

**SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF XHOSA SPEAKING
LEARNERS AS A MINORITY IN A HIGH SCHOOL:
IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPPORT**

By

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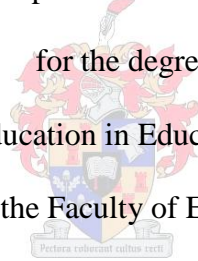
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996) formalised access to quality education for all by granting learners access to any school regardless of social, economic, race and cultural backgrounds. This saw many black families in South Africa enrolling their children into former white schools with the perception that these schools were better resourced and that their children would therefore receive a better education. The purpose of the study is therefore to enhance understanding of the experiences of the Xhosa learners as a minority in a former Model C school and to evaluate the life experiences of the learners within the context of the school system and how these experiences may be influencing their academic success. An ecosystemic theoretical framework guided the approach and orientation to the study undertaken by the researcher. This framework enabled the researcher to contextualise the study within the interacting systems that indirectly and directly influence the life experiences of the participants.

The study's research methodology can be described as basic qualitative research embedded within an interpretive paradigm. The participants in grade 9 to 11 (two per grade) were purposively selected to participate in the study. Two methods of data collection were used, namely six individual semi-structured interviews and one focus group interview. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data.

The research findings indicate that the major reasons for poor academic performance of this minority group are linked to discriminative attitudes and feelings of inadequacy. When learners experience the school as a safe place in which they have a sense of belonging, they are more motivated to learn. Working towards the creation and sustainment of this safe environment, which adequately supports the needs of the learners, requires genuine and continual collaboration between the interacting systems within the context of the learners.

OPSOMMING

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet (DoE, 1996) het toegang tot gehalte onderwys vir almal gewettig deur toelating aan leerders tot enige skool te verleen, ongeag van hulle sosiale-, ekonomiese-, rasse- en kulturele agtergronde.

Baie swart gesinne in Suid-Afrika het dus hulle kinders in voormalige wit skole geplaas, met die persepsie dat hierdie skole beter toegerus is en dat hul kinders beter onderrig sou ontvang. Die doel van hierdie studie was dus om die ervarings van die Xhosa-leerders, as 'n minderheidsgroep in 'n voormalige Model C-skool, beter te verstaan en om die lewenservarings van die leerders binne die konteks van die skoolstelsel te evalueer asook die moontlike invloed op hul akademiese suksesse. 'n Eko-sistemiese, teoretiese raamwerk het die benadering en oriëntasie van die studie, wat deur die navorser onderneem is, gelei. Hierdie raamwerk het die navorser in staat gestel om die studie binne die interaksie-sisteme, wat 'n direkte en indirekte invloed op die lewenservarings van die deelnemers kan hê, te kontekstualiseer.

Die studie se navorsingsmetodologie kan beskryf word as 'n basiese kwalitatiewe navorsing, ingebed binne 'n interpretatiewe (verklarende) paradigma. Twee deelnemers per graad, vanaf graad 9 tot 11 is doelgerig gekies om deel te neem aan die studie. Twee metodes van data-insameling is gebruik, naamlik ses individuele semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude en een fokusgroep onderhoud. 'n Kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise is gebruik om die data te ontleed.

Die navorsing dui daarop dat die vernaamste redes vir die swak akademiese prestasie van hierdie minderheidsgroep gekoppel is aan diskriminerende houdings en gevoelens van ontoereikendheid. Wanneer leerders die skool as 'n veilige plek van geborgenheid en toebehoorheid ervaar, is hulle meer gemotiveerd om te leer. Die skepping en vestiging van hierdie veilige leefwêreld, wat die behoeftes van die leerders voldoende ondersteun, vereis ware, voortdurende samewerking tussen die sistemiese interaksies binne die konteks van die leerders.

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The new democratic constitution of South Africa and the Bill of Rights are in keeping with the global initiative of most democratic societies to achieve equality for all. Together with the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996), which formalised access to quality education for all, these policy changes granted learners access to any school regardless of social, economic, race and cultural backgrounds. This saw many learners interacting with others of different backgrounds, which brought with it new challenges (Vandeyar, 2010). Many black families in South Africa, just as in other countries, enrolled their children at former white schools with the perception that these schools were better resourced and that their children would therefore receive a better education. However, research into the academic performance of these learners, as minorities within these schools, shows a continual pattern of poor performance (Ogbu, 2003).

There is a wealth of research (Altinyelken, 2008; Nickerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Ogbu, 2003) which highlights some of the challenges to learning and development which may impact on effective learning. Language and cultural differences have been identified as barriers and are particularly relevant in our diverse South African society. Research has shown that children who attend schools where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is in their second language experience tremendous conflict, especially if the parents and caregivers are not proficient in the second language (Yeh, Okubo, Ma, Shea, Ou & Pituc, 2008; Altinyelken, 2008; Prinsloo, 2005). Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005) propose that when such children enter school, these abilities and cultural differences are not understood and this can lead to social awkwardness and discomfort in the school situation which, in turn, could affect academic success in school.

Altinyelken (2008) conducted a qualitative study into the educational challenges of migrant girls whose families moved from rural areas in the east to the western parts of Turkey. The study revealed that these girls, as minority groups with a language and culture different to the

larger, general population within these schools, encountered a number of challenges that influenced their educational achievement. Themes which emerged from this study as having had an influence on their academic progress included adaptation, language, peer relations, discrimination, bullying and self-esteem. These themes could all be relevant within the scope of this current research study as the learners are a minority within the school with different social and cultural backgrounds and are learning in their second language.

Discovering not only what causes these disparities in academic performance among minority groups, but also what factors contribute to their academic success, has become increasingly important. These discoveries can serve to guide and inform future measures of support provided for learners, parents and teachers within the context of fostering academic success (Ogbu, 2003). In a study which explored why Asian American students perform better than other minority groups, parental involvement, time spent on task and study habits were identified as factors that contribute to academic success (Nickerson & Kritsonis, 2006). Ogbu (2003) suggests that the enhancement of the student's academic orientation through supplementary educational programmes and the creation of a cultural context which increases the value of academic success are important factors to consider when examining academic achievement amongst minority communities. In addition to this, he suggests that visible academic role models, effective parental strategies, perseverance and working hard are factors in achieving good grades. A study conducted in the United Kingdom highlighted similar factors, with the findings suggesting that a greater proportion of African-Caribbean children would realise academic success when schools, the home and the community worked together to develop a climate of academic achievement (Rhamie & Hallam, 2002).

The important role that teachers play with regard to creating an environment which fosters academic success cannot be ignored (Vandeyar, 2010). Teachers have to be aware of their own prejudices and engage in reflective practices where they critically assess the effect of their views and practices in the classroom. They must find ways to provide an inclusive, nurturing environment where learners from different backgrounds feel safe to express themselves freely (Ferrer, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 1994). Teachers should use the learners' cultural and linguistic assets as a basis for providing positive and socially meaningful classroom experiences. Learning from and with their learners can help teachers to be more effective (Vandeyar, 2010; Michael, Andrade & Bartlett, 2007).

The knowledge gained through these studies will provide valuable insight into the challenges minority groups experience and how these challenges can be overcome in order for them to achieve academic success. In order to truly achieve equality for all, the life experiences of all individuals have to be appreciated and catered for so as to better inform future measures of support aimed at improving their academic performance (Nickerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Ogbu, 2003).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The broader international and national concern for maximising the potential of all learners at school, regardless of language and cultural differences, provides the context of this research. The failure statistics at the school at which this research was conducted, show a greater percentage of failures amongst the Xhosa learners. In the apartheid era this school was considered a privileged school for white learners only. It has been referred to as a former Model C school since the legislation regarding school admissions changed more recently. It is therefore a well-resourced school in terms of facilities and qualified, experienced staff. The general profile of the Xhosa learners at the school is that they are a minority race group with a different cultural context, and are being taught in English, which is not their first language. These factors may therefore present as challenges which affect academic success as discussed previously. To maximise the potential of these learners it is important to understand their subjective life experiences, not only the challenges they experience, but also their perceptions on how these can be overcome to achieve academic success. Research has shown that programmes of support will only be effective if they appreciate and cater for the needs of the learners concerned (Michael, Andrade & Bartlett, 2007; Ogbu 2003; Rhamie & Hallam, 2002).

The purpose of the study is therefore to enhance understanding of the experiences of the Xhosa-speaking learners as a minority in a former Model C school and to evaluate their life experiences within the context of the school system and how these experiences may influence their academic success. An inductive approach has been used in order to identify themes or patterns in the data to determine their experiences of the key challenges influencing their academic success within the school system (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The research questions are therefore:

1. What are some of the key challenges that influence academic success within the school system, as experienced by a minority Xhosa-speaking learner population? and
2. How can these challenges be addressed effectively?

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher's approach and orientation to the study are guided by an eco-systemic theoretical framework. This framework enables the researcher to contextualise the study within the interacting systems that indirectly and directly influence the life experiences of the participants. A discussion on the nature of the eco-systemic framework will serve to place in context and enhance understanding of the experiences of Xhosa-speaking learners as a minority in a former Model C school.

A constructivist view of human development and learning can serve as an important basis from which to view a systems approach. The concept that learning is an active and contextualised process of constructing knowledge is central to a constructivist way of thinking. Knowledge is therefore constructed on the basis of personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment. These hypotheses are continually tested through social negotiation (www.learning-theories.com). Each individual has a different interpretation and construction of knowledge process and brings past experiences and cultural factors to a situation. Individuals shift and change their strategies in response to a given situation and in response to the feedback they get on how effective their strategies have been. Knowledge is not fixed but constructed and re-constructed in different social contexts and at different times (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006).

According to the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) in South Africa (DNE, 1997), the concept of 'barriers to learning and development' is linked to a systems approach to understanding problems and development. The systems approach is helpful in understanding individuals in relation to their social context. The social context within which they live has an effect on how children learn and develop. This means that the emphasis is not on what may be wrong with the learner but rather on what barriers may be experienced by the learner. It has already been found that barriers can be located within the

learner, within the centre of learning, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context. These barriers are experienced in different ways and only become obvious when a breakdown in learning occurs, when learners 'drop out' of the system or when the excluded become visible (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006).

According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006: 37):

This theory sees different levels and groups of people as interactive systems where the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction between all parts.

Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2010), use the eco-systemic view to understand interactions in the education process. This approach looks at levels of interaction between individuals and groups at varying levels of society. Specific factors at any one level interact with factors at other levels. Learning may be influenced at family level by factors such as support received, value placed on achievement at school, resources available within the family and the language spoken at home in relation to the medium of instruction at school. The specific value system of the child and the family may interact with the peer group or teacher or the local wider community. Factors may also be specific to a particular level (i.e. state policies at whole society level) but these still interact with other levels.

1.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Choosing an appropriate paradigm is essential in providing a framework which will guide and validate design decisions. An interpretive paradigm was chosen for the purpose of this study. Interpretive qualitative research focuses on trying to understand the way individuals interpret and make sense of their lived experiences. In this study qualitative methods will be used to collect data. Qualitative research is a scientific research design and is fundamentally interested in how the participants give meaning to their own situations (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The aim of this research is therefore to explore the meaning of phenomena as experienced by the learners themselves (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Working within this framework will provide the researcher the opportunity to understand the learners' unique experiences within the particular context of the school.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design provides an important framework which should connect the research question to the implementation of the research. A number of considerations underpin the development of the research design process. These include considerations on the purpose of the research, the theoretical paradigm which will guide the research, the context in which the research will be conducted and the research tools that will be used to collect and analyse the information collected (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The purposes of the study are to enhance understanding of the experiences of these learners, to place in context the challenges they may face and to provide suggestions to address the challenges within the context of the school system. A basic or generic qualitative study was therefore undertaken as this would assist in discovering and understanding the experiences and views of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

1.6 RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods used to collect data in this study were selected in terms of their consistency with the research design and the research questions. The participants were purposefully selected (Silverman, 2010). The data collection methods chosen include individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview. Data was analysed by using qualitative content analysis (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

1.6.1 Sampling

Purposive sampling requires one to think carefully about the parameters of the population being studied and to choose sample cases based on this reflection (Silverman, 2010). The Xhosa learners in grade 9 to 11 (two per grade) currently attending the Model C school in which the research study was conducted were purposively selected. The motivation for this choice of sampling lies encapsulated in the qualitative research paradigm which is explored further in Chapter three.

1.6.2 Data collection

As interpretive researchers want to enhance understanding of experiences as perceived by the participants within a particular context, the data collection methods selected should allow for this (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Bearing this in mind, the methods of data collection chosen were individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview, which would allow the researcher to access information-rich data.

The literature review in Chapter Two provides a comprehensive theoretical conceptual framework within which the data collected can be analysed and interpreted.

1.6.2.1 Individual semi-structured interviews

In a semi-structured interview, the researcher can explore a few general areas to help discover the participant's views. An interview schedule (Addendum A) serves as a basic checklist to make sure that key topics are covered (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). For this research, the themes for the interview schedule will be guided by the areas identified under the literature review and an evaluation of the various programmes of academic support instituted by the school (Addendum C).

1.6.2.2 Focus group interview

The focus group interview can be used as a method to reveal the development of perceptions in a social context. If more than one person participates in the interview it allows for a greater variety of information than the individual interview. This method also allows for immediate follow up and clarification of views and misconceptions (Patten, 2009; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Undertaking a focus group interview therefore provides an opportunity to explore themes that need further clarification and to obtain consensus on the themes as perceived by the researcher. Participants can also be given the opportunity to express any other matters that may not have been mentioned during the interviews. Both the individual interviews and the focus group interview will be recorded with permission. If permission is not granted, extensive notes will be made. Interviewing is a valid part of research methodology and the procedures followed in this research will be explained in more detail in Chapter Three.

1.6.3 Data analysis

An inductive approach is characteristic of all qualitative research. The researcher collects and analyses data in order to induce themes that explain the patterns noted in the responses of the participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The data collected will be analysed in order to identify organising principles. Themes will therefore be induced. A process of coding will be undertaken to highlight and group information according to identified themes. The transcripts of the interviews will be examined for distinct categories, which will then be coded with individual names. Subcategories will also be developed where possible (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The process of elaboration is done after the initial coding process (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Data analysis is discussed in broader detail in Chapter Three.

1.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

1.7.1 Validity

Validity asks the question of how congruent the research findings are with reality (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Quality control in qualitative research looks at techniques used to establish validity of the data. Credibility can be considered as qualitative research's equivalent to quantitative research's term of validity. Credibility is therefore the correspondence between the way in which the researcher interprets and presents the research findings and the meanings and perspectives of the research participant (Merriam, 2009). The technique used by the researcher to establish credibility in this study is method triangulation. Method triangulation is when one type of participant is used to provide data but two methods are used to collect the data (Patten, 2009). In this study, this is achieved through conducting individual interviews and then holding a focus group interview with the same participants.

1.7.2 Reliability

In keeping with the basic assumptions of qualitative research, reliability is considered an inappropriate term to apply due to its focus on being able to repeat a study's findings in later research (Merriam, 2009). Within qualitative research therefore, dependability refers to the reliability of research in that it lies in others agreeing that, given the data collected; the results are consistent and dependable. Dependability and consistency thus refers to the degree to which the reader is convinced that the findings of the research occurred as the researcher says

they did (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Dependability can be achieved through the provision of rich and detailed descriptions which show how the participants' perceptions are rooted in and develop out of their lived experiences within their specific context.

1.7.3 Role and position of the researcher

The researcher is a staff member, also from a minority group on the staff. As such, cognisance is taken of how I as the primary instrument of data collection in this research could be influencing (consciously or unconsciously) the study. Keeping this in mind; I will do everything in my power to remain neutral and objective. This will be achieved through verbatim transcripts of the interviews and method triangulation as discussed in section 1.7.1.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The protection of the welfare and rights of the research participants forms an essential basis of ethical research. It is therefore necessary to reflect carefully on ethical issues when designing and conducting research studies (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The ethical considerations in terms of permission to conduct the research, obtaining ethical clearance, informed consent/assent, confidentiality and debriefing will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

1.9 CONCEPT CLARIFICATIONS

1.9.1 A high school

A school that starts with grade eight (Senior Phase) and ends with grade twelve (Further Education and Training Phase).

1.9.2 Xhosa

One of the 11 official languages spoken in South Africa.

1.9.3 Apartheid

A social and political ideology which was enforced by the ruling white minority. It imposed separation of groups along racial and ethnic lines.

1.9.4 Township

Historically refers to an urban residential area that was usually underdeveloped. It was commonly reserved for non-whites who lived near or worked near white-only areas during the apartheid regime.

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISIONS

Chapter One

Chapter One provides an introduction and the background to the research so as to place the study in context. It also provides a brief outline of the qualitative research process which the researcher uses to gain more insight into the lived experiences of the research participants.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two provides an in-depth review of existing literature on the academic success of minority groups, with a focus on the influence of interacting systems around these groups which may present barriers to their learning and which may have an influence on their academic success. This review will serve to place the lived experiences of the participants in context.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three provides an in-depth discussion on the research process followed. This includes discussion of the research paradigm, research design, research methods and the ethical considerations taken into account. The research design will allow the researcher to explore, discover and better understand the lived experiences of the participants from their perspective.

Chapter Four

The research findings are discussed and interpreted in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five focuses on recommendations and also discusses possible limitations to the study.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter contextualises the research and motivates the importance of the study by providing a background. It also serves to outline the theoretical framework and the research process followed in keeping with this framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One the background and the context of the research study were described within the eco-systemic framework. Working within this framework requires the evaluation of the influences that the interacting systems around the participants may have on their academic success. In terms of this, the educational policy change within a democratised South Africa paved the way for equal access to schools for all learners regardless of language, race or culture, thereby providing the context within which the minority Xhosa-speaking learners of this research study find themselves. The literature review therefore aims to build on the central argument of the study under discussion, i.e. the experiences and support needs of minority Xhosa-speaking learners in a former Model C school as set out in Chapter One. The literature review serves to create a basis of knowledge and information from which meaning can be made during the interpretation of the data collected and allow for building upon existing knowledge.

In this chapter, the eco-systemic theoretical model provides the theoretical and conceptual framework within which this research has been conducted. Working within this framework has allowed the researcher to gain insight into and to better understand the systems around the Xhosa-speaking learners' that may have an influence on their academic success, and their consequent support needs as a result of these influences. This model allows the lived experiences of the participants to be placed in context.

Firstly, a general discussion on the eco-systemic model will be provided in terms of the levels of systems related to the educational process. Secondly, a more specific discussion on the levels of systems, as they pertain to the research study, and their possible influence on academic success will be explored. As the participants in this research study are Xhosa-speaking learners learning in English, their second language, this exploration will focus on language and cultural differences in terms of the influences of interactions between individuals and groups at varying levels of the school and their possible influence on academic success. The importance of parental involvement and peer group relationships as

micro-systems directly in interaction with the learner, as indicated in Figure 2.1, will also be explored in the literature.

2.2 THE ECO-SYSTEMIC MODEL

2.2.1 Introduction

Swart and Pettipher (2005) argue the importance of examining a framework that speaks to the complexity of the influences of interactions and interrelationships between individual learners and other systems connected to the learner. They describe Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model that proposes various levels of interacting systems which have to be examined in order to fully understand an individual's development within a social context. His model speaks to realizing the individual's barriers to learning from the backdrop of the social climate or context of the individual. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) acknowledge that the eco-systemic view does not replace Bronfenbrenner's model. They propose that while Bronfenbrenner's model is directed at understanding child development, the eco-systemic view helps us to understand interactions in the education process. Working within the eco-systemic view will therefore allow the researcher to explore the complexities of the interrelated systems and gain insight into their possible influence on the academic success of the learner.

2.2.2 Levels of systems related to the educational process

Many diverse social contexts exist in South Africa, which makes it critical to understand how this diversity in terms of, among others, culture, race, social class and language, as a whole may influence what happens in every school in South Africa. The values and norms of this diverse society are played out in the classroom through the interaction of the learners in the class, the school, the families, the community and the social system as a whole. It is seen that the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) makes provision for support by means of the systems approach (Landsberg, 2005).

Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2010:43) use the illustration below to demonstrate their understanding of the eco-systemic interactions in the educational process. This approach looks at levels of interaction between individuals and groups at varying levels of society. This model provides a valuable tool for understanding the dynamic interactions that take place

within the different systems and sub-systems, as well as on the various levels within the school and the broader society in which the learners function.



Figure 2.1: Eco-systemic interactions in the educational process (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:43)

The diagram clearly indicates how specific factors at any one level interact with factors at other levels. With specific reference to learners who are studying in a second or third

language, learning may be influenced at family level by factors such as support received, resources available within the family and the language spoken at home in relation to the medium of instruction at school. Learning may be further influenced by the value placed on achievement at school, as research has shown that if academic achievement is valued, the learner may be more motivated to work towards academic success (Ogbu, 2003). In addition, the specific value system of the child and the family may interact with the peer group or teacher or the local wider community. For example, the extent to which learners and their parents feel their culture and traditions are valued within the school system may influence their level of participation in the life of the school. Factors may also be specific to a particular level (i.e. state policies at whole society level), but these still interact with other levels. For example, although South Africa has opted to have 11 official languages (RSA, 1996), many students do not have access to good quality educations in their mother tongue (Brock-Utne, 2010).

According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010), the eco-systemic approach connects individual psychological development to a social context and the systems within it. The eco-systemic view also serves as a theoretical framework for addressing barriers to learning (DNE, 1997). Barriers to learning are defined as difficulties that arise which prevent the learner's needs from being met (DoE, 2005). This systemic approach to barriers to learning and development recognises that barriers do not reside within the learner only but may be as a result of other systemic factors (Bouwer, 2005; DNE, 1997). Therefore the difficulties many learners face in the learning process may be the result of a range of experiences in the classroom, at school, at home and in the community (Bouwer, 2005; Sterling & Davidoff, 2000; DNE, 1997). The report of the joint National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Commission on Support Services (NCSS) (1997) was the first in South Africa to use the terminology 'barriers to learning and development', in which learning difficulties are viewed differently to the medical model which only focused on barriers within the individual. Some of the barriers identified by the NCSNET and the NCSS, relevant to the research study, include the following:

- Social and economic deprivation
- Stereotyping and negative attitudes towards differences

- An inflexible curriculum and inadequate educator training to accommodate and address diversity of learning needs effectively
- The lack of acknowledgment of the essential role that parents can play in supporting the teaching and learning process
- Provision of support that may be inadequate in meeting the diversity of needs
- Language and communication challenges within the curriculum, in the medium of instruction and in the teaching process

The NCSNET/NCSS report (DNE, 1997) is considered to be a major policy informing document with regard to inclusive education in South Africa. It is thus important to discuss the South African education policies in relation to creating a democratic educational system in which the principle of equal access is entrenched. In the following section this will be explored within an eco-systemic theoretical framework, as it influences the academic success of learners who study in a language other than their mother tongue.

2.3 SOUTH AFRICA'S EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN CONTEXT

The political climate of a community has an influence on all spheres within that community, including the educational policy. Educational policy and the implementation thereof do not occur in isolation but reflect the broader principles of the community at large. The Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996a), contained in the South African Constitution, echoes the rights-based approach to education supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), as it stipulates that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education, which the state must continually strive to make available and accessible (DoE, 2008).

Having an apartheid system, where access to quality education and resources was based on race and ability, led to a system of exclusion. There were separate education departments, all governed by legislation along racial lines. This amplified division and separation (Swart & Pettipher, 2005; Makhalemele (2005). The first democratic election in 1994 dictated that the educational policy had to mirror the ideals of this democracy. A democratic society based on equal rights and equal opportunities for all meant that the government had to strive to create an education system that was non-racial and integrated; hence the implementation of an

inclusive educational framework. Inclusive education within the South African context, as described in the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), should be seen as the essence within which an integrated society, based on tolerance and respect for diversity and based on the human rights of all people, is developed. In keeping with the essence of tolerance and respect, inclusion is further defined as:

- Recognising that all learners can learn and need support.
- Restructuring education structures, systems and learning methodologies so as to meet the needs of all learners.
- Recognition and respect for differences in learners, regardless of whether these differences are due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV or other infectious diseases.
- The acknowledgement that learning occurs within the context of broader systems other than formal schooling. Learning occurs at home, within the community and within formal and informal settings and structures.
- Striving to change attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, the curriculum and the environment so as to meet the needs of all learners.
- Striving for the maximum involvement of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions.
- Working towards uncovering and minimising barriers to learning (DoE, 2001).

The aim of the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996) is to provide a strong foundation for the protection and advancement of the country's diverse cultures and languages. It is seen that Section 6 of this act empowers school governing bodies to determine the language policy of schools within guidelines set nationally and on provincial level. The Department of Education's Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1997) states the following:

- The parent exercises the right to choose the language on behalf of the minor learner.
- Learners (i.e. their parents) must choose their language of teaching upon admission to a school.

- In instances where a certain language is not available, learners may request that the provincial education department make provision for instruction in the chosen language.
- Governing bodies of schools must also stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes, or through other means approved by the head of the provincial education department.
- In instances where there are less than 40 requests in grades 1 to 6, or less than 35 requests in grades 7 to 12 for instruction in a language in a given grade not already offered by a school within a particular school district, it is the responsibility of the head of the provincial department of education to determine how the needs of those learners will be met.

The policy further stipulates that only official languages may be used for instruction. Furthermore language may not be used as a barrier to admission. Governing bodies must stipulate how their schools will promote multilingualism, as failing a language will result in failing a grade. The policy does raise some contentious issues, as parents want their children to study in English rather than in their own home languages. Possible reasons for this situation are:

- An attempt to ensure a successful financial and social future, parents may think it necessary for pupils to know an international language such as English.
- Parents may also believe that the job market demands knowledge of English.
- Studies cannot be completed at secondary and tertiary level in African languages.
- The injustices and policies of the past; have created a situation in which schools that use African languages as medium of instruction do not have the same resources and expertise, as other schools.
- Schools might not have the infrastructure or even motivation to accommodate more languages (DoE, 1997).

The implementation of inclusive education opened up schools and for the first time learners were allowed access to any school regardless of race, language and cultural background (Swart & Pettipher, 2005; Makhalemele (2005). Many learners from the previously disadvantaged racial groups opted to attend former whites only schools (previously referred to as Model C schools). This consequently led to them being faced with the challenge of learning in a language other than their mother tongue. Some teachers were now also challenged with teaching learners who were not proficient in the language of instruction (Sleeter & Grant, 1994). Individuals were also interacting with others of different language and cultural backgrounds which were often in conflict with their own beliefs and value systems (Vandeyar, 2010).

Addressing these challenges has indeed become essential, as they pose possible influences on the academic success of learners. This is particularly true for those learners who are a minority within the school and who are learning in their second language.

This discussion on the broader democratic ideals and consequent implementation of educational policies provides the context for the lived experiences of the participants of the research study. As these learners who have different language and cultural backgrounds, are interacting within a school as a system within the broader democratic climate, the discussion will proceed by highlighting some of the possible challenges that may influence their academic success.

2.4 SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

2.4.1 Rationale

In the South African context, the introduction of democratic educational policy and equal access to all schools saw learners of diverse language and cultural backgrounds seeking the opportunity to attend public schools of their choice (Vandeyar, 2010; Makhalemele, 2005).

Makhalemele (2005), a researcher in the Transitional Justice Programme at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, describes the choice of many parents to place their children in former white schools based on the fact that these schools are better resourced. Makhalemele further states that despite the many efforts to redress the inequalities in education- a direct result of an apartheid system- the contrast between former white and

former black schools seems to be largely unchanged. Even in instances where the gap between resources is not that large between schools, the perception and stereotyping of what better education comprises may still inform parents' decisions to send their children to these former white schools. In his research, Makhalemele (2005) cites one learner as ascribing the poor results produced by township schools to the perception that these teachers and learners do not put effort into their work.

Nel (2005) also offers the view that English is regarded as a prestigious language in South Africa and, as such, many parents prefer to place their children in schools where the LoLT is English. These parents view English as a universal language which will facilitate the successful education of their children, giving them access to better job opportunities in South Africa and abroad, thus breaking the cycle of poverty and economic exclusion (Makhalemele, 2005; DoE, 1997). Consequently, many of these learners are being taught through the medium of English, which is not their first language (Nel, 2005). This includes learners who attend these English-medium schools from the beginning of their school career, while they are brought up using their home language in the home context, as well as other learners, who for various reasons, for example lack of financial resources, or long travelling distances, remain in the disadvantaged schools in the townships during their primary years. These learners therefore have attended schools where the LoLT is in their home language and are only later able to attend schools where the LoLT is English. Because learners being taught in their second language tend to use their second language both in their daily lives and at school, the development of the first language is stifled and it may lead to the loss of their mother tongue language (Nel, 2005).

2.4.2 Some difficulties of second language learning

Learners who begin their literacy instruction in their first language acquire academic and linguistic skills which can be transferred to the second language. In recognising the value of mother-tongue instruction in improved learning, the Department of Education adopted a Language in Education Policy (LIEP), which encourages learners to be taught in their home language for as long as this is feasible, as well as to learn a second language. The policy does not restrict learners to the use of home language tuition, but emphasises that learners must use the language that they best understand as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) for all subjects studied at school. The LoLT may be selected from any of the 11 official languages (DoE, 2008).

Learners who learn through a second language may experience difficulties as the phonological and linguistic demands of the two languages differ (Nel, 2005). These difficulties may not have occurred if the child had been exposed to the first language only. Consequently, the learner develops adequate language skills, but may not be able to use them successfully because of these difficulties which then influence the learner's academic achievement (Nel, 2005).

According to the Department of Education (NCS, 2002), the first language should be used for learning and teaching as far as possible and where the learner's first language is other than the LoLT, the language of learning and teaching should be introduced in grade 1. It is important that these learners are provided with the necessary assistance and support in the learning of the LoLT. This support should be consistently provided until the learner can learn effectively in the LoLT (NCS, 2002). Learners therefore have to become competent in their second language, but at the same time maintain and develop their first language (Nel, 2005).

The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa, PRAESA (www.praesa.co.za) has worked extensively in schools promoting a culture of reading and multi-linguism. They suggest that, as knowledge transfers from one language to another, children are capable of learning to read and write in their mother tongue and in another language at the same time. It is, however, important that learners are increasingly provided with opportunities in which they are able to use their second language. Some suggestions for this knowledge transfer are made: for example, stories (in mother tongue or additional language) can expose children to a rich supply of language and rhymes, songs and wordplays allow for the development of phonemic awareness in young children. Phonemic awareness can develop in an enjoyable way if teachers and children play with language. Children should be encouraged to read, as this exposure will provide more opportunities to engage with the 'look of a word' in different texts. The context should be used to assist the learners' understanding of the language addressed to them, even if it may contain structures and grammar beyond their current competence. The teacher therefore needs to provide instruction that draws on the learners' experience and which provides relevant background knowledge (Sleeter & Grant, 1994). The teacher also needs to make use of contextual or visual cues (Nel, 2005) and to provide many opportunities for the learners to express their ideas (www.praesa.co.za).

In addition, PRAESA (2010) suggests that in order for effective learning to take place, children need to feel relaxed and confident. The project suggests various ways that teachers can assist children by creating a low-anxiety environment:

- Encouraging learners to talk about themselves and things that interest them
- Getting learners to participate and to talk as much as possible, through paired and group work
- Placing emphasis on communication rather than accuracy, and praising attempts to take risks

2.5 WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Whole school development can be defined as a comprehensive approach used in the development of effective schools. The essential purpose of schools is to foster effective teaching and learning, so that learners can develop optimally as individuals and can contribute positively to their society. A whole school approach therefore works under the premise that, in order to be effective, every aspect of school life needs to be focused on supporting this essential purpose (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2006). Working holistically is one aspect of whole school development and as such, the school should be viewed as a living organisation constituted of many inter-related parts. This approach necessitates the consideration and involvement of all stakeholders i.e. learners, teachers, parents, and the wider community and all the elements of the school as an organisation. (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000; Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999).

Within the comprehensive whole school approach, access to education invariably refers to the creation of a curriculum that can facilitate successful learning. This includes not only learning programmes, teaching practices, materials and assessment, but also refers to the culture and ethos of the school. Culture and ethos looks at the way the school classroom is managed to facilitate positive learning for all learners (Engelbrecht et al., 1999).

Figure 2.2 below illustrates the various elements that may influence the overall development of the school and as such need to be considered when working holistically (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

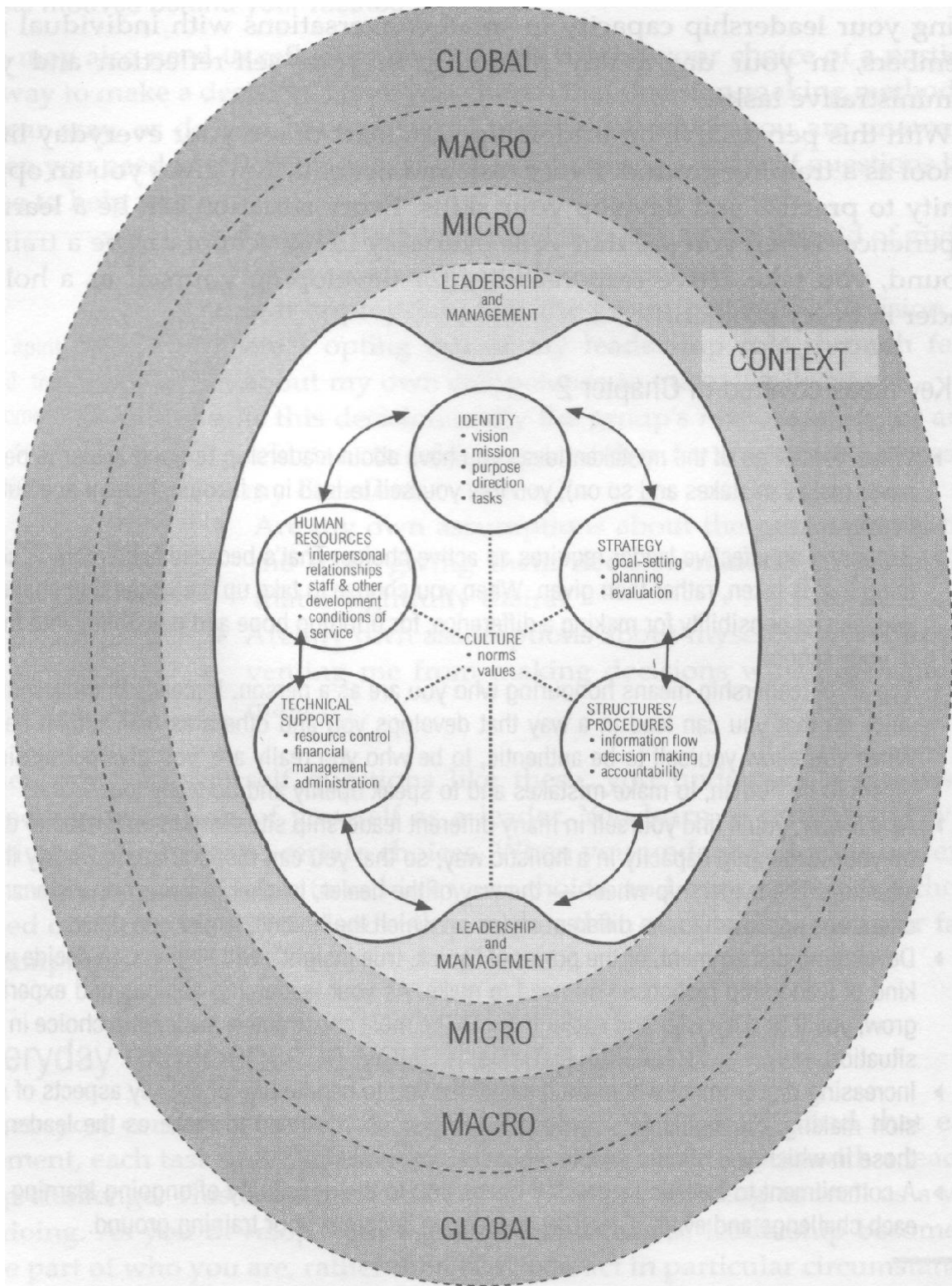


Figure 2.2: The elements of an organisation (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000: 42)

Sterling and Davidoff (2000) propose that the school be viewed as an organisation composed of various elements which make up the whole (as illustrated in Figure 2.2 above). Central to this proposed organisational framework is the culture of the school which refers to the accepted ways of thinking and behaving in the school. The organisational culture refers to the hidden network of feelings, attitudes and behaviours which influence people's thinking about the school (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006). It is important to note that as it is the individuals within the school who create the organisational culture; these individuals have the ability to change the organisational culture as well (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

The various elements, as illustrated in Figure 2.2 above, although apart, are closely inter-related. If one element in the organisation is ineffective, it has an influence on the organisation as a whole. A brief discussion of the inter-related elements will be undertaken so as to highlight their influence on the organisation as a whole.

The organisational culture influences and is influenced by the identity of the school. The identity of the school is moulded through the collective vision that the individuals within the school have. As the vision and mission statement sums up the purpose and direction of the school, it should be collectively agreed upon so as to foster a shared sense of purpose (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006; Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

Strategy can also be referred to as planning. The planning should be undertaken in lines with the long-term vision of the school. The short term goals are constantly evaluated to assess attainment in keeping with the long-term vision (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000). The evaluation process involves a lot more than the assessment of the learner's performance. It includes the evaluation of the curriculum, the staff and the school environment (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006). The evaluation process is therefore essential in that it allows the school to identify areas of weaknesses and adjust accordingly.

Structures involve the measures and procedures utilised in the communication between learners, teachers, parents and the broader community (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

The technical support aspect refers to control and access of the school's resources, management of the school's finances and day to day administration of the school. All these aspects are essential considerations in the effective management of the school (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

The schools most valuable asset is the human beings who make up the school. As such, human resource management requires the looking after of people so as to encourage those within the school to develop and realise their full potential. If people feel motivated, secure and inspired, they bring a sense of commitment and creativity into the school. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006: 126) suggest five aspects of human resources that need to be considered:

- Human resource management which involves not only the identification of peoples needs and but also ensuring that these needs are met. This includes knowing how to involve parents and other members of the community.
- Development and training of all the members of the school community, especially the teaching staff, so as to develop competence and skills.
- Conflict management and team-building is required to address any personal issues among staff, learners, parents and all those involved in the school.
- Management of the conditions of service which includes, for example, salaries, wages leave conditions, personnel policies and practices etc. is an important aspect as it can serve as a source of potential conflict.
- Support services which may be community based or district based to assist with organisational and curriculum development and to assist with the provision of preventative and curative support. All of which are essential considerations in relation to barriers of learning.

Leadership and management are related to each element of the school. While the management aspect provides stability and containment, the leadership aspect provides inspiration and opens up the possibilities for change. It is therefore crucial that these two aspects work together within the school context.

The micro context includes the community around the school as well as the local education and policy interventions. The macro context refers to the national context, for example the national educational and political climate. The global context refers to for example, global trends in education. The micro, macro and global elements provide and shape the context of the administration and management of the school.

When the school is seen as a whole, intervention should be chosen that facilitate the overall development of the school. The intervention may entail concentrating on a specific aspect of

the school which needs to be developed. However, the specific intervention is undertaken so as to strengthen and develop the school as a whole (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000). Viewing the school as an organisation is in keeping with a systemic framework and this view can therefore guide whole school development, as it requires an evaluation that includes considering all the interacting systems relating to the child.

2.5.1 School culture and a positive environment

Vandeyar and Killen (2006) express the view that multiculturalists believe that racism is the result of prejudice and ignorance and that it can therefore simply be eradicated by fostering personal contact between individuals of different cultural backgrounds, promoting understanding and exchange of information. Critics of this perspective of multiculturalism view it as ignoring the power and structural dimensions of racism.

An anti-racism perspective which not only calls for confronting overt attitudes and practices, but also insists on opposing subtle racism and stereotypical and patronizing views is therefore proposed instead (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006; Makhalemele, 2005). A distinction is made between overt racism and covert racism (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006). Overt racism is identified as any obscene racist practice which can result in physical violence. Covert racism is a more subtle, permeating form of racism. Institutionalized racism can take the form of covert racism, and may result from indifference or a refusal to challenge the way things are done within the institution (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006). Research shows that even so many years after the end of apartheid, some African learners in schools are still given the message that they do not quite belong as yet (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006; Makhalemele, 2005; Goduka, 1999).

The experiences and expectations of the minority learners, which may be influenced by power and status relationships, are consistent with those outside of school (Goduka, 1999). Ogbu's (1986) view, as quoted in Goduka (1999), that years of discrimination and oppression have taught minority learners that working hard is an exercise in futility, seems to be supported by research into desegregated classrooms. Research studies into desegregated classrooms found that teachers not only tended to impose the predominant culture of the school onto their learners, but also undermined the culture of some learners by openly making derogatory statements about those cultures (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006; Makhalemele, 2005). Minority learners are therefore pressurised to adapt to the culture of the school at the risk of negating

their own culture (Kajee, 2011; Mncube, 2009; Makhalemele, 2005). This highlights the central concept of access in promoting a positive environment.

From an eco-systemic perspective, Vandeyar (2010) suggests that teachers could foster different micro and meso-systemic interventions. The micro-system refers to the close daily interactions between children and other significant and familiar people, such as the family, peers and teachers (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Within this system, learners could be supported and motivated through enabling the skills and attitudes, such as unconditional acceptance, focused observations, adaptability and flexibility, of their teachers (Ferrer, 2011; Vandeyar, 2010). Kajee (2011) highlights the importance of teaching occurring within a context that is compatible with the culture of the learners. In doing so, continuity and congruence between the home and the school are fostered. To maximise the potential of learners it is important to understand not only the challenges they experience, but also their perceptions on how these can be overcome to achieve academic success (Ferrer, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 1994). Research has shown that programmes of support, especially programmes of support for minority learners, will only be effective if they appreciate and cater for the needs of the learners concerned (Michael, Andrade & Bartlett, 2007; Ogbu 2003; Rhamie & Hallam, 2002).

Through her work as a minority academic achievement specialist, Ferrer (2011) suggests the following strategies that schools can implement to improve the academic achievement of minority groups. Figure 2.3 below illustrates the division of the support strategies into three categories.

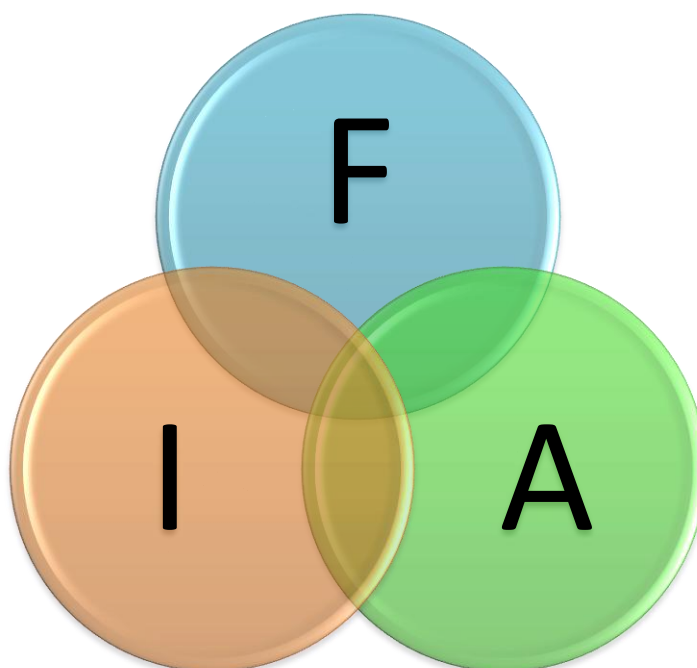


Figure 2.3 Categories for academic support (Ferrer, 2011)

Foundation strategies form the basis which supports the implementation of the other strategies. These include:

- Focusing on the building of relationships based on trust, empathy and mutual respect. Within a climate of trust and respect, these relationships can ease honest admission and exploration of presenting problems.
- Strategies recommended for the development and sustainment of this category includes the promotion of genuine rapport with the learners and working within a belief system that every student can learn.
- Recognising the learner as an individual first and then in a cultural context so as to avoid stereotyping.
- Avoiding assumptions and learning as much as possible about your learners. This includes learning about the languages they speak, the sports they like, their hobbies, their goals and the challenges they face.

Intellectual strategies are those considered to strengthen and raise sensitivities to learners' problems. These strategies provide for deeper insights into what the learners may be experiencing (Ferrer, 2011). This includes:

- Extending personal knowledge of the learners' cultures so as to avoid unintentionally overlooking or minimizing contextual factors of race and culture.
- Awareness that minority learners are reluctant to seek assistance if they think their teachers do not understand or might not care about issues related to their race and culture (Kajee, 2011; Mncube, 2009).

Advocacy strategies are those considered in the support for proactive planning and concrete problem solving options. Some of these strategies could include:

- Advocating for in-service training on topics such as diversity and culturally responsive teaching (Ferrer, 2011; Engelbrecht et al., 1999; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).
- Become an academic advocate in instances where learners do not have a caring adult to support their academic achievement.
- Forming alliances with respected community members to provide assistance for those learners who may be reluctant to share their problems with teachers or counsellors of the school but may be willing to share with the community leader (Ferrer, 2011).

It needs to be realized that the responsibility for change lies with the school and not the home as learners feel pressured to adapt to the culture of the school, at the risk of negating their minority culture. These learners succumb as they do not want to be estranged within the school (Kajee, 2011; Mncube, 2009). The learners need to feel comfortable and secure in their classroom environment and feel that they can trust their teachers. To facilitate this accepting environment it, teachers should treat learners as individuals. The implication is that learners should have time to adjust to the second language environment and to develop positive relations with classmates. Learners need to be encouraged to use their home language and teachers should try to learn the learners' language and learn more about their culture (www.praesa.co.za; Nel, 2005). If learners are able to use their first language with others, confidence and support in interacting with others is facilitated. In this environment, learning takes place more quickly and the progress in the second language is sustained (Nel, 2005). The diversity of the class should therefore be considered as a strength. The strengths and talent of individuals should be used to foster learning and to promote the development of well-being and the quality of life for all individuals (Nel, 2005). However, in order for this to be realised, teachers need to undergo continual and consistent professional development to help them better understand and deal with the many changes that underpin inclusion effectively. Teachers need to be provided with the necessary support in developing the skills

and competencies required to meet the diverse needs of all learners (Engelbrecht et al., 1999; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

There is a concern that schools generally demand that the new race groups conform into the school's existing culture and ethos. The effect of this attitude is that learners of other racial and cultural backgrounds suppress their identities so as to be accepted in these schools (Mncube, 2009). Interventions within the meso-system include facilitating relationships between different micro-systems. The meso-system examines the different micro-systems that continually interact with each other. For example, what happens within the family can influence how the child behaves in school and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). It is essential, therefore, that minority parents be involved and valued as equals in the learning process, as many parents already provide their children with literacy-rich environments (Kajee, 2011). The culture of the minority needs to be supported and understood. This can be achieved through the curriculum and classroom activities (Vandeyar, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

Invariably, schools expect that the parents of the minority language learners adopt the linguistic rules of the dominant group so as to support the child's learning (Kajee, 2011). For some families, the literacy demanded by the school may involve reading English books and this can pave the way to academic success. For other families, however, this may be intimidating and the families may feel they are giving up their cultural identity (Kajee, 2011; Vandeyar, 2010). Mncube (2009) has found that because of greater managerial expertise among parents, former Model C schools function more effectively than other schools. He further states that African parents in the former Model C schools attribute their reluctance to participate in the school governing body (SGB) and school activities to a lack of education in school governance, the language barrier because of the exclusive use of English as a communication medium, challenges in attending SGB meetings, their literacy level, fear of victimisation of their children by educators and power relations within the SGB. These factors can therefore inhibit or even silence the voice of parents in school matters.

Another concern is that many decades of stereotyping and inequalities have moulded the way society, which includes schools, sees people from different racial and cultural backgrounds (Mncube, 2009; Makhalemele, 2005). To combat this genuine collaboration between the home and the school is recommended for the benefit of both the learner and the school (Swart & Phasha, 2011; Vandeyar, 2010; Sterling & Davidoff, 2000). Research and practice suggests

that schools that work closely and encourage active involvement of parents are more effective than those that do not (Nickerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Lemmer, 1994).

Parent involvement encompasses the active and willing participation of parents in a range of school-based and home-based activities. This involvement can extend from supporting and upholding the ethos of the school to supervising homework at home (Kajee, 2011; Lemmer, 1994). Parent involvement should be purposeful and planned. The school also needs to constantly monitor and review parent involvement so as to develop effective ways to encourage and sustain the involvement of parents. Positive communication is the key to successful development of parent involvement. The implication is therefore mutual co-operation, sharing and support between the home and the school (Lemmer, 1994). Some of the benefits of parental involvement include improvement in school performance, reduction in drop-out rates, a decrease in delinquency and a more positive attitude towards school (Ogbu, 2003; Lemmer, 1994).

According to Kajee (2011), parents may, for instance, be engaged as interpreters at parent meetings, newsletters may be handed out in different languages and learners could be encouraged to design posters and engage in meaningful discussions on key events in the various languages spoken, so as to genuinely learn about and from each other. Teachers could therefore facilitate collaborating relationships with parents by including them in the learning process (Kajee, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

Collaborative relationships can also be established with colleagues in the school and the district (Vandeyar, 2010).

Looking at the inclusion of learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds within a systemic whole school approach is very important. It serves as a guide as to what areas need to be focused on when attempting to identify and understand any barriers to inclusion that may exist in a school. This further allows for collaboration and the identification of effective support strategies.

2.5.2 Effective support and collaboration

A whole school approach cannot be successful without support being provided to all involved. This support needs to be on-going and adapted to meet the needs of all concerned. This

involves building support and communication between all stakeholders i.e. learners, teachers, parents, schools and communities (Engelbrecht et al., 1999; Lemmer, 1994).

Joyce Epstein offers a model shown in Figure 2.4 below, which illustrates the overlapping systems of influence of family, school and community on children's learning (Swart & Phasha, 2011).

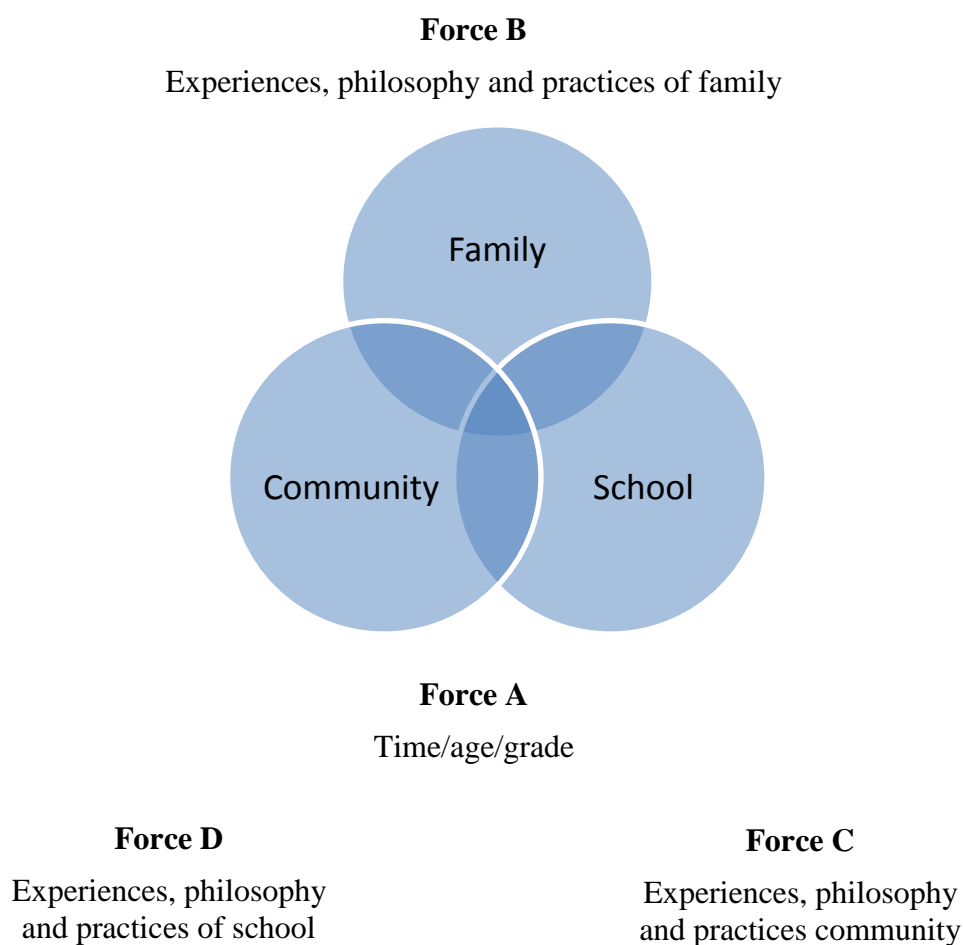


Figure 2.4: Epstein's model (Swart & Phasha, 2011)

A discussion based on this model, as explored by Swart and Phasha (2011), of Epstein's six types of partnerships of support is pertinent, as it relates to factors that may influence the academic success of learners.

Type 1 refers to fostering partnerships that can support families in providing home environments that facilitate the optimal learning of their children. Kajee (2011) highlighted the importance of teaching occurring within a context that is compatible with the culture of the learners so that continuity and congruence between the home and the school can be fostered.

Type 2 looks at the school's responsibility to share information about the children's progress, the curriculum, educational policies and school activities. It is important that teachers communicate with and have a close working relationship with parents. Parents should be informed about progress and problem areas and how the necessary support can be provided to help address the problem areas. Parents should therefore be encouraged to participate in the activities at school. Regular communication facilitates the relationship between the parents and the schools (Nel, 2005; Lemmer, 1994).

The third, fourth and fifth types of relationships as discussed under Epstein's model seem to be in keeping with research findings (Nickerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Lemmer, 1994) that parental involvement and support has to be encouraged, as it has an influence on the academic success of learners. Type 3 encourages parents to volunteer their time, talents and resources so as to foster the interests and availability of families in the support of their children. Type 4 makes provision for families to be able to support their children at home, as parents may be unsure of how to assist with issues such as homework and other curricular-related activities. Families are provided with information and strategies to assist learning at home. Type 5 refers to including families in the decision-making, as many choices need to be made regarding their children.

Type 6 looks at involving all who are interested in and affected by quality education. These include the local community groups, individuals and businesses and how they can provide varying degrees of support to the school, the families and the learners in an attempt to try and foster a holistic and integrated system of collaboration between all stakeholders.

This model proves to be valuable in establishing collaborative partnerships with specific reference to learners who are a minority learning in their second language and who have different cultural backgrounds to the dominant culture of a school. It is clear that regular and effective support is an essential element in changing attitudes towards differences. This approach is in line with the eco-systemic framework in which an understanding of the

dynamic interactions relates to the development of more supportive and collaborative relationships. This in turn may positively influence the academic success of learners.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter served to highlight certain aspects as they pertain to the influences on the academic success of minority learners. These aspects included the difficulties of learning in a second language, as well as difficulties that can arise as a result of cultural and racial prejudices. The important influences on academic success which helps to foster an accepting environment and to develop effective collaborative partnerships were also explored. It can be concluded that working within an eco-systemic framework and viewing the school as a dynamic organisation provides opportunities for addressing the learners' needs in the context within which they arise. The school and the parents, as interacting systems, therefore have a responsibility to support learners in their achievement of academic success. The school, together with the parents, needs to take cognisance of the influence that these interacting systems have on the academic success of the learners. This will allow the interacting systems to function as a whole and promote an environment in which learners can reach their maximum potential. The literature is generally in agreement that the provision of support and genuine collaboration are ways to make the learning context accessible to all learners. This feeds into the notion that education must be accessible to all (DoE, 2008). The continual review by the school of its cultures, policies and practices is needed to determine effectively the support that is required for the learners, parents and teachers.

In the next chapter, the research process and its various components will be discussed in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A researcher has to take a number of aspects into consideration when developing a research design. These include making decisions on the purpose of the research, the theoretical paradigm that will inform the research, the context within which the research will be carried out and the research tools that will be used to collect and analyse the information collected. The research design therefore serves as an essential framework which should link the research question to the implementation of the research. The process of developing a research design should be guided by consideration of the aspects mentioned above so as to provide a coherent and valid framework which will answer the research question (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Each of these aspects as they were considered in the process of the research design will therefore be discussed below.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As mentioned previously, the purpose of the study is to enhance understanding of the experiences of the Xhosa learners as a minority in a former model C school. The study was therefore aimed at evaluating their life experiences within the context of the school system and how these experiences maybe influencing their academic success. An inductive approach was used in an attempt to identify themes or patterns in the data to determine their experiences of the key challenges influencing their academic success within the school system (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The research questions are therefore:

1. What are some of the key challenges that influence academic success within the school system, as experienced by a minority Xhosa-speaking learner population? and
2. How can these challenges be addressed effectively?

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm can be defined as a way of thinking about the world or human nature (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Working from a qualitative research paradigm involves interpretation (hermeneutics) and human experience (phenomenology). Interpretive qualitative research focuses on trying to understand the way individuals interpret and make sense of their lived experiences. The aim of this research was therefore to explore the meaning of phenomena as experienced by the learners themselves (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). According to Niewenhuis (2007) an interpretive paradigm does not aim to describe human behaviour, but rather to understand it. Therefore in this study the researcher looked at exploring, describing, and analysing the meaning of individual lived experiences of Xhosa-speaking learners as a minority, in terms of their academic experiences, within a former Model C school. Working within this framework gave the researcher the opportunity to understand the learners' unique experiences within the particular context of the school. This further contributed to answering the research questions as stated in section 3.2.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of the study is to enhance understanding of the experiences of the Xhosa-speaking learners who are a minority in the school. This study further contextualises the challenges these learners may face with in order to provide suggestions towards addressing these challenges within the context of the school system. The type of research undertaken was therefore a basic or generic qualitative study, as this approach assisted in discovering and understanding the experiences and views of the participants (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Using this approach, the researcher conducted several in-depth interviews with Xhosa-speaking learners who have English (the LoLT) as their second language and who are a minority within the school where the research was conducted. Analysis proceeded from the key notion that there is a core experience that is shared with the others who have also had that experience. The experiences of those participating in the study were first analysed as unique expressions and then compared to identify central principles (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Four principles, as suggested by Durrheim (2006:37-39), were applied in order to achieve design coherence, namely the research paradigm, the purpose of the research, the context in which the research takes place, and the techniques used. Figure 3.1 below represents these design principles as applicable to this study.

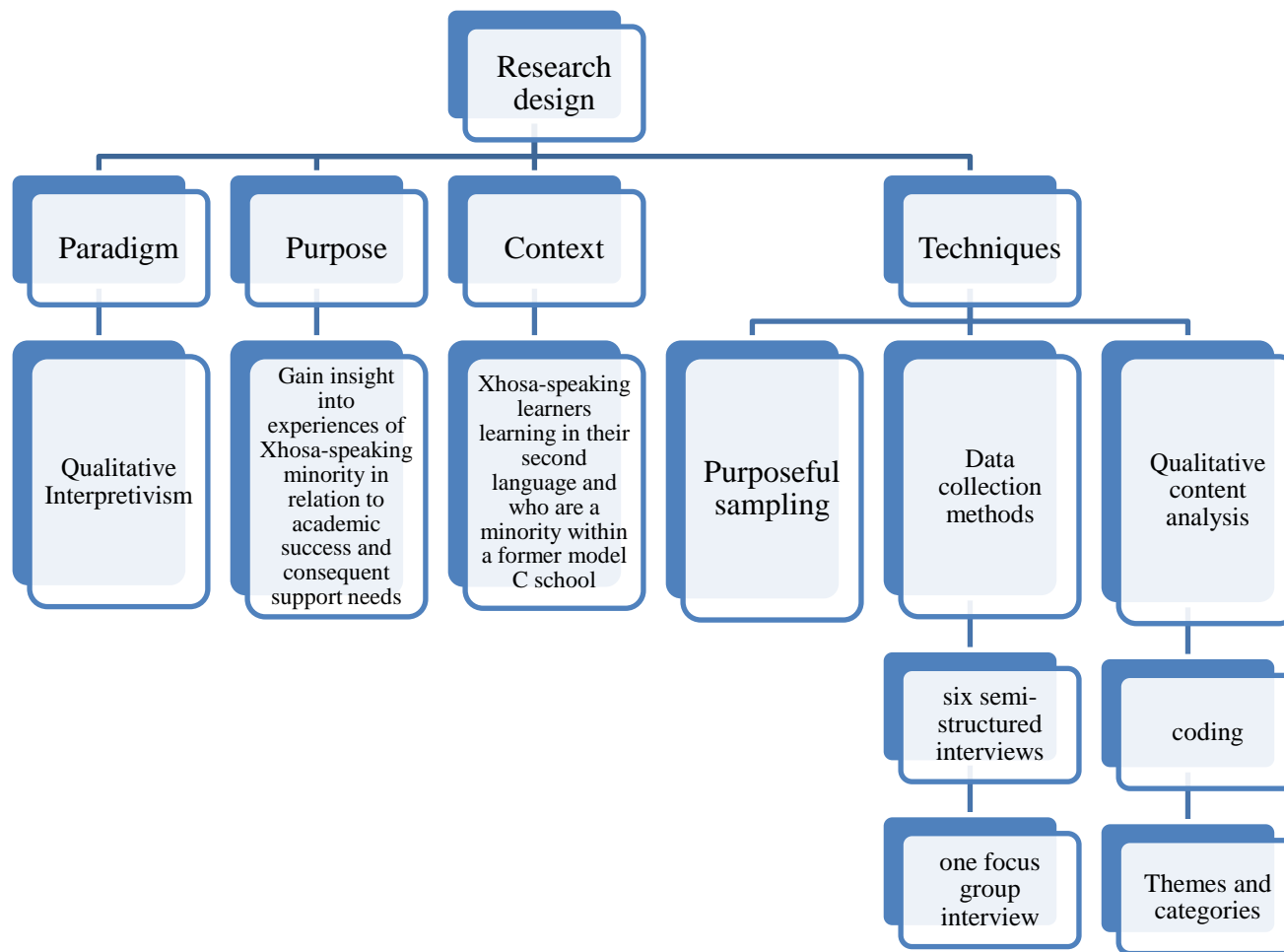


Figure 3.1: Schematic representation of the research design

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

3.5.1 Participants and sampling

The research study was conducted in a previously Model C school, which is located in the Western Cape Province, in the South Metropole area. The school serves a learner population of approximately one thousand and four learners, sixty-five of which are the black second-language learners, who form a minority of less than 7%. Purposive sampling requires one to think carefully about the parameters of the population being studied and to choose sample cases based on this reflection (Silverman, 2010). The participants in grade 9 to 11 (two per grade) were purposively selected to participate in the study, as they were information-rich students who would be able to provide knowledge on their life experiences within the context of the school and how these may influence their success at school (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

The table below gives a brief description of the biographical data of each of the participants.

Table 3.1: Biographical data of the six participants in the research study

| Participant | Grade | Age | Place where staying | Transport |
|-------------|-------|-----|---------------------|-----------|
| 1 | 11 | 17 | township | Bus/taxi |
| 2 | 11 | 17 | township | Bus/taxi |
| 3 | 10 | 16 | suburb | Walk |
| 4 | 10 | 16 | township | Bus/taxi |
| 5 | 9 | 15 | township | Bus/taxi |
| 6 | 9 | 15 | township | Bus/taxi |

The six participants are all Xhosa learners currently attending the Model C School. They have all attended the school from grade 8 and form part of a minority which has different language and cultural experiences to the majority of the learner population. Five of the six participants live in the nearby township, which is about five kilometres from the school and they travel

using public transport, i.e. bus or taxi. The one other participant lives within walking distance of the school. Their ages range from between 15 to 17 years of age.

3.5.2 Data collection

Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the participants and a focus group interview. Permission was obtained to record both the individual interviews and the focus group interview, each of which will be discussed in more detail below.

3.5.2.1 Individual semi-structured interviews

With the semi-structured interview the researcher explored a few general areas to help discover the participants' views. The interviews must however be flexible and respect the way the participants structure their responses. The participants' views should unfold as they perceive them (the emic perspective) and not as the researcher views them (the etic perspective). Related to this, is the researcher being able to convey the attitude that the participant's views are valuable and useful (Patten, 2009).

The researcher, being the primary instrument of data collection in this research, conducted six individual semi-structured interviews with the participants to explore and better understand their lived experiences (Merriam & Associates, 2002). These interviews allowed the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities, in relation to their influence on the academic performance, hold for the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). An interview schedule was therefore used, as it served as a basic checklist to make sure that key topics were covered (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Themes for the interview schedule, such as educational experience, school environment, work ethic and motivation were guided by the areas identified under the literature review and an evaluation of the various programmes of academic support instituted by the school (Addendum A). These academic support programmes (Addendum C) are discussed in more detail under document analysis in 3.5.2.3 below, was explored in terms of their success as experienced by the learners participating in the study.

3.5.2.2 Focus group interview

The word 'focus' implies that the interview was limited to a small number of issues. The group discussed particular themes under the direction of the researcher. The researcher acted as a facilitator to ensure that the discussion remained on the themes of interest (Barbour, 2010).

One benefit of a focus group interview is that it can be used as a means of revealing the development of perceptions in a social context. If more than one person participates in the interview, it allows for a greater variety of information than can be obtained through the individual interview (Barbour, 2010).

Another benefit is that it allows for immediate follow up and clarification of views and misconceptions (Patten, 2009; Merriam & Associates, 2002). A focus group interview creates a safe and supportive environment which facilitates the discussion from different points of view. It therefore enabled the researcher to explore themes that needed further clarification and to obtain consensus on the themes as identified by the researcher (see Addendum B for identified themes).

Participants were also given the opportunity to raise any other matters that might not have been mentioned during the individual semi-structured interviews.

3.5.2.3 Document analysis

Documents regarding the language policy followed by the school were analysed as the language policy could be an influencing factor on the academic progress of the learners, as discussed under the literature review. The language policy of the school is in keeping with the guidelines set out in the South Africans Schools Act (DoE, 1996) which empowers school governing bodies to determine the language policy. In instances where there are less than 40 requests in grades 1 to 6, or less than 35 requests in grades 7 to 12 for instruction in a language in a given grade not already offered by a school within a particular school district, it is the responsibility of the head of the provincial department of education to determine how the needs of those learners will be met. Furthermore language may not be used as a barrier to admission. Governing bodies must stipulate how their schools will promote multilingualism, as failing a language will result in failing a grade (DoE, 1997).

Since the school has predominantly English first language learners, the LoLT of the school is English. The school also offers various programmes of academic support, by way of extra lessons offered in various subjects and a world read initiative to assist with language and reading skills, which learners can access on a voluntary basis (see Addendum C for list of extra lessons offered). The policies and programmes and their possible influence on the academic performance of the research participants were explored through the interview methods discussed previously and will be discussed in Chapter Four.

3.5.3 Data analysis

Qualitative researchers will generally select an overall approach to guide their data analysis. An inductive approach is characteristic of all qualitative research. The researcher collected and analysed the data in order to induce themes that explain the patterns noted in the responses of the participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). A process of coding was undertaken to highlight and group information according to identified themes. The verbatim transcripts of the interviews were examined for distinct categories which were then coded with individual names (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The process of elaboration was done after the initial coding process. Coding and exploration were repeated until no new information or insights could be obtained. Only once this process was completed were the results interpreted (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In this study the researcher used the steps for data analysis described by Merriam & Associates (2002) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) above:

- The first step in the data analysis process was to transcribe all the individual interviews verbatim. The interviews were then read through several times, after which a process of open coding was implemented where units of meaning were identified and coded (Addendum I). E.g. schooling, language, academic success and work ethic.
- Codes were adjusted when necessary due to increased insight and information.
- The focus group interview was also transcribed verbatim and added to the data. A process of open-coding was also implemented here.
- This was followed by categorisation where relationships and themes were identified (Addendum J). These themes and categories were revised as the process of data analysis progressed, leading to a final list of themes and categories. An example of an identified theme is learning in a second language and the categories identified within this theme included schooling, loss of first language and reasons for attending school. The final list of categories and themes were then used as the basis of the argument for the findings of these studies from which conclusions were drawn.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

3.6.1 Validity

Validity asks the question of how congruent the research findings are with reality (Merriam & Associates, 2002). As credibility can be considered as qualitative research's equivalent to quantitative research's term of validity, in this basic qualitative research study, the understanding of the reality is based on the researcher's interpretation of the factors, as perceived by the participants, which influence their academic performance.

Quality control in qualitative research looks at techniques used to establish the credibility of the data. The researcher continually searched for evidence that was discrepant to the hypothesis being developed so as to produce a rich and meaningful account. The technique used by the researcher to establish credibility was method triangulation. Method triangulation is when one type of participant is used to provide data but two methods are used to collect the data (Patten, 2009). The researcher conducted individual interviews and then held a focus group interview with the same participants. Credibility of this research was therefore ensured by conducting a focus group interview with the same participants so as to explore themes identified from the data analysis of their individual interviews. Themes that needed further clarification were also explored in the focus group interview.

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the research findings can be replicated (Merriam & Associates, 2002). However given the nature of qualitative research, there can be numerous interpretations of the same data. Instead reliability therefore lies in others agreeing that, given the data collected, the results are consistent and dependable. Dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings of the research occurred as the researcher says they did (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Dependability and consistency in this research were achieved through the provision of rich and detailed descriptions which showed how the participants' perceptions were rooted in and developed out of their lived experiences within their specific context. In order to further ensure reliability, the data collected and analysed were mapped against findings from similar research.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The protection of the welfare and rights of the research participants forms an essential basis of ethical research. It is therefore necessary to reflect carefully on ethical issues when designing and conducting research studies (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In keeping with the above, the following steps were taken:

- The researcher obtained written approval from the organisations involved.
- The researcher gained informed consent from the parents of the research participants as they were minors.
- The researcher gained assents from the research participants.
- Ensuring the confidentiality of the participants' privacy each of which is discussed more fully below.

3.7.1 Approval from organisations

Permission was obtained from the Department of Education to conduct the study (Addendum D). Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the principal of the school, as he would like to get a sense of some of the underlying issues in order to implement informed measures to assist and address issues where possible (Addendum E). Ethical clearance was obtained from Stellenbosch University before the research was conducted (Addendum F).

The following ethical issues relating specifically to the participants were given consideration:

3.7.2 Informed consent

A key aspect to consider in the promotion of ethical values is informed consent. In order to obtain informed consent, the researcher had to inform the participants of the general purpose of the research. This included, what would be done to them during the research, what the potential benefits to them and others might be, and what the potential for harm might be. The fact that they could withdraw at any time without penalty also needed to be explained as well (Patten, 2009).

Consent was voluntary and informed. The identified learners and their parents, as they are minors, were approached to be part of the study. It was made known to them that the purpose of the research is to gain a better understanding of their life experiences and how it may impact on their academic success in school. They received a full and clear explanation of the

aims of the research and what would be expected of them. They had the right to withdraw during any aspect of the study. This information was provided in writing and the participants and their guardians signed informed assent and consent forms, respectively, to indicate that they understood it fully and agreed to participate (Addendum G and Addendum H). This was necessary in order for them to make an informed choice about participating voluntarily in the research.

3.7.3 Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is also an important aspect in the promotion of ethical values (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In keeping with this value, it was communicated to the participants that the report on the results would contribute to a Masters thesis. They therefore had the right to decide what information would be presented in the report and how. The names of the participants, their families and the school were not mentioned. Personal identities were therefore concealed through the use of numbers assigned to each participant. The verbatim transcripts were only handled by the researcher and will be stored in a locked cabinet for a period of five years thereby further safe-guarding the identity of those involved in the research.

3.7.4 Debriefing

Another important aspect in promoting ethical values is the debriefing of participants after their participation in the research. Debriefing involved reviewing the purpose of the study, the procedures used and sharing the results with the participants. The process of debriefing also included the reassurance that the information would remain confidential as discussed. In addition, the participants were given the opportunity to ask for information about any aspect of the research (Patten, 2009).

3.8 SUMMARY

All qualitative research has an interest in discovering how meaning is constructed. This involves discovering how people make sense of their lives and their world. The key aim of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and understand these meanings. This chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology used in conducting the study. This chapter also provides an explanation on how validity and reliability will be ensured as well as the ethical considerations which guide the research. The research design as outlined above

allowed the researcher to explore, discover and better understand the lived experiences of the participants from their perspective. The findings of the research will be presented and discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to answer the following research questions:

1. What are some of the key challenges that influence academic success within the school system, as experienced by a minority Xhosa-speaking learner population? and
2. How can these challenges be addressed effectively?

The data in this chapter is presented according to the themes and categories identified during the qualitative content analysis and a discussion of the findings. The findings are then interpreted in terms of the existing literature in an attempt to answer the research questions.

A summary of the themes which emerged during the data analysis is presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Themes that emerged from the individual and the focus group interviews

| Themes | Categories |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Learning in a second language | Schooling Loss of first language Reasons for attending the school |
| Ethos of the school | Peer relationships Teacher attitudes and support Academic support Involvement in school activities |
| Home environment | Parental support Work ethic of participants |

To assist in placing the participants' experiences within a context from which to discuss and better understand the research findings, it is first necessary to describe the context of the school and biographical data of the participants.

4.2 SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

4.2.1 School context

As mentioned previously, the school is a former Model C school and, as such, is well resourced in terms of facilities and experienced qualified staff. The number of educators on staff is 55, of which 48 are white. There are five Coloured educators on the staff and no black, Xhosa-speaking educators on the staff. As mentioned previously, the Xhosa learners' form part of the black minority of less than 7% amongst the predominately white learner population. The school is also situated in a previously 'whites only' suburb, with the nearest township located about 5km away.

4.2.2 Biographical data

The table below elaborates on the biographical data of each of the participants, given in Table 3.1 previously, so as to better understand their context.

Table 4.2: Biographical data of the six participants in the research study

| Participant | Grade | Age | Place where staying | Living with | Siblings | Transport |
|-------------|-------|-----|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| 1 | 11 | 17 | township | Mother (dad left before born) | 0 | Bus/taxi |
| 2 | 11 | 17 | township | Mother (divorced) | 1 | Bus/taxi |
| 3 | 10 | 16 | suburb | Both parents | 1 | Walk |
| 4 | 10 | 16 | township | Mother (dad deceased) | 0 | Bus/taxi |
| 5 | 9 | 15 | township | Both parents | 2 | Bus/taxi |
| 6 | 9 | 15 | township | Both parents | 1 | Bus/taxi |

Against this backdrop of the school context and the biographical data of the participants, the findings of the research will now be presented in terms of the themes that emerged during the data analysis.

4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The themes presented in Table 4.1 above reflect the lived experiences of the learners who receive their schooling in the LoLT of the school, which is different from their mother tongue which is Xhosa. The themes represent these students' perceptions on the key challenges they regard as having an influence on their academic success. The data presented is taken from the data generated through the verbatim transcriptions of the six individual interviews and the one focus group interview. Participants are referred to by number and the context in which the data was provided, either the focus group interview (FG) or individual interview (Indiv.). A participant may therefore be referred to as participant 1FG or participant 1Indiv.

4.3.1 Learning in a second language

4.3.1.1 Schooling

All the participants started their schooling in English-medium pre-primary schools. From the average age of three they were exposed to English as a second language. All the participants then attended various English-medium primary schools before entering their current high school in grade 8. During the individual interviews and corroborated in the focus group interview, all the participants expressed the view that they prefer to learn in English. They are of the opinion that they need English to succeed, especially if they want to go to university. Reasons for this opinion are reflected through their statements below.

- 4Indiv.: 'English is an international language.'
- 5Indiv.: 'I got a friend of mine in grade 8 at the township school. She is sixteen. In grade 6 she failed because she did not understand English. She did not go to a proper school.'
- 2Indiv.: 'I think that if I did not start with English in grade 1, it would be hard.'
- 1Indiv.: 'Not struggling at a white school. As I see now most people who come from black school and go to a white school, like struggle.'

1FG: 'You learn in English at university.'

3FG: 'Yes, I don't have a problem with English.'

4FG: 'I want to go to university. It would be hard if I struggled with English.'

Participant 1's mother was a live-in domestic worker for a white family. As a result, the learner grew up and spent most of her time with the white family, which has two daughters. They encouraged her mother to send her to a previouslywhites-only school. They sponsor her financially so that she can attend this school.

Participant 2 also has a sponsor which is a motivation to do well and pass.

2Indiv.: 'Well obviously they're not going to sponsor someone who is failing, not going to waste their money.'

It is clear from the data above that all the participantsview learning in English from the start of their schooling as being to their advantage, as opposed to their peers who have not had the same experience.

4.3.1.2 *Loss of language*

During the individual and focus group interview sessions the participants made it clear that they would not want to learn in Xhosa at this stage of their lives. They also speak mainly English at school, even when with other Xhosa-speaking learners. This has had an influence on the retention and development of their mother tongue, i.e. Xhosa, leading to the loss of development of their mother tongue.

The following comments were made regarding their experiences when confronted in their mother tongue:

3Indiv.: 'At home we speak mostly English. Sometimes we speak my language, but most of the time English. Sometimes my mom will speak and I will respond in English. Sometimes she goes deep and then I don't understand what she says.'

2FG: 'Xhosa is difficult. It would be difficult to do it at this stage.'

6FG: 'Yes, especially after learning in English all this time.'

- 2Indiv.: 'I am used to English. Everything is simple in English. It would be like me going to a black school now. I would not be able to, hard to adapt, everything done in Xhosa. I can speak it, but I can't write it.'
- 5FG: 'I can speak but I can't write it.'
- 3Indiv.: 'That would be hard, because people actually judge you, if your English is bad, they laugh, like, "Oh, she comes from the Transkei."'

The comments of the participants clearly illustrate that their schooling experience has led to a loss of their mother tongue, as proposed by Nel (2005) in the literature. Despite this the participants and their parents view their attendance at an English-medium school as an advantage, as can be seen in the reasons, given below, for attending this particular school.

4.3.1.3 *Reasons for attending the school*

When asked why they chose to attend this school and not the school in their township which is within walking distance, and which has a majority of Xhosa learners, the responses of the participants revealed a perception that one has access to better opportunities if one attends a white school.

- 1Indiv.: 'I'll say learning, being able to speak English properly ...'
- 5Indiv.: 'My mother says if I were to fail, she would take me out and put me in ... not appreciate the opportunity I have been given.'
- 3FG: 'This school is way better. It is strict but it is good. You can't do what you want. In ... they do what they want.'
- 4Indiv.: 'I would rather quit school than attend a black school.'
- 4Indiv.: '... 'because they speak Xhosa there. I don't think I would have coped there because I always stayed in...speaking English.'
- 2Indiv.: 'I kind of wanted to learn something. Resources of the school makes a big difference. Separating myself from my friends at that school has been good.'
- 5FG: 'Things are better here. The facilities are better. There are good teachers.'

5Indiv.: My mother doesn't think the education is high and she thinks the standard there is lower ... She thinks being here is a like a privilege because she did not get to go to a school like this.'

The perception, as is evinced in the literature, that attendance of a former white Model C school will afford one better opportunities, seems to be echoed by the participants and their parents.

4.3.2 Ethos of the school

The mission statement (and vision) of the school is learning to make a difference by being dynamic and effective and to inspire and empower all learners to achieve their full potential so as to be of purposeful service to society. In keeping with this, all members are expected to be mindful of their rights and responsibilities, to strive to develop the whole person and to encourage the pursuit of excellence in a safe, positive and caring environment, while at the same time being sensitive to the needs of the diverse people of the nation.

This description of the mission statement and vision of the school is important in relation to the participants' experiences within the school. Their experiences serve to highlight the extent to which the ethos of the school is in keeping with the mission and vision of the school. Their experiences also highlight the support and changes that are needed in order for them, as a minority group, to achieve their full potential, which should be in keeping with the vision of the school. The categories that emerge as having an effect on the ethos of the school, and how they influence the academic success of the participants will be discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Peer relationships

The important role that experiences of accepting and welcoming peer relationships play in academic success is highlighted in the data below. Four of the participants feel they are not able to ask for help in certain classrooms, as there is constant teasing and ridicule of black students by certain white students. This may prevent them from asking questions if they do not understand the work or discussion.

4Indiv.: 'Because, like, sometimes people always make funny comments, race jokes.They react different and weird towards you.'

4FG: 'It is upsetting. I prefer to rather keep quiet. I just want to be left alone.'

- 6Indiv.: 'Sometimes if you say you don't understand they might end up laughing.'
- 1Indiv.: 'Sometimes, if someone says something in class about black people, then I'm like, ok, now he's pointing out that I'm black and it's kinda irritating, so, like, I'll end up being upset the whole lesson, ... affects my concentration.'
- 1FG: 'Ja, some people can be so irritating.'
- 5Indiv.: 'Last year I did not ask questions. They laugh for everything. I would keep quiet or try and figure it out for myself.'

The two other participants said that they do not let the comments bother them as they have realised that if they keep quiet it may affect their learning if they keep quiet. A view which they corroborated in the focus group interview.

- 3Indiv.: 'I realise, like, if I keep quiet, it's going to affect me.'
- 3FG: 'I don't care. I will ask no matter who says what.'
- 2Indiv.: 'I ask when I need help. I can stand up for myself. Does not bother me. I am able to work and carry on.'
- 2FG: 'Does not bother me. If I don't understand, I have to ask.'

Given the choice, participants generally prefer to sit next to other Xhosa learners in class and to work with other Xhosa learners on classroom projects and assignments. This tendency flows over into break-time when they generally spend their breaks with other Xhosa learners.

The participants also expressed the view that despite being in predominately white English-medium schools in primary school, everyone got along in primary school. There seems to have been a change in attitude upon entering high school, as their experiences of racial prejudice seem more prevalent.

- 3Indiv.: 'Primary school was a lot of fun. It was different. Not a lot of things mattered because everyone was young. No colour, race. That did not matter. Attitudes change ... gravitate towards people with more of the same interests.'

- 4Indiv.: 'Everyone was nice. Coming to high school things changed ... I just want to be left alone.'
- 4FG: 'Remember in primary school. We would get along with everyone. Primary school was nice.'
- 2Indiv.: ... 'but I would not want to be in that group. They think they can still own us and stuff.'
- 1Indiv.: 'I think they're just trying to be cool.'
- 1Indiv.: 'In primary school I did not have any racial problems. I don't think like anybody kind of thought at that age about ... but, ja, I would say it started in grade nine, when we came up to the high school.'
- 5FG: '... always passing comment. I am so tired of it. Even if you walk in the corridors, they will make comments ... It was different in primary school.'

The responses from the participants clearly illustrate a shift in their experiences at high school when compared to primary school. This despite the similar conditions, in that the primary schools they attended were all English-medium schools with predominately white learners, as is the case with the high-school they are currently attending.

4.3.2.2 *Teacher attitudes and support*

In as much as an accepting and welcoming relationship with peers has an influence on the ethos of the school and consequently the learners' academic success, so too does the relationship with teachers.

It was evident from the interviews that the participants perceive certain teachers as having favourites which did not include them as black learners and express that they had experienced that certain teachers passed comments that made them feel inadequate. They therefore do not always experience the classroom as a safe environment to ask questions. This is sometimes met by retaliation by the Xhosa-speaking learners, as mentioned by participant 3 below. The retaliation can, in turn, be experienced by teachers as lack of discipline on the part of the learners and can therefore add to discipline problems experienced within the classroom.

- 3Indiv.: '... the worst teacher I had. She would make comments ... Most of the time when she is teaching, we would say, "Ja, we are not going to listen to you!" and would do stuff to irritate her, talking and stuff.'
- 1Indiv.: 'I hate the way some teachers sometimes ask if you need help. Sometimes it feels like, "Why are you asking me?"'
- 3FG: 'Yes, they think you can't do it or something ... and I look around, like why you asking me and not ...'
- 4FG: 'you do think, is it because I'm black that they think I can't do it?'
- 3Indiv.: 'We just felt intimidated ... so we would rather not ask a question.'
- 2Indiv.: 'If I ask a question and you don't take note of me and if someone else does ask and you respond, that means you don't respect me and I will then not listen to you as well.'
- 6Indiv.: 'Others will just say, "I've just explained, what don't you understand?" Then you put your hand down or sit down.'

On the other hand, some teachers are more approachable and supportive than others. Some teachers are able to create an environment in which the participants feel safe to ask questions if they do not understand. This is clearly illustrated in the following comments:

- 3Indiv.: 'The teachers I have this year are approachable, especially Mr ... He has this whole system going. He has a good heart. He believes in everybody. That is what I like about him.'
- 4Indiv.: 'But it's like I can ask questions in Mr ...'s class.'
- 2Indiv.: 'If I feel I need extra lessons for English, I will ask ma'am to take 10 minutes after school to explain to me.'

The lack of discipline in some classrooms makes it difficult to concentrate and serves as a source of distraction for some.

- 5Indiv.: 'My marks are better than last year ... I'm in a different class. Last year we would always get into trouble, class report, we had some terrible people. Get distracted, not able to concentrate.'

6Indiv.: 'We can't concentrate or get work done and we end up not understanding the work done.'

1FG: 'it is some pupils in the class who make it difficult to learn sometimes, always talking and stuff.'

4FG: 'especially in ... class. Those boys can be so irritating, so noisy.'

The research clearly shows the important influence that teachers' attitudes and support can have on the academic success of these learners. The creation of an accepting and welcoming environment, with an ethos of respect for diversity, is essential for learners to feel that they can be themselves. There is a clear need to create an environment in which learners can concentrate and feel safe and confident that they can achieve their potential.

4.3.2.3 Academic support

The academic support offered within the school is an important consideration in the attainment of an ethos which allows each learner to achieve their full potential.

The school offers extra lessons for certain subjects which the learners are free to attend after school (Addendum C). The participants generally agree that the school offers support if they are struggling academically, but that it is up to the individual to decide whether they want to access these.

6Indiv.: 'If I have no-one to stay with after school or if no friends are going to that extra lesson, then you don't really feel like going.'

2Indiv.: 'If I feel I need, then I would go.'

5Indiv.: 'I think they are supportive. There are extra lessons.'

4Indiv.: 'I go for lessons for extra help.'

The responses from the participants acknowledge the availability of academic support if they feel they need to make use of it.

4.3.2.4 *Involvement in school activities*

a) **Participant involvement**

Another theme that emerged is the involvement of the learners and their parents in the life of the school. This involvement seems to have an influence on the feeling of acceptance within the school which, in turn, can have an influence on the academic success of the participants.

According to the data, the participants are reluctant and don't feel confident enough to take part and get involved in the leadership structures. It reflects that they have not really thought about pushing themselves to be a top achiever, and that they are content to pass and do well enough to further their studies after high school.

- 4Indiv.: 'I would like to be there but I need to push myself ... because I always thought I will never be there, so don't bother.'
- 5Indiv.: 'Maybe black kids think they will not get voted. They think they don't have the skills.'
- 3Indiv.: 'I don't know, if anyone wants to they can, but it's like everybody is scared, afraid what everybody else is going to think ... you are just like scared. Are people going to vote for me, because I'm black ... if you're going to get an award are people going to laugh? So it's like, why bother with that?'
- 6Indiv.: 'I think it's because we don't have that much resources at home ... like computers and Internet.'
- 1FG: 'We don't have transport ... makes it difficult to get involved.'
- 6FG: 'Do you know how much the SRC do. How much time they spend at school? How can we do that?'
- 2FG: 'Does not help if we can't come to meetings and stuff ... then feel sorry for you and must always make a plan for you'.
- 2Indiv.: 'Why change something if you know it's not going to change? It is a white school ... People would say she is not going to get into the

leadership because she is black ... don't want people feeling sorry for us and stuff.'

The participants' perceptions of self-worth are portrayed in their responses, as it seems that the participants generally experience feelings of inferiority which influences their opportunities to achieve their full potential.

b) Parental involvement

All the participants express the view that their parents are supportive and concerned about their academic success. However, parental involvement in the life of the school varies. Four of the participants' parents have attended the parents' evenings to discuss their children's progress. However, this attendance is not consistent and will depend on their availability and access. Some of the reasons provided for non-attendance are that parents work late and long hours. Some parents do not have transport to travel to these meetings late at night.

3FG: 'My father has attended but he is busy with work.'

4FG: 'My mother has attended parents' evening to speak to teachers. She will attend if there is a problem.'

5FG: 'My mother attends if she can.'

2FG: 'My mother does not have transport ... as long as I'm passing well she is ok.'

Parental involvement was an aspect that needed clarification and was explored further during the focus group interview to better understand the lack of involvement in the life of the school. None of the participants' parents get involved in any other school activity except where it has direct bearing on their academic success. The participants express the view that, just as they are reluctant to get actively involved in the life of the school, so too are their parents.

2FG: 'My mother does not feel that she belongs amongst the other white parents.'

4FG: 'We don't have the resources like other parents do.'

1FG: 'My mother's experiences at her own work with some whites ... won't get involved here.'

The research shows that the general feeling is that, as black parents, they would not belong and would not be able to contribute to the life of the school. These perceptions are at odds with the mission statement and vision of the school.

4.3.3 Home environment

Besides the school environment and ethos of the school another theme that emerged was the home environment, the extent to which the participants' parents supported them and their own work ethic.

4.3.3.1 Parental support

Three of the participants live with both parents and the other three come from single-parent homes. Their parents want them to do well and have a better education. The parents encourage them to work hard. The degree of involvement and support offered in respect of school work, tests and exams varies. None of the participants have to do chores when they get home. They have time to complete homework and study for tests. Most of the participants have a space to learn and do homework at home.

1Indiv.: 'I usually do my homework because my mother is there saying, "Do your homework!"'

3Indiv.: 'My dad ends up switching off the TV. My dad is the one that will say "You have to go now."'

3Indiv.: 'My dad offers to help me with my work but we're both so stubborn and end up fighting. So I can do it by myself.'

5Indiv.: 'I don't have a desk. I work on my bed. I don't fall asleep. My mother comes and checks up on me all the time to make sure I am studying.'

4Indiv.: 'My mom takes my phone away because she knows I am going to go on my phone and actually makes me study.'

2FG: 'Our parents want us to do well. My mother would be so angry if I failed.'

The research shows the important influence that parental support and encouragement can have on the participants' preparation for test and examinations.

4.3.3.2 *Work ethic of participants*

The participants' commitment to homework and preparation for test and examinations varies. Three of the participants complete homework regularly and consistently. For the rest of the participants, homework is usually done late at night or in the morning register before lessons start. They also admit to being a bit lazy when it comes to preparation for tests and sometimes only study the night before. They do admit to putting more time into exams, as they do not want to fail, even though, with the exception of participant 5, they do not prepare study timetables.

5Indiv.: 'I usually do it right after school ... This year I started to do a timetable. It's helping me. Last year I did prepare but only studied the night before, which was not very good.'

2Indiv.: 'I know I have register and stuff so I will quickly do it ... Test and exams is different to homework. I have to focus, you want to pass.'

3Indiv.: 'Well, last year I only started maybe a week before. I have realized that did not work so well, so I am starting earlier.'

The research has highlighted the important role that the work ethic of the participants has on academic success. The participants realize that in order to achieve better results they need to study harder and prepare more conscientiously. A view that was corroborated in the focus group interview as well.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study needs to be reviewed before a discussion of the research findings is undertaken. The study was aimed at gaining a better understanding of the lived experiences of the minority Xhosa learners learning in their second language, so as to explore future measures of support in addressing the challenges they may be experiencing.

The literature identifies various influences on academic success but contextual factors also play a role, namely the interacting micro and meso-systems. The academic performance of these learners occurs within a context and is influenced by the interacting systems, such as relationships with peers or teachers, around the learners. It is important to therefore understand the influences of these in order to provide meaningful support to these learners and to address their needs effectively. In interpreting the findings, the discussion will place the findings within the context of the literature and the eco-systemic theoretical framework. The findings are further discussed under three broad themes, i.e. language experiences, ethos of the school and home environment. The language experiences theme includes their schooling, reasons for attending the school and the loss of the first language. The ethos of the school includes a discussion on the mission and vision of the school, teacher and peer attitudes and relationships, academic support measures and learner and parental involvement in school activities. The home environment theme includes a discussion on the work ethic of the participants and parental support.

4.4.2 Language experiences

The education of the learners who participated in this study takes place against the backdrop of the broader educational arena of South Africa. The educational policies based on democratic principles of equal access saw the acknowledgement of the right to learn and be taught in your mother tongue. However, the participants, supported by their parents, chose to start their schooling career where the LoLT is English and not Xhosa which is their mother tongue. The participants' perceptions are that they are at an advantage for having learned English, their second language, at the start of their schooling career. This perception seems to be supported by the literature, as Nel (2005) suggested that, because English is viewed as a prestigious language in South Africa, many parents place their children in schools where the LoLT is English. The parents and the participants are of the opinion that their schooling will grant them access to better career opportunities.

The participants expressed the view that had they not started learning English early on in their schooling, they would have been struggling to cope academically, as they might not have had a good command of the English language. This seems to be in keeping with the recommendation of the Department of Education (2002), which encourages the introduction of the LoLT in grade 1 if the first language is different to the language of learning and teaching. The participants expressed the view that it would be more of a struggle to cope

academically if they did not have a good command of the English language. It is important that second-language learners are provided with the necessary assistance and consistent support in the LoLT (NCS, 2002:4). This support has been consistent for the participants as they have remained in an English-medium school throughout to the extent that they feel they can learn effectively in the LoLT.

However, as the participants of the study are being taught in their second language and tend to use their second language in their daily lives and at school, as suggested by Nel (2005), the development of their first language has been stifled and it has led to the loss of the mother tongue. Despite this loss, the participants view their proficiency in English as an advantage. The implication is that they believe that their mother tongue as opposed to English, could not afford them better opportunities. A view which could further be perpetuating the participants' feelings of low self-worth and feelings of inferiority.

4.4.3 Ethos of school

The South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996) formalised access to quality education for all. These policy changes granted learners access to any school regardless of social, economic, race and cultural backgrounds. Many black families in South Africa enrolled their children into former white schools with the perception that these schools were better resourced and that their children would therefore receive a better education (Vandeyar, 2010). This perception is supported by the participants' responses as illustrated in section 4.3.1.3.

Being a minority within this school, these learners seem to be pressurised to adapt to the culture of the school at the risk of negating their own culture (Kajee, 2011; Mncube, 2009; Makhalemele, 2005). There are no specific programmes in the school which serve to validate the minority culture in the school. This is at odds with the mission and vision of the school which aspires to all members being mindful of their rights and responsibilities in striving to develop the whole person. This aspiration encourages the pursuit of excellence in a safe, positive and caring environment while at the same time being sensitive to the needs of the diverse people of the nation.

Despite the democratic principles of equal access, the deep-rooted separation and prejudice advocated through the apartheid system still plays out in stereotypical behaviour and attitudes. These learners seem to experience overt racism, as described by Vandayar and Killen (2006), as they walk down the corridors and interact in the classroom. Judgements are made against

various race groups based on the actions of community and government leaders as portrayed through the media. This is clearly illustrated in the participants' experiences of the attitudes of some of their teachers and white peers as seen in section 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.2.

It would seem from general comments that are made about blacks that covert racism (Vandayar & Killen, 2006) permeates the school. Attempts at assistance are also sometimes perceived as being condescending, where participants feel singled out, as is illustrated in the comment of some of the participants, in which they say that the way in which some teachers asked them if they needed help made them question why they, in particular, were being asked.

All the participants perceive themselves as being 'lazy', and that if they wanted to, they could be one of the top achievers academically. This, 'laziness', however seems to be a screen to hide behind, as they perceive themselves as being black and therefore not able to achieve or do not wish to draw attention to themselves. This perception, clearly illustrated in section 4.3.2.4a), that they may not be good enough or that people may feel sorry for them, can serve as a reason for them not to be actively involved in the life of the school. However, these learners may not have the necessary resources needed to sustain active participation. In instances where they do get involved and are then not able to meet the commitments demanded of the activity, this serves to reinforce the underlying thought that they do not belong or are not good enough.

It is interesting to note that the participants' experiences in relation to racism differ from primary to high school. This despite the similar conditions of the primary and high schools in that they are predominantly white with a black minority. This distinction could suggest a further possibility to explore for future research.

The participants acknowledge and are appreciative of the various measures of academic support that the school has to offer. They feel that they can access these if they need to. The research clearly illustrates the important role that the attitudes of teachers have in creating and sustaining the ethos of the school, as the participants experience some teachers as more approachable than others. The atmosphere that some teachers are able to create within their classroom can and does provide a secure and accepting environment. Within this accepting environment, the participants feel safe to ask questions and be actively involved in the learning process. Their academic success is adversely affected, as illustrated in section 4.3.3.2, in an environment where these learners do not feel secure to be active participants. Disruptive learners can also serve as a source of distraction and can create an environment

which makes it difficult to concentrate on the learning, which in turn adversely affects the academic success of some learners.

The school has various measures for communicating with parents and keeping parents informed of their children's performance and behaviour, as well as for canvassing for help for and advertising the various activities offered at the school. Despite this, the participants expressed the view that their parents are reluctant to get actively involved or to offer their services, as they do not feel included and fear they may not be able to make valuable contributions to the life of the school. This would suggest that the school has to reassess its parent-school partnership.

Epstein's model, as proposed by Swart and Phasha (2011), takes cognisance of the interacting relations between the school, the parents and the community in developing partnerships of support in the promotion of successful learning and development of learners. As this model could serve as guide in the creation and sustainment of supportive and collaborative partnerships, it will be discussed in more detail as part of the recommendations in Chapter Five.

4.4.4 Home environment

The research highlights the important roles that parental support and involvement and the work ethic of the participants can play in academic success. The participants all acknowledged that better preparation is needed if they want to pass and that their parents are there to encourage them to achieve. These findings are in keeping with Michael, Andrade & Bartlett (2007) and Ogbu (2003) findings that parental involvement, time spent on task and study habits are important factors that contribute to academic success.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The findings from the individual interviews and the focus group interview show that although the participants view it as a privilege to attend the school and experience varying measures of support from their school community, there are a range of challenges which may be hindering their academic success. There seems to be a need in particular, to foster a sense of belonging within their school community so that they and their parents can feel that they are valuable members within the school community.

Chapter Five will offer recommendations with regard to the support needs of the Xhosa learners who are a minority learning in their second language in a former Model C school. The strengths and limitations of the research study will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to gain insight into the support needs of the Xhosa learners who are a minority in the former Model C school learning in their second language. Working from an interpretive research paradigm, a basic qualitative study was used to explore the research questions. Using this research process allowed the researcher to gain insight into the lived experiences of the participants so as to better understand their support needs within the school.

The research study highlights the important influence that the ethos of the school can have on the academic success of learners. When learners experience the school as a safe place in which they have a sense of belonging, they are more motivated to learn. Working towards the creation and sustainment of this safe environment requires continual collaboration between the interacting systems that influence the learners.

In keeping with the eco-systemic framework, the challenges of being a minority group studying in a second language as they relate to the learner, the parent and the school are highlighted through the research study. These challenges, as they pertain to the interacting systems, will first be summarized and then the recommendations for support will be presented, taking cognisance of the interacting systems which these learners experience as the influencing their academic success. The limitations and strengths of the study as well as possible future research will also be discussed.

5.2 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.2.1 Challenges in relation to the learners

The participants of the study form part of the Xhosa minority within the school and as such seem to be pressurised to adapt to the culture of the school at the risk of negating their own culture (Kajee, 2011; Mncube, 2009; Makhalemele, 2005). The participants of the study are being taught in their second language and tend to use their second language in their daily lives and at school, which has led to the development of the first language being stifled (Nel, 2005). The perception that their mother tongue, as opposed to English would not afford them better opportunities could further be perpetuating the participants' feelings of self-worth and feelings of inferiority.

Despite the democratic principles of equal access, the deep-rooted separation and prejudice advocated through the apartheid system still plays out in stereotypical behaviour and attitudes. The research clearly illustrates the important role that the attitudes of teachers have in creating and sustaining the ethos of the school.

5.2.2 Challenges in relation to the school

Teachers are faced with learners from different language and cultural backgrounds. With such diversity, teachers are challenged to provide and foster an environment which serves to promote the development of all learners regardless of their background. The findings from this research is supported by the literature in that it highlightshow some teachers are able to create a welcoming atmosphere within their classroom. It showed that they provide a secure and accepting environment in which learners are motivated to learn and feel that they can achieve their potential. Teachers are also challenged to create an environment in which disruptive learners do not have the opportunity to serve as a source of distraction and create an atmosphere which makes it difficult to concentrate on the learning, which in turn adversely affects the academic success of some learners. On the other hand, some teachers find this challenge difficult as they still perpetuate discriminating practises. This is in opposition to the school's vision and mission.

5.2.3 Challenges in relation to the parents

The school has to create an accepting environment not only for the learners but for their parents as well. Research has shown that parental involvement can have an influence on

academic success (Nickerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Lemmer, 1994). The perceptions of the participants are that, while their parents are supportive and encouraging, they are reluctant to get actively involved or to offer their services as they do not feel included and fear that they may not be able to make valuable contributions to the life of the school.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study only focused on the support needs of the Xhosa-speaking learners as a minority within the context of a former Model C school. Therefore the following recommendations are based upon their experiences and perceptions. These recommendations will be framed in accordance with the interacting systems as they pertain to the findings of the research study. As discussed in the literature, viewing the school as an organisation is in keeping with a systemic framework and this view can therefore guide whole school development, as it requires an evaluation that includes considering all the interacting systems relating to the child. When the school is seen as a whole, intervention which facilitates the overall development of the school is pursued. The intervention may entail concentrating on a specific aspect of the school which needs to be developed. However, the specific intervention is undertaken so as to strengthen and develop the school as a whole (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

The organisational culture influences and is influenced by the identity of the school. The identity of the school is moulded through the collective vision that the individuals within the school have. As the vision and mission statement sums up the purpose and direction of the school, it should be collectively agreed upon so as to foster a shared sense of purpose (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2006; Sterling & Davidoff, 2000). The experiences of the participants highlight the support and changes that are needed in order for them to achieve their full potential, which is a goal stated in the vision of the school.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the focus points of the recommendations, based on the insight gained into the support needs of the participants within the context of the school. In keeping with the eco-systemic framework, the recommendations take into the account the challenges within the interacting systems and how these challenges can be addressed for effective academic support.

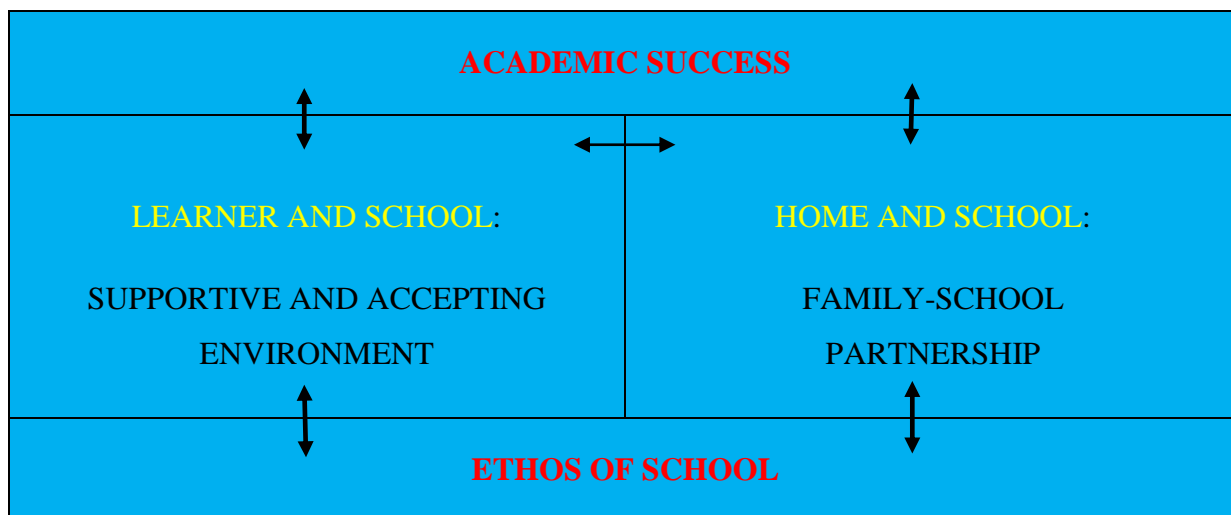


Figure 5.1: Focus points of the recommendations in terms of the important role the ethos of the school has in supporting academic success

As mentioned previously, the mission statement and vision of the school, which should reflect the ethos of the school, is an important consideration in light of the research findings. The vision of the school is:

Learning to make a difference by being dynamic and effective and to inspire and empower all learners to achieve their full potential so as to be of purposeful service to society.

In keeping with this, all members are expected to be mindful of their rights and responsibilities, to strive to develop the whole person and to encourage the pursuit of excellence in a safe, positive and caring environment while at the same time being sensitive to the needs of the diverse people of the nation.

5.3.1 Recommendations relating to the learner and school: Creation of supportive and accepting classroom environment

In the discussion of the creation of an accepting environment, it is important to be constantly mindful that, as it is the individuals within the school who create the organisational culture; these individuals have the ability to change the organisational culture as well (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000). The strategies recommended by Ferrer (2011) for the improvement of academic success of minority learners can serve as a useful guide in the promotion of a supportive and accepting environment and will therefore be repeated in this discussion as possible recommendation to consider in this regard.

- The foundation strategies which form the basis support the implementation of the intellectual and advocacy strategies. Within a climate of trust and respect, honest admission and exploration of presenting problems is made possible. The development and sustainment of the intellectual strategies includes the promotion of genuine rapport with the learners and working within a belief system that every student can learn. Recognising the learner as an individual first and then in a cultural context so as to avoid stereotyping. Avoiding assumptions and learning as much as possible about the learners.
- The intellectual strategies can serve to strengthen and raise sensitivities to learners' problems. These strategies provide for deeper insights into what the learners may be experiencing (Ferrer, 2011). Extending personal knowledge of the learners' cultures so as to avoid unintentionally overlooking or minimizing contextual factors of race and culture is recommended. Raising awareness that minority learners are reluctant to seek assistance if they think their teachers do not understand or might not care about issues related to their race and culture (Kajee, 2011; Mncube, 2009).
- The advocacy strategies are those considered when developing proactive planning and concrete problem solving options. This involves advocating for in-service training on topics such as diversity and culturally responsive teaching (Ferrer, 2011; Engelbrecht et al., 1999; Sleeter & Grant, 1994). Becoming an academic advocate in instances where learners do not have a caring adult to support their academic achievement. Forming alliances with respected community members to provide assistance for those learners who may be reluctant to share their problems with teachers or counsellors of the school but may be willing to share with the community leader (Ferrer, 2011).

The research study highlights the point that teachers and learners do not construct the social context of schooling in a vacuum. The experiences and expectations, which may be influenced by power and status relationships, are consistent with those outside of school (Goduka, 1999). Some of the experiences expressed by the participants are in keeping with the view expressed by Ogbu (1986), as quoted in Goduka (1999), in that years of discrimination and oppression have taught these learners that working hard is an exercise in futility. Classroom expectations which are limited to the predominant 'white' culture seem to impede the cultural orientation and free expression of minority groups which in turn seems to sustain incidences of covert racism (Vandayar & Killen, 2006). It is important therefore to realise that the more learners feel that their culture and language is validated and reinforced,

the more likely it is that they will want to learn. The idea that the learners' voice is fundamental in working towards cultural democracy in an inclusive classroom needs to be fostered. When minority learners are continually silenced by their teachers, they are prevented from finding their voices. These learners may therefore be conditioned into being dependant on a system that they do not understand and are unable to influence, because they have not been given the opportunity to develop the critical skills needed to make their interests and concerns heard. This in turn may serve to re-enforce the feeling of not really belonging (Darder, 1991 in Goduka, 1999).

In keeping with the vision of the school, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers can support the growth and development of learners from different backgrounds through a willingness to learn more about the different languages and cultures of the learners in their classrooms.
- Efforts should be made to relate the curriculum to the experiences and interest of the learners.
- Providing accurate information about racial and cultural diversity. This can be achieved through opportunities of direct contact with members of other groups during carefully structured situations. The aim is for learners to gain accurate information which can serve to challenge stereotyping of groups.
- Another method that can be used to challenge stereotyping of groups is co-operative learning. Learners are given opportunities to share the leadership responsibilities as well as to share the responsibility for each others achievements. These co-operative opportunities are provided as a means to help learners develop group process skills such as conflict management and listening (Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

The participants also experience the lack of discipline in some classrooms as having a negative effect on their ability to learn successfully. The implications for creating a safe and stimulating environment are that teachers and learners need to establish ground rules together. It is recommended that:

- Within creating this accepting environment, the learners should be included and considered as co-constructors.

- Ground rules that espouse mutual respect should be established.
- These rules should be enforced consistently without favouritism and prejudice so that everyone feels part of the classroom and wants to belong.

It is further recommended that:

- Regular and consistent staff development is undertaken.
- This should consist of programmes that raise awareness, open dialogue and debate on diversity and differences.
- Staff development should also provide opportunities to expand people-centred leadership skills. This entails the development of a number of essential skills which include: being sensitive to group dynamics, listening effectively, asking the right questions, dealing with conflict and building a climate of trust within the school (Ferrer, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

This will serve to create a safe platform for honest and open reflective practices as a means to addressing prejudices and create an opportunity for teachers to learn about and share with colleagues better ways to create an environment where all learners feel safe to be themselves and save to explore and maximise their potential.

5.3.2 Recommendations in relation to the home and school: Creation and sustainment of collaborative family-school partnerships

The research findings highlight the need to create and foster a more inclusive and interactive family-school partnership. This type of partnership encompasses striving to create an open climate where family members feel accepted and valued within the environment of the school. It is only in the creation of such an environment that family involvement can be promoted.

As suggested through the literature, fostering this accepting environment requires effective collaboration. In keeping with the Epstein Model of fostering more interactive family-school partnerships, Swart and Phasha (2011:241) suggest that while each situation occurs within its own contexts, effective collaboration can generally be shown and adapted accordingly through the following:

- Being open to listening to and acknowledging each other's points of view

- Considering differences as an asset to be exploited for the benefit of all concerned, for example learning about and learning from each other's occupations, cultures and abilities
- Trying to focus on mutual interests such as the learner's progress, behaviour etc.
- Being open to sharing information and resources so as to develop a mutual understanding around a problem and together develop a support plan
- Fostering respect for each other's skills and knowledge by continuously seeking input and ideas
- Planning and making decision in such a way so as to support parents, teachers and the learners
- Being willing to address conflict in a constructive way, which includes demonstrating a willingness to not only learn from mistakes made but to also share in the successes achieved

It is suggested that Epstein's recommendations on the type of interactions needed to foster effective family-school partnerships can serve as a useful guide in facilitating improved family-school relationships. It is important to realise that developing and sustaining an accepting family-school relationship is an on-going process which cannot be achieved overnight. Open communication and mutual support are essential in developing a sense of community characterised by a sense of belonging, mutual trust and respect.

The first type of involvement relationship refers to fostering partnerships that can support families in providing home environments that facilitate optimal learning of their children. Within this involvement, the importance of teaching occurring within a context that is compatible with the culture of the learners so that continuity and congruence between the home and the school can be fostered is highlighted. The following recommendations are made in this regards:

- Encouraging parents to monitor their children's progress.
- Actively involving parents in discussions on the curriculum.

- Encouraging their involvement in reading programmes and involvement in developing learning programmes for their children.
- Working together in designing and maintaining programmes for the supervision of homework and assistance with study programmes.

The second type of involvement examines the school's responsibility to share information about children's progress, the curriculum, educational policies and school activities. It is important that teachers communicate with and have a close working relationship with parents. It is recommended that:

- Parents should be informed about progress and problem areas and how the necessary support can be provided to help address the problem areas.
- Communication should therefore not only take place when the learner has problems. If the school has regular contact with parents about the progress and achievements of their child, it is easier to contact them when a problem arises.
- Parents should therefore be encouraged to participate in the activities at school.
- Regular communication, as suggested by Nel (2005) and Lemmer (1994), facilitates the relationship between the parents and the school.

The third, fourth and fifth relationship, as discussed under Epstein's model previously highlight the important influence that parental involvement and support has on the academic success of learners. Type 3 encourages parents to volunteer their time, talents and resources, so as to foster the interests and availability of families in the support of their children. Type 4 makes provision for families to be able to support their children at home, as parents may be unsure of how to assist with issues such as homework and other curricular-related activities. Families need to be provided with information and strategies to assist learning at home. Type 5 refers to including families in the decision making, as many choices regarding their children need to be made. It is recommended that:

- The school use pro-active strategies to encourage parent involvement in educational activities.

- Such as contacting parents at the beginning of the school year and establishing, and continually discussing and reassessing together with the parents, the educational goals they would like their children to achieve.
- Encouraging parents to monitor their child's progress, to supervise homework and helping their children to study.
- Involving parents in the discussion of the curriculum, reading programmes and development of learning programmes for their children.
- Many parents work and find it difficult to attend meetings at school. Flexibility in meeting times would allow families to be more involved in their children's education.
- This flexibility also sends a strong message to parents that the school is willing to accommodate their time constraints, as their involvement in their child's education is valued (Dodson-Sims, 2005). These strategies may serve to eliminate the negative connotation that parents of the minority are often confronted with when they are unable to attend meetings.

Considerations when developing these proactive strategies for optimal and effective parent involvement include the following (Dodson-Sims, 2005; Lemmer (1994).

- Suitability of the time for the parent evenings.
- The provision of alternative meetings for parents.
- Sufficient time given to parents questions.
- The percentage of parents who attend parent evenings.
- Hosting of special information workshops to assist parents in coping with home activities.
- Encouraging parents to meet regularly with teachers to discuss problems.

Regular and consistent communication with parents is also essential in encouraging parent involvement. Lemmer (1994) offers the following suggestions to develop effective communication:

- Letter, circulars, newsletters and reports. It is important to remember that the communication be reader friendly and accessible to all parents and be translated if necessary.
- Classroom newsletters which can be used to inform parents specifically about class activities, events, homework, tests and achievements.
- Telephone calls to parents to deal with any issue quickly and personally.
- Teacher could be encouraged to develop strategies for short but effective communication with parents regarding their children. The communication should not be time consuming and should not only be done when a problem arises. These communications should include short acknowledgement and thank you notes.

Bearing in mind the reluctance and constraints that parents may have, they should be encouraged and the means made available for them to get involved in a number of non-educational activities, either as individuals or through joining a parent-teacher association or class committee. These could include:

- Fundraising and organising social events.
- Assisting in extra-mural activities, playground duty and accompanying children on school outings.
- Assistance with administrative work, for example translation of newsletters.
- The arrangement of talks and workshops for parents.

The sixth type of involvement partnership looks at establishing community relationships by involving all who are interested in and affected by quality education. Recommendations in this regard include:

- Tapping into local community resources, groups, individuals and businesses and establishing how they can provide varying degrees of support to the school, the families and the learners in an attempt to try and foster a holistic and integrated system of collaboration between all stakeholders.

This model proves to be valuable in establishing collaborative partnerships, with specific reference to learners who are a minority learning in their second language and who have a different cultural background to the dominant culture of a school. It is clear that regular and effective support is an essential element in changing attitudes towards differences. This approach is in line with the eco-systemic framework, in which understanding the dynamic interactions relates to the development of more supportive and collaborative relationships. This in turn may positively influence the academic success of learners and make them feel a valued part of the school.

The discussion highlights the influences of the overlapping systems between the family and the school, which cannot be ignored in the creation of an ethos of acceptance and respect that adequately supports the needs of the learners (Swart & Phasha, 2011).

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the sample size, the scope of this research study was very narrow. The widening of the sample would help to increase the transferability of the research findings. Although the study focused on the lived experiences of the Xhosa minority within the school, and therefore used data collection methods which were aimed at gaining insight into their specific perspectives, the use of additional methods may have enhanced the research findings. The use of observation may have been useful in providing more data on peer, teacher and parent relationships and interactions. In addition, the study only focused on the support needs of the Xhosa-speaking learners as a minority in the school, while there are other minority groups also attending this particular school. However, this limitation may be also an advantage as discussed in 5.5 below.

Another limitation is that the research focussed only on the lived experiences of the learners. The opinions and experiences of the teachers and parents could have added value to the study. This was, however, outside of the scope and extent of the current research study. The teachers and parents could also benefit from research into their support needs.

5.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The nature and structure of the research design allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the Xhosa minority within the school so as to better understand their support needs. This research presents valuable findings and

recommendations for schools in their quest to provide equitable access to education within a whole school perspective. This understanding can further assist both parents and teachers in gaining insight into the learners' experiences, which could help them in supporting the needs of the learners and therefore, translate into improved academic success.

Although the sample used in this study was a minority of Xhosa-speakers in the school, there are other minority groups within the school. These include Coloured and Indian learners. The findings from this research can be valuable in addressing the support needs of these other minority groups within the school. This insight is also important, not only will it serve to guide future support needs within the sample school but the lessons learnt can also be shared with and adapted for other contexts experiencing similar challenges.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research findings suggest that the participant's experiences in relation to racism differ from primary to high school. This despite the similar conditions of the primary and high schools, in that they are predominantly white with a black minority. This distinction could suggest a further possibility to explore in future research.

As the research study was aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the minority Xhosa-speaking learners from their perspective, the experiences and perceptions of both teachers and parents as forming part of the interacting systems, did not fall within the scope of the study, but are aspects worth investigating further.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research study was aimed at determining some of the key challenges that were influencing the academic success within the school system, as experienced by a minority Xhosa-speaking learner population and how these challenges can be addressed effectively. It is clear from the research findings that despite being proficient in English, despite parental encouragement and despite the available resources, (all of which were factors identified as being important in the achievement of academic success), it is the sense of inferiority experienced by the participants which has the most profound influence on their attainment of academic success.

The new democratised constitution of South Africa has necessitated the need to explore more effective ways to meet the educational needs of learners from diverse backgrounds. The

research therefore highlights that, in order to address the challenges experienced by minority learner populations effectively, diversity needs to be viewed as an asset. Consequently, educational policies and particularly practices should therefore build on learners' strengths rather than devaluating these resources.

The creation and sustainment of an accepting environment, from an eco-systemic perspective requires the involvement of parents and community members who represent the diversity which these learners bring to school. It needs to be understood that all learners can benefit from being exposed to cultural and linguistic diversity. The needs of the participants will only be adequately supported when they feel genuinely valued and accepted within an environment in which they feel safe to achieve their full potential.

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ADDENDUM A

GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Background information

- Family history
- Family size
- Living with both parents
- Parents/breadwinner employed/occupation
- Language and cultural background

B Educational history

- Schools attended
- Any grades repeated
- Problems at school
- Any special achievements like to mention

C School experiences and environment

- Enjoy school?
- Interaction with peers, other race groups/teachers
- Assessment of support strategies implemented at school
- Difficulties with language/schoolwork
- Difficulties with cultural differences
- Support or lack thereof in school
- Any other difficulties

D Work ethic and motivation

- Reason for attending this school and not one closer in own area
- Participation and completion of tasks
- Frustrations in understanding or completion of tasks
- Preparation for tests and assignment

E Recommendations from participants

F Other themes

ADDENDUM B

FOCUS GROUP: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Confirmation and clarification of themes and categories

| Themes | Categories |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Learning in a second language | Schooling Los of first language Reasons for attending the school |
| Ethos of the school | Peer relationships Teacher attitudes and support Academic support Involvement in school activities |
| Home environment | Parental support Work ethic of participants |

ADDENDUM C

ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Extra Lessons

| SUBJECT | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Grade: | Teacher: | Day: | Time: |
| Physical Science | | | |
| 12 | (Room | Monday | 15:00-16:00 |
| 11 | (Room | Wednesday | 15:00-16:00 |
| 10 | (Room | Tuesday | 15:00-16:00 |
| 10 | (Room | Everyday | 07:00-07:30 |
| Maths | | | |
| 12 | (Room | Friday | 14:00-15:00 |
| 11 | (Room | Wednesday | 15:00-16:00 |
| 10 | (Room | Wednesday | 15:00-16:00 |
| 9 | (Room | Thursday | 15:00-16:00 |
| All | | Everyday | 07:00-07:30 |
| Life Science | | | |
| 12 | (lab | Wednesday | 15:00-16:00 |
| Afrikaans | | | |
| 10,11 | (Room | Monday | 15:00-16:00 |
| 12 | (Room | Thursday | 15:00-16:00 |
| 8,9 | (Room | Tuesday Day 7 | 15:00-16:00 |
| World Read Program | | | |
| All | | Monday And Wednesday | 15:00-16:00 |
| EGD | | | |
| 10,11,12 | (Room | Monday, Wed | 15:00-16:00 |
| CAT | | | |
| 10,11,12 | (Room | Mon – Fri (except Day 2) | 15:00-16:00 |

ADDENDUM D

PERMISSION FROM WESTERN CAPE EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

Navrae
Enquiries Dr A.T Wyngaard
IMibuzo
Telefoon
Telephone 021 467 9272
IFoni
Faks
Fax
IFeksi



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Verwysing
Reference 20110119-0053
ISalathiso

Mrs Suzanne Singh
15 – 11 th Avenue Da Gama Park
Simonstown
7975

Dear Mrs Suzanne Singh

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE OF XHOSA SPEAKING LEARNERS AS A MINORITY IN A HIGH SCHOOL

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **1 February 2011 till 30 August 2011**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 8 February 2011

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEDA UBHALE INOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

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VEILIGE SKOLE/SAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47

ADDENDUM E**SAMPLE LETTER ASKING FOR PERMISSION FROM
PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL WHERE RESEARCH WAS
CONDUCTED****TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

I, as principal of grant Mrs S. Singh permission to conduct the necessary research at this school for the completion of her thesis. I grant her access to the participants, academic and behaviour records as needed, provided that the necessary consent has been obtained from all the participants. I trust that the research will be conducted professionally according to the necessary ethical considerations.

PRINCIPAL

9 July 2010

ADDENDUM F

ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

2 March 2011

Tel.: 021 - 808-9183
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 491/2011

Ms S Singh
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Ms S Singh

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Academic experiences of Xhosa speaking learners as a minority in a high school*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards



Sidney Engelbrecht
MR SF ENGELBRECHT

Secretary: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Non-Health)

ADDENDUM G

EXAMPLE OF CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Poor academic performance of Xhosa speaking learners as a minority in a high school: implications for support

Your child/ward has been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mrs S. Singh, Master in Educational Psychology student from the Educational Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to a thesis study. Your child/ward was selected as a possible participant in this study because he/she is in a position to describe his/her life experiences and how these affect his/her success at school. To describe from his/her perspective the factors that influence academic success within the context of the school system.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to gain understanding into their personal life experiences and to evaluate the interacting factors that he/she as an individual experiences in relation to the school system in terms of their possible influence on school performance. The aim being to place in context his/her life experiences so as to better inform future measures of support in an attempt to improve academic performance and to add to the knowledge of research into academic success.

2. PROCEDURES

If he/she volunteers to participate in this study, we would ask him/her to do the following things:

He/she will be required to have a one on one interview with Mrs Singh. During this interview he/she will be asked to describe his/her experiences and how these may impact on his/her success at school.

A group interview may also be conducted if there are any areas identified that may need further explanation or clarification.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

He/she may experience some discomfort during the interviews as I require him/her to be honest and forthright about his/her life experiences and his/her perceptions on the factors influencing his/her

academic success. He/she therefore have the choice not to answer any question during the interviews and can withdraw from the study at any time.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

His/her participation will help us gain knowledge and understanding into his/her life experiences. The knowledge gained will help enhance an offer insight into the factors that influence his/her academic success so as to effectively inform any future measures of support instituted at the school. Insights gained will also contribute to the broader body of knowledge on academic success.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment will be given for your participation

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified by him/her will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with his/her permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of not using his/her name and the name of your family. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed so as to ensure knowledge gained is from his/her perspective. The data, the transcriptions and the knowledge gained from these, after it has been reviewed by him/her, will be used for the written thesis report that needs to be submitted to the university. As any information that is presented as part of the thesis can be accessed by any interested individuals, the information will therefore be reviewed by him/her beforehand. All data collected will be stored in a locked cabinet.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

He/she can choose whether to be in this study or not. If he/she volunteers to be in this study, he/she may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. He/she may also refuse to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw him/her from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mrs Singh (Principal Investigator: 021 7821107/ email: sams.1@webmail.co.za) and Dr Dreyer (Research Supervisor:021 8083502/ email: lornadreyer@sun.ac.za)

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

He/she may withdraw at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. He/she is not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of his/her participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as the legal representative and the rights of the research subject, contact MsMaléneFouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

| |
|--|
| SIGNATURE OF LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE |
|--|

The information above was described to _____ by Mrs Singh in English and I am in command of this language and it was satisfactorily translated to me. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to their satisfaction.

I hereby consent that the participant _____ [*name of participant*] may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

| |
|----------------------------------|
| NAME LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE |
|----------------------------------|

| | |
|--|-------------|
| SIGNATURE OF LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE | DATE |
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| SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR |
|----------------------------------|

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in *English* and *no translator was used*.

Signature of Investigator

ADDENDUM H

ASSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Poor academic performance of Xhosa speaking learners as a minority in a high school: implications for support

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mrs S. Singh, Master in Educational Psychology student from the Educational Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to a thesis study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are in a position to describe your life experiences and how these affect your success at school. To describe from your perspective the factors that influence academic success within the context of the school system.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to gain understanding into your personal life experiences and to evaluate the interacting factors that you as an individual experiences in relation to the school system in terms of their possible influence on school performance. The aim being to place in context your life experiences so as to better inform future measures of support in an attempt to improve academic performance and to add to the knowledge of research into academic success.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

You will be required to have a one on one interview with Mrs Singh. During this interview you will be asked to describe your experiences and how these may impact on your success at school.

A group interview may also be conducted if there are any areas identified that may need further explanation or clarification.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

You may experience some discomfort during the interviews as I require you to be honest and forthright about your life experiences and your perceptions on the factors influencing your academic success. You therefore have the choice not to answer any question during the interviews and can withdraw from study at any time.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Your participation will help us gain knowledge and understanding into your life experiences. The knowledge gained will help enhance an offer insight into the factors that influence your academic success so as to effectively inform any future measures of support instituted at the school. Insights gained will also contribute to the broader body of knowledge on academic success.

5 PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment will be given for your participation.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of not using your name and the name of your family. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed so as to ensure knowledge gained is from your

perspective. The data, the transcriptions and the knowledge gained from these, after it has been reviewed by you, will be used for the written thesis report that needs to be submitted to the university. As any information that is presented as part of the thesis can be accessed by any interested individuals, the information will therefore be reviewed by you beforehand. All data collected will be stored in a locked cabinet.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mrs Singh (Principal Investigator: Tel:021 7821107/ email: sams.1@webmail.co.za) and Dr Dreyer (Research Supervisor:Tel:021 8083502/ email: lornadreyer@sun.ac.za)

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact MsMaléneFouché[mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

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| SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT |
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The information above was described to _____ by Mrs Singh in English and I am in command of this language and it was satisfactorily translated to me. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to there satisfaction.

I hereby assent to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

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| SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR |
|----------------------------------|

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in *English* and *no translator was used*.

Signature of Investigator

ADDENDUM I

PORTION OF THE TRANSCRIPTION FROM A SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

- R So tell me about primary school. Primary school was fine. Your home language is?
- Lang My home language is Xhosa.
- R And when you got to grade 1 what was the English like?
- Schooling I never went to a black school once in my life because I was born in here and I went to ... pre-primary
- Lang and the first language I knew how to read was English so. I didn't really know how to speak Xhosa that well.
- R At home?
- Lang At home my mother tried to talk Xhosa, but I was hearing English at school all the time.
- Experience prim. school So primary school was fun for me. There was no racial things. The racial things came when I came to high school
- R This is the age when you are becoming aware of yourself; you want look cool, and want to fit into a group?
- I Ja
- R And academics was fine in the primary school?
- Academic Success Ja, academics were fine.
- R There were no problems with reading?
- Academic success Ja, no problems. I had a problem with maths because I didn't really like maths, numbers and all that stuff but now I don't really have a problem because I understand. It's now more better that what I did in primary school. I don't know why.
- Lang I did not really have problem with reading or anything based on English.
- R How do you feel about your academic progress now?
- Academic success Now. I feel good this year. I got to say.
- R What do you attribute to that? Why so good?
- Work ethic Concentrating more.
- R What is the motivation for concentrating more?
- University goal It's just; I think the motivation is I want to get to university. For the first application you need to get your June marks. I need to get my June marks to be well and all that stuff. Ja. So I'm working towards that goal, going to university.

ADDENDUM J

EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES CODED ACCORDING TO AN IDENTIFIED THEME AND CATEGORY

| Participant | Theme | Category |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| <p>1. I never went to a black school once in my life because I was born in here and I went to ... pre-primary (indiv)</p> <p>not struggling in a white school. As I see now most people who come from black school and go to white school like struggle (indiv)</p> | <p>Learning in a second language</p> | <p>Schooling</p> |
| <p>2. I think that if I did not start with English in grade 1, it would be hard (indiv)</p> | | |
| <p>4. English is an international language (indiv)</p> | | |
| <p>5. I got a friend in grade 8 at the township school. She is sixteen. In grade 6 she failed because she did not understand English. She did not go to a proper school. (indiv)</p> | | |