

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE FORMAL EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Van der Stoep (1984, in Baloyi 1997:18), formal education is the institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured educational system, spanning lower primary school to university level. Coombs (1985:24) agrees by declaring that formal education involves fulltime, sequential study extending over a period of years, within the framework of a relatively fixed curriculum.

By and large, the perception that parents have of education and adulthood determines the role they play in their children's formal education. In the Tsonga community, as in many other African communities, formal education is regarded as a determinant factor of the level of prosperity, welfare and security which the individual will achieve. Formal education is seen as a means of getting a certificate which is a passport to a coveted job, status and an income.

Parents are the primary educators of their children. They should view themselves as being in partnership with the school, which is then a formalised extension of the family. The partnership has been emphasised by recent legislation such as the South African Schools' Act (Act of 1996:90). This partnership recognises the mission and responsibility of parents to educate their children and assist in their formal education.

This chapter deals with the role of parents in the formal education of their children during the Foundation Phase. Parents should prepare their children for the role of adulthood and for cultural, moral and spiritual matters. The duty of the parents in this regard goes together with the competency to arrange and influence different aspects of a child's education. According to Long (1982, in Matlou 1993:34), it has been proved that parental involvement improves children's school performance and he argues that anything that does so merits close attention.

The dimensions of child development in the Foundation Phase will be examined, namely, physical development, psycho-social development, and cognitive development. The role of parents will be looked at generally, but also with regard to problems which could arise

in the facets of the physical dimension, affective dimension, normative dimension and cognitive dimension. The African family context will be contemplated and the main focus will be on the Tsonga community.

2.2 THE CHILD IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

During the Foundation Phase, Curriculum 2005 aims at establishing the critical minimum level of literacy in the mother tongue, the learning of numeracy skills and life skills (Olivier 1998:2). The Foundation Phase begins with the child's school entry at approximately seven years of age. It ends at the end of Grade Three when the child is about nine years old.

During this phase, according to Maier (1978:223), each child is in a "constant state of developmental change." Although children differ from each other, the basic process of development is the same for every child and the child's chronological age is not the only factor used to judge what stage of development the child has reached.

All children, however, begin at the Foundation School Phase when entering the formal learning situation for the first time. This leads to increased separation from home and family and, as a result, growing independence on the part of the child (Jacobs 1980:52; Vrey 1979:85). Maier (1978:188) describes the early phase of schooling as involving a shift from dependency on parents to dependency on peers and other adults, including teachers. The child is seen by Maier (1978:190) and Olivier (1998:7) as pushing towards new horizons in the development of his skills, knowledge and emotions during the period now called the Foundation Phase. The child becomes part of a wider group and thus able to relate to an increasing number of people.

It is important to consider what self-concept entails before discussing the developmental stages of the child in the Foundation Phase. This is important because the development of the young child's self-concept is strongly affected by the constant feedback from his family and is a vital part of his development in totality. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1993:193) the self-concept entails identity, action and self-esteem. Identity refers to "who I am." Action occurs as a result of identity ("I am a singer and I sing"), and self-esteem is the evaluative aspect of the self-concept, also known as self-worth ("I am an outstanding singer").

The term “self-concept” is, according to Raath and Jacobs (1993:12), treated synonymously with “self-image”, in that self-concept is defined as a “conceptualization or image of the self”. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1993:214), in their discussion of the self-concept place “self-image” in brackets, also implying that these two concepts refer to the same phenomenon.

According to Warren (1992:21), self-concept is cognitively structured because it is a conception. But, because the self-concept includes attitudes and convictions about the self (which stem from a cognitive organisation of concepts), it is also affective by nature. Warren (1992:30) stresses that self-concept is a structure, that is “the system of concepts available to the person in attempting to define himself”.

Jacobs (1980:52) and Vrey (1979:85) argue in the same vein and declare that the child's physical development, emotional development and cognitive development all affect his ability to meet the new demands made on him at school and that young children need to be well looked after.

The above-mentioned dimensions of child development will now be discussed in more detail, also considering the relationships of each with self-concept.

2.2.2 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Vorster and De Meillon (1991:68) define physical development as the increase in height and body mass. Development is defined by Lerner and Hultsch (1983:6) as systematic intra-individual changes. Cooper (1991:7) emphasises that development is an organized process. Human development thus entails all the changes which take place in the human organism between conception and death.

Theorists on child development, such as Erickson (1963:69), Havighurst (1976:18), Hurlock (1978:141), Landreth (1993:21), Michael (1990:319), Piaget (1971:300) and Vrey (1990:99) point out that during the first four or five years of the child's life, he gains control over his gross motor movements. He learns, for example, to use his body to walk, run and jump. As he develops physically, he is able to perform these movements with increasing speed, strength and accuracy. Hurlock (1978:145) emphasises that the child becomes able also to perform these movements more economically. He may, for example, use his whole body to throw a ball at first, but eventually will learn to perform this task more efficiently using only his arm.

According to Vrey (1979:88), after approximately the age of five, the child begins to gain increasing control over his fine motor co-ordination. This enables him to grasp objects, throw more accurately, catch, write and use tools such as a pair of scissors. He becomes able to use different groups of muscles in a more controlled way. According to Thomas (1990:326), accuracy and speed of movement as well as the ability to perform movements smoothly and automatically increase steadily. Thomas (1990:326) and Michael (1990:323) maintain that the strength of a muscle is related to its cross-sectional area and its composition. Therefore, the changes in strength that occur during early childhood follow the changes in body size. The steady gain in height and weight parallels the muscle mass and changes in strength between ages six to ten.

The child cannot learn the skilled movements discussed above unless his nervous system and muscles are sufficiently developed. Individual children differ markedly in the rate at which physical development occurs. The opportunity to practise the physical skills which the child is acquiring is also important. Hurlock (1978:139), Landreth (1993:21) and Thomas (1990:327) and point out that the child must be able to exercise physically and play actively in order to develop these skills.

According to Landreth (1993:28), children need to exercise and play because play is the child's natural medium of communication. When children exercise and play, they will understand and come to terms with their environment. Ramarumo (1992:20) emphasises that growing children also need to have sufficient physical vitality and reasonably normal health. Michael (1990:325) and Thomas (1990:327) hold the same vein and point out that, since one's level of fitness is retained for not more than a week or so, continued fitness requires exercise and proper nutrition. Good health will of course also foster resistance to illness. Food and other substances that humans ingest as the fuel for growth and action throughout life obviously exert a strong influence on motor skills.

The child in the Foundation Phase is seen by Vrey (1979:103) as achieving self-actualisation through the mastery of physical skills. Vrey (1990:100) and Nhlapo (1997:24) declare that good motor control makes the child feel physically secure and self-confident. Acceptance by the peer group depends on whether he can run, jump and climb like others in the group. Successful, active participation in games with his peers depends on skills such as throwing and catching (Landreth 1993:30).

Fine and gross motor control are also important to the child during the Foundation Phase as he enters the formal learning situation for the first time. The child must be able to use his left or right hand consistently, that is, he must by then have developed left or right-

handedness. He must be able to perform basic gross motor movements easily and have the fine muscle control necessary to use a pencil and a pair of scissors.

According to Hurlock (1978:155) and Rosa (1995:91), the psychological effects of problems in the area of physical development include feelings of inferiority, envy of others who can perform these physical tasks well and general feelings of unhappiness and rejection. Contact with the peer group is inhibited and social rejection may result from this. Vrey (1990:100) states that the child may become timid and afraid to try anything new. The researcher has observed that such children remain dependent on others for help in performing tasks which other children can already perform. Growing children, therefore, need the support of their parents for the establishment of the social context that facilitates meaningful learning as well as acceptance of important differences in not only intellectual, but also emotional, social and physical development within and among children. Matlou (1993:39) and Lambert and McCombs (1998:10) emphasise that learners have unique differences including emotional states of mind, learning rates, learning styles, stages of development, abilities, talents, feelings of efficacy and other needs. These must be taken into account if all learners are going to be provided with the challenges and opportunities for learning and self-development which they need.

2.2.3 PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Emotions play an important part in the young child's life. They provide the inner force that attracts one person to another, or that repels one person from another. Emotions provide a sense of feeling with and for others. When positive, they provide a sense of security, help persons cope with frustration, alert them to dangers and prod them into action (Lambert & McCombs 1998:9).

The pattern of emotional development is generally similar for all, but some factors in the child's life can produce different emotional responses in individual children. Nhlapo (1997:19) acknowledges that a child does not only need to feel safe physically, but he needs to feel sheltered emotionally. Draper (1990:415) and Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (1990:152) state that both the emotions themselves and their patterns of expression change with age, thus, during the child's overall development throughout infancy, childhood, youth and adulthood. The child increasingly gains control over his emotions as he matures. The most frequently expressed emotional reactions and expressions of feelings will generally settle into habits that become driving forces in a child's life.

Hurlock (1978:210), Lamprecht (1990:36) and Mathibe (1992:23) found that signs of emotional maturity in the child include self-control, acceptance and recognition of the emotions which the child is experiencing as well as the ability to express these emotions in a socially acceptable way. According to Draper (1990:417), affection involves the expression of feelings which reflect concern, warmth, regard, caring, sympathy and helpfulness. Young children are especially open about their feelings of affection toward others. As they reach preadolescence they show less physical affection but demonstrate their feelings through social interaction, confiding in one another and participating in activities together.

During the Foundation Phase significant changes occur in the way in which the child relates to others. As children leave the shelter of their homes and become part of a larger social group at school, they have the opportunity to relate to an increasing number of people outside their immediate families. Ramarumo (1992:19) describes the child as being thrust "... out of the home and into the peer group." Vrey (1990:101) points out that the child increasingly seeks relationships with his peers and these peer group relationships become more and more important as he gets older. Vrey (1990:101) sees this phase as the beginning of the process of the child's emancipation. The growth of the child's independence from adults begins in a slow and steady way and is seen by Vrey (1990:103) as one of the developmental tasks of childhood.

According to Mussen, Conger, Kagan and Huston (1990:535), school-going children influence each other by becoming models on which other children base their own behaviour and by the way in which they interpret and respond to each other's behaviour. Peers thus become increasingly influential in the socialisation process of the child in the Foundation Phase. Draper (1990:419) states that during this phase the child begins to rely on the self as the main source of possibility, energy and safety, yet remains emotionally grounded in the previous stages (infancy and early childhood). This is a period of search for self-identity and use of the body and brain together as a resource for functioning on a concrete level. Emotions are expressed under greater control as children seek to function as socially accepted human beings, interacting with others and interdependent in relationships.

Children's relationships with their parents are still, however, very important in that their parents can help them or hinder them as they become more independent. Parents' love and support enable children to venture confidently out of the secure home environment and meet the new challenges they face at school. The parents' unconditional acceptance and love will enhance children's self-concept, enabling them to accept themselves, their

successes and failures, adapt to new situations and enter into relationships with others. Conditional love and acceptance, on the other hand, will create negative relationships in children and in turn, they could become failures in life. Nhlapo (1997:25) states that when a child is not loved, he becomes anti-social, and may even become truant in order to get the attention of his parents.

Heystek (1998:15), Maier (1978:239), Matlou (1993:39) and Rosa (1995:4) and point out that the way in which parents relate to others also provides an example for children in their relationships. During this phase, the child becomes less subjective and is able to see other people's points of view. Lambert and McCombs (1998:21) and Vrey (1979:105) point out that the child becomes actively involved in playing with others and generally less egocentric in his approach to them. The child becomes more aware of and concerned with the rules of the particular game being played and fairness and justice become more important to him. Mussen *et al.*, (1990:426) stress this, saying "... through play the child learns to communicate with and relate to others."

Belonging to a group becomes more important to the child in the Foundation Phase and his need for acceptance by his peer group increases. Vrey (1990:102) and Mathibe (1992:7) emphasise that to gain acceptance, the child must meet the demands of the group. For example, he must be able to keep up with them in physical play and he must be able to wait his turn. The child becomes able to start new activities and persevere until they are completed. He becomes able to make decisions for himself and is thus less reliant on adults.

2.2.4 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Cognitive development can be defined as the growing ability of logical thought processes (Vorster & De Meillon 1991:69). These logical thought processes develop and improve as the child grows older. According to Murray (1990:205), cognition refers to the state of knowing. Gordon and Browne (1993:403) and Bjorklund (1995:3) accept the definition of cognition as "... the mental process or faculty children use to acquire and manipulate knowledge. To think is to be able to acquire and apply knowledge. By using conscious thought and memory, children think about themselves, the world and others." The followers of Piaget, such as McShane (1991:5), Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:239) and Nelson (1996:5) agree that children undergo stages of cognitive development, namely, the sensory-motor stage where learning occurs through use of senses and motor activities; the pre-operational stage where the words or objects represent people and other objects; the concrete operational stage where real objects are needed by the child before he can

draw conclusions; and the formal operational level where the thinking of the child is abstract.

Nelson (1996:5) emphasises that the cognitive task of the human child is to make sense of his or her situated place in the world in order to take a skilful part in its activities. During the Foundation Phase the child shows increased interest in and comprehension of the world around him. He begins to see reality in a more objective way. At this stage the child explores his world actively and gains both new knowledge and skills. He begins to master the basic scholastic skills. Success in this area is very important to him and failure leads to feelings of inferiority.

Hammil and Bartel (1990:296), Mussen *et al.*, (1990:276), Nelson (1996:11) and Piaget (1971:300), emphasise that during the concrete operational stage, the child becomes able to carry out mental activities that demonstrate the properties of flexibility and reversibility. The child can now understand that the action of taking some of a given number of objects from a jar can be reversed by putting the same number of objects back into the jar. This kind of understanding is thought to be necessary for the child to understand the relationship between reverse operations such as addition and subtraction in numeracy.

Further characteristics of the child's thinking during the stage of concrete operations include decentration, which is defined by Mussen *et al.*, (1990:276) as the ability to "... focus attention on several attributes of an object or event simultaneously and understand the relationships among dimensions or attributes." There is also a shift from relying solely on that which is perceived to the use of logical principles. Children become able to understand that qualities of an object such as its mass remain the same even when changes are made in the shape of that object. They can also use the principle of conservation in order to understand that the number of objects in two equal groups remains the same even when one of the groups is arranged in a different way (Rosa 1995:52).

The child also becomes able to arrange a group of objects according to a given characteristic, for example, from heaviest to lightest. According to Mussen *et al.*, (1990:278), Rosa (1995:54), and Vrey (1990:115), when comparing objects, the child no longer thinks in absolute terms. He becomes able to compare two or more objects. When comparing three buildings, for example, the child is able to identify them as a tall building, a taller building and the tallest building.

Hammil and Bartel (1990:295) and Mussen *et al.*, (1990:230) agree that, during the stage of concrete operations, the child is also able to classify objects in a hierarchical way. In addition, the child is able to understand that an object may belong to more than one category at any given time.

According to Mussen *et al.*, (1990:280) and McShane (1991:7), the child in the Foundation Phase thus shows marked differences in the way in which he thinks when compared to the preschool child. He is still, however, reliant on concrete objects and the relationships between them rather than on abstractions. This implies that the child's thinking is, to a large extent, still restricted to the concrete level. Facilitation at home as well as at school to be aligned with the particular learning style and needs of children in this age group, is also advisable.

His ability to use language to express himself increases and language is seen as the medium through which thought and reasoning develop. According to Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:241) and Rosa (1995:53), the child also begins to learn the difference between right and wrong and values become more important to him. The example of others is seen as a critical factor in the development of the child's value system.

As the child develops, his cognitive skills also widen. He begins to see things differently. The self-concept is highly meaningful to the learner, whether it is based on high or low esteem. The teaching style selected by the teacher and the learning environment at home must be such that it enables the learner to see himself or herself as successful at this stage. The teaching style and learning environment must be oriented towards the development of a positive scholastic self-concept. Hartline (1993:19) maintains that the self-concept is wider than self-esteem. We may think of self-esteem as a circle enclosed within the wider circle of self-concept or we may think of self-esteem as the evaluative component of the self-concept.

2.3 THE PARENTS' ROLE IN THE LIVES OF THEIR CHILDREN DURING THE FOUNDATION PHASE

2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section the researcher focuses on the role of parents in the lives of their children during the Foundation Phase. It is important that parents be valued by the school as primary educators of their children and as active partners with other family and community members in facilitating the process of learning during this phase. Parents are expected to

fulfil their obligations, co-operate and maintain certain values and standards in guiding the child's development to maturity. According to the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (ECD) (Department of Education 1996a:40), parental and community involvement is important in the lives of children during the Foundation Phase.

Van Schalkwyk (1991:145) declares that it is primarily the task of the family to undertake the initial education of children and later transfer the task to the school which must then further undertake it on behalf of the family. The education of the child is in the first place the task of his parents and secondly that of his teachers. Education is defined by Van Niekerk (1982, in Le Roux 1993:106) as the assistance given to a child so that he can become an adult. Gunter (1984, in Le Roux 1993:100) adds that education is the child's guided development from complete dependence at first to adulthood with complete self-reliance as the ultimate aim. From early childhood the family plays an important role in shaping the child's belief systems, value systems and code of behaviour. Le Roux (1994:188) echoes that the family plays a role in the child's identity so as to enable him to face and deal with crises successfully.

Because no person lives in isolation, it is, therefore, important to look at the contextual influences which might either impede or promote parental involvement. The contextual influences are considered important in this research because they could impact on the family even above and beyond factors such as culture and interpersonal relationships. Contextual influences on parental involvement will be discussed in some detail in paragraph 2.3.2, followed by a discussion of the various dimensions of the parental role in paragraph 2.3.3 onwards, in a consistent order of general principles, effect of problems/inadequacies, principles in the African community /culture and Tsonga culture.

2.3.2 CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES ON THE DYNAMICS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.3.2.1 Introduction

It may sound simple to practise parental involvement in the lives of children while they are in the Foundation Phase. However, there are some contextual influences which may hinder parents even then from being fully involved in the lives of their children. Felkins, Chakiris and Chakiris (1993:30) and Landman and Bodenstein (1994:449) accept the definition of context as "the set of circumstances, conditions and rules existing at any particular time that can affect the organism in relation to current and strategic goals." Context is a broader environment that affects family life, both positively and negatively. Positively, members of the family may be in a position to deal with stability and innovation

in the education system and negatively, context has a great influence on the interpretation and implementation of values. It is necessary that parents be in a position to deal with contradictions in the family situation and with whatever innovation is implemented by the education system.

The following are some of the contextual influences that may support or hinder parents from being fully involved in the lives of their children during the Foundation Phase:

2.3.2.2 Educational level and income of parents

According to Mashau (1989:41), the better educated parents normally interact with their children more frequently and endeavour to provide a high level of cognitive stimulation. On the other hand, the child raised in a home where especially the mother does not interact sufficiently with her children, has to fall back on his/her own devices in trying to figure out the meaning of the world.

According to the study undertaken by Fraser (1988:126), children of the parents of the middle-class tend to do well academically because they are motivated to be curious, responsible and autonomous and are encouraged to develop techniques of reasoning. Fraser (1988:127) found in his study that parental education, reading habits, income, occupation and living space are all related significantly to the intelligence quotient and academic performance of their children. In his study, Fraser (1988:126) used the expression “parental level of education” to refer to the education of any parent who has received functional education for at least four years and who can read and write. Jubber (1990:7) echoes that highly educated and occupationally well-positioned parents have the advantage of transmitting to their children the kind of skills, knowledge and attitudes which encourage and facilitate good school performance. Jubber (1990:8) concludes that such parents are generally further fortunate in being able to provide the kinds of equipment, resources, experiences and study environment that promote good schoolwork, and they are also able to send their children to the best schools.

The low educational level of parents also affects their socio-economic life. For instance, in homes where the wage is low, and especially in case of unemployment, the family does not always cater for the children’s needs. Jubber (1990:4) observed that “family income contributes to a child’s cognitive development directly and indirectly. Its more direct effects relate to such things as the relationship between income and nutrition, health, quality of school attended, preschool education, the quality of the home as an information environment, the value attached to education, and the ability of the family to supply the

kinds of educational support, equipment and experiences which foster school success.” In the same study, Jubber (1990:5) found that children from the poorest homes have proportionately more of their number who are poor performers.

2.3.2.3 Culture of the community

(a) Introduction

Culture is not static. It is a changing entity, influencing the actions of its members and also being influenced by these actions.

Researchers such as Fyfe and Figueroa (1993:19), Kabagarama (1993:14), Lemmer and Squelch (1993:11) and Mabusela (1995:12) agree on the same definition of culture as a system of values and norms, beliefs, rules of conduct, communication, knowledge and dynamism which have been socially constructed and are socially transmitted as part of a group's heritage and as the framework and medium of its life. Lemmer and Squelch (1993:11) further indicate that culture has both implicit and explicit elements: “Implicit elements are discreet and hidden, such as attitudes, values and beliefs. Explicit culture is visible and easily recognisable in aspects such as food, dress and language.” Sebidi (1999:54) concurs that culture is forged by human beings in a subject-to-subject relationship with one another and interacting with their environment in the pursuit of food, clothes and shelter.

Many definitions of culture point to the fact that culture is an identified common way of life. Culture, therefore, embraces all the aspects of life such as language, gender, roles, religion, behavioural norms and values. Culture is actually the way people live because whatever is contained within a culture constitutes a strategy for survival. It determines the identity of a person. Culture can, therefore, be regarded as a contextual influence in the lives of children during the Foundation Phase. According to Mncwabe (1990:56), in the South African context, culture “... tends to be defined in racial rather than in broader (e.g. social class) terms.”

Culture could influence the dynamics of the support for learning by parents in the education of their children. The cultural bond offers the child a particular environment. It gives him values and norms according to which he can adapt his life. It also presents the child with the guidance of a cultural-social bond in which he can develop his abilities. It is the application of those abilities that will contribute to the development of his culture. According to Wyngaard (1994:61), cultural practices change continuously owing to the impact made by other cultural groups, welfare, economical and technological influences

which could sometimes be destructive to the norm and value conceptions of the culture concerned. Wyngaard (1994:62) emphasises that cultural deprivation takes place when the child is suppressed, when the conflict is between the parents and school and when the child is excluded from exposure to enriching cultural moulding influences. However, the learning of effective language usage and the understanding of language, promote the child's learning abilities.

(b) Language

Language is communication. Le Roux (1994:44) describes communication as the ability to listen, a means of self-expression and sensitivity to subtlety and nuances in meaning. Communication is, in fact, the "handle" by which people grasp and hold onto the world.

The language of any tribe is a vehicle for transmitting its cultural heritage from generation to generation. According to Moseley (1996, in Davids 1997:101), "... each language is unique in a deep sense. It is the repository of accumulated thoughts and experiences of people, their metaphors and specialised knowledge, their unique experiences that developed over many lifetimes."

Children from a culture of poverty are impeded by a lack of ability to communicate in the dominant culture. This ability is limited by language deficiency. In addition, the interpersonal communication skills of these children are such that actualisation of their personal potential is also hampered. They are given scant encouragement and stimulation to develop their potential. Parents suffering poverty seldom play with and support their children; there is not much purposeful conversation to support their education and training. Holman (1979, in Le Roux 1994:44) states that the parents of these children typically talk to them less often and seldom ask them questions.

Language problems in such children could be the result of a poor linguistic example set by their parents. Because their use of language is of a poor quality, the pedagogic discourse lacks quality and scope. If the language used in the child's broader environment is also poor, the problem is compounded, and his or her language acquisition will be inadequate for academic demands. This again negatively affects the child's attainment of maturity. Le Roux (1994:45) declares that, since language development is determined socially, the inhibiting life-world of children in a **poverty-culture** has a direct and significant impact on their language usage. Their limited language ability is a reflection of their restrictive circumstances. Inadequate language usage and communication are detrimental to the child's development and again promote the culture of poverty. Language could, therefore, be regarded as one of the contextual influences that could most critically hinder parents

from being constructively involved in the education of their children during the Foundation Phase. Directly associated to language development is also the issue of literacy.

(c) Literacy

In all African cultures, education was in the past conducted in the oral method. Nothing was written. With the arrival of the missionaries, written text was introduced, but unfortunately most of the parents could not read nor write. Those who could continue their education were mostly men and the highest qualification was usually Standard Six (Grade Eight). The constraints of family illiteracy, semi-literacy and literacy on the academic development of many South African learners are in evidence to this day.

According to Langer (1987:4), literacy is an activity, a way of thinking, not a set of skills. It is a purposeful activity. People read, write, talk and think about real ideas and information in order to ponder and extend what they know, to communicate with others, to present their points of view, and to understand and be understood.

Singh (1996:312) declares that the term **illiteracy** indicates the inability to read or to write in any language whereas the term **semi-literate** denotes the ability to read and write in a very limited way. In the latter case the reading and writing skills are not permanently acquired and, therefore, can be easily lost. Singh (1996:312) adds that five years of formal schooling (Grade Five) are usually regarded as an indicator of basic literacy. **Basic literacy** is defined as the ability to read and write a short simple sentence in the mother tongue and is regarded as a prerequisite for the attainment of effective functional literacy. **Functional literacy** is understood to be the ability to engage in activities where literacy is required for effective functioning within a particular community, as well as enabling the individual to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for the individual's and community's development.

Just as culture affects the intellectual effects of literacy, so too does culture initially affect the process of learning to be literate. To promote the culture of literacy and thus the culture of learning, children need to be given an opportunity in the home to apply their skills and to solve problems. The new curriculum requires that the basic literacy skills and a resource-rich learning environment be made available for children. Hannon (1995:5-6) recognises this and argues that "... literacy is the key to the rest of the curriculum. Virtually all schooling after the first year or two, assumes literacy. This is particularly so to the extent that children are expected to work independently of teachers, for that requires them to read worksheets, written directions, reference materials, and so on." This style of learning needs to be reinforced in the home.

A resource-rich environment means a teaching and learning context that exposes learners to a range of diverse sources of information and representations of ideas and views in many forms and languages. It is about being creative to source-free or low-cost, appropriate and locally available learning resources and how they are used in the process of teaching and learning. In a resource-rich environment, learners, together with their peers, parents and siblings, can discuss their ideas and pitch their viewpoints in contest against one another. Given this context, learners can develop independent and critical thinking skills and evaluate matters in a more reasoned manner (Department of Education 1997a:51). To achieve these outcomes, is to be literate.

According to Wells and Chang-Wells (1992:149), learning is also more effective when:

- There is a collaborating group.
- There is discussion and debate so that ideas have to be contested.
- Learners organise and record their thinking in a logical, coherent and meaningful way.

Wells and Chang-Wells (1992:149) found writing to be more influential than reading because it is through writing, recording and re-presenting that learners process and evaluate information and begin to exercise their critical judgement. To be independent, critical thinkers, learners need to acquire basic information processing and application skills rather than organizing large quantities of content information that are quickly forgotten or become obsolete. Such skills involve selecting a suitable information source, accessing the relevant information and processing, sorting and organizing it so that it is appropriate to the problem. This process should be explicitly supported and encouraged in the home.

The RSA statistics for 1991 show that there were 3 million persons over the age of eighteen years who had had no schooling whatsoever. Of these, approximately 90% were Africans and a further 216,000 of Coloured origin (South African Department of Education 1992:120). We find that even today illiterate parents are often not overly involved in their children's education because they cannot read nor write. They do not see themselves as teachers. They leave everything in the hands of teachers.

The culture of literacy and learning in the family is not the only influence on parents' involvement in their children's education. Religion often plays a decisive role as well.

(d) Religion

The bond between man and God is known as “ religion” and determines man’s selfhood. Van Schalkwyk (1990:16) states that “... man’s selfhood is the religious root of his existence and this personal one serves as the mainspring for all his other relations, determining the kind of person he is and the way in which he creates culture.”

The parent who has his or her own religion introduces the child to the same belief. The young child will thus tend to follow the religion of the parent. The parent will teach the child according to his/her religion. What the parent adores or values, the young child will tend to follow suit. Religion influences the activities that one is involved in. According to Van Schalkwyk (1990:16) “... religion constitutes the deepest and most fundamental determining force or influence on all cultural activities of man and the community.”

The child’s need finds satisfaction not only in his personal religious experiences, but also in the common religious practice. According to Wyngaard (1994:60), religion provides the child with “...a large measure of security and, therefore, makes it possible for emotional stability and the creation of personal self-assurance, the moral values that give direction to the moral development and choices of the child and future expectations in the transcendental, that promote purposefulness and give meaning to his imminent existence.” The religious experience of the child lends itself to educational activity because religion in itself moulds the character. Religion is advantageous to education in establishing positive views and positive personality characteristics. Therefore, the child’s behaviour, thinking and attitudes could be positively influenced by his or her religion. The child whose parents are not religiously inclined could, on the other hand, tend to lack views and personality characteristics.

2.3.2.4 Family size

The size of the family has an influence on the scholastic achievement of children. The larger the family, the poorer the educational performance of children will be (Mwamwenda 1995:29). Mwamwenda (1995:30) emphasises that this is partly due to the necessary reduction that such increases imply in the attention that children receive from their parents as well as a reduction in living standard, living space, learning resources and privacy. Parents with one or two children will have an opportunity to lavish more love, care and attention on their children. They are likely to be able to provide their children with the necessary resources and take them on educational outings. Children from such families will benefit more and ultimately they will become independent and responsible adults.

Among Africans in South Africa, generally many families stay with their relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and cousins. Children from such families do not enjoy many of the benefits of focused motherly/fatherly love. According to Nhlapo (1997:20), from the moment when children from large families start school, they appear to get less encouragement from their parents, which could eventually be one of the reasons why such children tend to do less well academically.

2.3.3 PHYSICAL DIMENSION

Physical care of the Foundation Phase learners by the parents should be considered since the children are still developing and it is their parents' role to help and support them during the development of new skills.

2.3.3.1 General principles

Generally speaking, the more practice and opportunity a child receives in a physical or motor skill, the more adept he is likely to become, so that every encouragement should be given to children in the development of new skills. According to Lally (1991:9), children are vulnerable and need support from both parents. Azar (1989, in Hiatt 1996:81) emphasises that young children are less able to communicate their needs, thoughts and feelings, thus leaving room for a variety of parental interpretations of what they seem to require. Physical care of children includes nutrition, health, safety and supervision by parents.

The need for food is among the most basic human needs. According to Barrett and Frank (1987, in Cooper 1991:7), adequate food is needed in order to survive, to grow and reproduce, to carry out physical work, and to learn from one's experiences. Children should be encouraged to use the senses to explore the way food looks, feels, tastes and smells. They should also be encouraged to eat all of the food provided and complete the meal. Food preparation is the responsibility of parents. Growing children need a balanced diet, sustaining breakfast and mid-morning snack to provide the necessary energy for optimum engagement and learning in school.

Children depend on adults to provide them with safe and healthy places to live. Whether at home or in community settings, sanitary conditions must prevail. Areas for acts such as food preparation and service, toileting and bathing, and sleeping must be kept clean and safe. Parents must see to it that the play area is free of all hazardous objects and check whether toys and equipment are in safe working order. According to Draper and Draper

(1987:84), toys and equipment should be stored in a closed and locked area when not in use and be kept away from the traffic pattern of children. Children must be prevented from playing in the streets and protected from child abuse in all its forms.

Healthy children are cheerful. In the Foundation Phase, they appear to enjoy being with others and cope with problems successfully most of the time. Such children like to explore and try out new ideas. Draper and Draper (1987:74) declare that such children show enough strength for body size while playing with push, pull, lift and carrying toys. They also enjoy activities which require lots of body movement. Nhlapo (1997:21) adds that a healthy child enjoys playing alone at times and smiles or responds in positive ways to other children and adults. The attention span is long enough to enjoy interesting activities.

2.3.3.2 Effect of problems/inadequacies

Children who are not taught the sensory and motor skills that are needed in their future life and given sufficient opportunity to practice these, may be affected. These children may then be unable adequately to perform the activities expected of them. Such neglect can affect children's school activities as well as learning performance. Children who are deprived of such activities may experience feelings of inferiority, unhappiness and rejection.

If children are not given enough and proper food to eat, or if they are otherwise neglected or physically abused at home, their emotional and cognitive growth will probably be affected. According to Ferron (1986:4) and Etaugh and Rathus (1995:288), there are two types of malnutrition, namely quantitative malnutrition, which refers to a lack of the right amount of food, and qualitative malnutrition, which refers to a lack of certain minerals and vitamins in the diet. A lack of vitamin B, for example, produces the disease known as Pellagra which permanently injures the central nervous system. Malnutrition also causes loss of energy and it is detrimental for brain development. Recent research has demonstrated that other things being equal, inadequately nourished mothers tend to give birth to less intelligent children than those who have well balanced diets (Etaugh & Rathus 1995:287).

According to Etaugh and Rathus (1995:288), many children and adults consume excessive amounts of sugar and salt, which can be harmful to their health. If children are repeatedly exposed to sweet and salty food, preference for both will increase during childhood. Etaugh and Rathus (1995:289) emphasise that children should be given food

in the way parents want them to accept it in the future. Parents serve as role models in the development of food preferences. Rozin (1990, in Etaugh & Rathus 1995:289) declares that if a parent displays an obvious dislike for vegetables, children may develop a similar dislike.

Insufficient and inadequate food will cause young children to fall ill easily, and this can in turn make them feel neglected and helpless. Life could even become meaningless to children who are not well nurtured. Nhlapo (1997:19) emphasises that a hungry, thirsty, tired or sleepy child, or a child in school who has been sitting quietly for too long, is not likely to learn adequately, nor is the child who has urgently to go to the toilet, or who is working in a classroom that is ill-ventilated or too hot or too cold.

2.3.3.3 Principles in the African community/culture

During the early years, the African child receives lenient and patient treatment. As the child grows older, he is made to be less dependent on the mother and other members of the family. The gradual gaining of independence by the child is encouraged by his/her increasing mobility and the weakening of the bond between mother and child.

Africans feed on maize-meal. This cereal is cultivated in almost all African communities, especially in rural areas. It is sown and harvested easily. At Christmas time, when the first cobs are edible, people joyfully feast on the new crop. They cook some of them in the ashes, but they allow some of the rest to ripen and dry upon the stalks to make mielie-meal. Children are fed on soft porridge from three months until they are eighteen months old. Next in importance comes the “mabele”, commonly known as “kafir corn”. It is pounded and may be eaten in the form of “bogobe”, known as “bupi” or flour. According to Sebidi (1999:39), “kafir corn” takes a longer time to prepare. The grains must first be soaked for several hours in water to soften them. They are then crushed, the husks being carefully removed by the winnowing process (fefera) in the basket, which is spasmodically shaken with sudden jerky movements. The kernel of the grain is then pounded until it forms a fine “bupi”, flour.

In the African communities, the vegetables are mainly “morogo” or spinach, sweet potatoes and pumpkins. According to Junod (1962, in Sebidi 1999:41), the leaves of the sweet potatoes are sometimes used as a vegetable. Meat, milk and eggs are seldom given to children. In some families meat is used once or twice a week which may cause inadequacies in the growing children. Diet and health are closely related. It can be argued that the diet of children is of direct relevance to their intellectual development and

capability. For this reason, Mwamwenda (1995:31) contends that the food consumed by children must contain all the essential food nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, water, fat and minerals. All children must have a balanced diet.

African societies show an unusual problem with regard to health decisions, in that they have to consider whether to adopt a western or traditional health system, or a combination of both. This can leave the family in a state of conflict, because of the question whether the traditional or western approach would be the best to address a particular health problem. Pienaar and Spoelstra (1991:24) declare that, although Africans generally acknowledge the reality of the social forces that have set the stage for a more differentiated, more rationalised and a more individualised world, the continued vitality of traditional thought patterns about the meaning of health and illness cause some African families to experience uncertainty, confusion and conflict regarding choices between western and traditional methods of healing. Uncertainties, confusion and conflicts in the African community with regard to modern medicine, African herbal medicine or faith healing, may cause growing children to feel insecure and unsafe. Such treatment may ultimately act against each other, which in turn may cause misunderstanding in the healing, and be detrimental to the child.

The African's perceptions about health are based on a broad ecological framework. Such perceptions are often difficult to understand from the perspective of the western approach. The African worldview offers a metaphysical approach, which is shared by the traditional healer and his/her clients (Bodibe 1990:120). The western approach, on the other hand, is characterised by the ever developing and improving scientific approach to treatment and a highly competitive level observed within the medical environment (Schlebusch 1990:145). The western approach often appears impersonal and bureaucratic to the African, thus making understanding it more difficult for the traditional family.

Just as the family relationships can be our greatest source of nurturance and support, they can also be a powerful source of anguish. For example, if in the home a parent loses a job, the children's education may be affected because there would be a lack of money to buy school material. Poor housing, overcrowding and frequent clashes in the family may also be a source of anguish. Uncertainties may result in children being abused, starved, suffocated and sexually molested, which in turn may result in children becoming HIV/AIDS positive. According to Shaffer (1993:612), other children in African communities are not targets of these "physical" forms of abuse but are victims of such psychological abuse as being rejected, ridiculed, or even terrorized by their parents.

The African child in the Foundation Phase demonstrates his semi-independence by doing things on his own, exercising his skills, refusing to be rigidly controlled and managed, exploring the environment and starting to form relationships with other people outside the family, such as the peer group. This stage is problematic for parents and other family members as they strive to exercise control over the child. The aim of parents at this stage is to teach the child to control his behaviour and emotions and to create a conducive environment for the child.

2.3.3.4 Physical dimension in Tsonga culture

Among the Tsongas, few men stay with their families. The role of the man with regard to children in the family is to be an identification figure, to exercise control over the children, to discipline and guide them and be a figure of authority. Unfortunately, most of the Tsonga families in the rural areas lack fathers, for the fathers stay with them for a shorter period because of migratory labour practices, divorce or desertion. Most of the men in Tsonga families marry more than one wife. If, for example, he marries three wives, two will be left in the rural area while the third one remains with him in the urban area.

In some families, the grandmother stays with the family and her influence is vast. Her influence over the child occurs in two ways: by indirectly influencing the attitudes and feelings of the parents towards the child, or by directly influencing the child. Outside the family, the peer group also influences the child. He learns to perceive the needs and responses of others and to respond to them accordingly. The responses may be positive or the child may show acquired negative attitudes, such as envy and rivalry. According to Mwamwenda (1995:34), the African boy (including the Tsonga) uses stick fights to be tested for leadership and courage while among girls the criterion is the ability to sing. The Tsonga women and girls are expected to learn domestic duties and become acquainted with agricultural work, while the boys at the age of seven to nine learn to tend the stock in the kraal and to herd them in the tribal lands.

The Tsongas give great attention to cooking. Of a woman who knows how to cook well, it is said: "A wa hisa", she burns (but not meant negatively). Junod (1962 in Sebidi 1999:36) declares that a girl who knows how to "hisa" will have more chance of being married. As a rule, women cook only once a day, towards the end of the afternoon. This is a big meal which is eaten in the evening when everybody is expected to eat till satisfied, and what remains of it is generally finished the next day in the morning. This evening meal consists of cooked cereals (bupi) and the sauces (seshebo) seasoning them, consisting of "morogo", tomatoes and salt boiled in water.

2.3.4 AFFECTIVE DIMENSION

2.3.4.1 General principles

From the time children are weaned until they go to school, roughly between the ages of two and seven, the main pressure upon them in all societies is to learn to take care of themselves, and not to expect the kind of attention they received as babies. Much of their time is spent playing with siblings in the house or close by, or in a child care centre. It is at this stage that children also learn to take care of physical routines independently.

Children in the Foundation Phase become less emotionally dependent and unstable. This is the time when they are ready for school, the time when they learn to deal with adults other than their parents. They feel safe at school even if their parents are not there and if a stranger scolds them, they are free to accept the situation. During the Foundation Phase, children grow into risk taking, they learn that at school there is no place for tantrums, and learn to be less dependent. They discover how they are accepted and how they perform compared with other children of their age.

Wyngaard (1994:58) declares that the child should be taught to understand the influence of emotions on his behaviour and his personal life, should learn how to control his emotions, and also be consciously aware of the dangers of uncontrolled emotional outburst. Wyngaard (1994:59) adds that it is especially the negative emotional manifestations such as anxiety, fear, antagonism, irritation, moodiness and tantrums, which have dangerous repercussions for the child and his society during childhood. If these manifestations are ignored or merely accommodated without constructive control, emotional and behavioural patterns will be established in the child which he will find difficult to overcome in his later life.

Certain dominant values of a culture influence the way in which a parent responds to his/her child. If love and warmth are important positive values for social interaction, these may govern a mother's behaviour towards her child, even though at the same time she may believe she is spoiling him.

Nhlapo (1997:19) declares that "... parents have to continuously strive to build emotional reserves in their children as it is of vital necessity for their education." Where children have a sense of security, they explore their world more confidently and consequently learn better. Parents are strong pillars for supporting the lives and education of their children. Parents have to make sure that children's needs are satisfied. According to Miller (1981 in

Cooper 1991:22), every child has a legitimate narcissistic need to be noticed, loved, understood, taken seriously and respected by his/her mother. Nhlapo (1997:19) adds that psychological needs are satisfied when children are aware that people have affection for them and accept them as members of the group. Nhlapo (1997:20) emphasises that the need to belong is a most powerful socialising force and compels the child to become agreeable to others and to assume an attitude of give-and-take in the group situation. Children also need proper housing conditions and food in order to feel loved and secure. During the Foundation Phase children socialise with other children at school and become able to form a support group. They have less fear that making mistakes others would laugh at them. They become free and are aware that other children do love them too.

2.3.4.2 Effect of problems/inadequacies

Emotional instability is the result of feelings of fear, tension and uncertainty and it can be characterised by sensitivity, inner tension, and the call for attention, help and sympathy, and might even lead to depression. According to Wyngaard (1994:58), emotional neglect can lead to:

- detrimental effects on bodily growth;
- detrimental effects on the digestive system;
- lowering of resistance to illness;
- increasing susceptibility to asthmatic illness and skin irritations; and
- speech difficulties, such as stuttering.

Unhealthy emotional reserves may cause children to become stubborn. If in the family such a situation arises, parents should take action and guide a child firmly to stop the habit. Parents who always take action against stubborn children, do so because they have love for them. If the child does not want to obey, the parent must firmly direct him to do the right thing. If the parent does not take action immediately, according to Cooper (1991:41), the child in this situation would probably grow up experiencing a deep sense of aloneness and a fear of intimacy. Cooper (1991:42) emphasises that in taking action against such behaviour, parents are shaping the development of the children's subjective and interpersonal world.

Children must be brought up in a stable and emotionally secure environment. One of the results of a child being deprived of affection in the early years is poor academic work at school (Cooper 1991:22). Such children may be very intelligent, but they lack interest and do not seem to care what others think of them. According to Etaugh and Rathus

(1995:19), those who have not been loved as children may be incapable of loving others as adults. They are said to be affectionless.

Failure of affective bonding interferes with basic tension control in very early infancy and results in either understimulation or overstimulation. Children who have experienced such damage, according to Cooper (1991:44), usually find productive or meaningful relationships very difficult and may display borderline personality structures. If children in the Foundation Phase are not given love and support by their parents, they may experience emotional problems. They might feel unsafe and start playing truant and throwing tantrums which in turn might affect their learning.

2.3.4.3 Principles in the African community/culture

Among the Africans, child-rearing is mainly the responsibility of the mother. The mother is always with the child from birth to maturity when the father is out at work. The child learns most from the mother.

According to Matlou (1993:35), the child learns the language of his/her mother and the moral authority of the mother remains considerable. During the Foundation Phase, that is 6-9 years, a child confides in his/her mother when in trouble, hence the saying in black culture that "The mother holds the knife at its sharp end." This is why in the view of the African child, the mother is worth more than the father. She is the one who prepares her children for future life, the environment and the world they live in.

The mother, as explained earlier, is seen essentially as donor of life. The child becomes so close to his mother that an insult to her will be deeply felt. The relation of children to their mothers takes on a very different coloration than to their fathers. In the domain of modesty and language, one very often finds a very great reserve between the children and their father and a very close connection with their mother (Matlou 1993:33). Children in the Foundation Phase regard their mothers as their role models because of the intimate relationship they create for them. They enjoy the company of their mothers.

Children take particular pleasure in listening to their favourite stories presented by their mothers in the same terms, with the same gestures and modulations of voice. It is the responsibility of mothers to prepare children emotionally, physically and intellectually for entry into the school situation.

Going to school, which occurs when the child is about seven years old, marks a dramatic change in the lives of all African children. According to Mwamwenda (1995:21) this is the greatest change from the African child's previous life, for in many cases he/she has to learn in a strange language and his/her teacher is often a member of a different society.

2.3.4.4 Affective dimension in Tsonga culture

Among the Tsonga people, education is also mainly the responsibility of the mother. The Tsonga mother always makes the major child-rearing and disciplinary decisions when the father is absent from home.

With regard to children in the Foundation Phase, the affective upbringing is the same in Tsonga families as in African communities generally. In African culture, irrespective of being urbanised or not, impoverished or not, educated or not, the kind of warmth, love and support given by parents shows little difference.

2.3.5 NORMATIVE DIMENSION

2.3.5.1 General principles

The normative relationship between parents and children should be motivational rather than of a harsh disciplinary nature. Such a relationship in the family would enable parents to be kind and not harsh to children, to be strict but not authoritative, and children in turn would not like to shame their parents. If children are brought up in this manner, and if they want to do something, they would rather wait their turn. Principles of threat and physical punishment should not be regarded as a form of motivation because it can be cruel, harmful and damaging to growing children. In a situation where parents are mostly absent, the absences can constitute a form of neglect because siblings would not care whether the child does right or wrong. According to Chasdi (1994:121), the motivational value of personal interest, encouragement and praise should always prevail and be positive in the family.

Children in the Foundation Phase should be given praise when they have done the right thing and should be reprimanded when doing wrong. They are taught the rules, principles, morals and values that are important to the society in which they live. Chasdi (1994:135) emphasises that in those societies where parents believe that their own actions, rather than fate or heredity, have some effect upon the moral development of

their children, the value system of the culture will be an important part of what is consciously and intentionally transmitted to the child.

During the Foundation Phase, parents at home teach their children how to deal with conflicts and new situations and to take responsibility for their actions and their lives, for example, how to react when reprimanded, and how to communicate appropriately with people. Parents also teach their children about their religious faith. If religious faith is exercised and followed as required in the family, children will grow up obeying their faith. Rosa (1995:14) declares that personal religion means a faith and hope to which the child can cling during the uncertainties and vicissitudes of his development.

There must be a sound parent-child relationship in the family for children to learn that they are responsible for the fulfilment of their own and others' needs. Discipline is a means of teaching the child self-control and self-direction, which in turn sharpens the child's conscience regarding right and wrong. Chasdi (1994:136) emphasises that the nature and extent of normative upbringing provided by parents can affect the children's becoming, learning and self-concept.

2.3.5.2 Effect of problems/inadequacies

Parents should always strive for a healthy relationship in the family. If, for instance, parents quarrel in front of their children, the children may no longer have confidence in them and may experience a feeling of insecurity. If the children are not taught the good morals, they may not grow up in a norm-abiding way and if they are not disciplined when they have done wrong, they may become dishonest because of the negative upbringing.

The poor socio-economic status of some families in the African community tends to jeopardise the moral development of children. For example, material problems and retrenchments being experienced by their parents, could cause even less interaction within the family itself. Such conditions can literally cause misbehaviour in the growing children. It may cause children to become lazy about schoolwork and they may even become liars because of the situation which does not change. Sometimes children from such a family environment do not attend school regularly, at times they hide or return on the way because of the hopeless feelings they experience.

Some African parents work long hours and some do very hard physical labour which causes fatigue or a degree of despair. Such parents may not have the emotional energy to give support to their children, which in turn may cause the children to misbehave.

According to the researcher's observation, most children in the African community accept what comes from parents, as they do not question the instruction up to the age of ten.

Children in the Foundation Phase need to be taught to respect others and obey rules and regulations, because if the instruction is inadequate, poor performance may result. Inadequate normative guidance of the Foundation Phase children could strongly affect their learning in the sense that some values may be beyond the children's comprehension. Therefore, when dealing with religious aspects, they should not be too critical and judgemental.

2.3.5.3 Principles in the African community/culture

By nature man is a moral being (Mbiti 1975:116; Vilakazi 1998:27). Religious faith is important in the African community. According to Mbiti (1975:117), an African child not only continues the physical line of life, being in some societies thought to be a re-incarnation of the departed, but also becomes the intensely religious focus on keeping the parents in their state of personal immortality.

In the African community, the father's responsibility is to manage and oversee his family and to act as representative in the broader society, even though he may not be working from home. Lindgren (1969, in Nesengani 1990:15) declares that the African father is the most available model of what is expected from the child in the outside world. The father is the economic provider while the mother becomes the guide in the family. According to Rosa (1995:16), the father-absent child in the African family will be unable to bridge the gap between himself and society and he may feel alienated from the society of which he is a part. Rosa (1995:17) emphasises that paternal deprivation in the African culture can lead to conflicts and rigidities in the individual's sex role adjustment, which in turn is often related to deficits in emotional, cognitive and interpersonal functioning.

Just as God made the first man, a God's man in African culture, therefore, it is believed that man himself makes the individual who becomes the social man. For Africans, the individual is immersed in a religious participation which starts before birth and continues after his death. For him and for the larger community of which he is part, to live is to be caught up in a religious drama. It is, therefore, necessary in the African culture that, as soon as children start school, that is, during the Foundation Phase, they are taught to obey religious faith, and they learn that man lives in a religious universe. According to Mbiti (1975:15), both the world and practically all man's activities in it are seen as experienced through a religious understanding and meaning. Mbiti (1975:227)

emphasises that religious Africans do not know how to exist without religion. Revelation and healing play important roles in the lives of religious Africans. Central to the understanding of traditional beliefs is the understanding of traditional religion (Gumede 1990:208), which embodies the essence of all religions in its reference to God.

According to Gumede (1990:210) there are rules and regulations that are guidelines for living that permeate African culture. Vilakazi (1998:28) emphasises that these rules and regulations are unwritten laws handed down from father to son, from the dim past of African history by word of mouth. Taboos permeate every aspect of the African life from birth to death. Health and its significance is explained along life events and ill-luck that would befall the careless individual as, for example, in leaving one's hair to be blown about by the wind, eating while standing, or eating in the dark. According to Sebidi (1999:15), through taboos, African parents teach their children the African code of living.

Africans believe that there is a symbiotic relationship between the individual and his/her environment (Vilakazi 1998:32) and if an individual should travel to another region without being strengthened beforehand, he/she would become ill as he/she is not adapted to the new atmospheric and environmental conditions. If one travels to a strange place, one may cross a dangerous track or pathway which may result in illness if a person has not been strengthened or immunized.

2.3.5.4 Normative dimension in Tsonga culture

In some Tsonga families there is still an ancestral belief that the ancestors are like 'angels' who are allocated different duties by the Creator. The angels keep intimate relationship with their families and their primary concern is with the welfare of their descendants. According to Vilakazi (1998:16), these Tsonga families believe that the ancestors are omnipresent, although there is also the idea that they live in their own society, under the earth or in the sky. The belief held by these Tsonga families is that the ancestral family structure is formed in a hierarchy, which embodies a family lineage with the elders and seniors occupying the authoritative position.

It is the duty of parents to develop in their children a character that reflects their faith and also includes good manners, etiquette, politeness, hospitality, neatness and generosity. In the Tsonga families, just as in any African family, the time for teaching the children is non-structured. The Tsonga children are taught that as King, God is also Lord and Master. God is given these titles in many Tsonga families who are religiously inclined,

indicating that all respect and honour are due to Him and man's attitude to Him is one of humbleness and submissiveness.

Beatie (1960, in Vilakazi 1998:31) declares that in African families (also in Tsonga), men have traditionally assumed positions of power on the basis of being the traditional family heads, that they are bigger and stronger, and that the rights associated with their gender define a contract of enforced authority and decision-making in a relationship. According to Junod (1962, in Sebidi 1999:19), Tsonga women and children would be heard in the fields working with "marvellous rapidity." They would be heard singing and urging one another to still greater exertion and all hurrying to finish the job.

Tsonga fathers, in the past especially, would leave the home in the rural area to seek work on the mines. Because their wives and children were not permitted to join them in the city, many men formed liaisons with single women and set up their families in the cities. Many of these liaisons would not lead to marriage, and a great number of single parent and incomplete families became headed by women. The incomplete family consists of parents with their unmarried daughters who have children of their own, who never see their fathers. According to Rosa (1995:6), the single parent is then compelled to exercise discipline but may not be able to do so effectively. There are indications that ineffective discipline may influence academic motivation of children in the Foundation Phase negatively (Mwamwenda 1995:311). There is evidence of changes taking place in Tsonga families. Many people have moved to urban areas where they have established other social structures. Alliances through marriages of their own choice have been established and a different family structure has emerged. Just as society evolves, decision-making processes within the family unit also change. According to Dana and Williams (1989, in Vilakazi 1998:32) where decisional powers previously rested almost exclusively with a father or other adult male figure, lately wives, sons, daughters and even grandchildren are likely to take an active role in family decisions, as well as in community organisations."

2.3.6 COGNITIVE DIMENSION

2.3.6.1 General principles

Parents knowingly or unknowingly are constantly helping children to acquire an educational foundation. Parents do this by unfolding the reality of the living world for the child. The more the child is encouraged to follow through on his curiosity, the more likely it is that he will become an imaginative reader and learner. According to Meadows

(1996:22), the learning child learns not only how to do the particular task, but also how to observe, analyse, imitate, monitor and review other people and one's own activities. The child in the Foundation Phase should also learn when it is time to do homework, and when it is time to play.

Meadows (1996:23) declares that cognitive development is to be understood in terms of the child being implicitly and explicitly trained to behave in ways which the particular culture has developed as cognitively useful. By so behaving, and by practising and reflecting on what is being done, the child internalises the cognitive skills of the culture and can develop them and pass them on to the next generation. Children are helped by the adults in the appropriation of the knowledge and ways of thinking that preceding generations have constructed. Meadows (1996:23) emphasises that the skills required by the children include observation, imitation, generalisation and decontextualisation, all of which develop under the fostering support of social interaction.

According to Bruner (1990:31), some of the skills are called "cultural amplifiers", cognitive tools which make certain thinking jobs easier. Through the help of parents, these cognitive tools may structure children's language, their play, their schooling and their social interaction. Parents should, therefore, take an active part in their children's education.

Meadows (1996:46) draws attention to a strong and widespread belief that parental reading to children at home makes a major contribution to their later reading development. It is clear that the interaction which surrounds reading storybooks could contain many opportunities for growing children (in the Foundation Phase) to acquire knowledge about reading and books, to pick up positive attitudes towards reading, and even to practise some of the skills of literacy.

It is furthermore the role of the parents to encourage and support their children in doing their homework, and have discussions together. The positive and favourable environment will make children develop a positive attitude towards learning.

According to Slavin (1991:26), Piaget's theory of cognitive development comprises the schemata, assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium which play a major role in developing children. It is the duty of parents to help children to adapt to any situation in which they find themselves.

Owens (2001:382) emphasises that it is very important to understand children's cognitive level during the Foundation Phase school years. Without this understanding, children may be given information and assignments beyond their level which may create anxiety.

2.3.6.2 Effect of problems/inadequacies

If parents are deficient in their role of guiding their children's cognitive development, it may affect the progress of their children at school. On the other hand, unnecessary punishment, over-reacting and too much worrying about the future of their children, fearing that, if they get anything wrong in their books they might fail at the end of the year, continuous reminders that, if their children do not revise the work and do some corrections, they might have no future, could cause a virtually unbearable burden during the Foundation Phase. Some parents might even do the work for their children because of the fear that their children would fail. However, the parents' cognitive role should rather be to give cognitive support to their children by showing them how to solve problems and how to work with others in a group.

According to Kurtz, Gaudin, Wodarski and Howing (1993:588), cognitive development depends heavily on the ongoing quality of the parent-child interaction. The unavailable, neglectful parent presents a direct threat to the intellectual development of the child. Low educational aspirations, lack of encouragement to learn, a paucity of language stimulation, non-participation in school activities, and unresponsiveness to children's achievements affect success in school and further cognitive development. Wentzel and Erdley (1993:321) stress the importance of the parent-child relationship in influencing cognitive development, stating that parents' style of discipline affects children's social and emotional development, which again contributes to their academic, intellectual and cognitive development.

Meadows (1996:46) adds that children with less experience of being read to at home tend to exhibit somewhat poorer knowledge of literacy as they begin school and to make slower progress in learning to read. Scarborough and Dobrich (1994:245-347) reviewed a large body of research and found that there is a moderate and fairly consistent association between reading to Foundation Phase school children and the development of skills of literacy and of language.

Social structures play an important role in children's interpersonal relationships. Children who lack such necessary social structures may become predisposed to becoming social isolates. Such children may not have the necessary social cognitive structures that would

enable them to interact successfully with their peers and others. Children who lack the necessary social skills to enable them to accommodate and assimilate elements in a new social environment may experience what Piaget calls a social disequilibrium, resulting in social isolation. Strommen (1977, in Budhal 1998:22) declares that early peer relationships are a source of the development of social accommodation and social cognition, which in turn, are the basis for the changing quality of children's relationships. Children's inability to achieve decentration can restrict their social development. In a social situation, children who do not have the capacity to realise that other people's views can be different from theirs may find themselves in a conflict situation. It is the role of the parents to help children adapt to any situation.

2.3.6.3 Principles in the African community/culture

According to Berger (1990:103), parents are important teachers of their own children. Their involvement in the education of their children enhances the children's performance in their schoolwork. Jensen (1995) adds that parental involvement improves children's attitude towards education, reduces school failure and dropout rates and improves school attendance among children.

During the Foundation Phase, children in the African community interact less with their peers, but they spend more time playing with older children and sharing ideas with them. African children engage willingly and enthusiastically in discussing topics with older children. In this way, they learn to use different cognitive skills and learn more from older children. African children are taught not to ask adults too many questions. When watching TV or listening to the radio, the focus should be on what they see or hear and questions should follow later. Most of the African parents do not allow questions – often because some of them may be challenging.

The researcher has observed that a few African parents are not willing to contribute actively to their children's education. For example, they are unable to carry out schoolwork at home with their children, and very few spend a little time reading books and interpreting these to their children. Very few African parents can manage to buy magazines which contain educational activities. Finally, the minority of African parents ask their children about pictures in the books and things they have seen. Reading stories to their children and asking them to also read after them promotes cognitive development, especially, the development of language. Colletta (1977, in Kgasoe 1995:3) declares that if African parents could co-operate in supporting their children's education, the self-

concept of both children and parents would improve and children would become better achievers.

African children participate in learning mainly because of the great amount of interaction between them and older children. Owens (2001:383) emphasises that learner participation, no matter what the age or colour of the learner, is very important in all education.

2.3.6.4 Cognitive dimension in Tsonga culture

Cognitive skills development is important in the lives of all growing children. The Tsonga children receive their introduction to language as an instrument of communication and learning at the mother's knee. According to Kgasoe (1995:11), they learn the names of food, utensils and objects in the immediate home environment. During the Foundation Phase, the Tsonga children are introduced to the world beyond the homestead, so as to become active participants in the world in which they find themselves. In some Tsonga families some of the oral tradition could not be found any longer.

According to Mwamwenda (1995:109), it is a common practice among many Tsonga people that children use their right hands for greeting people, eating and passing objects to other people. According to the researcher's observation, such experience, it can be assumed, facilitates children's knowledge of the distinction between the right and left hand.

The following chapter will discuss the research design for data collection using qualitative and quantitative methods.

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