521@gmail.com

Cell: 0834596647

Disclaimer: Although I have made comments and suggested corrections, the responsibility for the quality of the final document lies with the student in the first instance and not with myself as the editor.

BK & AJ Carlson Professional Editing Services

Appendix J: Language Re-editing

PO Box 2588
King William's Town
5600
13 March 2018

CONFIRMATION OF EDITING

This is to confirm that I, Dr. Vuyisile Matthews Ngoqo, edited for language use, the thesis entitled **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK OF RURAL COMBINED SCHOOLS IN THE KING WILLIAM'S TOWN EDUCATION DISTRICT**-Malixole Ivan Mbembeni.

This editing involved issues such as spelling, punctuation, and sentence and paragraph structure as well as language usage.

I hold a PhD degree in Teaching and Learning and I majored in English in my Bachelor Pof Arts degree from the University of Fort Hare, Alice.



Dr. VM Ngoqo

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