The attitudes of parents towards homework in the Foundation Phase

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The attitudes of parents towards homework in the Foundation Phase

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Marike du Preez, hereby declare this MEd thesis:

The attitudes of parents towards homework in the Foundation Phase

to be my original work and that all the sources I have consulted have been acknowledged.

Marike du Preez   08/09/2014

Signature   Date

SUMMARY

Homework is given to learners on a daily basis to practice a specific skill, to foster personal development and to develop planning and time management skills. Although learners in the Foundation Phase are encouraged to do homework on their own, the support and involvement of their parents are required in order to develop personal skills and to maintain a healthy social relationship.

As homework is a time of the day when parents usually interact with their children, their attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase impact the way in which a learner will experience the homework process. Some learners experience homework as more pleasant when parents are involved, while others feel that homework disrupt families and causes conflict and tension.

Research has indicated that the early years of a child's life are critical for development, as this is the time when learners acquire fundamental concepts, skills and attitudes and when parents pass on values such as respect, tolerance and appreciation, all of which are important to laying down the foundation for lifelong learning. Parents' beliefs and behaviours thus have an important role to play in a child's development, and their attitudes and actions influence the nature and course of their children's development. Parents and families need to be encouraged to assist their children with homework and to see this as the time of the day when they can bond with their children.

KEYWORDS

- Homework
- Foundation Phase
- Parenting styles
- Participatory parenting opportunities
- Family-centred practices

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that there are a number of factors which influence the quality of homework, such as parental monitoring (Spera, 2005: 130), homework environment (Hong, Milgram & Rowell, 2010: 197), communication between teacher and parent (Shirvani, 2007: 34), and motivation (Bang, 2011: 2). However, little research focuses on the impact of parental attitudes on the learners' homework experience (Knollmann & Wild, 2007: 64). According to Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2010: 603), the interaction between parents and their children concerning the dynamics of helping with homework is both complex and under-researched. I aim to determine parents' attitudes towards homework, and to provide them with guidelines to assist their children during homework sessions.

Homework ought not be viewed as an activity that the whole family dreads, but rather as an opportunity to interact as a family, with the aim of improving a learner's academic performance. According to Brown and Iyengar (2008: 23), parents should interact in a fun and loving way during their child's homework time, so as to promote a positive outcome for both. The way in which parents interact with their children is also referred to as their 'parenting style' or 'child-rearing style' (Angenent, 1976). As Le Roux (1992) on the other hand explains, the concept of a "child-rearing style" refers to the attitude, behaviour, disciplinary approach or way of communication that parents use in their relationship with their children.

Spera (2005: 132) identifies two styles in which parents interact with their children. The first is a love-orientated style, in which parents make use of warmth, praise and emotional affection. Parents who make use of the love-oriented style will have a more positive relationship with their children. Secondly, Spera (2005: 132) describes the object-orientated parent as a parent who may for example, withdraw objects such as toys to respond to their children's behaviour. These parents are less likely to have a positive relationship with their children, where love is withheld. These two styles will have distinct outcomes on children's behaviour, and most likely on children's experiences when doing homework.

1.2   RATIONALE

According to Hiatt-Michael (2010), parents play a crucial role in the family, because of the resources they provide, the routines they establish, and the way they assist their children with educational planning and decision-making, all of which has a bearing on how successful their children will be. As an educator, I witness on a daily basis the impact that parents have on their child's schoolwork, since homework is a crucial instrument by means of which to improve a learner's achievement in school (Bang, 2011: 3) as well as to foster self-discipline and personal responsibility (Corno, 1996: 28). Schoolwork is seen as the time of day when parents interact with their children (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2002: 603). This study is conducted to determine the challenges that parents face during the completion of homework, which may lead to negative attitudes. The goal of the study is ultimately to assist them with guidelines to make the homework process easier for both themselves and their children.

Homework is given to learners to revise what they have done in school, and to provide them with the extra opportunity to practice (Corno, 1996: 27). According to Warton (2001: 156), the purpose of homework is to foster personal development, like taking responsibility, to have self-confidence, and to manage time and develop planning skills. In order to develop personal skills and to maintain healthy social relationships, children need the support and involvement of their parents. Research has indicated that parental involvement can have both positive and negative effects on the homework experience (Patall, Cooper & Robinson, 2008: 1040). Some learners experience homework as more pleasant when parents are involved (Patall, Cooper & Robinson, 2008: 1040), while others feel that homework disrupts families and that conflict with parents can arise over homework (Bang, 2011: 2). Patall, Cooper and Robinson (2008: 1041) believe that homework can increase frustration and tension between parent and child. Some parents find it difficult to find time to supervise homework due to parental commitments (Cooper, Lindsay & Nye, 2000: 468), while other parents feel that their involvement can be destructive and damaging to their children's achievement and attitudes. Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2010: 605) assert that parents who have strong negative emotions towards homework are more likely to discourage their children than to support them. On investigation, little research was found on the impact of negative parental attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase.

The research was worth conducting because as an educator, I engage daily with parents who are tired of struggling and battling to assist their children with homework. Parents often complain that homework is the reason they fight with their children, and that homework is to blame for the negative relationship between them and their children. In order to address this potential source of conflict, this study helped me to assess the impact of parents' attitudes towards homework. The study set out to identify why some parents have negative attitudes towards their children's homework, as well as how these negative attitudes influence their children's homework experience. It also aimed to provide parents with guidelines, to assist them in making homework a more positive experience for both parties involved.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

As homework is a time when parents usually interact with their children (Hoover-Dempsey, Basler & Burow, 1995: 436), and, conversely, because homework is likewise known to be a battleground between parent and child (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004: 279), this study attempted to answer the following question:

1.3.1   Primary research question

What is the impact of parents' attitudes towards homework in the Foundation Phase?

1.3.2   Secondary research questions

In order to fully explore the primary question, the following secondary questions needed to be addressed:

- Why do some parents have negative attitudes towards their child's homework?
- How do these negative attitudes influence the child's homework experience?
- What guidelines can be recommended in order to make homework a more positive experience for parents?

1.4   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to explore how parents' negative attitudes impact their child's homework experience.

1.4.1 Research aim

The aim was to focus on how parents can be encouraged to view homework as quality time spent with their children, and not as a parental chore.

1.4.2 Research objectives

The research objectives was to provide information that may assist parents with homework guidelines, so as to promote the most positive attitude towards homework as possible.

1.5   RESEARCHER'S ASSUMPTIONS

The following are general assumptions that the researcher holds about the study:

- From the study, I assumed that some parents experience homework negatively, due to the impact it has on their families, where it causes tension between parent and child.
- I also assumed that children who experience homework negatively due to their parent's behaviour are less likely to complete their homework, and will therefore perform badly in school.
- Parents ought to to be empowered in order to assist their children with homework.
- Guidelines to assist parents in making the homework experience more positively will help both parents and learners to come to perceive homework as a quality time spent.

1.6   LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of the research, the currently available research is detailed in this study, where gaps in the literature will be identified.

1.6.1 The purpose of homework

When it comes to homework, learners, teachers and parents are all important in determining the degree to which homework is undertaken effectively, since teachers assign the homework; parents provide the environment and learners do the homework (Hong, Milgram & Rowell, 2010: 198). Homework is generally defined as "tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are intended to be carried out during non-school hours" (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004: 279), and can be a combination of workbooks, worksheets and essays (Corno, 1996: 27). Although this description clearly defines homework, parents often question the purpose of homework. According to Corno (1996: 27) homework is given to learners so as to revise the things that were taught to them, to give learners extra practice, and to help learners to construct their own meaning and understanding. Foyle and Bailey (2010: 187) classify homework according to the following four purposes: preparation to prepare a learner, practising to master a specific skill, extension to determine if a learner can use a new skill and creativity to integrate many skills. Foyle and Bailey (2010: 187) furthermore assert that homework should include all four aspects, in order for it to be successful.

Lacina-Gifford and Gifford (2004: 280) maintain that homework should have a purpose and a goal. It should not only be extra material that learners bring home to show their parents to make note of their curricular industry.

According to Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Burow (1995: 436), homework is seen as the interaction between parent and child about the day's activities and about work. From the above-mentioned, it is clear that homework is given to help a learner, as well as to involve parents.

1.6.2 Parent involvement in homework

Parent involvement, according to Spera (2005: 128) consists of parents attending parents' evenings, helping their children with their homework as well as attending their children's extracurricular activities that take place after school.

Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong and Jonas (2001: 195) state that parents become involved in their children's homework when they believe that it is their duty to do it, when they believe that it will have a positive effect, and when they are being asked for help.

Parents may believe that it is important, necessary and permissible for them to be involved in their children's homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001: 195). They may feel that it is expected from them to do it, and may see it as a parental chore. Balli (1997: 3) states that some parents enjoy helping their children with homework because they become aware of what the children learn in school, while other parents feel that homework drains their own energy and patience. Balli, Demo and Wedman (1998: 149) report that parental involvement is an important contribution to homework, because it is an example of face to face communication, nurturing and support for children. It is therefore clear that not all parents view homework in the same way, and with this study, I determined parents' views about homework, as well as what the reasons for their perceptions might be.

According to Balli (1997: 4), parental involvement can enable and enhance their child's education in three ways: modelling their beliefs, reinforcing goals through praising their children and directing instruction through drilling their children on homework problems. In the same vein, Balli, Demo and Wedman (1998: 149) note that studies indicate a link between parental involvement and a range of positive learner outcomes, which include higher academic achievement, improved school attendance, enhanced school retention and lower dropout rates.

Parents also become involved in their children's homework, where they sense this is wanted and expected of them. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001: 201), there are various reasons why learners might require assistance while doing homework. Age is a main reason, where younger children appear to elicit more involvement than older ones. Children also learn best when they have opportunities to interact with their environment, which in this case, represents their parents (Battle-Bailey, 2004: 36). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001: 202) have stated that the child's performance level may be a reason as to why learners require assistance, because poorer performance may invite more parental help. The impact of this involvement depends on parenting styles.

1.6.3 Parenting styles

Parenting styles can be described as "parental values, goals, skills and attitudes that are passed on from one generation to the next" (Spera, 2005: 125).

Cooper, Lindsay and Nye (2000: 466) have proposed three dimensions of parenting style that ought to predict children's self-regulation and competence. The first one is support for autonomy, defined as "the degree to which parents value and use techniques which encourage independent problem solving, choice, and participation in decision making" (Cooper, Lindsay & Nye, 2000: 466). Secondly, direct parent involvement is the degree to which a parent takes an active part in the child's life, and lastly, provision of structure is the degree to which parents provide clear and constant guidelines for their children (Cooper, Lindsay & Nye, 2000: 466).

When it comes to parenting styles in help with homework, Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2002: 608) identify five distinctive groups that cover the range, from non-interventionist to more controlling strategies.

The first parenting style shows no helping strategy, and homework is only mentioned in passing (when children see their parents). The second parenting style is seen as the praise, or unconditional support, where parents ask about homework only then to 'stress praise', rather than to explicitly teach. The third parenting style is when parents make it clear that they are available if needed to talk things through although their ability to help may be limited. The fourth parenting style is seen as homework support as proactive involvement. Here the parents are actively encouraging, supporting and guiding learners. Lastly, monitoring parental control is seen as the parenting style in which parents ensure that homework is done and a high degree of control over homework is reported (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2002: 608).

Angenent (1976) distinguishes between eight child rearing styles or otherwise seen as basic forms of parenting:

- Warm parenting;
- Dominant parenting;
- Tolerant, democratic parenting;
- Involved parenting;
- Cold parenting;
- Permissive parenting;
- Intolerant, autocratic parenting; and
- Indifferent parenting

Brown and Iyengar (2008: 17) meanwhile state that parenting consist of three prototypes: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Simons and Conger (2007: 214) define authoritative parents as "parents who combine warmth and support with [the] enforcement of rules and [the] use of sanctions when necessary". Authoritarian parents value obedience, but don't encourage verbal give and take, and they also believe that children should accept parental authority when having to decide whether certain actions are right or wrong (Brown & Iyengar, 2008: 17). These parents are strict and use punishment when their children misbehave (Spera, 2005: 134). Lastly, the permissive parent behaves, according to Brown and Iyengar (2008: 17), in an accepting manner towards the child, in order to avoid the power of control.

Findings gathered by Spera (2005: 135) indicate that authoritative parenting styles are associated with positive school outcomes. The reason for this is because these parents provide a high level of emotional security, a sense of awareness and understanding of their parents' values, morals and goals, and they engage in bidirectional communication (Spera, 2005: 135).

From the above-mentioned typology of parenting styles, it is clear that it is incumbent of parents to create a caring and loving environment through their parenting styles, so as to promote a positive learning experience for their children.

1.6.4 Parent-child relationship

Homework plays a crucial role in the relationships between many parents and their children, because it provides a way of "keeping in touch", and for some it is seen as the only contact between parent and child (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2002: 603). Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2002: 603) further state that although such contact can be a highly rewarding experience, it can also be a source of conflict.

In order for parents to successfully interact with their children while doing homework, Gordon and Brown (2008: 135) refer to Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development, where eight stages of psychosocial development, each representing a critical period for development, are explained. These stages are: trust vs. mistrust; autonomy vs. shame and doubt; initiative vs. guilt; competence vs. interiority; search for identity vs. role confusion; intimacy vs. isolation; generativity vs. stagnation; and integrity vs. despair. Each of these stages develops certain strengths, such as hope, willpower, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care

and wisdom (Gordon & Brown, 2008: 135). It is thus important for parents to interact with their children while doing homework, in order to develop these strengths so that the learners can successfully move on to the next stage of development.

1.7   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

A theoretical framework "provides an overview of perspectives and research results with reference to the proposed topic" (Ferreira, 2012: 34). This study will be conducted through the lens of Carl Dunst's integrated framework for family empowerment, to investigate how parents can be empowered to support their children with their homework. Parents and families need to be empowered in able to give them the confidence to avoid dysfunction and problematic child behaviour (Winter, Morawska & Sanders, 2012: 882). This study assumes that parents need to be empowered to assist their children with their homework, so as to avoid dysfunction within the family (where parents become incapable of fulfilling their parental role) which could lead to children not functioning optimally, because they feel neglected. Empowering parents and consequently also families will help in developing strategies by means of which to overcome challenges such as homework completion, so that children can become independent, and so as to promote positive relationships in the family (Graves & Shelton, 2007: 557).

The purpose of this study was to investigate what the impact of parents' attitudes is on a child's homework experience. In the study, I made use of Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support (Dunst, 2004). Early childhood intervention and family support is defined by Dunst (2005: 1) "as the provision and mobilisation of children's learning opportunities, parenting support, family and resources, in a family-centered manner". For the purpose of the study, family support is taken as the professional assistance and advice given to parents to acquire the necessary capabilities to assist their children with homework (Dunst, Boyd, Trivette & Hamby, 2002: 221). According to Dunst, Trivette, Davis and Cornwell (1988: 72), parents need to become empowered in order to solve problems better and to meet the needs of their children.

Gordan and Brown (2007: 151) assert that parents become so preoccupied and unavailable to their children, that they may sometimes need more attention from caregivers at school, who in return may ask for more resources from the family. In

this regard, Gordan and Brown (2007: 152) explain that "just as in nature, activity in one part will affect all the other parts". This implies that one activity has an impact on all the other parts, as described by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, in which he explains the mutual impact of systems on one another, and specifically on the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support is shown in Figure 1.
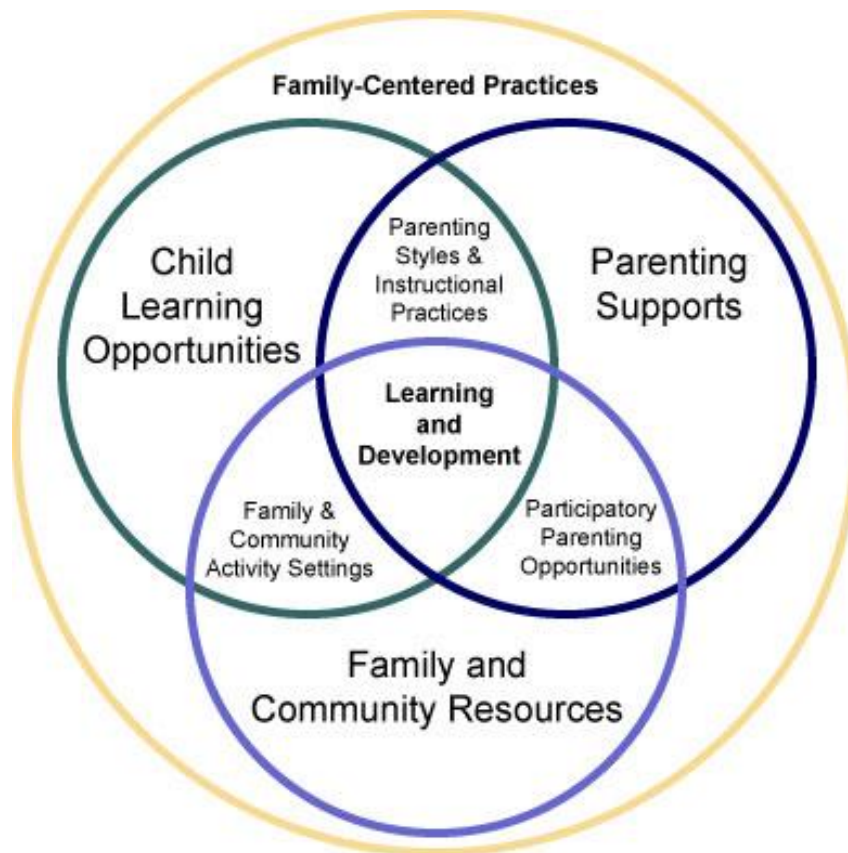
Figure 1.1: Dunst's integrated framework

Carl Dunst's model depicts his model of family support, where each circle represents factors that contribute to a child's learning and development. These factors are family-centred practices, parental support, child learning opportunities and family and community supports. All these components need to come together on all levels in order for a child's learning and development to take place.

1.8   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section elucidates the rationale behind the specific method(s) used in this study, with an explanation of the research strategy employed.

1.8.1   Research design

1.8.1.1   Paradigm

Creswell (2009: 6) defines epistemologies as "general orientations about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds". Research was conducted from a social constructivist paradigm. Social constructivism can be described as the participants' views that they construct while making meaning of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2009: 8), or alternatively, as the reality that people create through language (Ferreira, 2012: 35).

I made use of the social constructivist paradigm for this research as it made provision for the interpretation and sense-making of those meanings that participants have about the world (Creswell, 2009: 8). This can also be seen as one of the strengths of the qualitative approach, as it gives me richness and depth of the descriptions from the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 60).

In the research I made use of open-ended questions when I interviewed my participants, as it allowed the participants to share their views. According to Creswell (2009: 8), open-ended questions should be asked so as to allow the researcher to listen carefully to what people say and do in their life setting.

1.8.1.2   Approach

The methodology of research can be called the science of finding out about human social life (Babbie, 2008: 6).

A qualitative research method was followed in order to explore the impact of parents' negative attitudes on the child's homework experience. Qualitative research can be defined as "an inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations with selected persons in their settings" (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 315).

I made use of qualitative research, because it allowed me to collect data in its natural setting, where participants experience the issue or problem that is being researched (Creswell, 2009: 173).

Potential challenges could have been where the researcher made a wrong interpretation of what is being seen, heard and understood (Creswell, 2009: 180). According to Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007: 38) several investigators, sources and methods ought to be used to compare findings with each other. This will eliminate alteration by means of misinterpretation. Another challenge is the way questions are being asked. According to Seabi (2012: 89), questions should not be sensitive or threatening, as the participant may experience discomfort

1.8.1.3   Type

Ferreira (2012: 35) describes a research design as a "specific plan for studying the research problem". In support of this description, McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 117) refer to the term research design "as a plan for selecting subjects, research sites, and data collection procedures to answer the research question(s)". This study followed a qualitative research design, through conducting a qualitative, phenomenological research.

The purpose of phenomenological research is to understand the lived experiences of others (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 120), to investigate a phenomenon itself (Morgan & Sklar, 2012: 74) and to set aside the researcher's own experience in order to understand that of the participants (Creswell, 2009: 13). A phenomenological research paradigm has been selected for this study, so as to assist in obtaining information from parents about which factors, in their view, impact (positively or negatively) on the quality of their children's homework.

The strength of phenomenological research is that it allows me to study a small number of subjects through extensive engagement with them, in order to develop patterns and relationships (Creswell, 2009: 13). There are, however, also limitations to the phenomenological research paradigm. Lindegger (2002) has noted that problems may arise with regard to the validity of the information and casual relations that are often hard to test. In cognisance of this, the design prevents these challenges from affecting the quality of the study, by eliminating biased views and making sure that prolonged time is spent in the field in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Creswell, 2009: 13).

1.8.2 Research methods

The following methods are being used in support of the research.

1.8.2.1   Participants

Sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 79). The study was conducted by applying purposive sampling. Nieuwenhuis (2007: 79) defines purposive sampling as "selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question". I made use of purposive sampling to access participants that are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena under scrutiny (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). I made use of focus group interviews, as this allowed me to work with several people simultaneously. The research consisted of three focus groups interviews (one with positive set parents, one with negative set parents, and one with parents from disadvantaged environments). The main research site was a school situated in Centurion.

I chose parents based on the following criteria:

- Firstly I chose parents that are positive about homework. These parents see homework as a good thing, and find no problem helping their children with homework.
- Secondly I chose parents that are negative about homework. These parents see homework as a barrier and feel that it takes time and causes frustration.
- Lastly I chose parents that come from disadvantaged environments. These parents do not have all the resources that they require in order to assist their children with homework.

The following was expected from the participants of the study:

- Parents were expected to attend the interview sessions at the specific school.
- Parents were interviewed based on how they experience the homework process.

1.8.2.2 Data collection

I made use of the following data collection techniques in order to answer the research question.

Interviews

The aim of using interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 87) and to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2009: 179). Parents were interviewed through focus group interviews. Seabi (2012: 90) asserts focus group interviews to be useful because the issues surrounding the proposed topic are not clear, and further state that the participants will bring together key issues and ideas relevant to the proposed topic. Parents were interviewed through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and this allowed me to get answers from a set of predetermined questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 87). These predetermined questions guided me through the interviews and also helped me to guide and encourage participants to share their views and experiences regarding the homework process, and how it makes them feel.

I audiotaped all interviews, using handwritten notes to support my recordings, and also observed the participants non-verbal communication by maintaining eye contact.

A benefit of conducting focus group interviews is that I obtained a better understanding of the problem being researched (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 156) due to the fact that the participants were able to build on each other's ideas, which provided a more nuanced view (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 90). Nieuwenhuis (2007: 90) also emphasises that one of the limitations can be that some of the participants may experience focus groups as threatening. I was aware of this limitation, and therefore observed the focus group process carefully, in order to attend to each participant's need, in order to make them feel at ease.

Documents

Parents were asked to document their personal experiences by using diary entries or journals. This enabled me to obtain verbatim transcriptions authored by the participant (Creswell, 2009: 179), which describe the individual's actions, experiences and beliefs (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

The advantage of documents, which are described by Creswell (2009: 179) as "data that is thoughtful" is that participants pay careful attention to writing the diary/journal entries. However, on the other hand, this format can be seen as a limitation, because of the fact that not all people are equally adept at expressing their feelings in written form.

1.8.2.3 Data analysis

According to Creswell (2009: 183), data analysis "involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analysis, moving deeper into an understanding of the data, representing the data, and interpreting the meaning of the data".

The following data analysis steps was followed:

Step 1: Transcription

The first step was to transcribe all the available data. In the study I transcribed the tape recorded interviews and the diary entries from the parents (documents). Non-verbal cues were included.

Step 2: Organising your data

This step involved sorting and arranging data into different types depending on the source of information (Creswell, 2009: 185). For the purpose of the study I organised the data according to the setting, the situation, participant's perspectives, activities, processes, relationships and social structures (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Step 3: Read through the data

According to Lacey and Luff (2001), the researcher then listened to the tape recordings, reading and re-reading the data and making memos and summaries. By reading through the data, I obtained a general sense of the information and became more familiar with the information. This process is also better known as "memoing". According to Nieuwenhuis (2007: 104), memoing allowed me to form a journal that will contain my own reflective notes about what I am learning about the data collected.

Step 4: Coding

Babbie (2008: 422) defines coding as "classifying or categorising individual pieces of data", while Creswell (2009: 18) defines it as "the process of organising the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information". For the purpose of the study, I read through the transcriptions in order to categorise specific topics. These topics were denoted according to central ideas discussed in them. Coding enabled me to easily retrieve all the data with the same thematic idea, so that it can be examined and compared (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 105).

Step 5: Themes

According to Creswell (2009: 189), after coding, a small number of themes are required for the research study. These themes appeared as major findings.

Step 6: Interpretation

The final step in data analysis was to interpret the data in order to make meaning out of it (Creswell, 2009: 189). By interpreting the data collected, I searched for emerging patterns, associations, concepts and explanations from my data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 111).

After following all of the above-mentioned steps, I drew conclusion. This conclusions was based on my findings from my data in relation to what is already known, in order to reveal new possible insights (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 111).

1.8.3 Trustworthiness

Di Fabio and Maree (2012: 140) define trustworthiness as "the way in which data is collected, sorted and classified, especially if it is verbal and textual".

The credibility or the truth value of data refers to factors such as the significance of results (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 140). This was achieved by submitting the documentation to researchers that was not part of the study, in order for them to assess the way in which the analysis was carried out.

Dependability refers "to the stability and consistency of the research process and methods over time" (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 140). This was achieved by monitoring the quality of the recording and transcription of the data, documentation, methods and the interviews.

1.9   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Creswell (2009: 87) states that "researchers need to protect their participants, develop a trust with them, promote the integrity of research, guard against misconduct, and cope with new challenging problems". It is essential that throughout the research process, the researcher abides by ethical guidelines (Maree, 2007: 300). In adhering to these guidelines, I first of all applied for ethical clearance for my study from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. Once this has been approved, I informed the principle of the selected school about the research being conducted. After obtaining permission to enter the research site, I obtained informed consent from my participants, explained the research process to them and emphasised the fact that participants may withdraw at any time. I informed the participants that they will not be exposed to undue physical or psychological harm, and that results will be presented in an anonymous manner in order to protect their identities.

1.10   CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1 the orientation of the study was presented, indicating the rationale for the study and the research questions that guided the study. A preliminary literature review was presented and the theoretical framework was introduced. The research methodology was briefly explained and ethical considerations were mentioned. Chapter 1 served as the map that guided me through the research process in order to gain an in-depth understanding of parent's attitudes towards towards homework.

In Chapter 2 an in-depth literature study is presented on recent homework in the Foundation Phase research and the theoretical framework is discussed and adapted for the purpose of the study.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE STUDY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

"Homework is a bridge for knowledge to travel back and forth between school and home" (Corno, 2000: 533).

Homework is given to learners on a daily basis to practice skills, to foster student personal development (Warton, 2001: 156) and usually begins during the early years, when parents have a significant role to play in forming the attitudes of the learner (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow, 1995: 436). The roles that parents play are, according to Balli, Demo and Wedman (1998: 149) an example of the most direct face-to-face form of parental involvement in a child's life, and a way of communicating care and affection. Although available research stresses the importance of positive parental involvement in assisting with homework, it is nonetheless a reality that homework is also a source of conflict, which leads to parents having negative attitudes towards it (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2002: 603).

Since the purpose of this study was to explore the way in which parents' negative attitudes impact their child's homework experience, the focus of the literature study was on homework in the Foundation Phase, the importance thereof, along with the learners' homework experience and the challenges of homework. The study also investigates the different parenting styles and the importance of parental support. Family-centred practices are taken as the main theoretical framework for this research.

2.2 CURRENT ECD POLICY

Meier and Marais (2009: 41) have stated that "early childhood development refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers."

The current ECD policy aims to protect all learners' rights by ensuring that every learner has the best possible start in life (Department of Education, 2001). Furthermore, its purpose is to improve the quality of ECD programmes, correcting

the imbalances in their provision, and to develop a learner to his or her full potential (Department of Education, 2001).

Research has indicated that the early years of a child's life are critical for development, because these are seen as the time of a child's life when they acquire concepts, skills and attitudes (Department of Social Development, 2007), as well as being an ideal phase for passing on values such as respect, tolerance and appreciation of diversity, all of which are important to laying down the foundation for lifelong learning. The Department of Education (2001) also asserts that these are the years in which children grow and thrive in a number of ways, including physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially. It is therefore important for learners in the Foundation Phase to get the appropriate treatment and care, in order for them to develop to their maximum potential. In order for this to happen, early intervention should be made possible for learners to reduce the need for remedial services (Department of Social Development, 2007).

Early childhood development is the responsibility of the parents, teachers, school as well as other departments (Bornman & Rose, 2011). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model illustrates these relationships.
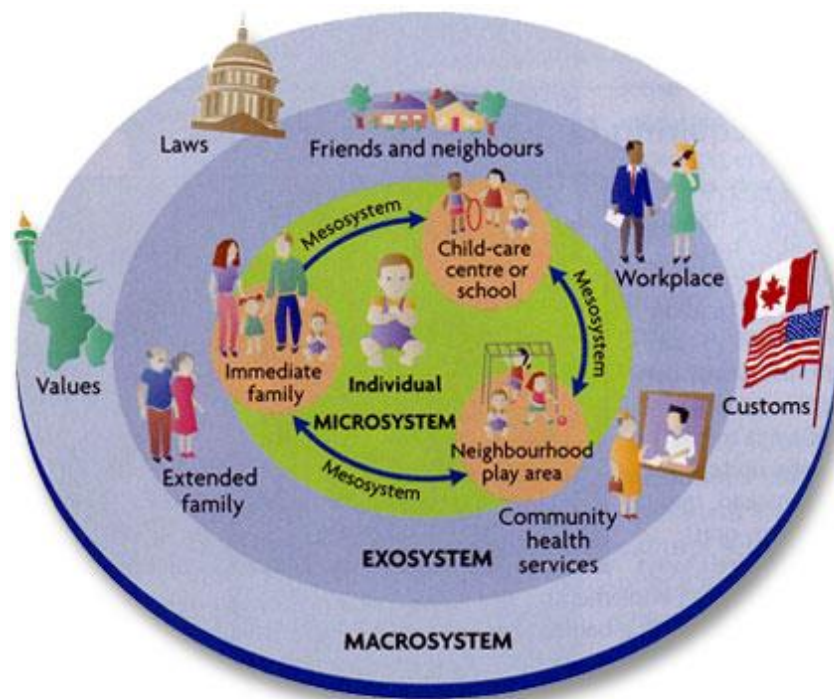
Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1999)

Bronfenbrenner describes that learners are influenced by their surrounding environment and that this environment influences a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The current Education White paper on Early Childhood Education makes it very clear that the primary responsibility for the upbringing and care of young children belongs to parents and families (Department of Education, 2001). This can be seen in the micro-system, as it is the level closest to the child (Bornman & Rose, 2011). Parents need to take care of their children in order for their physical needs (shelter and nutrition) and emotional needs (love and security) to be met (Meier & Marais, 2009). Parents also have the obligation to send their children to school. The mesosystem includes the communication and relationships between the people in the micro systems (Bornman & Rose, 2011). According to the Education White paper on Early Childhood Education, it is now the responsibility of the school to ensure that parents are fulfilling their duty to educate their children (Meier & Marais, 2009), and also to involve parents as much as possible in the functioning of the school (Department of Social Development, 2007). Parents can be involved most easily and directly through meetings with teachers. According to the current ECD policy, parents have the right to be informed about their children's performance and progress at school, and should have an opportunity to meet educators on a regular basis (Schools Act, 1996).

According to the Education White Paper 6 (2001), it is the responsibility of the teacher to identify whether or not a learner needs help, by looking at a range of diverse learning needs, and then undertaking an intervention with the learners in the Foundation Phase.

From the above-mentioned ECD policy it is clear that the Foundation Phase plays a crucial role in a learner's upbringing and that the school, educator, parents and families all need to work together in order to educate a learner. Schools have the responsibility of ensuring that learners make adequate progress towards achieving certain standards, and for this reason, assigning homework (described in the section that follows) has emerged as a potential source to improve achievement (Bang, 2011).

2.3 HOMEWORK IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

This section details the purpose of homework, the importance of doing homework in the Foundation Phase, the way in which the learner experiences homework, and lastly the challenges that learners face during the completion of homework.

2.3.1 The purpose of homework

Homework is generally defined as "tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are intended to be carried out during non-school hours" (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004: 279). Corno (1996: 27) and Paulu and Perkinson (1995) define homework as the revision of work done in class, to give extra practice and to help the learners to construct their own meaning. Although these definitions are quite clear, the purpose of homework is often questioned.

The real purpose of homework has been outlined by various researchers, each having their own stance on why teachers ought to assign homework to learners. Foyle and Bailey (1986: 187) classified homework according to four types, namely: preparation, practice, extension and creativity. Preparation homework is given to learners to help them prepare for larger units of work and ideas discussed in class (Corno, 1996: 27), as well as to ensure that the student is ready for the next lesson (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010: 182). Learners also need to prepare for upcoming tests and assignments. Practice homework is given to learners so as to practice and reinforce concepts that they have studied in school (Balli, 1997: 3). Learners need to be given time to practice the things that they struggled with during class lessons, in order to lay down the foundations of their knowledge and to construct their own meaning. Extension homework is given to learners to determine if the learner can transfer a new concept or skill to a new situation (Foyle & Bailey, 1986: 187). Lastly, creativity homework is given to foster student personal development, as it allow learners to think for themselves (Warton, 2001: 156).

Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010: 181) add to Foyle's and Bailey's purposes of homework, and state that homework fosters parent-child relationships, parent-teacher communications and peer interactions. Homework plays a crucial role in the relationship between many parents and their children, because it provides a way of "keeping in touch" with children, and for some parents it is the part of the rare contact they have with their children (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2002: 603). Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010: 182) state that parent-child conversations are very

important, and may help to promote the learner's understanding of schoolwork. Homework can also bring parents and educators closer together (Paulu & Perkinson, 1995), through communicating with each other about the assignments that the learners must do and also about their child's education and school.

From a teacher's perspective, the purpose of homework is to make learners revise the things they have been taught in school, as well as to reinforce and to practice a specific skill (Corno, 1996: 27). Teachers also assign homework so as to inform parents about classroom activity (Warton, 2001: 156), and what is being done in class during school hours. By assigning homework, teachers feel that they teach the learners to use resources such as libraries, as well as other reference techniques such as computers (Paulu & Perkinson, 1995).

From a learner's perspective, the purpose of doing homework is to win the approval of their parents and teachers (Xu, 2005: 47). This has led to the tendency for learners to work for approval, rather than to enjoy the experience of learning (Corno, 2000: 532). Learners also stated in a study conducted by Warton (1997: 218), that from their perspective the purpose of homework is to do revision of the day's work.

It is clear from the above that homework is relevant to learning and that it is not assigned randomly, but in order to assist learners to develop to their maximum potential.

2.3.2 The importance of homework in the Foundation Phase

There is often the perception that homework is only given to Foundation Phase learners to keep them busy after school hours, while others mainly feel that it is given by teachers because of the work load and limited time. Corno (1996: 27) asserts that the purpose should be to foster self-discipline and personal responsibility. Personal responsibility helps Foundation Phase learners to manage their time and establish a work schedule, building study skills and developing research skills (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010: 182), all of which helps with personal development during the early ages of schooling for a Foundation Phase learner.

Researchers have indicated that homework has emerged over the years as a potential vehicle to improve achievement (Bang, 2011: 1; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow, 1995: 436). Paulu and Perkinson (1995) for example have mentioned that children who spend more time doing homework, advance better in

school (Corno & Xu, 2004: 228). In order for learners to excel at school, homework should be meaningful and should have a specific purpose with clear instructions (Paula & Perkinson, 1995). Homework is not only important for academic reasons, but also for the development of good work habits, self-control and self-regulated learning (Corno & Xu, 2004: 228; Corno, 2000: 534). Self-control includes responsibility to complete daily assignments (Xu, 2005: 47). Learners in the Foundation Phase should be taught from an early stage that they have the responsibility to complete their homework and that there are consequences if they fail to do so. Self-regulated learning according to Corno (2000: 534) involves the management and control of emotions, having a positive attitude towards the task at hand, and having effective strategies to process information and to solve problems. For some Foundation Phase learners, doing homework can be very emotional, because of the time and effort it takes to complete homework. Xu (2005: 48) defines self-regulation in homework completion in terms of five aspects: setting up an environment that is appropriate for doing homework; managing homework time; having control over the amount of attention given to the task; motivating oneself; and keeping your emotions from interfering in the work.

2.3.3 Learners' homework experience

When Foundation Phase learners were asked by Warton (1997: 218) to give a reason why homework was necessary, they responded that it was "to learn", "so that our parents can see what we are doing" and "so that we don't sit in front of the television". In a study that has been conducted by Corno (1996: 28), learners feel that homework is sometimes given by teachers as a form of punishment for misbehaving in class, and that this discourages learners from learning (Paulu & Perkinson, 1995). Learners do not always engage in homework assignments out of their own interest, but rather because out of a sense of duty to finish their homework and to avoid punishment (Katz, Kaplan & Buzukashvily, 2011: 376).

Learners experience homework differently, and therefore have different attitudes towards doing homework. Parents can make the homework experience more positive for learners by providing them with an atmosphere of support, encouragement and humour, as this will help to overcome the frustration that learners may experience while doing homework (Corno, 1996: 29).

When learners in the Foundation Phase are interested in the topic of the given assignment, they experience the homework process as enjoyable and often find it

easier (Bang, 2011: 16). Teachers should therefore try to ensure that homework is given is such a way that it has a positive effect on the learner, that it is inspired by the students own interest wherever possible, and that it should challenge the learner gradually (Corno, 1996: 29).

The way in which learners experience homework (either positively or negatively) plays a significant role in how the learner will complete homework tasks.

2.3.4 Challenges during the completion of homework

Most homework is assigned by teachers with the best of intentions, but parents frequently highlight this activity as a source of conflict and difficulty (Warton, 2001: 155). Parents feel that homework can drain their energy and patience, because of the time and effort it takes to monitor a learner's homework (Balli, 1997: 4). Parents also feel that helping with homework prevents them from doing their own work, that it has a negative impact on their social activities, and that it limits the time for themselves (Xu & Yuan, 2003: 28). Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2002: 605) state that these negative emotions and attitudes towards homework are more likely to have a negative impact on a learner's view about homework than to support the learner.

Another challenge being experienced while doing homework is that it is often not supervised in the correct manner. Xu (2004: 232) states that homework is often supervised by adults who are not well-informed about how to assist their children with homework, and who do not respond when learners need help. Balli (1997: 4) adds to this by saying that some parents have inadequate skills, and that this can hinder them in assisting their children with homework. Subjects are sometimes too complicated for parents, which leads to learners not asking their parents assistance while doing homework (Xu & Yuan, 2003: 34). Not only do many parents have inadequate skills to assist their children, but learners sometimes feel that their parents do not understand the homework, and therefore find it difficult to complete it (Bang, 2011: 16).

For most parents and learners one of the most challenging aspects of doing homework is the limited time they have (Warton, 2001: 158). Learners need to attend to other extra-curricular activities, which involve sport at school, extra classes, and chores around the house (Bang, 2011: 16), all of which makes it difficult for them to complete all homework assignments in time for the following

day. In some families, the evening schedule is so tight that homework can only be done after a time that is usually too late for parents and learners (Corno, 2000: 535). In another study, Corno (1996: 29) states that working till late in order to complete homework tasks can become too intense for learners, where their only purpose is to get through the work, rather than to focus on the learning experience it implies. Parents are concerned about the appropriate amount of homework given to learners because they feel that if learners are given too much homework, they do not feel like doing it, which defeats the purpose. Paulu and Perkinson (1995) advise parents to find a regular time for doing homework, as this will help learners to finish their assignments.

Some families feel that due to inadequate resources (learning space and materials), the homework process can be a challenge for them (Warton, 2001: 158). Cooper, Lindsay and Nye (2000: 466) assert that for some families, it is difficult to do homework, due to the fact that they cannot assist their children in providing a quiet, well-lit space in which to do the homework, and also that they cannot provide the materials needed to complete the assignments.

Boredom resulting from assignments that are too easy can also be a challenge, because according to Corno (2000: 532) this can frustrate learners. Learners reported in a study conducted by Xu and Yuan (2003: 38) that they struggled doing homework assignments because it was either considered too easy or too hard, or that it was not relevant to their real life context, or that it was boring. Corno (2000: 532) further states that when learners are bored they get easily distracted and start to daydream, all of which leads to a sense of constraint.

Distractions and the attractiveness of other activities can be another challenge for learners while doing homework. In a study conducted by Xu and Corno (2003: 504), learners reported that the telephone and television where the two most troublesome distractions while doing homework. Paulu and Perkinson (1995) assert that televisions ought to be turned off, and telephone calls should be discouraged while doing homework. Learners feel that they spend so much time doing homework that they do not have time to play outside and to have fun with friends (Xu & Yuan, 2003: 38).

Teachers, parents and learners all have different perspectives and views regarding how to get homework done. But from the above mentioned criteria, it is clear that

homework is and will always be a challenge for learners and their parents, at it takes up time and effort.

Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts and Fraleigh (1987: 1244) identified five processes that link family and homework completion of learners in the Foundation Phase: parents need to communicate to their children in order to find out what is going on in the school and what homework assignments need to be completed; parents need to set expectations for their children; parents should make sure that there is a positive affective relationship between them and their children; parents should believe in their children; and parents should have behavioural strategies in place in order to lay down boundaries for a learner. These parental attitudes and parenting styles influence the way in which they approach their children while doing homework. In the section that follows, I look at the different parenting styles and how this influences a child.

2.4   PARENTING STYLES

It has been said that parents "create" persons, due to the significant role that parents play in a child's development (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006: 17). Parents' beliefs and behaviours thus have an important role to play in a child's development, and therefore their attitudes and actions influence the nature and course of their children's development. The emotional climate in which parents raise their children (Spera, 2005: 127), the values, behaviours, and standards that children are expected to adopt (Dornbusch et al 1987: 1244), and the parental goals, skills and attitudes that are being passed on from one generation to the next (Spera, 2005: 125), can all be seen as parenting styles that have an influence on the nature and course of a learner's development.

Parents sometimes ask how they can become good parents. In order for parents to answer this, they must understand the two dimensions of parenting described by Sigelman and Rider (2006: 426) and Angenent (1985), as acceptance-responsiveness (warmth dimension) and demandingness-control (dominance dimension).

In the warmth dimension of parenting, Pretorius (1998: 63) distinguishes between being a warm/acceptant parent and a cold/rejection parent, when it comes to the parent's attitude towards their children. This dimension implies that the warm and

loveable parent will have a good relationship with their children, and that the cold parent is not involved and does not care what the child does.
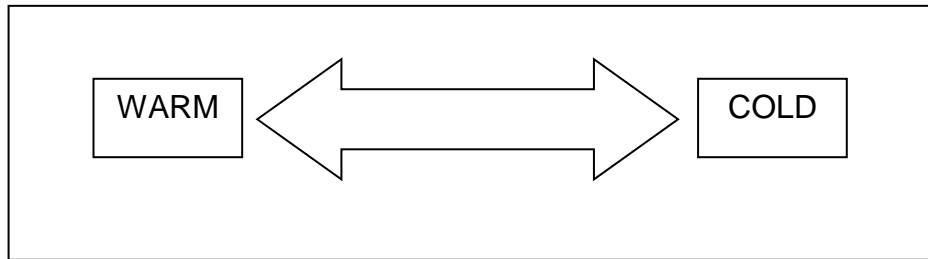
Figure   2.2: The warmth dimension of parenting

Parental acceptance-responsiveness (warmth dimension), according to Sigelman and Rider (2006: 426), refers to the support parents give to their children while doing homework, the praise and affection they provide when their children are doing something right, and the encouragement they provide in order to motivate their children. Parents that show responsiveness behaviour foster individuality and self-regulation in the child, all of which helps with building a good self-esteem (Spera, 2005: 135).

Secondly, the dominance dimension in child rearing can be different in a dominant/control parent and a permissiveness parent, respectively, when it comes to the parent's attitude towards the education of the child (Pretorius, 1998: 63). Parents can either be strict and overrule their children, or they can let the child work independently.
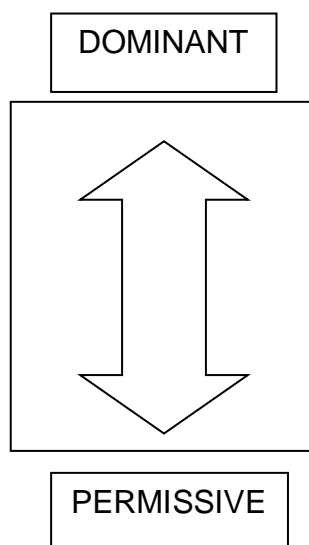
Figure   2.3: The dominance dimension of parenting

Parental demandingness-control (dominance dimension) refers to the an active form of control that parents take over their children while doing homework (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 426). Dominant parents set rules, and expects their children to obey them without asking questions. Such parents set demands for their children and uses strict discipline efforts when rules are not obeyed (Spera, 2005: 135).

These characteristics of demandingness-control and responsiveness-acceptance generate different types of parenting styles.

2.4.1 Types of parenting styles

According to Pretorius (1998: 64), eight child-rearing styles or basic forms of parenting can be distinguished on the basis of the above mentioned model, namely:

- Warm parenting
- Dominant parenting
- Tolerant, democratic parenting
- Involved parenting
- Cold parenting
- Permissive parenting
- Intolerant, autocratic parenting
- Indifferent parenting
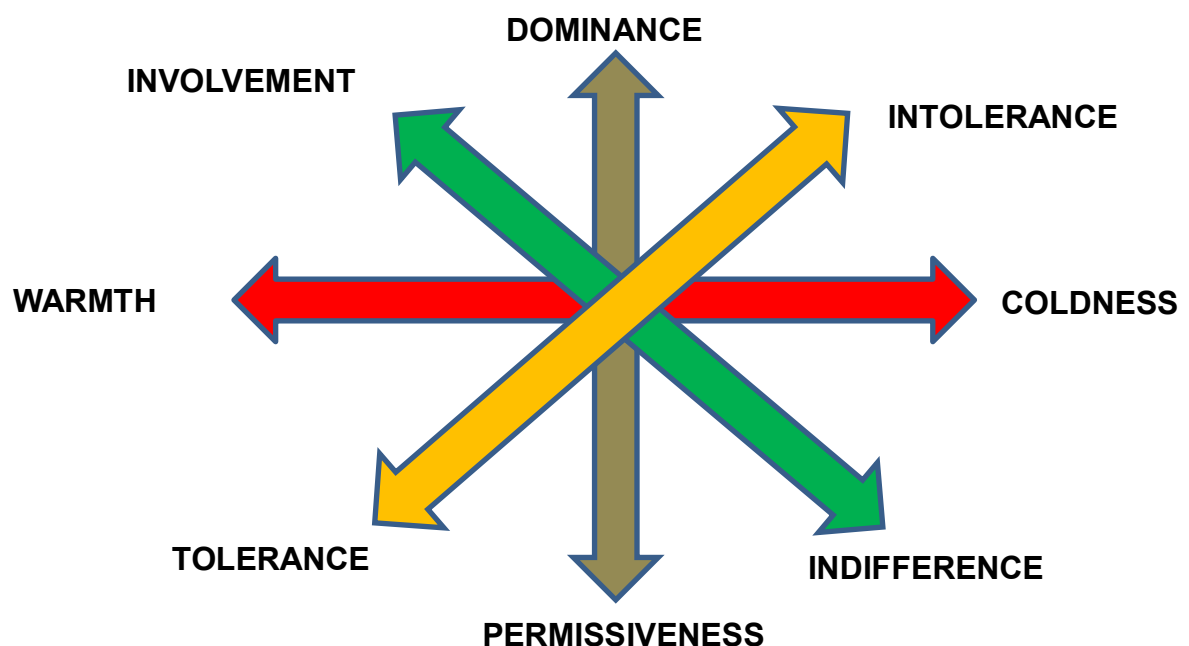
Figure   2.4: The two-dimensional child-rearing model of Angenent (1985)

These parenting styles differ in the values, behaviours and standards that parents expect their Foundation Phase learners to adopt, and also differ in the way that these parents expect their children to behave (Dornbusch, et al. 1987: 1244).

2.4.1.1   Warm parenting

The warm parent can be seen as the "me-and-you" relationship between parent and child, where the parents are loveable, supportive and sensitive with regard to the child's problems, emotions and feelings (Pretorius, 1998: 65). Pretorius (1998: 65) defines these parents as parents who are interested in their child's goals and achievement at school, who motivate their children to bring friends home, who discuss plans with the child, and who accept the child as an individual. Children of these parents will be more likely to enjoy doing their homework with their parents, because of the environment their parents provide for them. They see homework as quality time spent with their parents, and will feel free to ask questions if help is needed. These children will also have higher levels of competence, and will adapt to a social situation more easily (Spera, 2005: 134). In a study conducted by Brown and Iyengar (2008: 19), children who describe their parents as treating them warmly (with love and affection) were more likely to develop positive attitudes towards their homework process, and are consequently able to do better in school.

2.4.1.2   Cold parenting

Cold parents show rejection, coldness and heartlessness towards their children (Pretorius, 1998: 66). Children from these parents will be less likely to enjoy their homework and will be likely to choose to do it on their own instead. They are too scared to ask questions if help is needed, and they are also aware that their parents do not have time for them to help them with their homework. According to Pretorius (1998:66) these parents are parents who show no interest in their child, do not have time for their children, use verbal punishment, do not support the child, criticise and blame the child for everything, and do not speak well of their child.

2.4.1.3   Dominant parenting

When it comes to the educational styles, the dominant education style can be described as the style where parents want to dominate, control and correct their children (Pretorius, 1998: 66). These parents will be more likely to control their children while doing homework. They want their children to do their best, and will

make use of physical punishment to show their strict attitude (Pretorius, 1998: 66). These learners are less likely to learn on their own, as homework is undertaken on their behalf, where learners do not get the opportunity to learn on their own.

2.4.1.4   Permissive parenting

According to Sigelman and Rider (2006: 427), this child rearing style is high in acceptance-responsiveness, but low in demandingness-control, because these parents have few rules, and encourage their children to express their feelings freely. These parents are seen as being accepting towards their children's impulses, and are not likely to use any punishment towards their children (Dornbusch et al., 1987: 1245). Permissive parents do not structure and monitor their children's behaviour and fail to be supportive and to provide rules for their child (Garg, Levin, Urajnik & Kauppi, 2005: 653). While doing homework, these parents will allow their children to do as they please, and are not especially concerned about the child's progress in school (Spera, 2005: 134).

Foundation Phase children from permissive parents feel that they are being encouraged to express their own feelings while doing homework (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 426) and scored low on measures of self-control and competence (Spera, 2005: 135). These children are not afraid to ask their parents for assistance while doing homework and are allowed to regulate their own activities as much as possible (Baumrind, 1966: 889). These parents use minimal control and the child is left to their own devices (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 426). This child will be left to make own autonomous choices regarding homework.

2.4.1.5   Tolerant, democratic parenting

Tolerant, democratic parenting is a combination of warmth and permissiveness, with characteristics of both (Pretorius, 1998: 69). These parents accept their children as an equal and display a lot of flexibility, without fear of losing their position of power (van den Berg, 2004). These parents are also described as being authoritative parents. They can sometimes be very demanding and controlling over their children, but on the other hand, they can also be accepting and responsive (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 426). These parents have high expectations when it comes to their child's achievement in school, but foster these high demands through communicating with their children, giving explanations when they are being

punished, and by encouraging their children to become independent (Spera, 2005: 134).

Brown and Iyengar (2008: 17) define an authoritative parent as a parent who believes that a child should accept the parent's word for what is right, and values obedience. Baumrind (1966: 891) asserts that these parents exerts firm control over the child, but still allow them to do things for themselves, as they believe that children have their own interests and special ways of doing things.

The authoritative parenting style is found by Leung, Lau and Lam (1998: 160) to be associated with good performance (also see 2.4.3 for a more detailed discussion), as these parents encourage an open atmosphere in their family, where their children can communicate freely, and where they have a say in decisions made, all of which give a child more confidence and responsibility. Secondly, they assert that parents with such a parenting style show more supportive behaviours while doing homework, that they give their children praise and that they encourage them to work harder. While doing homework, these parents provide their children with affection and support (Spera, 2005: 134), showing their children that they are interested in the child's homework and school progress. Spera (2005: 134) further states that these parents have high expectations for achievement, and these parents will encourage learners to work independently, while still providing them with rationales for their actions (e.g. "if you don't do your homework now, you will not succeed in school").

Brown and Iyengar (2008: 19) suggest that there are three specific components of authoritativeness that contributes to successful homework completion: parental acceptance and warmth (child feels valued and loved by parents), behavioural supervision and strictness (parents need to have boundaries set for their children in order for them to complete their homework), and democracy.

Children with authoritative parents have a high self-esteem, can do things independently, and are curious (Gordon & Brown, 2008: 314). These children feel that their needs are being met and that they are involved in family making decisions (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 426) by their parents. While doing homework these children are being encouraged to do work on their own, and feel free to ask their parents if help is needed (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987: 1245).

2.4.1.6   Intolerant, autocratic parenting

According to Pretorius (1998: 70), intolerant, autocratic parenting features characteristics of both cold and dominant, or authoritarian parenting. Parents believe that their word should be accepted without question, and they also apply disciplinary rules with force (Van den Berg, 2004).

This parenting style can be seen as a combination of high demandingness-control and low acceptance-responsiveness parenting (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 426). Authoritarian parents are described as parents trying to shape and control their children's behaviour and attitudes according to a particular set of standards (Baumrind, 1966: 890). These parents also expect their children to be obedient, and to have respect for their authority (Leung, Lau & Lam, 1998: 158). The authoritarian parenting style is associated with lower academic grades, and Leung, Lau and Lam (1998: 158) attribute this to parents trying to control their children while doing homework, which makes it difficult for children to construct their own meaning. Authoritarian parents are usually very strict with their children, and use power when their children misbehave (Spera, 2005: 134). Spera (2005: 134) further states that while doing homework, these parents expect their children to follow through rules and orders without communicating to them why it is necessary to do so.

Children from authoritarian parents feel that they are being controlled and need to be obedient (Gordon & Brown, 2008: 315). While doing homework, these learners feel that they must do what their parents are telling them to do, and that they are not allowed to make decisions themselves (Baumrind, 1966: 890). If learners do not obey their parent's rules, physical punishment is used in order for the parent to gain control (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 426).

2.4.1.7   Involved parenting

Involved parenting means that dominance, limitations and control go hand in hand with warmth and love (Pretorius, 1998: 72). Parents share experiences with their children, and pay attention to the child's activities (Van den Berg, 2004). Parents are involved in their child's school progress, and are interested in the child's daily activities.

2.4.1.8 Indifferent parenting

The parent shows signs of both cold and permissive parenting (Pretorius, 1998: 73). These parents show no interest in the child, display an emotional distance, and do not satisfy the child's primary needs (Van den Berg, 2004). These parents are uninvolved in their child's upbringing, because they combine a low-level form of demandingness-control parenting, with a low-level form of acceptance-responsiveness parenting (Sigelman & Rider, 2006: 427). These parents do not visibly care about their children, and may even reject them. No assistance is given while doing homework.

Children are more likely to enjoy doing their homework when they are loved and supported. If they are being neglected and little guidance is given while doing homework, they may feel that they are not important, which can lead to them becoming selfish. When too much guidance is given while doing homework (as with authoritarian parents), opportunities to learn are being taken from the learner, which may result in the learner having less confidence in making their own decisions.

2.4.2 Support from parents

Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2002: 607) assert that the most basic account of homework help can be explained according to categories of parenting style. Parent's interaction with their children while doing homework can range from non-interventionist strategies, to more controlling ones; the authors (2002: 609) describe five distinctive categories of parental support while doing homework as: 'no particular help needed'; 'praise and unconditional support'; 'promoters of autonomy'; 'homework support as proactive involvement/encouragement and guidance'; and 'monitoring parental control'.

Epstein and Becker (1982: 105) explain 'no particular help needed' as a family style where homework is only mentioned to parents because of the learner's concern that it might cause psychological stress in the family. Learners will inform their parents that they have homework to do, but will not ask for assistance. The main reason for learners not to ask help from their parents in this instance is an awareness of their parents' other responsibilities at home, such as cooking, chores or other commitments, where the child may feel that asking for assistance will cause a certain conflict (Epstein & Becker, 1982).

'Praise and unconditional support' refers to the kind of family situation where parents are interested in their child's homework, but would rather encourage the child to tackle the homework independently than to intervene with explanatory help and advice (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2002: 608). Learners in the Foundation Phase will try to do the easy things on their own, and will not be scared to ask for help in case it is needed.

'Promoters of autonomy – but available when needed' refers to a situation where parents make themselves available for their child while doing homework, but their ability to help may be restricted to the fact that they do not have the knowledge required to complete the tasks assigned. Parental behaviour that supports the child's need for autonomy includes behaviours such as: allowing the child to make choices; expressing understanding for the way in which the child sees things; and providing a relevant rational for the homework task (Katz et al, 2011: 378). In a study conducted by Solomon et al (2002: 610), parents described themselves as being unfamiliar with the new curriculum, and some reported that they do not have the confidence to assist their children with certain subjects, even in the early grades. Some parents may be illiterate or may be unwilling to supervise while doing homework (Cooper et al, 2000: 465). This perceived lack of competence may lead to the fact that parents avoid their children while doing homework, where they may also act in such a way as can become harmful towards the child and their motivation.

'Homework support as proactive involvement/encouragement and guidance' describes a situation where parents are involved at all times, supporting and guiding their child while doing homework. Parents will use different techniques to encourage independent problem solving, and to help learners to construct their own meaning (Cooper et al, 2000: 466). These parents will also set challenging goals for the learners (like giving extra maths problems and rewarding the child if he/she is able to do it correctly), and these parents will provide informative feedback (Katz et al, 2011: 378). They will make sure that the extra work given is age appropriate, and that it is work done in the Foundation Phase.

'Monitoring parental control' describes a situation where a high degree of control over the homework process is reported. According to Cooper et al (2000: 466), parents may feel that they are well-informed about the task, and will therefore take an active part in the learner's homework.

When parents help with homework, monitor after school activities, attend school functions, provide emotional support, and give their children their time to read together, this helps the learner succeed in school. Spera (2005: 127) characterises this kind of help as "specific behaviours that parents use to socialise their children" and notes these parenting styles as a manner of "the emotional climate in which parents raise their children". Parental support can be distinguished into behavioural control, and psychological control. Behavioural control is described by Brown and Iyengar (2008: 17) as providing the necessary supervision in order to facilitate development. Psychological control refers to an attempt to control that impede the psychological development of the child, including a child's thinking processes, emotions and attachment to parents (Brown & Iyengar, 2008: 20). When parents feel confident in their competence to assist with homework, this will lead to them being more comfortable with helping with homework, and they also tend to behave more warmly towards their child as a result (Katz et al, 2011: 378).

Why then is it important for parents to become involved in their child's homework? Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong and Jones (2001: 201) try to answer this question by arguing that parents believe that they should be involved because it is their responsibility; they believe that their involvement will make a positive difference, and lastly they perceive invitations to be involve. The last mentioned reason can be explained through learners asking their parents for help in assisting them with their homework.

Parents can be involved in their children's education by: monitoring their after-school activities such as sport; monitoring homework and the completion thereof; supervising activities with their peers; and making sure that their children progress at school by meeting with their teachers (Spera, 2005: 130).

Katz et al. (2011: 378) have concluded that parental attitudes towards assisting a Foundation Phase learner with homework is likely to affect the quality and amount of involvement. Positive parental attitudes are related to learners developing a positive attitude towards homework, leading to greater learner enjoyment while undertaking homework assignments (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2001: 205). Katz et al. (2011: 378) further assert that positive parental attitudes towards homework are associated with more frequent homework completion, while negative parental attitudes towards homework are associated with parents not being willing to assist their children with homework.

2.4.3 Parenting style and academic achievement

Many researchers found that parenting styles significantly influence achievement, along with the performance of learners (Brown & Iyengar, 2008:15). Spera (2005: 135) states that learners with authoritative parents are more likely to do their homework independently, are more mature, not scared to socialise, are achievement-orientated, and are more active than learners from authoritarian parents. Spera (2005: 136) cites three reasons why an authoritative parenting style can be linked to positive child outcomes and better academic achievement. Firstly, these parents provide their children with security, which helps the learner to work independently, where they are not scared to ask for help. Secondly, these parents provide their children with explanations, helping children to understand why they did something wrong, and helping them by providing morals and goals. Lastly, these parents communicate with their children, and allow them to communicate back, helping them with interpersonal skills.

Research conducted by Garg, Levin, Urajnik and Kauppi (2005: 653) and another study by Brown and Iyengar (2008: 18) have shown that both authoritarian and permissive parenting is associated with poorer academic performance in children. The lack of guidance by parents, criticism and punishment can be seen as the main reasons why children with these parents have poorer academic achievement (Brown & Iyengar, 2008: 21). Authoritarian parents try to control their children, they enforce rules, and expect obedience while doing homework, which leads to a child not wanting to do homework, and therefore in the long term, leads to poorer academic achievement (Leung, Lau & Lam, 1998: 158).

In order to provide an overview of perspectives and research results on the way in which parent's negative attitudes impacts a learners' homework experience, a theoretical framework needs to be in place, providing a platform on how to guide parents to support their children with their homework.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework "provides an overview of perspectives and research results with reference to the proposed topic" (Maree, 2012: 34). This study will be conducted through the lens of Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support, using it to investigate how parents can be guided to support their children with homework. Early childhood intervention and

family support are defined by Dunst (2005: 2) as "the provision and mobilisation of children's learning opportunities, parenting support, and family and community resources in a family-centered manner". Early childhood intervention is also seen as the support given to families from members of a social support network in order to help the child, parent and family to function better (Dunst, 2000: 99). For the purpose of the proposed study, family support is taken as the professional assistance and advice given to parents to help them in acquiring the necessary capabilities for parenting and to guide parents in assisting their children with homework (Dunst, Boyd, Trivette & Hamby, 2002: 221). Guiding parents help families to develop strategies to overcome challenges such as homework completion, helping their children to become independent and to promote a positive relationship in families (Graves & Shelton, 2007: 557). According to Dunst, Trivette, Davis and Cornwell (1988: 72), parents need to become guided in order to solve problems better and to meet the needs of their children.
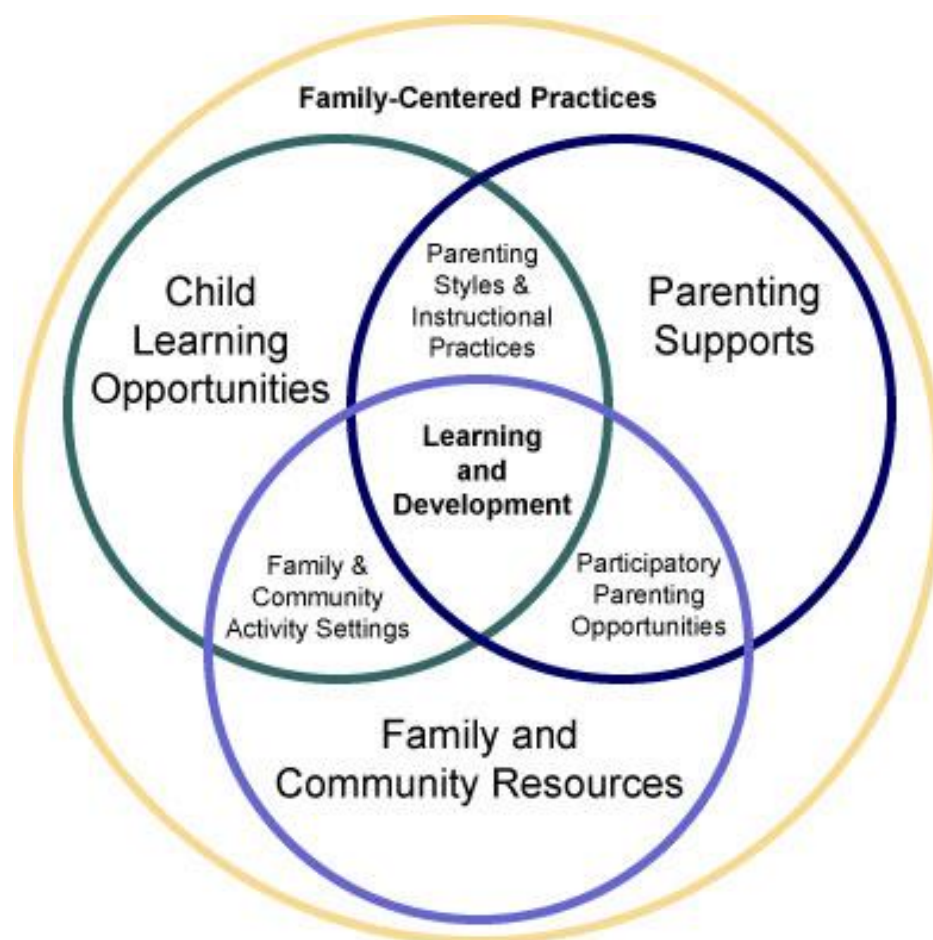
Figure 2.5: Dunst's (2005) integrated framework for practising early childhood intervention and family support.

2.5.1 Family-centred practices

The large circle indicates family-centred practices. Family-centred practices are defined by Dunst (2002: 141) as those resources and support necessary for families to care for their children in ways that will create optimal child, parent and family outcomes. Family-centered practices focus on family strengths, rather on the deficits, and are there to promote family choices and the control over resources where a relationship between parents and professionals is developed (Bruder, 2000: 107). Family-centred practices are crucial for the proposed study, because families need support from schools and teachers in order to help their children with their homework. Resources and support such as the knowledge and skills that parents acquire in order to improve life circumstances (Dunst et al., 2002: 222) will help strengthen a parents' abilities to provide their children with experiences in order to develop learner qualities such as independency (Dunst, 2002: 141). According to Thomlison (2008), many child problem behaviours such as fighting and disobedience have been prevented by family-centred practices, which lead to demonstrated improvements in family functioning.

Empowerment is viewed as the most important element of treatment success within a family-centered care model (Graves & Shelton, 2007: 557). Empowerment is explained by Dunst, Trivette, Davis and Cornwell (1988: 72) as those competencies that are already present, but due to the lack of social structure and resources, these competencies cannot operate, and for this reason new competencies needs to be learned. Graves and Shelton (2007: 557) documented empowerment as having three main components: firstly, that all people have existing strengths, and are able to build on these strengths through empowerment. Secondly, that a family's difficulty with meeting their needs are not to be explained by the inability to do so, but rather because the social system surrounding the family fails to support them and are not providing them with opportunities to display their competencies. Lastly, in order for family members to be empowered, family members must at least try to perceive the observed change. In order for a person to be empowered, he/she must have the necessary information to make informed decisions, and must be able to make behavioural changes to their own actions in order to acquire a sense of control over life events (Dunst et al., 1988: 72).

2.5.2 Parental support

The second circle represent parental support with its primary goal to strengthen families to meet the challenges of parenthood. Parental support includes advice, information and guidance to promote those new competencies that parents require to raise their children and to provide them with developmental learning opportunities (Dunst, 2004: 6). For the purpose of this study, parents need information and guidance on how to assist their children with homework as well as how to make the homework experience more enjoyable for the learner. Parental support and assistance, if supportive in nature, can enhance certain aspects of parent-child interaction (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). By supporting parents, they will be empowered to interact with their children in such a way that this has positive influence on their schoolwork (Balli, 1997), on their families (Graves & Shelton, 2007: 557) and on the parent-child relationship (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2010).

2.5.3 Child learning opportunities

The third circle represents child-learning opportunities, which include those experiences and opportunities (which can either be planned or may happen spontaneously) that help develop children as part of daily living (Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab & Bruder 2000: 151). Children need activity settings described by Dunst et al. (2000: 151) as "developmental-enhancing life experiences" in order to provide them with different kinds of learning opportunities (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Hamby, Raab & McLean, 2001: 69). Developmental-enhancing child-learning opportunities are interesting, engaging and competence producing (Dunst, 2004: 5). For the purpose of this study and in order for learners to participate in everyday natural occurring learning opportunities, Dunst et al. (2001:69) have asserted that children need different activity settings (such as swings, sandboxes or slides) in order to develop different learning opportunities (such as building sandcastles, developing movement on a swing). These everyday activities can either encourage child participation, which could then lead to more positive child development, or it can hinder child participation, leading to negative child development (Dunst et al., 2001: 69).

In order for learning opportunities to take place, Dunst, Hawks, Shields and Bennis (2001: 16) described methods and procedures that parents can use to locate and compile information about everyday community learning opportunities – also called community mapping – and the authors further assert that this is useful for

identifying natural learning environments and inclusion opportunities for learners in the Foundation Phase.

Figure 2.6 shows a model of community mapping strategies.
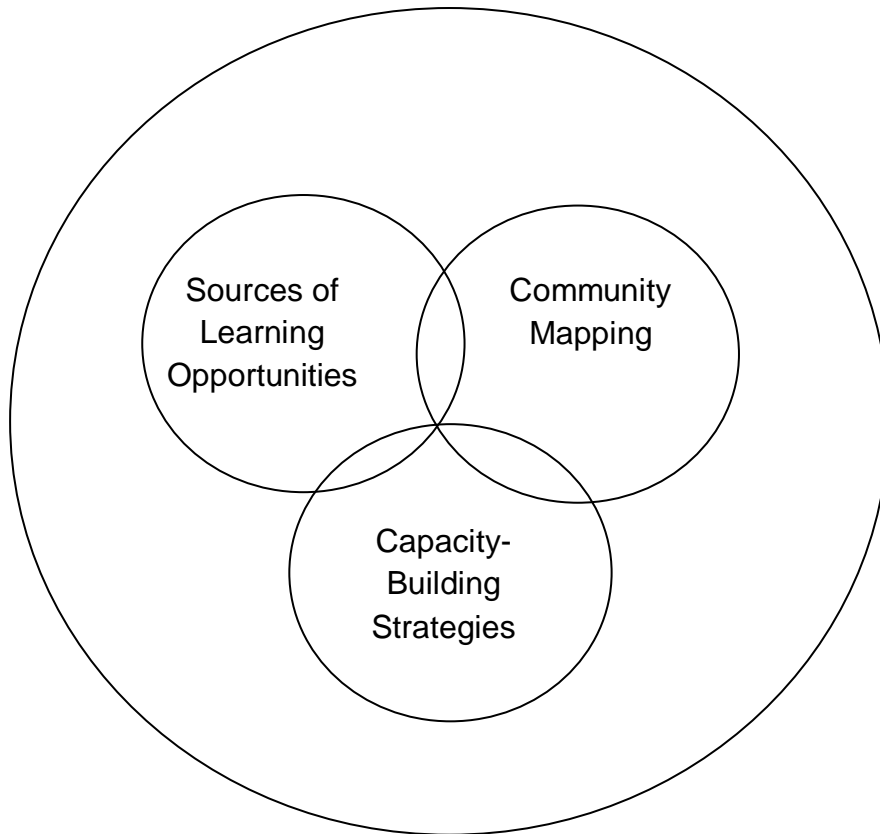
Figure 2.6: Model for identifying and promoting community activities as sources of children's learning opportunities (Dunst et al., 2001: 17).

Dunst et al. (2001: 17) explain that sources of learning opportunities refer to the community, places and events that provide Foundation Phase learners with different kinds of learning experiences. These authors elaborate that community mapping is the process of identifying and informing parents about all the different learning opportunities available in a given community, and lastly refers to capacity building strategies as the different interests of Foundation Phase learning that may increase the participation of learners in community learning activities.

2.5.4 Family and community support

According to Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab and Bruder (2000: 152), both family and community support are viewed as the two major contexts of children's learning, providing opportunities for children to participate in more formal kinds of early childhood programmes (early intervention, preschool, childcare, therapy). This system of care is a combined network of community-based services and support with the main purpose of meeting the challenges of children and their families, and helping children and their families to function better at home, in the school and in the community (Graves & Shelton, 2007: 557). The focus of the family and community support component in the model is to ensure that parents have the support and resources required that allows them the time and the energy to take on child-rearing responsibilities and parental activities (Dunst, 2004: 6). These child-rearing responsibilities can consist of the homework that children in the Foundation Phase bring home on a daily basis, with which parents can assist.

All the components discussed above need to be brought together holistically in order for a child's learning and development to take place.

2.6   CONCLUSION

Literature has revealed that homework plays a crucial role for the learner in the Foundation Phase, and that all learners experience homework differently. It became evident that homework is given to learners in the Foundation Phase on a daily basis to foster personal development, and that parents need to be involved in assisting their children with homework. It was therefore important to discuss the nature and types of parenting styles in detail in order to get a clearer perspective on why parents differ in their parental goals, skills and attitudes. From the literature gathered, it became clear that authoritative parents are more likely to assist and support their children, while authoritarian and permissive parenting tend to result in learners with a poorer record of homework completion and academic performance.

Lastly, parents and families need to be empowered in order to assist their children with homework. Carl Dunst's (2005) integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support was used to explore possible solutions, in order to resolve parents' negative attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase.

The conclusion can be made that from the given literature, a child is more likely to achieve at school if parents are involved in their child's homework process. Therefore, parents who have negative attitudes regarding homework needs to be empowered in order to overcome challenges, and to provide them with guidelines to assist their children with homework.

In Chapter 3, I will go on to explain in detail the research methodology used to determine parents' negative attitudinal problems regarding homework in the Foundation Phase, and the methods of analysis devised in this study to make sense of why parents have negative attitudes regarding homework. Ethical considerations are also discussed.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 the perspectives on the importance of homework in the Foundation Phase was discussed, with specific focus on the purpose of homework, and how learners experience it. The nature and types of parenting styles were highlighted in order to determine the impact of parent's attitudes on their child's homework experience. Carl Dunst's (2005) integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention was used as theoretical framework to explain the importance of family support in the homework experience, and to identify possible guidelines to address parent's negative attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase. In this chapter, I explain the research methodology that I used to address parents' negative attitudes regarding homework. Ethical considerations are then discussed.

3.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

Glatthorn and Joyner (2005: 97) describe a research design as a "specific plan for studying the research problem", which in this case, investigates parent's negative attitudinal problems regarding homework in the Foundation Phase. In support of this description, Nieuwenhuis (2007: 70) refers to a research design as being based on the researcher's assumptions, research skills and research practice, which influence the reasons for collecting data. In the section that follows, the research paradigm, approach and type are discussed.

3.2.1 Paradigm

Nieuwenhuis (2007: 47) defines a paradigm as "a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world-view", which further provides the researcher with a lens through which the results of the study can be interpreted (Ferreira, 2012: 35). My research was conducted from a social constructivist paradigm. In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2012: 24). The current research assumes that parents' negative attitudes towards homework has a

detrimental impact on the learner in the Foundation Phase, but that the reality can only be accessed through social constructions such as language (interviewing parents), consciousness and shared meaning (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 59). I therefore relied as much as possible on the participant's views of the phenomena.

The social constructivist paradigm allowed for an understanding of phenomena under scrutiny by means of the way in which they are understood by participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 59). I therefore made use of open-ended questions, so that the participants can construct meaning through interacting with others (Creswell, 2012: 25). Nieuwenhuis (2007: 59) asserts that the main purpose of social constructivism is to make sense of a situation, and to provide insight into the way in which a particular group (parents) makes sense of the situation (homework) they encounter. In Table 3.1, Nieuwenhuis's (2007: 59) assumptions regarding the social constructivist's perspectives are shown in relation to the features of the study.

Table 3.1: Social constructivist paradigm (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 57) and its application to this study.

Assumptions	Relation to features of this study
"Human life can only be understood from within", therefore a focus ought to be placed on how people construct meaning and interact with others.	By making use of face-to-face open-ended focus group interviews, I encourage participants to share their homework experiences as well as how they feel while helping their children with homework. This will help me to listen carefully to what people say or do in their life setting.
"Social life is a distinctively human product" and placing people in their social context will help in understanding their perceptions.	The environment in which learners complete homework assignments needs to be considered, as it plays an important role in how parents and learners experience the homework

	process.
"The human mind is the purposive source of the origin of meaning" and by exploring the phenomena, one can get a better understanding of what people say it means to them.	Through an in-depth literature study, the purpose of homework, its importance and the impact it has on a learner in the Foundation Phase, a clearer understanding of why homework is necessary and what challenges parents face while assisting their children with homework became possible.
"Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world", helping us to enrich our theoretical framework.	Through interacting with participants directly, I was able to understand the issues regarding homework better.
"The social world does not "exist" independently of human knowledge". Our own knowledge influences the way in which we conduct research.	My prior teaching experiences and the knowledge I have gained from reading literature regarding homework helped me to formulate a set of questions, and to fix the way in which the research was conducted.

Creswell (2012: 25) points out that the strength of a social constructivist paradigm is to make sense of the meanings that others have about the world as researchers, who sometimes use their own background to make interpretations and to position themselves in the research. Social constructivism also provides the researcher with an in-depth description of the way in which a particular group makes sense of their situation they encounter (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 60).

3.2.2 Approach

Since the purpose of my study is to explore the way in which parent's negative attitudes impact their child's homework experience, I chose to make use of a qualitative research method, which enabled me to collect data in a face-to-face situation with selected persons in their settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 315). The qualitative approach is defined by Page and Meyer (2000: 18) as a focus on the words and feelings that people use to describe an event or experience. Qualitative research allowed me to access the inner experience of my participants and to determine how they formulate their own meanings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 12). According to Nieuwenhuis (2007: 51) following a qualitative approach helps the researcher to study people by interacting with them and observing them in their natural environment. In this study, focus group interviews allow for in-depth engagement with participant's meanings and interpretations that they assign to the phenomena under investigation.

Creswell (2009: 175) has made a list of the characteristics of a qualitative research that captures both traditional perspectives and the newer self-reflective perspectives of qualitative inquiry. In Table 3.2 these are listed next to the way in which they feature in the current study.

Table   3.2: The key characteristics of Qualitative Research (Creswell, 2009: 175) and their application in this study.

Characteristics	How it features in the study
Data is collected in the participant's **natural setting**.	Data was collected in research sites chosen by the participants, which in this case, was their own Grade 2 classroom at a school situated in Lyttleton, Pretoria.
The researcher is the **key instrument** to collecting data.	I made use of face-to-face focus group interviews to collect data, gathering the information interpersonally, rather than via questionnaires.

Multiple sources of data are used.	I made use of face-to-face focus group interviews, observations and documents to gather in-depth data and did not rely only on a single data source.
An **inductive data analysis** enables the researcher to work through the data by organising it into increasingly more abstract units of information.	The aim of the data analysis was to work back and forth between the themes until establishing a comprehensive set of themes.
Qualitative research focuses on the **meanings that participants** hold about the problem under research.	The purpose of my study is to explore how parents' negative attitudes impact their child's homework experience and therefore I focused on the meaning that parents from learners in the Foundation Phase make from their experience homework.
The research process for qualitative researchers is **emergent,** where the initial plan for research may change.	I remained aware of the fact that my research question may change and that the forms of data collection may shift, and I therefore kept an open mind when analysing my data.
A **theoretical lens** is used in qualitative studies to view concepts of culture, as well as racial and class differences.	I made use of Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practising early childhood intervention and family support as my theoretical framework.

Qualitative research is a form of **interpretive inquiry,** in which researchers make an in-depth interpretation of what they see.	I made an interpretation of what I saw, heard and understood and acknowledge the fact that my interpretations cannot be separated from my own backgrounds and prior understandings of the phenomenon under research.
Holistic account - Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study.	I tried to present a holistic view of how parent's negative attitudes influence their child's homework experience and by reporting on multiple perspectives.

The goal of qualitative research, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 315), is to understand social phenomena from the participant's perspective. This can be achieved through analysing the meanings that the participants construct. Since the purpose of the study is to explore how parents' negative attitudes impact their child's homework experience, I chose to make use of the qualitative approach, as it enabled me to look at the participants' feelings, beliefs, ideas, thoughts and actions in an attempt to generate an understanding of the impact of these on children's experience of homework.

3.2.3 Type

I chose to conduct a qualitative, phenomenological research study, because I believe that it is the most suitable research design through which to collect the data needed to lead to an in-depth understanding of the effect that parent's negative attitudes have on a child's homework experience.

Phenomenological research is suitable for the study under investigation, as it allows for the investigation of the research problem from different epistemological perspectives (Morgan & Sklar, 2012: 75). Phenomenological studies are defined by Nieuwenhuis (2007: 75) as a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain […] phenomenon of interest", where this

approach is used to understand the participant's perspectives on their everyday lived experiences of the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 26).

Four characteristics of a phenomenological design are described by Morgan and Sklar (2012: 75). As a design that looks at a phenomenon over a period of time, it explores individual differences, the phenomenon in context, as well as various sources of information. The phenomenological research design would therefore be useful for the study under investigation, as it allowed me to study a small number of participants through extensive engagement with them, in order to assist in developing patterns that describe the meaning that the participants assign to the problem (Creswell, 2009: 13). This research method helped me to consider every phenomenon as unique (Page & Meyer, 2000: 22) and to put aside all prejudgments, rather than to collect data on how the participants make sense out of a particular situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:26).

Phenomenological research is used to investigate the phenomenon itself, rather than breaking it down, which means that the core of the experience is explored (Morgan & Sklar, 2012: 74). In this study, parent's negative attitudes towards homework are explored in order to determine how these negative attitudes influence a child's homework experience. In a phenomenological research design, participants are chosen based on specific criteria.

Conducting this phenomenological research enabled me to reach a description of each of the participants' experiences of the homework process, in order to explore both the reasons why parents have negative attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase, as well as the impact of parent's negative attitudes have on a child in the Foundation Phase in their experience of homework.

The research methods applied in this study are discussed next.

3.3   RESEARCH METHODS

The following section details strategies and techniques used during the sampling, data collection, data documentation and data analysis processes. My role as researcher is attended to first.

3.3.1 The role of the researcher

As a qualitative researcher, my main role is to be an interviewer and an observer. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 344), an interviewer begins to establish the research role from the first contact with the participant, when making an appointment, explaining the purpose of the study, and elucidating the confidentiality of the participant.

Qualitative researchers develop relationships with the participants, and are therefore tempted to follow personal expectations in interpreting observations (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 115). The more involvement there is with participants, the greater the risk of bias taking place. In order to prevent bias entering into the study, continuous self-reflection is necessary in order to create an open and honest research narrative (Creswell, 2007: 192). As a qualitative researcher, I realise the importance of reflecting on my role as a researcher. I am also aware of the fact that my current teaching experience as a Foundation Phase educator creates a lens through which I observe the problem I intend to investigate.

3.3.2 Participants and Research site

Nieuwenhuis (2007: 79) defines sampling as "the process used to select a portion of the population for study" and continues by pointing out that purposive sampling is generally used for qualitative studies. In this study, I made use of purposive sampling, as participants were selected based on defining characteristics, and specifically for the purpose of collecting the best data possible in order to answer the research question (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 79). Babbie (2008: 204) asserts that it is appropriate to select a sample on the basis of knowledge, its elements, and the purpose of the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 319) note further that participants are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under investigation.

Purposive sampling is usually of smaller scope, and can range from 1 to 40 depending on the purpose, research problem and the data collection strategy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 322). This study has 15 participants, ensuring rich data collection.

According to Creswell (2009: 178) the decision to choose participants and research sites depends on four aspects, namely: the setting where the research is going to

take place; the actors who will be observed and interviewed; the events; and the process of events that is undertaken by the participants within the setting.

The research setting/site is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 319) as a setting selected by the researcher in which to locate participants involved in the study. For the purpose of the research under study, the setting is a Grade 2 classroom in a primary school, situated in an established neighbourhood, due to the fact that I am currently a teacher at the school, as well as that the parents chosen for the study are parents from learners attending the selected school. Information about the selected school is indicated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Information about the research site.

Research site	Number of classes in the Foundation Phase	Number of learners in each grade	Language of instruction	Population group	Time taken to complete homework on a daily basis per grade
Primary school situated in Lyttleton, Centurion	Grade 1 = 4 Grade 2 = 5 Grade 3 = 5	1= 120 2= 140 3= 140	English	Black 80% White 5% Indian 5% Coloured 5% Other 5%	1 = 30 min 2 = 15 min 3 = 30 min

Creswell (2009: 178) states that a researcher ought to gain access to the research site by seeking approval of gatekeepers. As I am currently a teacher at the selected school, I explained the purpose of the study to the principal and asked for permission to conduct focus group interviews with parents of learners in the Foundation Phase. I explained that the research would take place after school hours and would last approximately one hour for each focus group interview (three focus group interviews were conducted). My principal gave me permission to conduct research at the specific school and agreed to sign a letter of permission (see Appendix A).

Parents from learners in the Foundation Phase were asked to complete a reply slip (See Appendix B) where they were required to indicate how they felt about homework. From this reply slip, I chose five parents, who indicated that they felt homework to cause conflict and tension (negative set parents), and five parents who indicated that homework is seen as the time of the day when the have the valuable opportunity to interact with their children (positive set parents). Five parents from disadvantaged environments where chosen on the grounds of my knowledge of where they live, and the indication that this provided of their financial disadvantages. The reason I made use of parents from disadvantaged environments is to explore what impact the absence of resources necessary to do homework may have on the homework process. Sometimes parents are more than willing to assist their children with homework, but find it difficult to do so because they do not have all the necessary resources (electricity, internet, and stationary) available for them. This can lead to parents feeling helpless, leading on to negative attitudes about homework.

The actors/participants are parents from learners in the Foundation Phase and were selected based on the following criteria:

- The first focus group consisted out of five parents that are positive about homework. These parents see homework as a good thing and find no problem helping their children with homework.
- The second focus group consisted of five parents that are negative about the whole homework process. These parents see homework as a barrier and feel that is takes time and only causes frustration leading to family dysfunction.
- The last focus group consisted of five parents that come from disadvantaged environments. These parents do not have the resources (electricity, internet, and stationary) available that they need in order to assist their children with homework. These parents do not necessarily have negative attitudes towards homework itself, but are led to feeling this way indirectly, due to their circumstances.

The selected participants were invited to take part in the study. All of them agreed to the focus group interviews, and all signed the letters of informed consent (see Appendix C). The participants selected for the study were expected to attend interview sessions at the school. They were interviewed based on how they

experience the homework process, where English was designated as the language of engagement.

3.3.3 Data collection

Data is defined by Seabi (2012: 88) as "bits and pieces of information found in the environment", and are used to focus on what the phenomenon under research means to the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 340). For the purpose of the study, I made use of the following data collection methods in order to answer the research question.

3.3.3.1 Semi-structured focus group interviews

Seabi (2012: 89) has defined interviewing as a method used to collect rich and descriptive data about the views, ideas, beliefs and opinions of the participants, enabling the researcher to understand their social reality. The aim of interviews, according to Nieuwenhuis (2007: 87), is to see the world through the eyes of the participant, as they are a valuable source of information. For the purpose of the study, semi-structured focus group interviews were used in order to explore the reasons why some parents held negative attitudes regarding homework.

Semi-structured interviews require the participants to answer a set of predetermined questions, as this will allow the researcher to clarify answers (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 87). Semi-structured interviews allow the participants to respond with no limitations, as the questions are open-ended (Page & Meyer, 2000: 112). The researcher needs to listen to responses to these questions carefully, and needs to be attentive, so that new emerging lines and questions related to the problem being studied can be identified and explored (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 87).

I made use of three semi-structured focus group interviews, as I needed to interview three different groups of parents. Seabi (2012: 90) defines focus group interviews as a method of interviewing that can be useful when the researcher does not know what all the issues surrounding a specific topic may be. During focus group interviews, a sampled group is interviewed together (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 360). The use of these interviews creates a social environment in which all members are stimulated by one another's perceptions, views and ideas, helping the researcher to obtain quality data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 360). Parents in each group in this study have more or less similar backgrounds, making the use of focus group interviews worthwhile, as parents influence one another to

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express their feelings regarding homework. Page and Meyer (2000: 112) have stated that focus group interviews usually follow a specific format, namely: an initial introductory question is posed to the participants to discuss the issues regarding the topic being researched; key issues and words are later transcribed; while other relevant questions can then be asked of the participants, helping the researcher to gain as much data as possible.

I prepared my focus group interview schedules according to a set of predetermined questions (see Appendix D).

Nieuwenhuis (2007: 88) has identified key factors that are required in order to ensure successful interviewing. Table 3.4 shows the way in which factors of successful interviewing are applied to this research so as to ensure the success of interviews as a data gathering technique.

Table 3.4: Key aspects to successful interviewing (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 88) and their application in this study.

Keys to successful interviewing	How I successfully implemented it into my study.
Find participants **best qualified** to provide data.	I made use of a reply slip that parents needed to fill in in order to determine which parents would be best suited to interview.
State the **aim** of the interview.	Before I started with my research, I informed all my participants of the aim of the study as well as of the information I needed from them. I also informed them that at any stage during the research, they would be allowed to withdraw from the study. Confidentiality was also discussed.

Ensure that your data is **saturated.**	At the end of all the focus group interviews, I made sure that I had enough rich and descriptive data on the phenomenon under investigation.
Ensure a good **questioning strategy.**	Throughout the interview process I made sure to avoid yes/no questions. I ensured that my questions were clear and neutral. To avoid making the interview too long, I kept the number of questions to a minimum.
The **type of question** is important.	I made sure that throughout the interview process I included a variety of questions, ranging from experience and behavioural questions, to opinion and value questions. I also made used of feeling questions and knowledge questions.
Be a **good listener.**	In order to be a good listener I reminded myself that I am there to listen to what my participants have to say, and not to dominate the conversation. I did not judge or criticise any of my participants, or become part of a disagreement with any of them.
Observe at all times.	Throughout the interview process, I observed my participant's non-verbal

	communication in order to gather more data. I made eye contact at all times and kept an upright posture to show my interest in their views.

All the focus group interviews were recorded using a tape recorder with the permission of the participants. Creswell (2009: 183) states that an interview protocol ought to be used when recording answers during a qualitative interview. This protocol includes the following: all recordings ought to have a heading, indicating the date, place, who the interviewer is and who is being interviewed. It should have instructions. The main research question ought to be followed by about five sub-questions, ending with a concluding statement or question. Spaces should be left between the questions, in order to record responses, and lastly a thank-you statement to acknowledge the participants. During the interview process, I also tried to capture non-verbal cues, such as body posture and facial expressions, from participants.

3.3.3.2 Documents

Apart from the focus group interviews, I also made use of documents. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007: 82) the use of documents as a data gathering technique helps the researcher to focus on written documents that may shed light on the phenomenon under research. These written documents may include letters, reports, email messages, faxes, or any other document that will help with the research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 82). For the purpose of this study, parents were asked to document their personal experiences using diary entries or journals. This enabled me to obtain thoughtful data compiled by the participants themselves (Creswell, 2009: 180) and which accurately describes the participant's action, experiences and beliefs (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 357).

3.3.3.3 Observation

Seabi (2012: 91) describes observation as a systematic process of collecting data where the researcher gathers data by making use of his/her senses (sight and sound) without communicating with the participants. This technique of gathering information relies on the researcher seeing and hearing and notating these

observations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 207). Using data collection methods enabled me to gain a deeper insight into and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. As there are different types of observation in a qualitative study, I decided to become a complete observer (I will only observe the situation from a distance and will not participate in the discussion), as it allowed me to look at the situation from a distance (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 85). By observing participants I was able to note their body language and posture when asking/listening to a question. Observing also enabled me to record information as it occurred (Creswell, 2009: 179). This means that while I was asking questions, I immediately made notes on the way in which parents reacted, as well as what aspects about homework made them uncomfortable and which they found difficult to discuss.

3.3.4 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 364) as "an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among these categories". Nieuwenhuis (2007: 99) defines it as using different approaches, processes and procedures in order to understand and make meaning of the qualitative data that has been collected from those under research. Creswell (2009: 183) compares data analysis to an onion being peeled, where different analyses moving progressively deeper into an understanding of the data.

In order to make sense of the data from this study, and to answer the research questions guiding it, I used the following steps shown in Figure 3.1 suggested by Creswell (2009: 185), McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 368) and Nieuwenhuis (2007: 103).
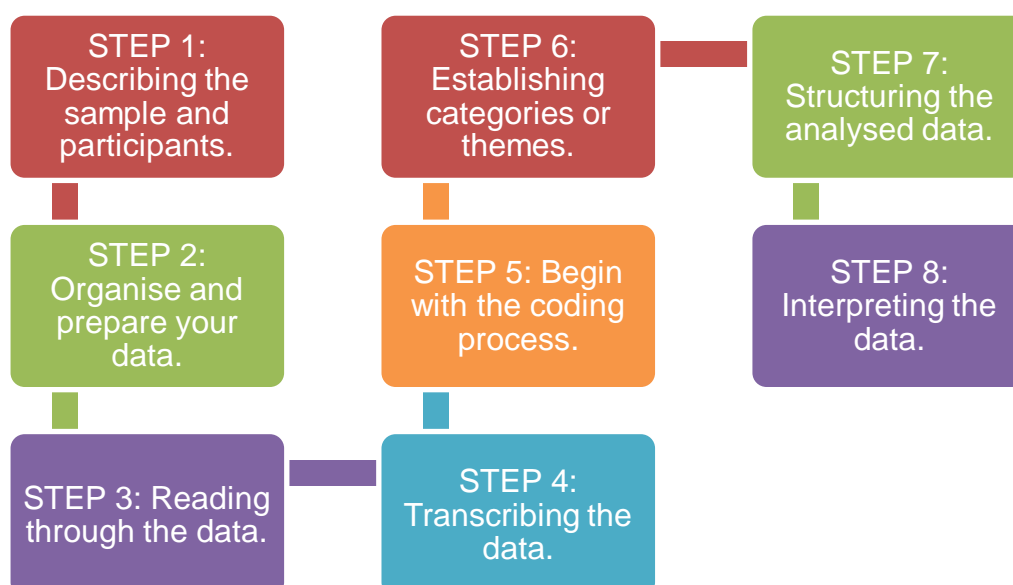
Figure 3.1: Steps to be followed in order to analyse and interpret qualitative data, as suggested by Creswell (2009: 185), McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 368), and Nieuwenhuis (2007: 103).

The first step in analysing data is to describe the sample and participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 103). As mentioned earlier in the study, I made use of three focus group interviews consisting of five parents who felt positively towards the homework process, five parents who felt negatively regarding homework, and five parents from disadvantaged environments. Understanding is pursued by giving a description of the participants and the research context, in order to grasp the reality of the phenomenon under investigation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 103). The next step was to organise and prepare the data gathered. This step involved sorting and arranging data into different types depending on the source of information (Creswell, 2009: 185). The study involves a small group of people, allowing for data to be organised according to the setting, the situation, participant's perspectives, activities, processes, relationships and social structures (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 368).

Next, I read through the data in order to obtain a general sense of the information gathered (Creswell, 2009: 185). Maree (2011: 104) states that good analysis depends on an understanding of the data gathered, and says that by knowing your data better, you must read and reread the text. This process is better known as "memoing" and is described by Maree (2011: 105) as something that researchers engage in throughout their studies and build into a journal, containing their own reflective notes about what was gleaned from the data.

After I read through the data, the process of transcribing it began. As I made use of audio-taped interviews, I needed to transcribe it to typed files. Transcribing data is best done by the researcher themselves, as the researcher will most probably include non-verbal cues in the transcript (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 104). Nieuwenhuis (2007: 104) further asserts that it is best to transcribe data word for word, as important elements of the conversation should not be ignored.

The transcript of each interview was read through carefully, in order to divide it into meaningful analytical units that are possible to code. This process of coding is described by Creswell (2009: 186) as "organising the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information". These segments of data can be marked using symbols, descriptive words or unique identifying names

(Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 105). Creswell (2009: 186) provides a useful sequence for the coding process, as shown in Figure 3.2, in order to engage the researcher in a systematic process of analysing textual data.

Step 1
- Read through all the transcripts: I read through all of my transcripts in order to get a sense of the whole.

Step 2
- Pick one document: Creswell (2007: 186) assert that by picking out one document to read through, this enables the researcher to write down thoughts of what the document was about.

Step 3
- Make a list of all the topics: After I read through all the documents I clustered together all the similar topics.

Step 4
- Go back: After I made a list of all the topics I went back to my data and wrote down codes next to the appropriate segments of the text.

Step 5
- Find the most descriptive wording: descriptive wording was then turned into categories.

Step 6
- Make a final decision: I made a final decision on the naming of each of the categories.

Step 7
- I assembled the data material belonging together in each category in one place.

Step 8
- I recoded the data that remains.

Figure 3.2: The coding process described by Creswell (2007: 186) and the application thereof in my study.

The coding process enables the researcher to retrieve and collect all the text associated with a given thematic idea in order to examine them together (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 105). From these codes, I looked for emerging themes or categories. This step involves using the coding to generate a small number of

themes (five to seven) so as to create headings in the findings section of my study (Creswell, 2007: 189). Nieuwenhuis (2007: 108) explains that these themes should then be given a label or identifying name, by using descriptive phrases or words from the text. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 370) define themes as "a more general and abstract entity that represents the meaning of similar topics". McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 370) further assert that certain strategies should be followed in order to form themes: Firstly, it is necessary to ask questions, such as who, when, where and what, in order to lead the researcher to more refined questions. Secondly, a sentence or a phrase should be analysed, where the researcher must then compare the data to a similar situation. Lastly, the researcher must identify "red flags", which is unclear phrases that needs more clarity.

Before I moved on to the next step, I made sure that I completed my categorisation by rereading my transcripts to ensure that I had captured all the essential insights that emerged during the coding process. Nieuwenhuis (2007: 110) has stated that it is crucial to bring meaning to words by identifying themes that will facilitate understanding and to organise these themes into categories that summarise and bring meaning to the text.

The next step will be to bring order and structure into the categories identified. Nieuwenhuis (2007: 110) asserts that the identified categories ought to be linked to other categories in order to trace connections. This relationship among concepts is called concept mapping, and is defined by Babbie (2008: 427) as "a graphical display of concepts and their interrelations, useful in the formulation of [a] theory". Nieuwenhuis (2007: 111) states that there are many types of graphical displays that can be used in qualitative data. I made use of sticky notes or note cards in order to create a display of categories that allowed for connections to be made visually between them. By displaying the findings visually, I attempted to answer the research questions and construct a narrative discussion to explain what I have learned from the data analysis. See Chapter 4 for a detailed analysis of the data.

Finally, I interpreted the findings by giving an overview of them, comparing this to past research and personally reflecting on the meaning of the data from my own perspective (Creswell, 2007: 189). Nieuwenhuis (2007: 112) points out that the ultimate aim of interpreting data is to draw up conclusions of the findings as well as to ask further questions (Creswell, 2007: 190).

3.4   TRUSTWORTHINESS

The trustworthiness of the data refers to the way in which data is collected, sorted and classified in a qualitative study (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 140) and is further described by Nieuwenhuis (2007: 113) as the acid test of the data analysis, findings and conclusions.

Di Fabio and Maree (2012: 140) explain that there are different ways in which the validity and reliability of qualitative data collection instruments can be secured, and evaluated, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Credibility of data includes clarifying the study's basic theoretical orientation, explaining the process and reason that led the researcher to explore a certain phenomenon, and reporting everything that affected the researcher's work, so that the information can be handed to external evaluators for their own interpretation of the data. (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 140). To ensure the credibility of the data I made use of member checking, to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings (Creswell, 2007: 191). During this process participants and other people who may have an interest in the research are given the chance to comment on the research findings, interpretations and conclusions and express their feelings about it (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 114). Creswell (2007: 191) states that the process of member checking can be undertaken through conducting a follow-up interview with the participants, giving them the opportunity to comment on the findings, or it can be done through casual conversations in informal situations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 326). As a researcher I ensured to keep in touch with participants, as this enabled me to follow up on the research findings.

Transferability is regarded as the way in which the reader can take the findings from the research, and transfer it to other contexts (Maree, 2007: 301). According to Di Fabio and Maree (2012: 140) all aspects and features of the research ought to be described, enabling researchers to assess whether the qualitative results are transferable to other contexts.

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the research process and the methods over time, and how this influences the degree of control in the study (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 140). Di Fabio and Maree (2012: 140) further assert that through monitoring the quality of the recordings and transcription of the data, the

documents, and the methods of observations, the credibility of the research procedure is strengthened.

Lastly, the conformability refers to the "objectivity of data and the absence of research errors" (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 140). To ensure conformability of the data, an external researcher who was not part of the study should assess whether the methods and general procedures of the study are described clearly. The involvement of an external auditor is another recommendation made by Creswell (2007: 192) in the process of validating a qualitative study. This involves the researcher requesting a person outside the project to review the study, and to provide feedback on it strengths and weaknesses. Such a review can be done either throughout the process, or at the conclusion of the study (Creswell, 2007: 192). Di Fabio and Maree (2012: 141) describe the role of an auditor as someone who verifies the conformability of the data, through assessing whether the methods and procedures used in the study are described clearly, and in detail, so as to allow for data verification. The role of an external auditor/ experienced researcher was fulfilled by the supervisor, who guided the research process and reviewed the findings and interpretations to ensure their trustworthiness. The external examiner/s appointed to review my dissertation at the end of my study will fulfil the role of the knowledgeable person/s on the topic of parent involvement in the homework process.

Nieuwenhuis (2007: 113) points out that since qualitative research is based on the researcher's interpretation of the data, procedures used for the assessing the trustworthiness of the data analysis should be kept in mind. Nieuwenhuis (2007: 113) and Creswell (2007: 191) recommend the use of multiple strategies to enhance the researcher's ability to access the accuracy of the findings.

Triangulation is seen as a strategy frequently used to assess the accuracy of research findings, and involves the use of different sources of information, methods, researchers, theories and types of data (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 140). Page and Meyer (2000: 44) define triangulation as "the use of more than one research method to provide convergent evidence". Nieuwenhuis (2007: 40) however suggests that the term "crystallisation" should be used rather than "triangulation", because it provides a better lens through which to view the components in qualitative research, and it provides the researcher with more ways if interpreting their observations (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012: 142). By making use of focus group

interviews, documents and observations, the use of different data collection methods was ensured, so as to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

To further enhance the trustworthiness of the interpretation and reporting of the research findings, McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 325) suggest that the researcher must ensure prolonged and persistent field work. Creswell (2007: 192) refers to this as spending enough time in the field in order for the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, as well as also to procure more detail about the research site and the participants. Through spending enough time in the field, it was possible to recheck the data collected, and it also allowed me to refine ideas and to ensure a match between the data I have as evidence and participant reality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 325).

Nieuwenhuis (2007: 115) asserts that the goal of a qualitative research is not to generalise findings across a population, but rather to seek insight into the participant's perspectives, experiences, attitudes and behaviour. Finally, Nieuwenhuis (2007: 115) states that it is important to choose your quotes carefully, as this can lend valuable support to data interpretation. The words of the participants should never be used out of context, and the quotes should be long enough for the reader to determine the meaning of what the participant was trying to convey. The researcher should never force their own interpretation on the data, or use quotes that illustrate their own take on the matter (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 115).

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 333) state that conducting qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than a quantitative study, and therefore ethical guidelines like obtaining informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, privacy and caring, ought to be in place. According to Maree (2007: 300), when working with individuals, it is important to understand and pay attention to the ethical guidelines of informed consent and voluntary participation, protection from harm and privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. In adhering to these guidelines, my first step was to apply for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (see Appendix E). Once my ethics application was approved, I could proceed with the research process. Ferreira (2012: 38) explains that throughout the study, specific strategies should be used to ensure that the research being conducted will be done in an ethical way.

3.5.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Creswell (2009: 89) states that throughout the data collection process, the researcher ought to respect the participants and the research site, as many ethical issues can arise during this stage of the research (see 3.3.2 for information about the research site and the participants and how access was obtained). I informed my participants that their identity would remain confidential, as some participants might feel that their names ought not be mentioned. Creswell (2009: 89) states that it is very important that participants be well informed about the possible risks involved in participating in the research.

After introducing myself to the participants, I discussed the purpose of the study with them, as well as the procedures that would follow, and the information I needed from them. I read through the letter of informed consent (see Appendix B) and explained their rights to them. I also informed them that their identity would held confidential and that no names would mentioned. All the participants signed the letters of informed consent, and I could proceed with the focus group interviews. It is also important to gain permission from the individuals in authority at the research site (Creswell, 2009: 90). I gained permission from the principal of the school to conduct research. The principal signed the letter of informed consent (See Appendix A), which identified the extent of time, the potential impact and the outcomes of the research.

3.5.2 Protection from harm

Although physical harm to participants seldom occurs during qualitative research, McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 335) assert that some participants may experience humiliation and loss of trust. During the study I tried to be honest, respectful and sympathetic towards all my participants in order to prevent harm. Babbie (2008: 68) states that the revealing of information can embarrass the participants, or endanger their friendships or jobs. During the research, I informed my participants that no information about them would be revealed.

3.5.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Babbie (2008: 69) defines anonymity as "being guaranteed in a research project when neither the researchers nor the readers of the findings can identify a given response with a given respondent" and confidentiality as "when a researcher can identify a given person's responses but promise not to do so publically". All the

participants' information and responses shared during the study were kept private and the results were presented in an anonymous manner in order to protect the identities of the participants. I assured my participants that their identities would not be revealed at any stage during the research, that the information that they share with me would be kept confidential, and that they could request insight into the reporting of the findings at any time.

I made sure during the research process that I conducted the research according to the Ethics and Research Statement provided by the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria.

3.6   CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to give a detailed description of the research methodology used to explore the way I which parents' negative attitudes impact their child's homework experience. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of how parents of learners in the Foundation Phase experience the issue under investigation, I followed a qualitative research approach and conducted a phenomenological study. I made use of purposive sampling in selecting a primary school situated in an established neighbourhood and conducted three focus group interviews with parents from learners in the Foundation Phase at the selected school. A detailed discussion of the analysis of the data and interpretation of the findings will follow in Chapter 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a qualitative approach was followed in conducting this phenomenological research study. A primary school situated in an established neighbourhood was selected through purposeful sampling, and semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with parents from learners in the Foundation Phase at this school. The purpose of the interviews was to collect data from positive set parents, negative set parents, and parents from disadvantage environments, regarding their experiences and concerns about homework in the Foundation Phase.

This chapter presents the research findings. This is done according to similar topics, clustered together, from which themes and categories emerged. I started off with a description of all the parents who participated in the focus group interviews. Thereafter, the themes and categories that emerged from the data are presented, and quotes from the transcribed focus group interviews are used to support the findings.

4.2   DESCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUPS

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, their names, the names of their children, and the name of the school will not be used. I refer to the positive set parents as 'Group 1', and the parents participating in that group as 'Participants 1-4'. The negative set parents are in 'Group 2', with the parents participating in that group as 'Participants 5-7'. Finally, 'Group 3' are the parents from disadvantage environments with parents participated in that group as 'Participants 8-11'.

4.2.1   Group 1

Group 1 consists of four parents, who indicated that they see homework as the time of the day when they can interact with their child/ren and that they find no problem assisting their child/ren with homework. Participant 1 is a grandmother of a learner in Grade 3. Although the child's parents also live with them, the grandmother had assumed the responsibility of looking after her, and assisting her with all school-

related activities, including homework. Participant 1 is a stay-at-home grandmother, and picks her granddaughter up directly after school.

Participant 2 is a mother from a learner in Grade 2, a teacher, and the senior phase Head of Department at the school where the research has been conducted. She is also the mother to a Grade R learner and a Grade 5 learner. She is married to a company worker with long hours giving her the responsibly of assisting with homework in the afternoons. As mentioned, she is a teacher, and is able to find sufficient time in the afternoons to assist with homework.

Participant 3 is a mother of learners in Grade 3, and Grade 7, respectively. She is an assistant working in a Grade 1 class, and therefore does not have any other responsibilities after school. She used to work in a company, but after realising that this left her with no time for her children, she decided to change her circumstances. With sufficient time in the afternoons, she assists her children with their homework, awaiting their father, who arrives home later, but is also willing to help where he can.

Lastly, Participant 4 is a mother to a learner in Grade 3 and in Grade 7. She used to be a stay-at-home mother, but decided to become an assistant in a Grade 1 class, feeling she needed to do something throughout the day. She has a husband working away from home, who only visits them on a monthly basis. Being an assistant, she does not have any after-school activities, and therefore finds sufficient time to assist her children with their homework.

All four participants indicated that they were able to attend to focus group interviews as arranged, but only three attended the focus group interview, as Participant 2 fell ill during the study. Her interview data was collected via correspondence, and included in the transcribed data.

4.2.2 Group 2

Group 2 consisted of parents who indicated that they feel that homework causes conflict and tension between them and their children, and that they only assist with homework because it is part of their parental commitment. Finding participants in this group was challenging, because parents tended to indicate that they do not have time to come for an interview, as they are working parents and only get home late in the evenings. After some searching, I found four parents who would be willing to participate.

Participant 5 is a mother to a learner in Grade 3 and a learner in Grade 5. Being a single mother, financial assistant at the school where research was conducted, as well as supervising over the aftercare centre until 6 o'clock, she experienced difficulty in assisting her daughters with their homework. The family also resided with her aunt, making things difficult at home and causing certain tension. Her children only see their father every second weekend, making it her responsibility to take care of them throughout the week alone.

Participant 6 is a mother to twins in Grade 2 and a learner in Grade 4. She is a stay-at-home mother, but due to financial constraints she has to walk to school every day to drop off her children, and then in the afternoons, she picks them up and walks back. She informed me that homework can sometimes be fun for her, but that most of the time, she finds it difficult because of her circumstances. Her husband is working late every day, making it her responsible to assist with homework.

Participant 7 is a mother to five learners, from Grade 1 to Grade 6. She also took in two abandoned children, and looks after her domestic workers' child as well. Between all the children that she cares for, she works a full day in order to provide for them. When asked how she experiences homework, she informed me that she cannot handle it anymore, and that some days are very difficult.

All three participants indicated that they would be willing to attend the focus group interview.

4.2.3 Group 3

Group 3 consists of four parents who indicated that although they see homework as a quality time spent with their children, their financial and personal circumstances can sometimes cause difficulty to them in helping with homework.

Participant 8 is a single mother to a Grade 2 learner and a four year old. She is also a Grade 1 assistant, and supports herself and her children on her own salary. She recently moved in with her boyfriend, because she couldn't pay her rent by herself. Her children do not see their father, and she does not receive any child support from him. Being Afrikaans in an English school can sometimes be very challenging for the Grade 2 learner, but because her mother works at the school, it is necessary to keep her child at the school, where transport and fees are logistically more

feasible for her. Assisting with homework can sometimes be very challenging for Participant 8, as she struggles financially.

Participant 9 is a single mother to a learner in Grade 2 and Grade 12, respectively. Working full days in order to provide for her children makes it difficult to assist with homework, as both needs to attend aftercare. Because she struggles financially, she does not own her own car, and needs to depend on other people to take her places. As their father is in jail, she does not receive any child support, making it more difficult for her to cope.

Participant 10 is a mother to a learner in Grade 2, as well as a two year old. In addition, from this year on, she also takes care of two Grade 1 learners and a four year old. The children were taken away from their biological parents (who were alcoholics) and placed in her care. She is a stay-at-home mom, who is obliged to make time for five small children. Living off one salary, she finds it difficult to pay for petrol, and in rough times she will stay at school after dropping of her kids in the morning only to pick them up in the afternoon again. Her car is in such bad shape that it sometimes takes up to three hours to get it to start again. Her husband works late, making it her responsibility to look after the needs of all five children.

Participant 11 is a single mother to a learner in Grade 3. She does not receive any child support and lives with her mother and two sisters. She is an assistant and only works half days. She loves to assist her daughter with her homework but sometimes feels that she needs her own space. Living in a household with three other adults can sometimes be difficult, as it can be a huge distraction while doing homework.

All four participants indicated that they would be able to attend the focus group interview, as discussed with them. Only three of the four participants attended the interview, as Participant 9 couldn't arrange transport. Her interview data was collected via correspondence, and included in the transcribed data..

4.3   DATA ANALYSIS

I made use of open-ended interview questions (See Appendix D) in order to gain data from the participants. Questions were asked about homework and the homework environment, assisting with homework, ability to cope, and recommendations from the parent's side.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the following steps were followed in analysing the data:

i.   The transcribed interviews were read through several times in order to form a holistic picture.

ii.   Notes were made on ideas and topics, after which the similar topics were clustered together.

iii. Text segments were coded using words or short phases.

iv.   Codes were then organised into emerging themes.

v.   The themes that emerged from the data will be presented (Chapter 4) and interpreted with reference to the literature on homework and the theoretical framework of Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support (Chapter 5).

All three focus group interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and were transcribed for data analysis. The themes and categories that emerged from the data are presented in Table 4.1.

Table   4.1 Themes and categories that emerged from data.

1. Context
i.   Homework setting ii.   Influence of other children while doing homework
2. Time
i.   Homework time ii.   Finding sufficient time to do homework
3. Disposition
i.   Bonding through homework ii.   Learners' willingness to do homework iii. General feeling regarding homework

4. **Ability**		

i.   A helping hand
 	
      ii.   Parents' ability to assist with homework
 	
    iii. Homework causing tension		

5. **Recommendations and strategies**		
i. Parents' strategies to make the homework process easier ii. Parents' recommendations to the school and teachers		

The following codes will be used for referencing in the presentation of the research findings:

Table   4.2 Coding of Participants

Group 1: Positive set parents	Participant 1	P1
	Participant 2	P2
	Participant 3	P3
	Participant 4	P4
Group 2: Negative set parents	Participant 5	P5
	Participant 6	P6
	Participant 7	P7
Group 3: Parents from disadvantage environments	Participant 8	P8
	Participant 9	P9
	Participant 10	P10
	Participant 11	P11

4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Context

4.4.1 Homework setting

4.4.4.1   Group 1

Because most learners in the Foundation Phase still need assistance with their homework, these parents felt that it is easier for them to have their children either at the kitchen counter or the dining room table, where they can assist with homework at the same time as attending to other parental commitments. Participant 3 mentioned that learners in the Foundation Phase are so accustomed to a classroom environment in which the teacher is always available to assist, that they expect the same at home.

> *It could be also that the class environment the teacher's there;*
> *it's not an environment where they never see the teacher; the*
> *teacher is always around; so with my younger one I feel that*
> *maybe because they have that environment in the class they*
> *still expect it...(P3, 142).*

4.4.4.2   Group 2

Parents from group 2 indicated that when they are able to help their children with homework it will be either at a counter or at a table. Participant 5 felt strongly about the fact that homework should not be completed by the children on their laps, and that they needed to sit on a chair.

> *As long as it is a counter or a table, somewhere where they*
> *can sit on a chair and not* [have the homework] *on their laps*
> *(P5, 142).*

4.4.4.3   Group 3

Participant 11, who is a mother to five children, felt that homework should be done at the children's own respective desks. She explained that doing homework around the dining room table became difficult, as the children tended to look at what the others siblings were doing. Individual desks made it easier for them to stay focused on their individual assignments. Participant 8 added to this by saying that by sitting

at a desk, her daughter stayed more focused, and did not have things distracting her.

> *Study desk, I believe that is the best for a kid because otherwise she's got things that are distracting her, so* [it is better that] *she is at her desk doing her homework. (P8, 143)*

4.4.2 Influence of other children's presence while doing homework

4.4.2.1 Group 3

Participant 10 indicated that other children who are present during the homework process and not doing homework can become a huge distraction. Younger kids still need to be supervised while giving attention to children doing homework, and therefore it can sometimes be challenging. Participant 10 mentioned that she has separate toys for the two youngsters to keep them busy while doing homework with the older ones. Participant 8 added to that by saying that her little boy needed to play outside, where she could keep an eye on him, but that he is not allowed to be in the same room as his sister when she is doing homework.

> *Because of the younger two obviously not being able to be unsupervised, it does tend to be a bit of a distraction, that is why I actually have separate toys –* […] *special toys and special activities that the younger kids can do... (P10, 144)*

Participant 9 felt that the fact that she has an older son (in Grade 12) helped her a lot, because when she was not able to assist with homework, he was always there to lend her a hand.

Time

4.4.3 Homework time

4.4.3.1 Group 1

The positive set parents have indicated that homework should be done immediately by children when they get home, before they lose concentration. Giving your child an opportunity to get dressed and eat after returning home is the most common method used by these parents (participants 1, 2, 3 and 4). With this said, they

explained that the break should not be too long, as the learners can become too relaxed and unwilling to completer their homework.

> *If they have a too much long break* [sic] *then they just don't want to do anything; then you don't get anything out of them.* (P4, 140)

They have also indicated that enough time should be set aside for the learners to complete their homework, because if not done, it may result in learners battling to complete their homework.

> *I think an hour, hour and a half* [for] *doing homework is enough time for them to finish; if it is longer than that they are either battling or their homework is too much or too difficult… (P4, 140)*

> *…So it just depends on how you push them whether they want to do it or whether they don't want to do* [it]...*(P1, 140)*

4.4.3.2   Group 2

The negative set parents differed completely from the first group, expressing that they do not have a specific time for their children to complete their homework. Participant 6 and 7 explained that they had difficulty setting aside a specific time for doing homework, as they work fulltime and have either an au pair assisting their children with homework, or they attend aftercare.

> *I've got an au pair to help me because my daughter is studying teaching, so she helps me out and when I get home at half past five/quarter to six, then I will finish off all projects given the same day for the next day; so then you still have to find the time. (P7, 141)*

4.4.3.3   Group 3

As for the first group, the parents from the disadvantaged environment (participants 8, 9, 10 and 11) also indicated that they do homework immediately from the time they get home.

> *The moment we get home, she'll dress and that is the first thing she does before play anything else...homework first. (P8, 141)*

4.4.4 Finding sufficient time to do homework

4.4.4.1 Group 1

It is important for the parents of the positive set group to make time for their children after school. Participant 3 and 4 felt that working half day proves to be an advantage for them, as they are able to assist their children with their homework and attend to their parental commitments. Sometimes it is not always easy, because of the homework load, and other things that require attention, but for these parents, I felt that they would go out of their way in order to make time for what is most important.

> *I make time. I leave my stuff for later and I sit with the kids. I really make time for that. (P4, 151)*

4.4.4.2 Group 2

Participant 5 expressed her concern by saying that as a single mother, not being able to share the homework load makes it difficult for her to attend to her children's homework, and that other things in and around the house require attention.

> *And as a single mom it is even worse. You can't even share the load. (P5, 152)*

To be able to share the homework load doesn't make it easier. Participant 7 explained that the amount of homework given to learners on a daily basis is the main reason she struggles to assist them, as well as to attend to her other parental commitments. She found that although her husband and elder daughter helped with the homework, they still struggled to finish everything on time.

> *They have got so much that even going through the books, you have three four books a day every day (P7, 152).*

4.4.4.3 Group 3

All the participants from group three mentioned that they struggled most of the time to attend to their children's homework and parental commitments, because of their schedule. Participant 10 explained that having five children made it difficult for her to keep to a schedule, as each one liked to do their own thing and go their own way. She also added to this by noting that because of the children being so small

and unable to help around the house, she needs to attend to everything herself, making it more difficult for her.

> *I still have to get uniforms and everything organised for the next day, so no, I do not have time for everything, not with the amount of homework* [they have]*. (P10, 153)*

Participant 11 expressed her concern by saying that living with other adults sometimes makes it difficult to keep to a schedule, as her daughter gets easily distracted by everything that goes on around her.

> *It is very difficult sometimes; and to get my daughter in that position to focus on her homework - then 'this one' comes in and 'that one' comes in; then she wants to go and greet my mother; then she wants to go and greet my sisters; then I will tell her that she can later greet them and see them; 'let us just focus on your homework first'* [I say]. *(P11, 153)*

Participant 8, who recently moved in with her boyfriend, feels that keeping to a schedule is now more important than ever, as she needs to give attention to her children as well as her boyfriend.

> *That is the same with me now since we moved. I've got a schedule now in the afternoon, because there are certain things that I have got to do, which include my daughter with her homework; so you have to try to keep strictly to that schedule; because if you don't, everything falls out; her bath, everything bombs out* [sic]. *(P8, 153)*

Disposition

4.4.5 Bonding through homework

4.4.5.1 Group 1

Participant 3 has indicated that doing homework with her daughters is seen as bonding time, because for those few minutes doing homework, there are no

phones, TV or anything else, it is only communication between her and her daughters.

But that half an hour or forty-five minutes is actual solid communication that is happening. It is not technology - it is not a phone - it really is good on both sides. (P3, 148)

Days can become so busy that parents sometimes do not have the time to communicate with their children, but for these parents (participants 1, 2, 3 and 4), making time to bond with their children was more important than anything else. Participant 4 used to work in a corporation, but she felt that she missed out on her children's lives. She explained that making a career shift was one of the best things she has ever done for herself and for her children.

I didn't know what was going on, because about the time they got home, there stuff is all done and finished and then I had to look in their books and see what they were doing just to keep up with everything. But I think it is a good thing to actually sit with them and be able to bond with the kids [sic]. *(P4, 148)*

4.4.5.2 Group 2

Group 2 differed from Group 1 where they disagreed that they bonded while doing homework. Participant 7 felt that fighting everyday with her children only moved their family further and further apart, and therefore decided not to assist them with homework anymore.

I've got an ADHD child, I've got a child that has [is on an] *autism spectrum, so I sit with that every day, and to fight with them over homework - we wouldn't have a family left if I had to do homework with them. (P7, 149)*

Participant 7 added to that by saying that homework is too burdensome a task, and it sometimes feels to her that her children are overworked. She notes that homework fatigues them, and she blames the school and its teachers for the tension being caused at home by homework.

They are putting in the same work day as we are. We never did that as children. We were allowed to be children. Our children

are not allowed to be children. From Grade 1 on they are pulling a full day [sic] *and expecting them to cope. (P7, 150)*

They are not getting it done in class, they are giving it as homework. They are not keeping our kids' best interests at heart, or our families'. (P7, 149)

Participant 6 complains about her child getting headaches from all the work, sometimes affecting his moods and causing conflict.

4.4.5.3   Group 3

Participants 8, 9 and 11 responded that they bond with their children while doing homework, while participant 10 felt that she did not interact with her children while doing homework. The reason for this is that she does not have the time for one-on-one interaction with all three of her children, while keeping the younger two busy.

I don't have time [for] *one-on-one interaction with the other kids, because I have so many in such a busy household, it is a bone of contention; because there* [are] *always distractions; they don't want to sit and do it, and because I am spread so thin, they are not enjoying it as much as my son did last year. (P10, 150)*

Participant 10 added that last year when there was only one child, she enjoyed every minute of doing homework with him, but it got more challenging and frustrating when other children were placed in her care.

4.4.6 Learners' willingness to do homework.

4.4.6.1   Group 1

Participants from group one use different methods when their children are not in the mood to do their homework. Participant 1 explained that when her daughter is not willing to do her homework, she will explain to her that all of her actions have consequences and if she does not feel like doing homework, it will be her responsibility to go and tell her teacher why her work is not done.

'You are either going to do it or close that book and tomorrow morning you go to school without doing your homework!' (P1, 156)

Participants 2 and 3 used a reward method. When homework is completed in time and without complaint, they will receive a reward (such as a sweet or some playtime). These parents feel that it doesn't help to shout or scream at your children if they are not in the mood to do their homework, as it will only worsen the case. Rewarding them works well for these parents.

> *Rewards and incentives work really well with my own kids and homework. (P2, 156)*

> *So if you know that you need* [it], *you get good marks, when the holidays come, whatever you need to be done, if you want to have a break, that is how you get rewarded; so it is the old fashioned reward system. It work*[s] *well, so we will stick to that one for now* [sic]. *(P3, 157)*

Participant 4 feels that giving her children time out when they are not in the mood to do homework works best for her. Sometimes, if they can't sit still, she will encourage them to go and play for a few minutes, and then to complete their homework thereafter. In rare circumstances, where they do not want to complete their homework, she will tell them that they are allowed to play all day, but may not come and ask her anything when starting with homework at night.

> [I say to them:] *"Don't ask me any questions, nothing. Then you have to do it on your own and explain to teacher if you didn't do half of your work." (P4, 156)*

4.4.6.2   Group 2

Other than Group 1, who tries to come up with solutions on how to encourage their children to do homework, participants from Group 2 feel that shouting and screaming at their children to be the only way to get them to do their homework. Participant 5 feels frustrated because she doesn't understand why her children do not want to do their homework, nor why it is her responsibility to encourage them to do it.

> *I think sometimes I probably overreact, because I get frustrated. Because, as I said, I can't understand why they don't want to do it. I think that is the frustrating part. (P5, 157)*

Participant 7 responded to this by saying that her children are so exhausted by the time they need to start with their homework, that they do not care if their homework is not done for the next day, they do not care if they are going to get in trouble for not doing their homework. The moment they see the amount of homework they have, they choose to rather play outside than to do their homework.

> *They see there are five subjects of homework. There is no way [they can imagine finishing it]. I had enough and then they will step back and go away [sic]. (P7, 158)*

4.4.6.3   Group 3

The majority of the participants in Group 3 (participants 8, 9 and 11) use the same methods as Group 1 reported to have used. These methods include making their children take responsibility and using a reward system in order to encourage them to do their homework.

> *Well in my case, with my daughter, I will say okay fine, if you don't want to do your homework you are going to get a demerit. (P11, 159)*

> *I try to [teach] her how to be responsible. Because, I said to her, well if you don't want to do it, you can go and explain to your teacher why the work is not done, because I am not going to do it. (P8, 159)*

For participant 10, it is a different story. Because of behavioural problems and living under difficult circumstances, she finds it challenging to handle situations where her children do not want to do their homework. She explained that on a weekly basis, one of her children will retaliate if he does not want to do his homework. As a result, she has given up on disciplining the children to do their work.

> *Obviously I am not going to let it happen three or four days a week, but once a month maybe; but no, I am sorry, it is up to him. If he is having an incredible bad day he will get a pass, he can. I am sorry, I am not going to force it. (P10, 159)*

4.4.7 General feeling regarding homework

4.4.7.1 Group 1

For the participants in Group 1, homework is seen as an important aspect in a child's life, as it adds structure to their lives, and teaches them a routine. The sooner one starts with structure and routine in the Foundation Phase, the easier it is going to get in the higher phases. Participant 2 and 3 feels that homework should be done as a form of revision of what was done in class, and therefore know the importance of homework.

> *I expect them to get homework every day, because if they do not get homework for over a while then they start to get lazy. (P4, 163)*

> *As an educator myself I know the importance of homework so I have sort of* [sic] *instilled this in my own kids, so there are no excuses when it comes to homework. (P2, 164)*

Although Participant 1 realises the importance of homework, she feels that if a learner listens in class, there should not be any problems when it comes to homework. It is therefore the teachers' responsibility to lay down a proper foundation in class for the learner to work from.

> *If she listens she doesn't have a problem with homework at all. If they do not listen in class, then they pick up problems in their homework. (P1, 163)*

4.4.7.2 Group 2

The main concern that the participants of group 2 had when asked about their general feeling regarding homework was the fact that when they used to be in school things was more different from what it is now. These participants find it hard to understand that things change over time and struggle to adapt to change.

> *I don't know, I think that sometimes the* [difficulty] *of the homework is that I don't remember having homework in class one and in class two. (P5, 164)*

> *I remember spending a lot of time in libraries. (P5, 164)*

Somehow when we were in school the concept was grasped. You actually got to read. But now the kids have homework, 'they have got this, they've got that' [sic]. In Grade 1 they have got to make a sentence. (P7, 164)

But we used to be twenty kids in a class but now they are forty kids in a class. Everything has changed. (P7, 164)

See but that is the thing, my mother never ever had to force me. (P5, 165)

Not being able to adapt to a new era makes it difficult for participants 5, 6 and 7 to understand the importance of homework, and the shift from teachers doing all the schoolwork, to parents being involved. These parents feel that homework should be done in class and should not be sent home. Participant 7 explained that it all came down on the teachers being taught differently, from when they use to be in school.

I think the teachers are taught differently. I had a teacher [say] that if you got hurt she wanted to know if you were okay. Now the teachers don't have that time for the kids. (P7, 165)

It is clear that parents from this group do not have a clear perception of what the roles and responsibilities of both the teacher and the parent are supposed to be.

4.4.7.3   Group 3

Participants from Group 3 mentioned their main concern to have been that although they feel that homework is an absolute necessity, it can also be very stressful because of their circumstances at home. Some of the positive things that came from these parents when asked about how they feel about homework was that it actually helps them as a parent, because they know what is going on in class, and that they also feel that they learn something new from their children.

It actually helps you as a parent because then you know what is going on in the class [sic]. (P11, 165)

It is learning all over again. I mean for me, I am not going to say how long back I was in school, but you know it is [a new thing] for me. (P8, 166)

I love sitting there, discovering with them what they are doing in their classroom, and the realisation on their face that they actually can do something. (P10, 166)

This being said, they also felt that the amount of homework can sometimes cause tension, as all of them have different reasons for not being able to do homework for extended periods. Being a single parent, having more than two children, and working full day can sometimes make it hard for these parents to do homework with their children.

I don't want to know how hard it is for parents that [are] *working full day till five o'clock, because now you get home, mom needs to do washing, ironing, and dishes and make food, supper, bath* [with] *homework in-between, and by eight o'clock, or whatever time they go to sleep, it must be done. So yes, I think it would be difficult for a parent that is working* [a] *full day. (P8, 166)*

No, look, I am a stay-at-home [mother], *I am at home the whole day, and even as it is now, I struggle to get all my household duties done in the morning before I have to come and fetch them from school and start the homework run. So, hats-off to working mommies* [sic], *because I don't know how moms do it, I really don't. (P10, 166)*

Ability

4.4.8 A helping hand

4.4.8.1   Group 1

Participants from Group 1 indicated that their children are capable of doing homework on their own, but if there is work that they are struggling with, they will ask for help. When assisting with homework, they will only help if their assistance is needed and asked for, but they will make sure that homework is completed correctly by checking it afterwards.

There are times when she is totally independent and just comes to double check her spelling - she does everything herself. (P2, 145)

They can do their homework on their own, but if there are words they battle with [sic]*, they will ask me. (P4, 144)*

4.4.8.2   Group 2

Participants from Group 2 felt that they needed to assist with homework, because of the fact that their children cannot read and therefore cannot work entirely independently. They need constant assistance which parents in this group find difficult to provide.

I assist them every time, always, because they normally cannot read what they have to do, and afterwards I help with spelling. Those are the two biggest [tasks]*. (P5, 146)*

Participant 6 indicated that she would usually let her twins do their homework on their own, but would assist them when it came to making sentences. Although they try to do it on their own, most of the time they find difficulty, and then she needs to help them. She believes that her children should learn on their own, otherwise they are never going to understand.

What I always do, is I do, especially with the twins, I let them do their homework, they mostly do their homework by themselves, only when it comes to making sentences, then I help them make sentences. But sometimes it doesn't make sense [to them]*, and then I help them. (P6, 146)*

4.4.8.3   Group 3

Participants from Group 3 indicated that they assist their children with homework, either through reading them the questions, explaining what they need to do, or supervising. Participants 9 and 11 let their children do homework on their own, and only assist with spelling errors and maths, while participant 10 needs to constantly supervise homework and actively assist with what they are doing.

I will be there to assist with [her] *spelling errors and stuff like that,* [and] *if* [she is] *struggling with Mathematics I definitely help her. (P11, 147)*

4.4.9 Parents' ability to assist with homework

4.4.9.1 Group 1

For some of the participants (participant 1 and 3) assisting with homework can sometimes become challenging, as they do not know the work or what is expected from the teacher. Participant 1 has mentioned that when she is not able to assist her daughter with maths, she will write a letter to the teacher, explaining to her that the homework was too difficult for both of them, and that she needs to explain it again in class. Participant 4 added to this by saying that she struggles to use a computer, and therefore she cannot assist her children when they need to do research online. They have to wait for their father to come home in order to help them.

> *You know what I do, I write letter to teacher: "teacher I don't understand, please you have to help me". And really, the teachers are awesome when it comes to that. (P1, 145)*

> *Mommy is not very good with the computer. (P4, 145)*

Participant 3 expressed her concern by saying that most of the time children are too shy or scared to raise their hands in class when they are uncertain about something, and that this causes a problem for the parent. Now it has become the parent's responsibility to figure out what needs to be done.

> *Teachers like them to read and ask questions, but ninety-nine percent of the time, they might not raise their hands and ask that teacher exactly, and then come home with that question. Now, you either assist them, or you can just let it go and nobody gets their understanding* [sic]. *(P3, 145)*

4.4.9.2 Group 2

Participants from Group 2 felt that the questions given by teachers did not make sense, and therefore found it hard to assist with homework. When it came to

Mathematics, the way in which parents assisted might differ from the methods taught in class. Participant 7 found this to be a constant battle.

> *Let the teacher do an example so that we can understand. If we go through the example, see the steps that they have taken, and then we can do that with them* [sic]. *(P7, 146)*

4.4.9.3   Group 3

Participant 10 feels that her biggest problem to assist with homework is not that she doesn't understand the work, that there are too many children that require her attention and assistance while doing homework, and that the volume of the work is problematic.

> *There* [is] *so much work to go through, that they do need constant supervision all the time - somebody there explaining what they* [ought to be] *doing. (P10, 147)*

4.4.10 Homework causing tension

4.4.10.1   Group 1

Participants cite learners themselves as the main cause of tension during homework. Participants 1, 2, 3 and 4 feel that the main reason why they fight with their children while doing homework is because the children become frustrated with the task. This is caused by a long day's work or because they don't understand what to do while doing homework.

> *If the work is too much and the kids are irritated and do not know what to do, then sometimes, yes, there is a little bit of tension. (P4, 160)*

> *Days when she plays netball, her concentration is low as she is very tired and frustrated. (P2, 154)*

Participant 3 explains that sometimes the tension comes from her side, when it becomes difficult to provide explanations. This may then cause tension and frustration.

> *I think on my side the tension might come, because I must come down to their level, and sometimes you are trying to*

explain something, but it is literally 'going over their heads'. You are speaking like an adult, you are not coming down to their level. (P3, 160)

4.4.10.2 Group 2

The tension caused by homework is usually blamed on the teacher, citing the amount of work given and unclear instructions. Participant 7 expressed her concern by saying that that she gets so frustrated when she needs to explain something to her child, and she doesn't know what to do. There are no instructions given to parents to enable them to assist their children, and this causes frustration among them.

> *Not understanding it is* [terrible]. [We] *are parents, we have got to guide our children and we* […] *don't know what to do because they are telling you one thing,* [whereas the] *books say something else, and you know something else. (P7, 154)*

Participants 5 and 6 also felt that it is unnecessary for mathematics sums to be done in a specific manner. They feel that they know a certain way of doing things, and get frustrated when asked by the teachers to do it in a different way.

> *Some of the maths examples, I don't even know. I can't even work it out. I can't get the gist of why they do it like that. (P5, 154)*

> *I don't know why they are doing that long way of the sum* [sic]. *(P6, 154)*

4.4.10.3 Group 3

Some of the participants of Group 3 cite a lack of listening skills amongst learners as the main reason for tension during homework. Parents try to explain something to their children, the children do not understand because they do not listen, and then the parents become more frustrated. Participant 8, 9 and 11 feel that the loss of concentration can be the main reason why they do not listen.

> *The major thing is the listening skills. They do not listen. (P8, 161)*

She hates it when I say "poor listening skills", she hates it. (P11, 161)

…it also has to do with the concentration. When they are tired that is what they do, but yes listening skills definitely comes in there. (P8, 161)

We had an incident where he needed to say a rhyme off by heart, and refused to, as he was very tired. This caused a lot of tension. (P9, 161)

Participant 10 expressed her concern about homework thus:

Why do they need to have an eight hour day? My kids get up between half past five and six o'clock every morning and now they have got to work through up to half past 4, five o'clock in the afternoon. It is ridiculous. (P10, 155)

Recommendations and strategies

4.4.11 Parents' strategies to make the homework process easier

4.4.11.1   Group 1

The parents from the positive set group were all eager to share the strategies they used to make the homework process easier, key amongst which was making homework fun for children. Participant 1 and 4 helped their children play as if they were simulating the school environment. This was particularly effective when it came to practicing spelling. Participant 1 feels that when children enjoy homework, they will see it as a learning opportunity, rather than as a form of punishment.

Or she plays teacher and she uses this spelling words and she does them or timetables, those types of things. So you must try and make the homework fun for her. Really, because it is the fun part that actually makes them wants to do the homework. Because if you don't let them have a little bit of fun, because they think being a teacher is great fun. Love, love it. I let her do it. Sometimes it is a little bit distracting for her [and I have to

intervene to say:] *'let's get that homework done!', but you need to let her do that. They have to. (P1, 171)*

I also have the white boards, and for them, they also go write stuff on the board, and my daughter loves to play; even if her cousins come over, they want to play school and she wants to be the teacher and she wants to write everything down. So, they also still have a different way of learning… (P4, 172)

For Participant 3, taking things that your children are really interested in and bringing them into the homework process makes it easier for her to do homework. She explained that as Afrikaans is not their home language, it is therefore challenging, so to make it easier for her children to understand, she uses English songs, and then translates these into Afrikaans. They can enjoy this process together.

My daughters are really into hip hop music […] *so we take a song that* [they] *really like and we now translate that entire song into Afrikaans, which is* [rather amusing], *because Chris Brown doesn't sing Afrikaans but Christopher Bruin does. (P3, 171 and 172)*

Furthermore, participant 3 also explained that she will find interesting ways to help her children to make the subject come alive.

I tend to find things that they really click with [sic], *and then my younger one is really interested in games, so she will now pick up a character in a book and then refer it back to something. So if I take something they find interesting, I can make that subject come alive; maybe not all subjects, but sometimes there is something that relates to them, and then it works every day. (P3, 172)*

Another strategy that works for participant 3 is giving her children diaries to write in and express their feelings. She feels that this helps with their spelling, as well as when they have to write sentences.

Another strategy in my household is they both like to write, so they have got their little diaries where they write and sometimes you would be amazed at the stories. (P3, 172)

It works a lot on the imagination and sometimes when you have to do things in school where it is unprepared, it is amazing how they can stand up and talk about stuff, because somewhere in that book they wrote about something. (P3, 172)

It improves their handwriting a little bit, because I have seen now that they are [learning] *cursive. So yes, it just works a little bit better on our side* [when they do this]. *(P3, 173)*

For participant 2, it has to be quiet in the house in order to do homework. Routine and rewards are the only strategies that work for her.

It has to be quite time. There has to be routine, for example homework should be done every day at three o'clock: no TV. Rewards should be given for completing on time. Teaching my kids time management and trying to complete tasks that are due later on given date [help to] *avoid stress. Punishments are given for incomplete homework etc. (P2, 173)*

Participant 3 and 4 pointed out that they tend to bring technology along into their households, making the homework process easier. For participant 3, Afrikaans can sometimes become challenging since their home language is English, so she showed her children how to use an online dictionary when they need to find the meanings of words. She noted however that that technology is only used for certain things, and that the rest of the time she will assist her children.

In my household we tend to bring technology along also into the household. So if I am not there and the little one wants to [...] *she uses an online dictionary, which is probably not the best way, but she will find the meanings of the words online. So I do bring technology in, but there is also a set hour for technology where technology can be a helping hand, otherwise most of the time it will be* [me] *having to explain. (P3, 145)*

Participant 3 also expressed her concern when it comes to certain topics and things that she was not yet ready to discuss with her daughters, noting how technology can be helpful in this instance.

> *There are a lot of things that I think that I was not ready to discuss with my kids and to be able to bring technology in made it easier. (P3, 145)*

Because participant 4 had a husband working away from home, technology helped a lot with assisting with homework. She explained that sometimes she found it difficult to assist her children with homework and would then let her children use Skype™ to contact their father online in order to ask for his assistance.

> *Technology is actually a very good thing, because especially with my husband working away, we can Skype™, and if the kids don't understand something they will either phone him or Skype™ him and say: 'Daddy, please help!' if I don't have a clue* [sic], *especially* [when it comes to] *maths. (P4, 145)*

4.4.11.2   Group 2

When asked about the strategies that the participants of Group 2 used, these parents weren't able to think of anything that they use to make the homework process easier. For them, teachers simply gave too much homework, exhausting their children.

> *By the end of the day, my kids are so mentally tired that they can't take additional stimuli in. (P7, 173)*

Participant 6 felt that it must be very quiet in the house, and that no electronics ought to be allowed to distract the children.

> *No TV, no nothing* [sic] *must be on. Nothing to distract them. (P6, 173)*

> *And there are no games during the week. No computer games, no PlayStation games, nothing. The only games start on Fridays, after school. Then they can play games until six o'clock on Sundays. School week is school week* [sic]. *I don't even care if tomorrow is an off day, no games. (P6, 158)*

4.4.11.3   Group 3

All the Participants of group 3 felt that rewarding their children is the best way to keep them motivated to do homework.

> *Gold stars, reward system: works like a bomb* [sic]. *Instead of getting cross* [sic] *with them, rather praise them for the good behaviour and for everything else. (P10, 173)*

> *'By the time we get home you only have to do a few things and when your homework is done you will get something'. (P11, 36)*

> *Yes rewards are the best thing to do with your child. Because then they feel that they have accomplished something and then the next time they will do it again. (P8, 174)*

4.4.12 Parents' recommendations to the school and teachers

4.4.12.1   Group 1

Parents from Group 1 realised that it is sometimes easy to blame everything on the school and the teachers, but felt that it was time that parents take responsibility for their children. According to participant 3, the school ought to have an intervention for parents, so that parents can come and see what is happening in the school, and that the teachers do everything to the best of their abilities.

> *So, I feel the school needs to* […] *have an intervention for parents. That is my opinion, because you, as a parent, need to come and see what happens in the school. It is not about the fact that 'my child is brighter than your child'. The teachers cannot do anymore. If we look at the laws that this country is* [setting in place] *as far as teachers go, your hands* [are] *actually tied, you can only do that thirty five minutes, that is what you can do. And know it has become a problem, because as soon as I don't like a teacher, or I don't like the way the teacher has spoken to my child, I decide with my child, and my child is going to say: 'you know what, when it comes to that subject, I don't have to listen anymore, because mommy and daddy* [are] *actually protecting me when it comes to that subject'. But that is*

just me, so [an] *intervention for parents, I would say, would be helpful. (P3, 168)*

Participant 1 added to this by saying that parents need to be self-disciplined in order to discipline their own children.

I agree, the parents needs to be disciplined because [for some of them] *it is easy to say: 'you know what? Leave it to the teacher!' (P1, 168)*

Participant 3 felt that parents are responsible for their own child's lives, and ought to be educated and trained on how to take greater responsibility.

But at the end of the day, we need to look at who is responsible for that child, because the teacher is only responsible for one year of that child's life and we are responsible for everything else. (P3, 168)

4.4.12.2 Group 2

All the participants in Group 2 felt that the school and the teachers needs to limit the amount of homework.

And in your Foundation Phase*, I mean, they are getting a lot. They are Grade One. Grade 1 shouldn't be doing homework until five o'clock, I'm sorry. My kids get home, eat something, three o'clock they start homework: so that is two solid hours! (P7, 170)*

Participant 5 felt that the teachers are responsible for children not completing work in class.

But the problem, I think, is that the class runs behind. You see, you are going to have fifty questions in class, some of them are going to do five, some are going to do ten, some are going to do forty. So you give five and tell them all to finish five. Now those who don't finish the five are a problem [sic], *because they left behind and weren't finished. (P5, 170)*

Participant 7 suggested that homework should be limited, and that certain subjects should be set for certain days.

Choose days for certain subjects to get homework, and stick to it. If I come home, I know you have Maths today […] I don't have to guess what subject you've got for homework. (P7, 170)

If you have limited homework on set days, Monday home language, Tuesday Afrikaans, then you also know that if mom comes home bring me your Afrikaans book, you don't have to bring me all your books. (P7, 170)

4.4.12.3 Group 3

Participants from group 3 all agreed that the school and its teachers were already doing more than could be asked of them.

Well, at this point of time, they are making it easier for us. […] I am not sure if they recommend after classes, but they are already doing it because they have intervention classes. So they are already doing it for us. (P11, 171)

The parent needs to work with his child as well. They also need to put in effort. Not just the teacher, because it is a two way street. So from both sides you need that, to help that kid [sic]. *(P8, 171)*

I really can't think of anything at this moment, as I feel [the teachers] *are doing an amazing job. My son has really progressed and I think it all reflects back on the teacher. (P9, 171)*

4.5 SYNTHESIS OF KEY FINDINGS

Each group and the organisation of the group are being interpreted in order to establish key findings that will impact the data analysis.

4.5.1 Group 1

Homework does not seem to be challenging for the participants of Group 1, as three of the participants only work half a day, while another participant is a stay-at-home parent. These participants therefore have the time to assist their children with homework, and also to attend to their other parental commitments. All four of these

participants are married, making it easier for them to have a helping hand with their kids when taking care of them becomes difficult. By only having one or two kids, it is easy for these parents to attend to each child's needs and to ensure that these children get the necessary attention that they require.

The homework process is therefore seen as quality time spent between parent and child.

4.5.2 Group 2

Working full days and being the only parent to assist with homework constitute the two main reasons why participants of Group 2 find it difficult to bond with their children during the homework process. For participant 5, the most challenging part is to get home after 5 o'clock, and then to start with parental commitments, including assisting with homework without the support of a spouse. Not only do some of the participants of Group 2 need to assist their children with homework, but at home they are also seen as the main figure for implementing discipline in the household. This can cause tension, as learners need to be relaxed while doing homework, but because of limited time and frustrated parents, they may not be able to enjoy themselves.

Two of the three participants also have three or more children, making it challenging to assist all the learners with their homework. These parents find it difficult to assist all their children, especially with the amount of homework given to them. Not being able to give individual attention to each child causes tension and frustration among the children. This can have a significant influence on the homework process, as the children may act out in order to get attention from their parents.

All the above-mentioned factors make the homework process both challenging and unpleasant for these parents.

4.5.3 Group 3

Experiencing financial constraints seems to be the major factor that makes the homework process difficult for the participants of Group 3. All four participants are under significant pressure to provide their children with food and shelter, that it can become difficult at times and can also influence the homework process. Not having

access to the internet also makes homework assignments difficult, as these learners do not always know the answers.

For participant 10, caring for five children at once is very challenging, as all of them are still small and need a lot of attention. The fact that three of the five kids are not her own sometimes causes tension while doing homework, because she feels that she does not need to put in effort with somebody else's child to the detriment of her own.

Two of the four parents are single parents, which also makes it difficult for them to assist their children with homework after a long day's work.

Although participants from group 3 try to enjoy homework time with their children, they find it hard doing so, because of their financial and personal circumstances.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of Chapter 4 was to present the research findings according to the themes and categories that emerged from the data during the thematic analysis of the transcribed group interviews. The participants' experiences regarding the homework context and time, the ability to assist with homework, homework causing tension and their general feeling regarding homework were presented. Furthermore their strategies and recommendations to make the homework process easier were dealt with.

After conducting my literature study (see Chapter 2) it became clear that homework is an important necessity in a child's daily routine (see 2.3.2) and that the homework experience depends on the attitudes of the parents (see 2.4) as well as the willingness of a learner (see 2.3.3). Through using positive parents, negative parents and parents from disadvantage environment I was able to get different opinions and I was also able to compare different parenting styles and the effect that it has on homework. I was satisfied with my research findings, as these confirmed what I have found in the literature on homework in the Foundation Phase.

Since I followed the recommended steps in analysing qualitative data and presented my findings thoroughly and clearly, with quotes from the data to support my themes and categories, I regard my research as trustworthy and believe that it will be of great value in answering my research findings.

In Chapter 5 the research findings will be interpreted with reference to the literature on parents' attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase and Dunst's (2005) integrated framework for practising early childhood intervention and family support, in order to make sense of the research findings and to reach an in-depth understanding of the issue under investigation.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, the research findings were presented according to the themes and categories that emerged from the data during data analysis. The participants' experiences regarding the homework context and time, the ability to assist with homework, homework causing tension, and their general feeling regarding homework, were presented. Furthermore, their strategies and recommendations to make the homework process easier were discussed.

The final step in data analysis is to interpret or make meaning of the data. Nieuwenhuis (2007: 111) describes this step as gaining an analytic understanding, in order to explain the causes for the phenomena encountered. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to discuss the research findings with reference to the research aim (see section 1.4.1), the relevant literature on homework in the Foundation Phase (see Chapter 2), the theoretical framework (see Chapter 2), and to answer the following research questions (see Chapter 1):

- Why do some parents have negative attitudes towards their children's homework?
- How do these negative attitudes influence the children's homework experience?
- What guidelines can be recommended in order to make homework a more positive experience for parents?

In order to make sense of the research findings and to reach an in-depth understanding of the issue under investigation, I used the themes and categories that emerged from my research findings (see Table 5.1) (see Chapter 4) and combined this with Carl Dunst's theoretical framework (see Figure 5.1) (see Chapter 2), by using each of the intersecting practice elements. This enable me to make interpretations based on existing knowledge, and to work around a set of elements.

Table 5.1 Themes and categories that emerged from data.

1. Context
i. Homework setting ii. Influence of other children while doing homework
2. Time
iii. Homework time iv. Finding sufficient time to do homework
3. Disposition
iv. Bonding through homework v. Learners' willingness to do homework vi. General feeling regarding homework
4. Ability
iv. A helping hand v. Parents' ability to assist with homework vi. Homework causing tension
5. Recommendations and strategies
iii. Parents' strategies to make the homework process easier iv. Parents' recommendations to the school and teachers

ABILITY

- Parent's ability to assist with homework

CONTEXT

- Homework setting
- Influence of other children's presence while doing homework

TIME

- Homework time
- Finding sufficient time to do homework

ABILITY

- A helping hand
- Homework causing tension

DISPOSITION

- Bonding through homework
- Learner's willingness to do homework
- General feeling regarding homework

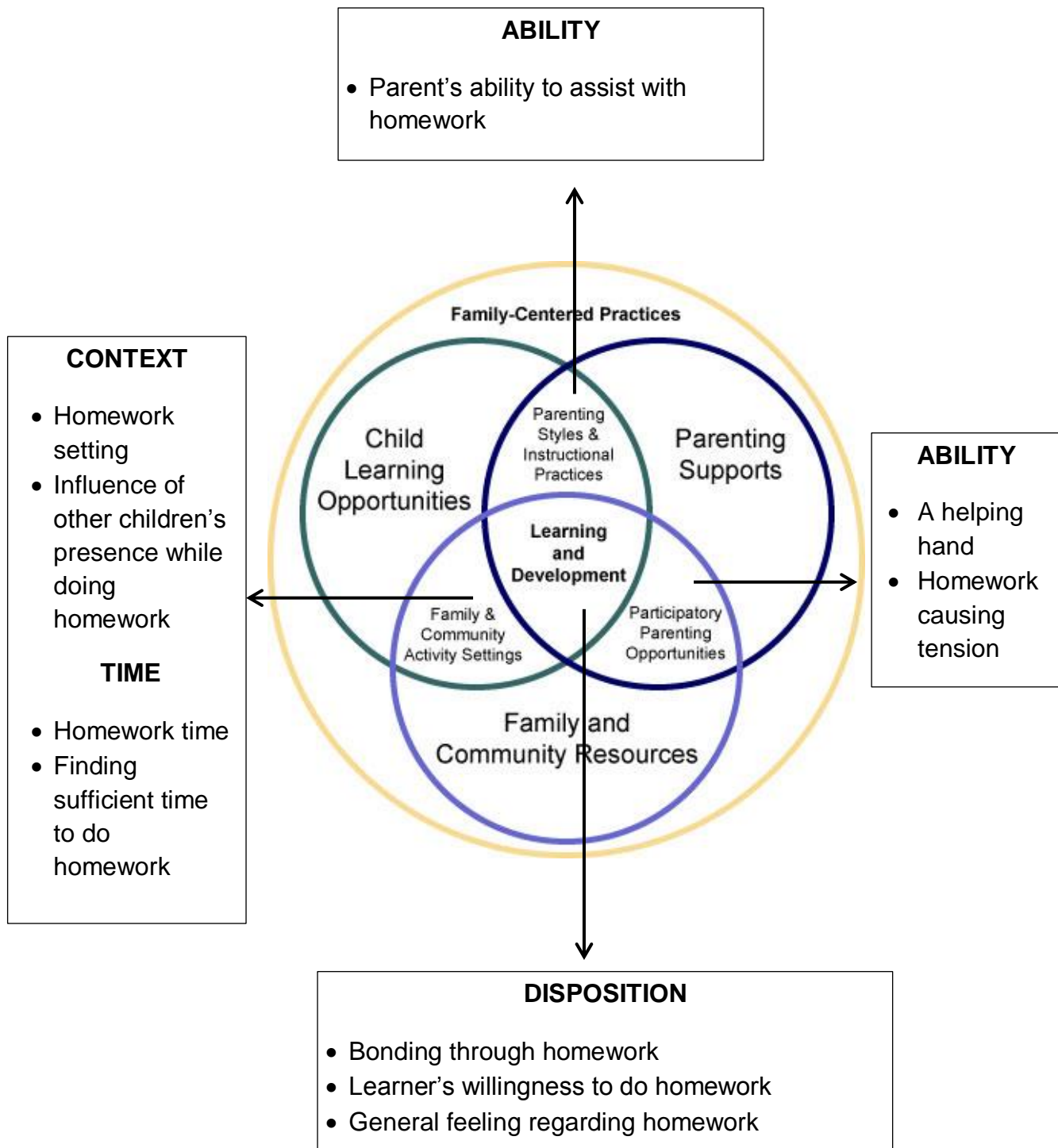**Figure 5.1: A visual presentation of how the themes and sub-categories are interlinked with Carl Dunst's integrated framework.**

In the following section, the impact of parents' attitudes towards homework in the Foundation Phase is discussed, by presenting the research findings through the lens of Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support.

5.2   FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITY SETTING

A family or community activity setting can be described as the intersection of children's learning opportunities and family/community resources (see Figure 5.1) and defines that children need activity settings in order to provide them with different kinds of learning opportunities (see section 2.5.3). When comparing my findings to the literature on activity settings, I realise the importance of the context in which homework is done and the time of homework on a learner's homework experience.

The homework context can play an important role in the homework process, as the learners in the Foundation Phase need an appropriate physical space and conducive conditions for doing homework (Xu, 2005: 49) (see section 2.3.2). All the parents who participated in this study indicated that it is important that their children do their homework at a table where they can sit on a chair. One of the parents explained that the homework environment should be more or less the same as a classroom environment, meaning that children should sit at a table, and that parents should be around to assist with homework, just as a teacher might do in class.

Xu and Corno (2003: 504) (see section 2.3.4) assert that distractions and other activities can be a challenge to learners' attention while doing homework. One of the parents in group 3 mentioned that her child sits in her room at a desk in order to avoid any distractions. While doing homework, the TV and radios are switched off, as all the parents explained that these are the main two distractions while doing homework (see section 4.4.1).

For some parents, the presence of other children while doing homework can be a significant distraction, causing negative attitudes towards homework, while other parents see them, on the other hand, as being able to assist with homework. Cooper, Lindsay and Nye (2000: 466) (see section 2.3.4) assert that parents can feel overwhelmed by homework if they are not able to provide their children with a quiet learning space. One of the parents indicated that not being able to leave her younger children unattended while assisting the older children with homework is one of the most frustrating aspects, leading her to having negative attitudes towards homework (see section 4.4.2).

Warton (2001: 158) (see section 2.3.4) points out that one of the most challenging aspects of doing homework is a limited amount of time. As most of the parents from the positive set group only work half days, they find it easy to assist their children with homework, and still have time to attend to other parental commitments (see section 4.4.4.1). But for parents from the negative set group, and also parents from the disadvantaged environment group, it is not so easy. Homework is regarded as an additional burden, and can cause tension for parents who work late and only arrive home after five o'clock. Corno (2000: 535) asserts that for some families, the evening schedule is so tight that homework can only be done later at night, which is usually too late for both learners and parents (see section 2.3.4). Starting late at night with homework can cause learners to develop negative attitudes towards homework, as they are tired, and their only purpose becomes getting through the work, rather than focusing on the learning experience (Corno, 1996: 29).

Some parents do not only work late, but are also single parents, making it more challenging for them to assist with homework (see section 4.4.4.2). One of the parents expressed her concern by saying that having extra helping hands at home is not always the solution, as the amount of homework given to learners constitutes the main problem (see section 4.4.4.2). Not only does the amount of homework influence the parents' ability to assist with homework, but it can also have a negative influence on the learners' homework experience. Homework can be very emotional for learners, because of the time and effort it takes, and also, because it can become a source of conflict between parent and child. Subsequently, the children are demotivated and discouraged in their learning (Paulu & Perkinson, 1995).

The context and time of homework (activity setting) can either encourage a child's participation, which could then lead to more positive child development, or it can hinder child participation, leading to negative child development (Dunst et al., 2001: 69) (see section 2.5.3). From the information gathered, it is clear that children are more willing to do their homework if they have an appropriate learning environment to work in, and if homework is done directly after school. The elimination of distractions also encourages child participation while doing homework.

5.3 PARENTING STYLES AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Parenting styles and instructional practices is the intersection of children's learning opportunities and parenting supports (see Figure 5.1) and defines the parenting style and instructional practices portrayed by parents as playing an important role while doing homework; as it can enhance certain aspects of the parent-child interaction (see section 2.5.2). The way in which parents raise their children (Spera, 2005: 127) and the parental goals, skills and attitudes (Spera, 2005: 125) that are transmitted, can be seen as parenting styles all of which have an influence on a learner's development, and consequently also on the homework experience.

According to Angenent (1985) (see section 2.4.1), eight child rearing styles or basic forms of parenting can be distinguished, namely: warm parenting; dominant parenting; tolerant, democratic parenting; involved parenting; cold parenting; permissive parenting; intolerant autocratic parenting; and indifferent parenting. A detailed description of these parenting styles was discussed in Chapter 2, but for the sake of the data interpretation the parenting styles are briefly discussed here again.

5.3.1 Warm parenting

The warm parent is a parent who is interested in their children's goals and achievements in school (Pretorius, 1998: 65) (see section 2.4.1.1). They are loveable, supportive and sensitive with regard to the child's problems, emotions and feelings (Pretorius, 1998: 65). All the parents from group one reflect these characteristics of warm parenting, because they make time for their children in order to assist with homework (see section 4.4.4.1), they see homework time as an opportunity to bond with their children (see section 4.4.5.1) and because of their warm attitudes towards their children, these children enjoy homework more (see section 4.4.6.2). Some parents from Group 3 also reflect warm parenting characteristics.

5.3.2 Cold parenting

Cold parents are the opposite of warm parents and these parents show rejection, coldness and heartlessness towards their children (Pretorius, 1998: 66) (see section 2.4.1.2). Pretorius (1998: 66) further asserts that these parents do not have time for their children, and do not show an interest in their children's work. Parents from group two portray these characteristics because they feel that they only fight

with their children while doing homework (see section 4.4.5.2), they chastise their children in order to get them to do their homework (see section 4.4.6.2), and they do not encourage their children to succeed in school (see section 4.4.6.2).

5.3.3 Dominant parenting

This type of parenting can be seen as the parenting style where parents want to dominate, control and correct their children (Pretorius, 1998: 66) (see section 2.4.1.3). One of the parents from group one is a good example, as she indicated that she tends to control her daughter while they do homework. The reason for that is that she only wants the best for her daughter, and will therefore show a strict attitude towards her.

5.3.4 Permissive parenting

Parents with this parenting style have very few rules, and allow their children to express themselves fairly freely (see section 2.4.1.4). While doing homework, these parents do not have specific rules and routines (Sigel & Rider, 2006: 426), they are permissive (see section 4.4.3.2), and they also allow their children to do what they want to do (see section 4.4.6.2). Some of the parents from Group 3 also use permissive parenting, but only due to circumstances such as no being able to assist all their children. Being a single parent can become very challenging to enforce discipline, leading to parents not being able to maintain strict rules and structure.

5.3.5 Tolerant, democratic parenting

These parents have high expectations when it comes to their children's achievement in school, but foster these high demands through communicating with their children, giving explanations when they are being punished, and encouraging their children to be independent (Spera, 2005: 134) (see section 2.4.1.5). It is important for these parents to maintain a firm control over their children, while still allowing them to do things themselves. The parents from Group 1 portray a tolerant, democratic parenting style and these parents encourage an open atmosphere in their family, where their children can communicate freely (see section 4.4.5.1), and they also give their children praise by rewarding them (see section 4.4.6.1). Spera (2005: 134) states that these parents have high expectations and therefore they will encourage their children to work independently, while still providing them with rationales for their actions. It is important for the parents of group one to teach their children that all of their actions have consequences (see section 4.4.6.1). According

to Brown and Iyengar (2008: 19), there are three components of a tolerant, democratic parent that contribute to successful homework completion: parental acceptance and warmth (parents from group one and group three makes sure that their children is loved and valued); behavioural supervision (these parents sets boundaries for their children in order for them to complete their homework); and democracy.

From the data gathered, it is clear that children of tolerant, democratic parents are involved in decision making, they are encouraged while doing homework, and they are not afraid to ask their parents for help.

5.3.6 Intolerant, autocratic parenting

Parents with an intolerant, autocratic parenting style believe that their word should be accepted without question (Van den Berg, 2004) (see section 2.4.1.6). These parents try to shape and control their children's behaviour and attitudes according to a set of standards (Baumrind, 1966: 890). Parents from Group 2 and some of the parents from Group 3 have indicated that they are very strict while doing homework, and will sometimes use force when their children misbehave (see section 4.4.6.2 and 4.4.10.2).

5.3.7 Involved parenting

Involved parents share their experiences with their children, and pay attention to the child's activities (Van den Berg, 2004) (see section 2.4.1.7). Parents from group one have indicated that they are interested in what their children are doing in school, (see section 4.4.5.1) and that they are involved in their child's school progress.

5.3.8 Indifferent parenting

These parents show no interest in their children, and display an emotional distance from their children (Van den Berg, 2004). Parents from Group 2 work late every day and do not have time for their children when they get home at night. Their children are left to do their homework on their own.

From the above-mentioned information, Figure 5.3 shows the characteristics portrayed by the positive set parents, and by those of the negative set parents.
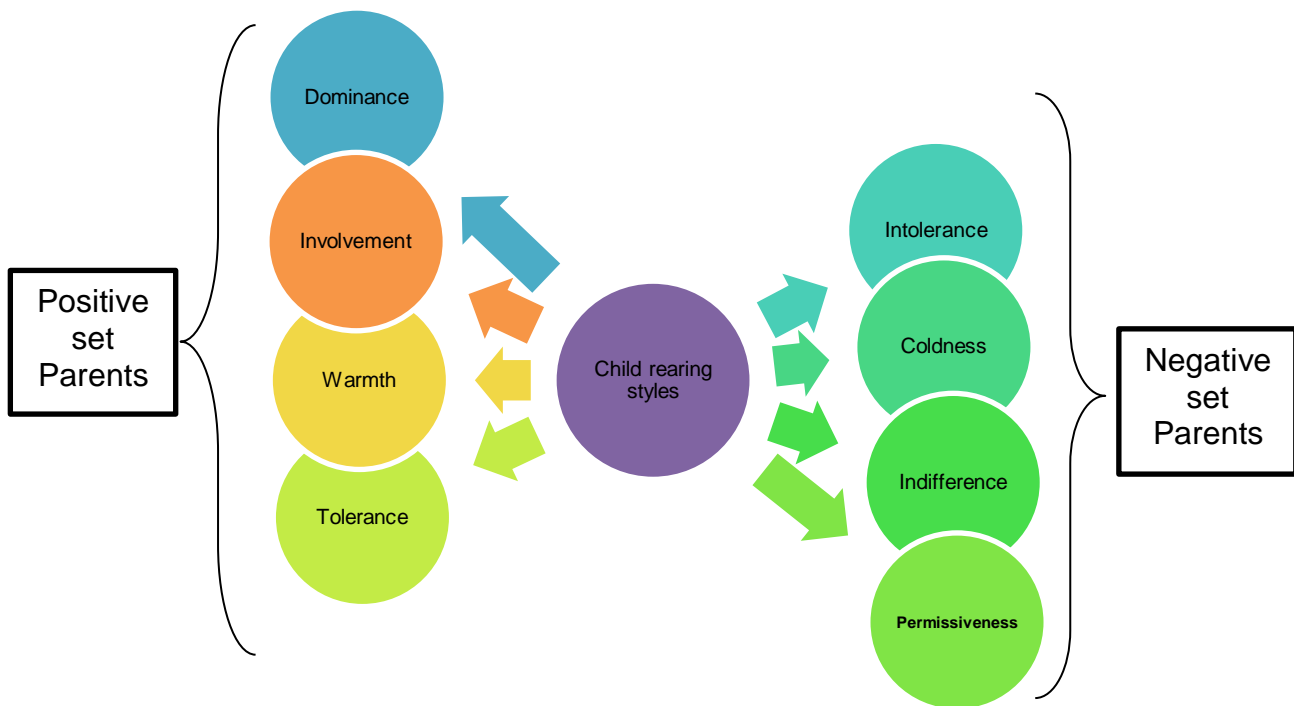
Figure 5.3: Summary of the characteristics portrayed by the positive set parents and negative set parents.

Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2002: 607) assert that the most basic account of homework assistance and the ability to help with homework can be explained in terms of parenting styles. The way in which parents interact with their children while doing homework depends on the parenting style being portrayed, and from the above-mentioned information it is clear that the positive set parents show characteristics of dominance, involvement, warmth and tolerance, all of which are associated with learners being more likely to tackle their homework independently. These parents explained that their children will do their homework on their own, and will ask for assistance if needed (see section 4.4.8.1). Children from these parents also enjoy this time of the day with their parents (Spera, 2005: 135) (see section 2.4.3). These parents have indicated that homework time is that time of the day where they can bond with their children, and that tension only arises if their children are tired or otherwise frustrated (see section 4.4.10.1). These parents provide their children with explanations, helping them to understand when they make mistakes in their homework, and also communicating with them and helping them to build interpersonal skills.

The negative set parents shows characteristics of intolerance, coldness, indifference and permissiveness, all of which are associated with poorer academic performance in children. These parents lack the ability to guide their children, and use punishment in order for their children to listen to them (Brown & Iyengar, 2008: 21). These parents have indicated that their children cannot do homework on their own, because of the fact that they cannot read (see section 4.4.8.2), making things more difficult for them, because they are not able to assist their children with homework when working late. These parents feel that it is the responsibility of the teacher to educate their children, and do not believe parents should be made to take responsibility for this aspect of their children's lives (see section 4.4.9.2). Children from these parents are less likely to do their homework, because they are controlled and feel that the homework process only causes tension.

Parents from the group living in disadvantage environments portray all characteristics of Angenent's (1985) child rearing styles, where on some days their circumstances can dictate their ability to assist their children with homework. Being a single parent can sometimes lead to control and domination, but can equally also lead to a child being wrapped in love and warmth.

Looking at my research findings, it is clear that the parents' attitudes towards homework and parenting style influence the way in which a learner will experience the homework process.

5.4   PARTICIPATORY PARENTING OPPORTUNITIES

Participatory parenting opportunities combine parenting and family/community support (see Figure 5.1) and refers to parents who can call on support in order to encourage or discourage specific parenting attitudes and behaviours towards homework. From the research findings detailed here, it is clear that parents' attitudes and behaviours influence the way in which they support their children while doing homework. Solomon, Warin and Lewis (2002: 609) (see section 2.4.2) distinguish between five distinct groups of parent support style while doing homework: no particular help needed; praise and unconditional support; promoters of autonomy; homework support as proactive involvement/encouragement and guidance; and monitoring parental control.

Some of the parents in group two and three mentioned that they are not always aware of homework that needs to be done, and therefore feel that their help is not

needed. According to Epstein and Becker (1982) (see section 2.4.2), learners sometimes do not ask for help from their parents, because they are aware of their parents' responsibilities, and feel that asking for assistance could cause tension. Due to the fact that children were not part of my research, I have no evidence to confirm this statement, and therefore assume that parents sometimes do not help with homework, because they are not aware of any homework assignments that need to be completed.

Praise and unconditional support is portrayed by some of the parents from group one, because these parents are interested in their child's homework, but would rather encourage their children to do homework on their own (see section 2.4.2). Some parents from group one have indicated that their children are capable of doing their homework on their own, but will ask for help if needed. These parents also indicated that although their children do not ask for assistance they will nonetheless make sure afterwards that all homework is correct and complete.

Promoters of autonomy describes parents who make themselves available for their children in order to assist with homework, but their ability to help may be restricted to the fact that they do not have the knowledge or understanding to do so. This inability to assist with homework causes these parents to become promoters of autonomy. This was one of the main concerns of all the parents who participated in the research. All of the parents mentioned that they sometimes struggle to assist their children with homework, because of the fact that they do not know what is expected of them (see section 4.4.9.1), where they feel the questions given by teachers do not make sense to them (see section 4.4.9.2) and that they do not understand the homework (see section 4.4.9.3). Parents sometimes lack the confidence to assist their children with homework and can therefore avoid assisting their children with homework.

Homework support as **proactive involvement/encouragement and guidance** describes parents who are involved at all times while doing homework. Parents from group one indicated (see section 4.4.1.1) that they were involved at all times while their children are engaged in homework, even though they encourage independent problem solving. Parents from group two and three indicated that they are not always able to assist at all times, due to other parental commitments as well as the needs of their other children.

Lastly, **monitoring parental control** is portrayed by some of the parents in group one, where a high degree of control over homework is reported (see section 4.4.8.1). Although some may think that this is the best type of parental support, it can also be of disadvantage towards a child, because independent problem solving is not encouraged. One of the parents from group one admitted (see section 4.4.8.1) a dynamic of control not only influences the parent-child relationship, but also influences her child to be dependant, and to ask for assistance the whole time.

From the information gathered, it is clear that parents' behaviours and attitudes influence the way in which they support their children while doing homework. These behaviours and attitudes can also cause tension while doing homework. Various reasons for homework tension were reported by parents taking part in the research.

All the participants from group one indicated that the main reason they fight with their children while doing homework is due to their children feeling frustrated and irritated (see section 4.4.10.1). The parents biggest concern was that their children were obliged to attend extra-curricular activities, and then to attend to their homework late at night. Parents report that this causes their children distress. Parents from group three also indicated that the lack of listening skills can cause tension while doing homework (see section 4.4.10.3). When children do not listen to instructions, parents can become very frustrated, because they feel that they cannot interact properly with them.

One of the parents from group one also mentioned that sometimes the parents cause tension themselves, because they forget that their children are still young and that they can struggle to relate to them in a way that makes sense to their children (see section 4.4.10.1). Sometimes parents gets frustrated because they try to explain something to their children, and when this fails, realise that their method of instruction is not age appropriate.

Parents from group two blame their teacher for tension that may arise while doing homework (see section 4.4.10.2). They feel that teachers assign too much homework and that instructions are not always clear. They also feel that it is unnecessary for things to be done in a specific manner (for example math word problems that need to have specific steps), because it makes it more challenging for them as parents to assist their children with homework.

The way in which learners experience homework (either positively or negatively) can be influenced by the support given by parents, and also by the behaviours and attitudes of the parents towards homework.

In order for learning and development to take place, all three elements (family and community activity setting, parenting styles and instructional practices, and participatory parenting opportunities) need to be in harmony with one another (see Figure 5.1). Parents need to set an appropriate environment and time for learners to do homework, they need to adopt an appropriate parenting style to accommodate the needs of learners, and their behaviour and attitudes need to be positively set in order to avoid any tension that may arise.

5.5   LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

During the interviews (see Appendix F) with the parents from learners in the Foundation Phase, five distinctive factors came forth as to why homework is given to learners in the Foundation Phase, namely: to practice a specific skill; to foster parent-child relationships; to learn responsibility; to establish structure and routine; and to involve parents. All these need to come together in order for a learner to develop to their maximum potential and for learning to take place.

Regarding the purpose and value of homework, there were vast differences in the perceptions of participants. As some of the parents in this study are also educators, they know the importance of homework, and why it should be given to learners (see section 4.4.7.1). Learners in the Foundation Phase are given homework to **practice a specific skill** and to revise the work that has been done in class (Corno, 1996: 27, Paula & Perkinson, 1995) (see section 2.3.1). They know that homework is given to prepare a learner (Corno, 1996, 27) to practice that with which they struggled during class (Balli, 1997: 3); to determine if a learner can transfer a new concept or skill to a new situation (Foyle & Bailey, 1986: 187); and to foster responsibility and time management (Warton, 2001: 156) (see section 2.3.1). These positive set parents will therefore go out of their way to make the homework process as pleasant as possible for their children (see section 4.4.7.1).

For some of the negative set parents, the main purpose of doing homework is not clear, and they therefore feel that it is the teachers' fault for not being able to complete the work in class. These parents feel that work should be done in school and not be sent home, excepting parents to assist (see section 4.4.7.2). Because

parents find homework meaningless, they tend to have negative attitudes and emotions towards homework, which is likely to impact the learner's view about homework. One of the negative parents explained that the moment her kids are not in the mood to do their homework, she will leave them, because she also feels that it is not necessary to do homework (see section 4.4.6.2).

Homework is also given to learners in the Foundation Phase to **foster parent-child relationships**. For some parents, homework is a way to keep in touch with their children (Solomon, Warin & Lewis, 2002: 603) and provides a time for them to bond with their children. For some parents of the positive set group, doing homework is the only time of the day when there is no TV and mobile phones, where communication can take place face to face (see section 4.4.5.1). Some parents also feel that it is important to know what is going on in school, and to talk about the things that happened during the day. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010: 182) state that this communication that takes place is very important, as it may help to promote the learner's understanding of the schoolwork.

Parents from the negative set group feel that homework only causes tension between them and their children, and that it tears their family apart (see section 4.4.5.2). Some of the participants from the disadvantage environment group also feel that they cannot bond with their children, because of their circumstances (number of children who needs attention). Not being able to have a relationship with their children due to tension at home during the homework process causes parents to have negative attitudes towards homework.

Homework is given to learners to teach them to be **responsible** and to teach them that there are consequences if homework is not done. The positive set parents make sure that they establish this foundation by teaching their children that if they do not complete their homework there will be adverse consequences (teacher will give demerits) (see section 4.4.6.1). Not only do these parents focus on the consequences, but they feel that their children should be rewarded if they do something right. Xu (2005: 48) states that laying down this foundation will improve a learner's self-regulation, which involves controlling emotions, having a positive attitude towards the task, and having effective strategies to solve problems when they arise.

Some of the negative set parents indicated that it becomes their responsibility if their children do not want to do their homework (see section 4.4.6.2). They also feel

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that their children do not care if they get into trouble the next day if homework goes incomplete. When their children start complaining about the amount of homework that needs to be done, these parents will excuse them from completing their homework and will then write a letter to the teacher explaining why the homework is not done. According to Corno and Xu (2004: 228) these children will never be able to develop good working habits, self-control and self-regulated learning.

Another reason why homework is given to learners in the Foundation Phase is to **establish structure and routine**. From personal responsibility comes the ability to manage time, and to establish a work schedule (Epstein & Van Voorhuis, 2010: 182) all of which helps with the personal development during the early ages of a Foundation Phase learner. Parents from group one feel that structure and routine should be established from a young age in order to make the higher levels easier (see section 4.4.7.1) and added that if learners do not get homework and they stay in the routine of doing homework, they become lazy. When homework is not done at a regular time each day, it can cause problems leading to learners not being able to complete their homework (Paulu & Perkinson, 1995) (see section 2.3.4). For the parents of Group 2, finding a specific time each day to assist with homework is challenging, because they work late. Their children get home after school and then engage in other activities apart from doing homework. By the time these parents get home, their children are not in the mood to do homework, which creates tension (see section 4.5.3.2).

Most teachers assign homework in order to **involve the parents** and to inform them about classroom activity and what is being done during school hours (Warton, 2001:156). According to the parents of Group 1 and some of Group 3, homework helps them to become more involved in what is going on in the school (see section 4.4.7.3). According to the ECD policy (see section 2.2), it is the responsibility of the school and the teachers to ensure that parents are fulfilling their duty to educate their children and to involve all parents in the functioning of the school (Department of Social Development, 2007), but from these findings, it seems necessary to take a child's personal context is taken into consideration. Homework is therefore important, as it is seen as the link between the school and parents.

Holistically, the data interpretation shows that in order for learning and development to take place, parents need to set an appropriate environment and time for learners to do their homework (family and community setting), they need to portray an

appropriate parenting style to accommodate the needs of learners (parenting style and instructional practices) and their behaviour and attitudes need to be positively set, in order to avoid tension that may arise (participatory parenting opportunities).

5.6   SUMMARY

Through conducting a further thematic analysis of my findings by layering and interconnecting the themes in order to look for relations between the themes as well as comparing the findings with past research in the literature in the form of a narrative discussion, I have reached an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon I set out to investigate.

Since the aim of this study was to investigate how parents can be encouraged to view homework as quality time spent with their children and not as a parental chore, the focus of the empirical study was on the voices of parents from learners in the Foundation Phase. Three different groups of parents (positive set, negative set and parents from disadvantaged environments) were used to compare how different attitudes and behaviours influence the homework process for a learner in the Foundation Phase. It was interesting to see that their experiences regarding homework in the Foundation Phase correspond with the findings of research on homework worldwide. In order to get a holistic view, I compared my research findings to Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support.

I have gained a clarity as to how parents' attitudes impact their children's homework experience, as well as how parents can be encouraged to view homework as quality time spent with their children. In Chapter 6 a summary of my research findings is given, before research conclusions are drawn by answering the initial research questions. Recommendations and guidelines in order to change parents' negative attitudes towards homework are followed. I trust that the recommendations emanating from my study will make a difference in the lives of parents of learners in the Foundation Phase.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5 the research findings of this study were discussed with reference to the research aim, research questions, theoretical framework and the relevant literature on homework in the Foundation Phase, in an attempt to uncover the meaning of the empirical research findings. I compared my research findings to Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support, in order to get a holistic view. Family and community activity settings were presented and compared to the findings of previous literature on the importance of the homework context and time and the impact thereof on a learners' homework experience (see section 5.2). Thereafter, the role of parenting styles and instructional practices portrayed by parents while assisting with homework were discussed (see section 5.3). Thirdly, the way in which parents support their children while doing homework were discussed as participatory parenting opportunities (see section 5.3). Finally, learning and development were discussed by emphasizing that all three intersecting elements (family and community activity setting, parenting styles and instructional practices and participatory parenting opportunities) ought to be in harmony with one another in order for learning and development to take place (see section 5.4).

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to conclude the study by presenting a brief summary of the literature on homework in the Foundation Phase (Chapter 2) and the empirical research findings of this study (Chapter 4). Similarities and possible contradictions between the literature and the empirical findings of this study, as discussed in Chapter 5, will be briefly summarised. Subsequently, conclusions will be drawn by first answering the secondary research questions, and finally, the main research question which guided this study. Lastly, recommendations will be made for parents, the school, and teachers, and for further research.

6.2   SUMMARY

6.2.1 A short overview of the literature on homework in the Foundation Phase

Much research has be done on homework in the Foundation Phase, due to the impact it has on a child's personal development (see Chapter 2). Homework is given to learners on a daily basis for various reasons. From a teacher's perspective, homework is given to learners to practice a specific skill, to prepare them for a upcoming test and to revise the things that have been taught in class. From a parent's perspective, homework is given to foster parent-child relationships, to bring parents and educators closer together and to keep in touch with what is going on in school. From a learner's perspective, homework is given to win the approval of their parents and teachers, and to learn (see section 2.3.1).

The importance of homework for a learner in the Foundation Phase is usually wrongly understood as a way of keeping learners busy after school and is only given to them because teachers are not able to finish the work in class. This is not the case as homework is given to learners to foster self discipline and personal responsibility. Learners in the Foundation Phase need to learn to manage their time, to build study skills, and to develop research skills, which will help with personal development and responsibility. Homework is not only important for a learner's development, but also for academic reasons. Research has shown that learners who do homework, do better in school, and therefore have good grades (see section 2.3.2).

Parents' parenting styles and way of instruction have an impact on a learner's homework experience. The emotional climate in which parents raise their children, the values, behaviours and standards that children are expected to adopt and the parental goals, skills and attitudes that are passed on all have an influence on the nature and course of a learner's development, and the way in which they will experience the homework process. Children enjoy their homework when they are being loved, supported and encouraged while doing homework. If learners feel neglected and little guidance is given while doing homework, learners may feel that they are not important, leading to generalised negative feelings. Too much guidance while doing homework can cause learning opportunities to being taken

from the learner, resulting in a learner not having confidence in making her own decisions (see section 2.4).

Parents attitudes towards homework are likely to affect how a learner will experience the homework process. Positive parental attitudes are related to learners developing a positive attitude towards homework, and will help them to see this time of the day as quality time spent as a family together. When learners develop a positive attitude towards homework, they are more likely to complete their homework with regularity, and will have more confidence. Negative parental attitudes will lead to a learner having negative feelings regarding homework, resulting in incomplete homework tasks, conflict with parents and low academic results (see section 2.4.2).

The literature consulted is of great value for this research as it enabled me to get a clear perspective of the importance of homework for a learner in the Foundation Phase, and to understand why parents need to be involved in assisting with homework. The literature is also the foundation on which recommendations and guidelines for parents are established.

6.2.2 A short overview of the empirical research findings of this study

Three semi-structured focus group interviews (positive set parents, negative set parents and parents from disadvantaged environments) were conducted with parents from learners in the Foundation Phase of a primary school, situated in an established neighbourhood. Positive set parents revealed that they see homework as a form of quality time spent with their children, and that they find no problem assisting their children with homework. Although they only work half day and have the time to assist with homework, they still feel that it is their responsibility to do so. For these parents, homework ought to be done directly after school and at an appropriate learning space in order to establish routine and structure (see section 4.4.1 and 4.4.3). It is important for them to teach their children that there are consequences if they do not want to do homework, and that conflict is not a solution to a problem (see section 4.4.6). These parents promote independent problem solving with the reassurance that help is available when needed.

Homework is more challenging for the negative set parents, as most indicated that they work full day, and that there is no time to assist with homework in amongst all of their parental commitments. They therefore find it difficult to bond with their

children while doing homework, as this only results in conflict. Structure and routine are not important for these parents, resulting in homework only being done at night, when their children are tired and frustrated (see section 4.4.4). These parents mentioned that homework only drives their family further apart and therefore blames the school and teachers for the tension caused by homework. They feel that it is not their responsibility to encourage their children to do homework, and do not mind if homework is not completed (see section 4.4.6). For these parents it is easy to blame poor school performance on the teachers, while their own roles and responsibilities as a parent remain under examined.

Parents from the disadvantage environment experience financial constraints, and therefore the homework process can be very difficult. Tension may arise while doing homework, where parents may feel under pressure to provide their children with food and shelter, not having access to internet and other relevant sources, other children in the same house that also need attention and being a single parent. Although it is challenging to establish a routine, these parents feel that it is important for their children to do homework at a suitable place and directly after school (see section 4.4.4). Not being able to give individual attention to children while doing homework can sometimes become challenging for these parents, resulting in homework not being completed. These parents will also make excuses for their children if homework is not done, taking away the child's responsibility (see section 4.4.6.3). Parents from a disadvantaged environment group have mentioned that homework is an absolute necessity, but that it can become very stressful because of their circumstances, leading to negative feelings regarding homework.

Parent's attitudes towards homework play an important role in how their children will experience the homework process. Parents are role models to their children and therefore need to know the implications of their behaviours and attitudes on a child's homework experience.

When I compared my empirical research findings to the findings of previous studies in the literature, I found that participant parent attitudes and behaviours correspond with the impact that this may have on a learner's homework experience, as proposed by various researchers.

With regard to the learning space and time, my research findings correspond with the findings of previous studies in the literature, due to the importance of an appropriate learning space while doing homework. The positive set parents pointed

out that an appropriate learning space and daily routine helps to build structure, making homework completion more easy (see section 5.2). The parenting style and way of instruction has been set out by previous research studies as an important factor, as it is the way in which parental goals, skills and attitudes are transmitted. From my empirical research findings, it became clear that the positive set parents portray most of the characteristics (dominance, involvement, warmth and tolerance) associated with having positive attitudes towards homework, while the negative set parents portray characteristics (intolerance, coldness, indifference and permissiveness) associated with negativity towards the homework process (see section 5.3). Previous research also emphasises that parents attitudes and behaviours influence the way in which they assist their children while doing homework. From these empirical research findings, it became clear that behaviours and attitudes of parents towards homework influence the way in which learners will experience the homework process (either positively or negatively). Although this research is mainly focused on the learner's experience while doing homework, I have no evidence that the parent's behaviours, attitudes and way of instruction influence a learner's academic performance (see section 5.4).

Although previous research mainly focuses on the importance of homework for a learner in the Foundation Phase, these research findings seems to break new ground, since I used Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support in order to show that for learning and development to take place, parents need to set an appropriate activity setting, they need to portray an appropriate parenting style, and their behaviours and attitudes need to be positively set in order to avoid the tension that may arise while doing homework.

6.3   RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The final conclusions of this study will be drawn by answering the research questions guiding the study (see Chapter 1). The main research question was: how can parents negative attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase be resolved? The secondary research questions were: why do some parents have negative attitudes towards their children's homework?; how do these negative attitudes influence the children's homework experience?; what guidelines can be

recommended in order to make homework a more positive experience for parents? The last mentioned questions will be answered through a set of recommendations.

I will proceed by stating research conclusions as answers to the secondary questions, which will subsequently lead to the main research conclusions, and the answering of the main research question.

6.3.1 Secondary research question 1: Why do some parents have negative attitudes towards their children's homework?

Some parents have negative attitudes towards homework due to their personal circumstances, the inability to assist with homework, the inability to find sufficient time to assist with homework, and the tension that arises while doing homework. Being a single parent, raising more then three children, being financially constrained and working late everyday are some of the personal circumstances making it difficult for parents to have positive attitudes towards homework. Feeling under pressure to provide their children with food and shelter leads to tension while doing homework. Some parents feel that family is all that they have, and that doing homework can lead to tearing their family apart. As some parents are not familiar with how things should be done, they may feel embarrassed and uncomfortable in assisting with homework.

Most parents work full days, and come home late in the evenings, only to attend to their parental commitments, including assisting with homework. For single parents, assisting with homework can become challenging, as there are no extra hands to help with homework and other household commitments. This leads to negative attitudes, as parents feel that the homework load given by teachers is too much, and that the circumstances of parents are not taken into consideration. Lastly parents develop negative attitudes towards homework because of the tension that arises while assisting their children with homework. Not only are the parents tired and frustrated at night but their children are also exhausted after putting in the same hours as most adults do. Being under pressure, frustrated and irritated with each other while doing homework, only leads to tension and fighting. For most parents, this is the main reason for having negative attitudes towards homework, as they feel that they do not bond with their children and that it only drives them apart.

6.3.2 Secondary research question 2: How do these negative attitudes influence the children's homework experience?

As parenting styles are described as the way in which parents raise their children and also the parental goals, skills and attitudes being passed on from parents to their children, it is safe to say that parents' attitudes influence the way in which their children will experience homework. When parents have negative attitudes towards homework, children will be less likely to enjoy the homework process and may also develop negative feelings.

Because parents with negative feelings regarding homework fail to designate a time for their children to do homework, it can influence a learner as they do not have any structure and routine when doing homework. These children usually have to start their homework by the time their parents get home at night, leading to having negative feelings, because they may feel tired and demotivated to do their homework. Some parents find it difficult to have one-on-one interaction while doing homework, because of the number of children that needs attention, or because of single parent households. These children may develop negative feelings towards homework, as they feel that they do not get the love and attention that they desire, and also because homework is the reason why they quarrel with their parents. As homework is not a priority for these negative set parents, learners may feel that they are not encouraged to complete their homework. As reported by parents in this study, these children may also feel that there will be no consequences for their incomplete homework, and that it is easier to choose play over work.

Although most children in the Foundation Phase enjoy doing homework because of the interaction and bonding they have with their parents, learners from negative set parents may feel that doing homework only causes tension. Homework is therefore seen as a burden.

6.3.3 Main research question: What is the impact of parents' attitudes towards homework in the Foundation Phase?

In order for parents' attitudes to be resolved, all four intersecting circles of Carl Dunst's integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support (family and community activity setting, parenting styles and instructional practices, participatory parenting opportunities and learning and development)

needs to come together in harmony with one another. Their practical application will be discussed under recommendations.

These intersecting circles make up the family-centered practices that help strengthen families, and are there to promote family choices and to develop relationships between parents and their children (see section 2.5.1). Through these family-centered practices, parents becomes empowered by building on existing strengths, helping them to meet the needs of their children.

The following guidelines are recommended in order to make the homework process in the Foundation Phase a more positive experience for parents.

6.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to my research findings, the following recommendations can be made for parents, for the school, for teachers and for further research.

6.4.1   Recommendations for parents

As mentioned earlier, all four intersecting circles of Carl Dunst's integrated framework need to be in harmony in order to resolve parents negative attitudes. Each intersecting circle will be discussed and possible guidelines will be recommended in order to make the homework process a more positive experience.

6.4.1.1   Family and community activity setting

Parents need to designate an appropriate learning space for their children while doing homework. This can be done through assuring that homework is done at a suitable surface (table, counter, desk) where learners can sit on a chair. Any distractions or other activities need to be eliminated while doing homework. Television sets and radios need to be switched off and the presence of other children should be avoided. As time is one of the most challenging aspects for a full day working parent, routine and structure need to be established. Homework should be completed directly after school, before learners become too tired to do homework. Parents also need to try to make the homework environment more or less the same as a classroom environment, as this will help learners to stick to a routine. This can be done through ensuring that learners sit on a chair at a table and that parents are available at all time. When parents are present while doing

homework, learners may feel that they can ask for help at any time. Parents also need to check homework in order to avoid mistakes.

6.4.1.2   Parenting styles and instructional practices

When parents show characteristics of warmth, tolerance, dominance and involvement, learners are more likely to do their homework independently and without difficulty. Parents need to show warmth by showing interest in their children's goals and achievement in school. Through communicating with their children and encouraging them to be independent, parents can portray a tolerant, democratic parenting style. They can also set boundaries for their children and explain to them that all of their actions have consequences. Parents need to become involved through sharing their own experiences and becoming involved in their children's activities. Lastly, parents need to promote positive learning and time management through rewarding their children. This is done by giving praise for appropriate behaviour.

6.4.1.3   Participatory parenting opportunities

Parent's attitudes and behaviours determine the support they give while doing homework, and therefore these attitudes and behaviours need to be positively enforced. Parents need to show that they are available while doing homework and need to show interest in what is being done. Parents need to promote independent problem solving and give praise for good and completed work. If parents are not capable of assisting their children with homework they can encourage their children to use technology (computer) in order to get the answers themselves. When doing homework with their children, parents need to keep in mind that when explaining something, it should be age appropriate, and can be done through illustrations and drawings.

6.4.1.4   Learning and development

In order for learning and development to take place, parents first need to know the importance of homework and why it is given to children. This will help parents to make homework as pleasant as possible for their children. Making homework fun for children can promote a positive homework experience. This can be done through playing school-school, which enable learners to teach each other, and even teach their parents something new. Learning to spell with a blackboard, is a fun way of learning spelling words. Translating songs from one language to another will help

learners with translation, and with their first additional languages while laughing at the silliness. Lastly, writing diary entries about personal feelings enable learners to practice writing skills through expressing their feelings. Parents need to see homework as the time of the day that they can bond with their children. When doing homework, parents should switch off all electronics and cell phones and mainly focus on communicating with their children. Through this parents can also get an idea of what is going on in school and what happened during the day. In order for learning and development to take place, parents need to promote responsibility through emphasising that there are consequences if homework is not done. Learners also need to be taught to take responsibility for their own actions. At the same time, learners should be rewarded when homework is completed.

6.4.2 Recommendations for schools and teachers

In order to make the homework process easier for parents a few recommendations are made for the school and for teachers.

An intervention for parents should be made, where parents can come to the school and be educated on how to assist with homework. Parents will then also be able to see what is going on in the school. Parents also need to be educated and trained on how to take responsibility of their child's needs.

The amount of homework should be limited. This can be done by allowing for certain subjects to be given on certain days. For example, on Mondays only Maths homework is given, on Tuesday spelling words can be given, on Wednesdays, grammar, and on Thursdays, Afrikaans. This will also help parents to know exactly what homework should be done on which day. Homework will be done more thoroughly when divided into days, because it will allow learners to focus on a specific task for a small amount of time.

Intervention classes for learners are also recommended, as parents feel it will help with learning problems. Parents are aware that extra help cannot be given during school hours, and it is therefore recommend that intervention should be given after school to give extra support.

6.4.3 Recommendations for further research

According to the empirical research findings, parents' attitudes and behaviours influence the way in which a learner experiences the homework process.

Accordingly, it is recommended that a study should be conducted on how parents' attitudes and behaviours towards homework influence a learner's academic achievement. The academic progress of learners in the Foundation Phase should be investigated in order to determine the extend to which their parent's attitudes towards homework are influential. The findings of such a study can then be presented to the Department of Education for approval.

Similarly, an investigation to develop and implement a homework programme which can be used to improve parent-child relationships while doing homework will be useful in an attempt to promote positive parental attitudes towards homework. This homework programme would enable parents to bond with their children while doing homework, and alternatively make the homework process a more positive experience.

6.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to explore the way in which parents' negative attitudes towards homework impact their child's homework experience. Through conducting an in-depth literature study on homework in the Foundation Phase, I discovered the importance as well as the complexity of parent's attitudes towards homework in the Foundation Phase, which provided the framework for collecting, analysing and interpreting my data. The empirical part of the study revealed that parent's attitudes and behaviours influence the way in which a learner will experience the homework process.

Even though my research findings cannot be generalised, this study argues that parent's attitudes towards homework influence the way in which a child experience the homework process. As homework is given on a daily basis and always will be a part of a child's life, homework plays a significant role in family cohesion, and therefore I argue that parents need to be encouraged to see homework as quality time spent with their children and not as a parental chore. The expert advice of positive set parents should be followed in supporting parents who harbour negative feeling regarding homework. Schools and teachers should also listen to the voices of these parents as they speak on behalf of others.

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APPENDICES

Dear Principal

Requesting permission to conduct research at Laerskool Fleur Primary.

I am a student studying through the University of Pretoria. I am currently enrolled for my BEd (Masters) in Learning Support in the Faculty of Education. I hereby wish to apply for permission to conduct research in 2014 at Laerskool Fleur Primary. My research project will involve 15 parents from learners in the Foundation Phase.

My research topic is "**Resolving parents' negative attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase: Challenges and guidelines.**" Parents complain that homework is the reason why they fight with their children and that homework is the blame for the negative relationship between them and their children. I therefore want to address this potential source of conflict by identifying why some parents have negative attitudes towards their children's homework and to provide parents with guidelines in order to assist them in making the homework process a more positive experience for both the parties involved.

The study will involve three different focus group interviews with parents from learners in the Foundation Phase. Focus group interviews will be conducted at the school after school hours. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed by the researcher and the information obtained will be treated with confidentiality. A copy of the interview schedule is attached for your information.

Parents will be given an informed consent letter to inform them about the research. Participation will be voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. The identity of the school and all participants will be protected. Information collected will be treated as confidential and will be in my or my supervisor's possession.

It is my presumption that the research finding will make a creditable contribution towards assisting parents with homework guidelines/recommendations in order to make homework a more positive experience.

If you agree to allow me to do research at your school, please fill in the consent form provided below. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

Yours sincerely

_____   _____

Marike du Preez   Dr MG Steyn
(Supervisor)

marikearcher@gmail.com   mg.steyn@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, Principal of

_____ agree / do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to allow Marike du Preez to conduct research in this school. The topic of the research is: **Resolving parents' negative attitudes regarding homework in the Poundation phase: Challenges and guidelines.**

I understand that parents from learners in the Foundation Phase will be interviewed about this topic for approximately one hour at a venue and time that will suit the parents. The interviews will be audio taped.

I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:

- Voluntary participation which imply that participants may withdraw at any time.
- Informed consent whereby participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process.
- Safety in participation.
- Confidentiality and anonymity of human respondents.
- Trust.

Signature: _____   Date:

_____

Homework

Name: _____

Surname: _____

 I feel that homework causes conflict and tension between me and my child which leads to negative attitudes.

 I feel that homework is seen as the time of day when I can interact with my child and I find no problem assisting my child with homework

 I help my child when doing homework because it is part of my parental commitment.

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a student studying through the University of Pretoria. I am currently enrolled for my BEd (Masters) in Learning Support in the Faculty of Education.

My research topic is "**Resolving parents' negative attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase: Challenges and guidelines."** Parents complain that homework is the reason why they fight with their children and that homework is the blame for the negative relationship between them and their children. I therefore want to address this potential source of conflict by identifying why some parents have negative attitudes towards their children's homework and to provide parents with guidelines in order to assist them in making the homework process a more positive experience for both the parties involved. I hereby would like to ask whether you will be willing to participate in this research.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed about this topic. The interviews will take place at Laerskool Fleur Primary at a time that will suit you. The interviews will be in a form of a group with other parents. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed for analytic purposes. Information obtained will only be accessed by myself and my supervisor and will be regarded as confidential and anonymous.

You do not have to participate in this research if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, but change your mind during the research process, you can withdraw your participation at any time.

Your identity as well as the school's identity will be protected during the research process. Information given will only be used for academic purposes and will only be in my possession or my supervisor's and will be locked up for safety and confidential purposes.

If you agree to take part in the research, please fill in the consent form provided below. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

_____   _____

Marike du Preez   Dr MG Steyn
(Supervisor)

marikearcher@gmail.com   mg.steyn@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____ agree / do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to allow Marike du Preez to conduct research in this school. The topic of the research is: **Resolving parents' negative attitudes regarding homework in the Foundation Phase: Challenges and guidelines.**

I understand that I will be interviewed about this topic for approximately 2 hours at Laerskool Fleur Primary at a time that will suit me. I am also aware that the interview will be audio taped.

I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:

- Voluntary participation which imply that participants may withdraw at any time.
- Informed consent whereby participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process.
- Safety in participation. Participants will not be placed at risk or harm of any kind.
- Confidentiality and anonymity of human respondents.
- Trust. Participants will not be respondent to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The purpose of this interview is to find out how parents feel about doing homework, how they manage to assist their children with homework and what guidelines they use during the homework process.

Homework and the homework environment:

1. What time do you usually do homework?
2. Where does your child do his/her homework?
3. Are there any other children present while doing homework?

A helping hand:

4. Do you assist your child with his/her homework? If answered yes:
5. How do you assist you child with his/her homework?
6. Do you as parents feel that you bond with your child while doing homework?
7. Do you find sufficient time between all of you parental commitments to help with homework?

Ability to cope:

8. Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by his/her homework?
9. What do you do if your child is not in the mood to do his/her homework?
10. Does the homework process sometimes cause tension between you and your child?
11. How does this influence the homework experience for both you and your child?
12. What is your general feeling regarding homework?

From the parent's side:

13. What do you as parents recommend the school and teachers to do in order to make the homework process easier?
14. What strategies do you use to make the homework process easier?

Dear Mrs Du Preez,

REFERENCE: EC 13/11/03

We received proof that you have met the conditions outlined. Your application is thus approved, and you may **continue with your fieldwork**. Should any changes to the study occur after approval was given, it is your responsibility to notify the Ethics Committee immediately.

Please note that this is **not a clearance certificate**. Upon completion of your research you need to submit the following documentation to the Ethics Committee:

1. Integrated Declarations form that you adhered to conditions stipulated in this letter – Form D08

Please Note:

- *Any* amendments to this approved protocol needs to be submitted to the Ethics Committee for review prior to data collection. Non-compliance implies that approval will be null and void.
- *Final data collection protocols and supporting evidence (e.g.: questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules) have to be submitted to the Ethics Committee before they are used for data collection.*
- *On receipt of the above-mentioned documents you will be issued a clearance certificate. Please quote the reference number **EC 13/11/03** in any communication with the Ethics Committee.*

Best wishes,

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

DATA: TRANSCRIBED AND ARRANGED ACCORDING TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

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HOMEWORK ENVIRONMENT:

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1. **What time do you usually do homework with your child?**

Positive set parents

P3: I am fortunate enough to be at home in the afternoon, so we get home and have an hour of break from so by half past three is a fair time to start if there is not too much homework maybe 4 o'clock so there is two hours basically between school and then homework.

P2: Immediately when we return home, she has half an hour to change and have lunch and then we begin.

P4: It takes me about half an hour to 45 minutes to get to home from here so by the time I get there they have a quick lunch and then we start homework. I feel that the kids must do homework immediately after school. If they have a too much long break then they just don't want to do anything then you don't get anything out of them. And then ja, I think an hour, hour and a half homework is, doing homework is, is enough time for them to finish, if it is longer than that they are either battling or their homework is too much or too difficult.

P1: Well, I have been doing this for 12 years and I normally leave, my daughter ok until about half past four five o'clock then she start her homework. And I also find that, like the lady said; if there is too much homework they don't get it finished. And then you have got to push then through until eight nine o'clock at night to get their homework done and normally it goes quickly these last few days she did two days homework in one day, so it just depends on how you push them whether they want to do it or whether they don't want to do....

P3: I also think if you have different ages obviously foundation level versus senior level is a lot more, but the homework they get is normally the homework they get per subject so it's exactly like your day at school you have your period you get the work if it should work the same way, so I tend to work with a clock system with my older one, where as the younger one doesn't really have a clock system, you need to get

through the five subjects and if you have homework for all five and you didn't you then tend to finish but I also agree that if they are done before eight o'clock you know they have done what they need to, it is not too much.

Negative set parents

P5: Various. Mine various. Depends on what time I am home. If I get to do homework, otherwise I am aftercare. That is my homework. So ja that is me.

P7: I've got an au pair to help me because my daughter is studying teaching so she helps me out and when I get home at half past five quarter to six then I will finish off all projects given the same day for the next day so then you still have to find the time.

P6: When mine get home they have got an hour to spend for themselves and after that hours' time then we start with homework.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: We do homework from half past 2 in the afternoon till about half past 4, 5 o'clock every afternoon.

P11: By the time I get home from school that will be around about normally say 3 o'clock, quarter past 3 until 5 on the latest.

P8: The moment we get home, she'll dress and that is the first thing she does before play anything else...homework first.

2. **Where does your child do his/her homework?**

Positive set parents

P1: Well I normally sit in the kitchen because when I start homework with my daughter she...I'm normally cooking. I start cooking at about half past three four o'clock and if she doesn't want to be with me in the kitchen she goes to her bedroom and she sits and does it in her bedroom. I sometimes tend to find that she does it quicker when she is on her own but if I'm with her I push her and push her and she gets a little bit upset about it so I let her go and study in her room if she needs to, wants to otherwise she'll come and sit, because of her older sister she'll sit in the kitchen

with her because her sister sits there as well and then my daughter will sit and do her homework if she sees her older sister doing it, she'll do it.

P3: It's basically the same with me I think is because I have two girls but the eldest one tends to be more of a loner so I think the work load is a lot more she concentrates better on her own whereas with the small one I would have to say ok let's just sit where we have to sit, either the dining room or her desk one of the two, but it gets done that way.

P4: I also sit with my kids in the kitchen, they both have their desk in their room. My daughter that is now in grade six, sometimes she wants to go do her stuff on her own she goes to her room sit at the desk do it. My son wants me still even if he is in grade three now he still wants me to sit there and help him, not actually help him but you know I just have to be there even if I am in the kitchen busy as long as I'm there then...

P3: ...it could be also that the class environment the teacher's there it's not an environment where they never see the teacher the teacher is always around, so with my younger one I feel that maybe because they have that environment in the class they still expect it but the work gets done but if and if they get stuck they tend to ask so I think it's exactly, in my household I think it's exactly the same way it is in the classroom. Teachers' there so I ask teacher, so that is just my opinion.

P4: She does her homework on the kitchen table.

Negative set parents

P5: Table or a counter. As long as it is a counter or a table, somewhere where they can sit on a chair and not on their laps.

P7: My dining room table.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: In our lounge I have got three desks set up and each child has their own individual desk.

P11: In the lounge, I do my homework in the lounge and I ask her when we get home, homework books out, then I say whatever she's got she must show me, Afrikaans, English, Mathematics and when she starts with her...sometimes she starts at school here...then I would say go on you know what to do, you know the spelling words, so

go on see if you don't understand the spelling words I will help you so see what you can do and when we get home then I will help her with whatever she needs help with and then we go on.

P8: Study desk, I believe that is the best for a kid because otherwise she's got things that are distracting her, so she is at her desk doing her homework.

P9: My son does most of his homework at aftercare. We have an arrangement that the work that he is not sure about we then do in the evening.

3. Are there any other children present while doing homework?

Positive set parents

Answered in the above mentioned question.

Negative set parents

P5: O yes. Sibling.

P7: Six other siblings.

P6: Yes mine is all three together.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: Yes, I've got five so there is a two year old, four year old and then three children busy doing homework, so yes they are all present while we are doing homework, or trying to do homework. **Does this influence the homework process?** Yes, very much so because of the younger two obviously not being able to be unsupervised, it does tend to be a bit of a distraction that is why I actually have separate toys it is special toys and special activities that the younger kids can do in the same room where I can keep an eye on them, like playing with clay ect, it is called homework clay and they only play with that when the other older children are busy doing homework, but yes it is a huge distraction, so yes other children are present, most definitely.

P11: I have only got one child, and I have never done homework with other children before. Sometime I go to my brother and his eldest daughter will ask me to help

her, then I say I must first help Joellianne then I will get to you, I will help you with your work, but yes that is a huge distraction.

P8: My rule is that the younger one must go and play, I can see him where he is playing on the jungle gym, so I can have an eye on him, but he is not there when his sister is doing homework, because he is a major distraction at all, so he knows when his sister starts doing homework, he goes out.

P9: My other son is in grade twelve. I also assist him where I can and when I need to.

A HELPING HAND:

4. Do you assist your child with his/her homework? If answered yes, how do you assist your child with his/her homework?

Positive set parents

P1: I tend to want to help her and my elder daughter, she is in grade twelve says to me that I must not always want to help. I will say to her okay, I can't help her with Maths that is out and I will sit with her and especially when she does her Afrikaans, she tends to find the Afrikaans a little bit of a problem, right, so I have to tell her for example "*kom ons speel*" she doesn't know what I am saying and then I have to repeat it in English and then I would say to her that I don't want to repeat it in English because then you are going to know what it is. She will then respond but ma I don't know what you are saying, please you have to repeat it. So I do tend to help her a lot when it comes to the Afrikaans. I really do.

P3: I think it is a bit of a challenging in most homes...Afrikaans. In my household we tend to bring technology along also into the household. So if I am not there and the little one wants to use...she uses an online dictionary which is probably not the best why, but she will find the meanings of the words online. So I do bring technology in but there is also a set hour for technology where technology can be a helping hand, otherwise it will be most of the time it will be mom having to explain.

P4: Yes also the same yes. They can do their homework on their own but if there are words they battle with they will ask me. The will look in a dictionary, we still go the

old way, mommy is not very good with the computer, so we still go the old way. So yes if they do not know any words they will look it up and I will explain to them.

P2: Yes, I will write out the first word for her. We create sentences together. There are times when she is totally independent and just comes to double check her spelling, she does everything herself.

P1: I am very lucky there with my elder daughter, because she will go to her sister. If I don't understand what it is about, she will go straight to her sister or she goes to her grandfather, because her parents always comes home quit late at night. So she has to either go to either one of us, but somewhere she will find the answer.

P3: I also think that we are fortunate that the textbooks that the school gives them, there is normally an example of what they have done in class, so with that example, I will refer them back to that example and see if they can work that way. It seems to be working great in the higher levels so far. So let us touch wood and see what happens.

P4: Technology is actually a very good thing, because especially with my husband working away, we can Skype, and if the kids don't understand something they will either phone him or Skype him and say daddy please help if I don't have a clue, especially also maths.

P3: There are certain topics like if you look at Life Skills and Social science when they get higher, there are a lot of things that I think that I was not ready to discuss with my kids and to be able to bring technology in made it easier. It is not like it was in the older days when you waited. I mean what they learn in school is a lot more that what I learned when I was in Primary school. So you need to have that helping hand for if you can't do it there are the ways finding it to do it. It is not easy but it is out there.

P1: You know what I do, I write letter to teacher. "Teacher I don't understand, please you have to help me". And really the teachers are awesome when it comes to that, I mean you know me. I do that.

P3: Teachers like them to read and ask questions but ninety nine percent of the time they might not raise their hands and ask that teacher exactly and then come home with that question. Now you either assist them or you can just let it go and nobody gets their understanding.

Negative set parents

P5: I assist them every time, always, because they normally cannot read what they have to do and afterwards I help with spelling. Those are the two biggest.

P7: They do not understand what the teacher wants.

P5: A lot of the time they do not understand, and neither do I.

P7: Questions are sometimes so evasive that you don't, you do it this way which makes it almost right, but then teachers are like all over your child the next day.

P5: And I find with maths because there are so many ways of doing certain sums, the way I like to go back to my old school ways doing multiplication like that but then "no mom we can't do it that way, we must do it like this", because if you do it this way this is the way it has to be. And if I say to her but…she will do a multiplication sum and she says this is the way we must do it, and I will say to her but "no that is not the right answer" but that is the way they have to do it. There is a constant battle on what is the way that teachers told them and then on the way we have to tell them.

P7: We need to get classes.

P7: Let the teacher do an example so that we can understand. If we go through the example, see the steps that they have taken and then we can do that with them.

P6: But even though the steps that they have taken, I don't always understand. What I always do, is I do, especially with the twins, I let them do their homework, they mostly do their homework by themselves, only when it comes to making sentences then I help them make sentences. But sometimes it doesn't make sense, and then I help them. When it comes to the spelling words, what I will do is, I give them the dictionaries and they must look up the words for themselves and so they learn the meanings of things. This is how I let them do their homework. And if I don't understand I do research.

P5: Mine hates the dictionary.

P6: I've got three so I am working out of the Grade three mini dictionary and the normal dictionaries that they've got.

P5: Yours actually likes to do it, mine hates it.

P6: Mine is excited to go through words and to understand the meaning of it. That is the only way they are going to learn and that is also the way they learn spelling the words.

P5: It makes sense but as I say mine don't like it.

P6: Because if you are going to do the things for them, they are never going to understand the things.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: Yes, the younger two I have got to read the questions and actively assist with what they are doing. The older one is very good at doing homework on his own, he very rarely needs my help, which is great because spending a lot of time with the grade ones, there are so much work to go through that they do need constant supervision all the time somebody there explaining what they are doing, so yes most definitely.

P11: Yes, if I am not there, my daughter will not go on without me, I will ask her then when she is going to start doing homework on her own, you are in grade 3 now, you have to prepare yourself for your senior phase, this is the end of your Foundation Phase, so you have to try to go on on your own. I will be there to assist with your spelling errors and stuff like that, but if she is struggling with Mathematics I definitely help her. But with English and Afrikaans she can go on because if you can read you can go on with your English and Afrikaans homework.

P8: The same with my daughter, she goes on with her work on her own, if she struggles then she will ask me, but I am there always. She would for example, if she knows the word and she make a sentence, she will ask me "Is this correct?", so I am always there to assist. And I like doing it that is the fun part for me.

P9: I will explain and provide examples and let him carry on on his own, there are times that I need to sit next to him, but this does not happen often.

5. Do you as parents feel that you bond with your child while doing homework?

Positive set parents

P3: Yes of course.

P1: I don't. I don't. We do but I tend to get a little bit upset if she doesn't quite know what is going on and I do that. I do unfortunately. She will tell me "mom go away" because I want her to do it properly then I find that we clash. Just a little bit not much, but we do clash.

P2: Yes, I thoroughly enjoy this time with her.

P4: Yes well especially with my daughter also, because she wants to do everything on her own and then, but I mean it is also a good thing that I am there. Last year when they were in the aftercare, I left them in the aftercare for an hour to sit and do their homework so when I go there is no homework. And then eventually at the end of the day I was feeling like I missed out on everything they were doing. I didn't know what was going on because about the time they got home, there stuff is all done and finished and then I had to look in their books and see what they were doing just to keep up with everything. But I think it is a good thing to actually sit with them and be able to bond with the kids.

P3: In my household we actually, it is bonding not just only with mom but dad as well because he is a corporate dad so he only gets home at a certain time, and there are certain subjects that actually makes him and his eldest daughter gets closer, whether it is an accounting subject or something. But that half an hour or forty five minutes is actual solid communication that is happening, it is not technology, it is not a phone, it really is good on both sides. So even when I was a parent that didn't need to work half day and I was in the office, I think I will have been missing out a lot.

P1: I'm fine with when you give them their... and they have to do speeches and things like that, they go to their grandfather because he is very good at speeches. And with my elder daughter as well, she will go to her grandfather and read read her subject to him, being biology, science whatever it is, she will go through the whole syllabus with him and they pick it up very very quickly. And my daughter tends to do that as well now.

P4: There were a couple of times that my kids phoned their dad and have their orals over the phone so that he can know what they are talking about, so ja they want him also to be involved but now he is not here so they have to phone him.

P3: And I think you will see it in the child the next day, because I mean when teacher is checking the homework and your homework is all done, I could be wrong here, but I

think they have that little aura about them that "look I have done all my work". My parents have actually taken an interest in what I have done so that comes out towards the teacher, I could be wrong, but obviously working in that environment the teachers can see who hasn't done their homework you can already see the child making up the reason at the back of his mind to why is hasn't been done. So I think it gives them confidence as young people.

Negative set parents

P7: No. We fight. You argue with them because this is wrong and that is wrong. They are telling you what to do and how to do it, but if they come to you because they do not understand it what they have to do and then you get to a point where…I've got an ADHD child, I've got a child that has got an autism spectrum so I sit with that every day and to fight with them over homework we wouldn't have a family left if I had to do homework with them. And it is not one subject today or the prescribed "half an hour a day" of homework because Government does prescribe, the teachers carol the homework and none of them checks who has given homework previous to them. They should be given a day, English on a Monday, Afrikaans on Tuesday or Home Language, second language, maths and then the smaller subjects you can join, but you can't give this much homework on a Monday and expect it tomorrow because the kids are exhausted. I mean I've had my two daughters who are now Grade four and in the Foundation Phase working up until ten o'clock at night. And I've had my son who is in grade one, he is seven years old, and he is putting in the same work day as what my husband and I put in, it is unacceptable.

P5: Now that I am helping the aftercare, I saw, I can't remember what grade, they had to do exactly that definition, but they have got ten. And to look up ten words. I still had them over an hour in that class and I was there watching them, it is not like they played. An hour's homework is too much. It is too many words.

P7: The government prescribe so many hours for a certain age groups. An hour is too long, that is what the teachers are not conforming to that part of work. They are not getting it done in class, they are giving it as homework. They are not keeping our kids best interests at heart, or our families.

P6: But then sometimes it is not only the teachers, it is the government. It comes on the Department of Education, because they only have a time limit to do a certain things

in that specific timeframe. And they have to hand in those things, and if it is not done, then what then?

P7: That is true but government also say you are only allowed so much homework per day, it is prescribed. The teachers need to try and figure out, instead of giving twenty sums of the same thing only give five.

P6: At least they do understand what it is about.

P7: You can see in those five sums who struggles, from only ones sum you can see who struggles. So instead of doing twenty maths sums, or twenty definitions, give your three hardest words as definitions and the rest is spelling. Or sentences. But then if it is divided, then you have got that time, but giving twenty sums every day, it is pages and pages of homework. The kids aren't coping.

P6: Yes, but sometimes my one that is in grade 5, says he has got headaches because he cannot cope.

P7: They are putting in the same work day as we are. We never did that as children. We were allowed to be children. Our children are not allowed to be children. From grade one on they are pulling a full day and expecting them to cope.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P11: O yes definitely.

P9: Yes most definitely.

P10: I loved homework time with my son, last year the one on one interaction it was lovely, but this year I am struggling, I don't have time to do one on one interaction with the other kids, because I have so many in such a busy household, it is a bone of contention, because there is always distractions, they don't want to sit and do it, and because I am spread so thin, they are not enjoying it as much as my son did last year. So it is definitely difficult for the amount of work to have the younger ones all together. Honestly I don't know how teachers do it because they have a class of 30 all at that stage and I am struggling just with two. So I do, I will be honest, I am struggling at this point with the amount of work that's got to be done. It is too much

P11: It is too much. Sometimes I feel jis. And I only have one, I don't have the patience sometimes that other teachers have. To be a teacher you must have patience to help those children, because they are not always on the same level...

P8: Yes my girl is extremely good, she is very clever, she will sit and she will work, she is brilliant yet my boy struggles. So I am finding that I have to repeat a lot and do a lot over again and of cause it takes up my time and then the other two have questions, and then I have to put him sort of on hold, go and run and help the other two if they have got a problem and run back to him and try to get him sorted, it is crazy, it really is crazy.

P8: I think with me it is easier because I only have got one at this stage, so all my attention is with her and I think it also builds a very good trust between the two of us, because now she knows that whenever I have got a question, I can go to mom, I can ask her. So I think that is really very good to have that trust between the two of us. **So you feel that you can bond?** Yes.

P11: You know her strongest points and her weakest.

6. **Do you find sufficient time between all of your parental commitments to help with homework?**

Positive set parents

P4: I make time. I leave my stuff for later and I sit with the kids. I really make time for that.

P3: I think if you take during the week it is quiet easy to do it on my side because I am at home in the afternoons but I also have to say the teachers gives us sufficient time when it comes to projects. There has never been a day where you got the thing today and the project is due tomorrow. So if it is things like projects then we tend to do it more over the weekend, but as far as the homework goes, I think there is sufficient time on the child's side as well. It is not work that should make them work up till nine o'clock at night unless like you said they are extreme struggling, but then it is not something that you can always allocate that time for over the weekend where you can sit and improvise again. They do not have to know everything right now. So I think with the planning of the school and the teacher it gives the parent a lot more time to be able to plan it.

P4: It is an advantage for when you are a mom and you are with the kids at home in the afternoon. It is an advantage that you can spend quality time with the kids when they do homework.

P1: I just find that sometimes they tend to have a lot of homework. So they sit for quite a while doing homework, maybe one or two hours and they sort of feel that maybe they wants to go and do something else, they themselves, okay not me specifically, but they themselves and they will want to get up and I will say no first finish your homework, but no I want to get up and then I have to force myself to let them get up and go and do it. But as far as quality time, I don't know whether I spent sufficient quality time with them because there is always something happening always doing something.

P2: At times it becomes too much as my elder son in Grade five needs more assistance and his homework tends to be more demanding.

Negative set parents

P7: No. You are doing a half wash job because you are so busy doing everything else. Even a half an hour, consider an half an hour before supper it is okay say "let's go through books", even if I got my daughter helping me, let me go through your books, why is it incomplete? How can I help you? Now I have to sit for six hours. I mean half an hour would be enough to go through even my six kids' books. But it is not that. They have got so much that even going through the books, you have three four books a day every day.

P5: Also working full time as a mom, if you don't have a maid, there is no time to do homework.

P6: I am a housewife, I don't get to everything with my children. They say ja you are at home you do everything, you don't get time to do everything. Really. Because when school finish then it is their time. In the mornings it is my time, not really my time because it is homework and everything else with it. And then from school then it is their time. And you have to set yourself a timeframe otherwise they are not going to get enough rest. And if they don't get enough rest that night to be fresh in the mornings it is going to be a problem.

P6: And as a single mom it is even worse. You can't even share the load.

P7: I am married and I don't share the load.

P6: My husband is not here now, he is out of the country for seven months. He is only coming back in November. And I am sitting alone with them.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: NO. I am an exception to the rule. I have five kids. Last year I didn't have five kids. Last year I would say without a doubt, YES, also to your previous question, I bonded beautifully with my son last year, it was awesome. This year, no. I don't have time currently with five kids to get to all my parental commitment, because by half past four if I am not in the kitchen starting supper, then our whole evening is late, because I still have to bath everybody, I still have to pack lunchboxes, I still have to get uniforms and everything organised for the next day, so no, I do not have time for everything, not with the amount of homework.

P11: I am living with my mother and sisters and sometimes they do not understand when I tell them that _al werk ek half dag, dit maak nie saak of ek half dag werk nie, jy weet nie watse werk dit is om n ouer te wees nie. Jy moet werk, jou werk doen, huiswerk kom doen._ It is difficult sometimes and they do not understand it. Because my sisters, they do not have children. I said "you don't understand what I am going through". When we were in school the homework was not like it is now. It is very difficult sometimes and to get my daughter in that position to focus on her homework, then this one comes in and that one comes in, the she wants to go and greet my mother, then she wants to go and greet my sisters, then I will tell her that she can later greet them and see then, let us just focus on your homework first. Let us just keep to the schedule because we are running out of time.

P8: That is the same with me now since we moved. I've got a schedule now in the afternoon, because there are certain things that I have got to do which include my daughter with her homework so you have to try to keep strictly to that schedule, because if you don't everything falls out, her bath everything bombs out. You need to try to keep with that schedule, and whether you have got other kids in school or like I have a smaller boy not in school but still he also needs your attention. So schedule is there, you need to try and keep to it, and it is not always that easy.

P9: Yes, as mentioned I am a single working parent.

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7. Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by his/her homework?

Positive set parents

P3: Yes, speaking from somebody that has a child in the senior level, yes. I think if I didn't feel like that I would be letting my kid down, because you can't always get everything right and there are days that they pick up the phone and ask dad to please come home because Maths is killing mom. So if you see that it is okay for you to say you know what it is okay if I can't do it because mom can't do it. I think it is good for them as well if I fail at something.

P4: Everybody is not perfect.

P3: You are not always going to get that subject where you are going to be great at, there is always going to be one subject that is going to knock you.

P1: Yes, I sometimes feel overwhelmed especially with maths, even if you have all your little "show you how to do it", because I sometimes also feel I do not know how to answer it, she might just feel that you do not know what you are talking about so why bother, but I sometimes do. Not with the Afrikaans or any of that other subjects but particularly with maths.

P2: Days when she plays netball, her concentration is low as she is very tired and frustrated.

Negative set parents

P7: Yes.

P5: Yes I think so.

P7: Not understanding it is like the worst. I mean here we are parents, we have got to guide our children and we are going "oeps" I don't know what to do because they are telling you one thing, books say something else, and you know something else. And then there is never an example, even like if it was broken down, just a photo state or in the actual book, broken down with steps with what you need to do.

P6: Well there is an example in the book but it is the easy example. The sum they get is not the same as the example in the book and it is not difficult.

P5: Some of the maths examples, I don't even know. I can't even work it out. I can't get the just of why they do it like that.

P6: I don't know why they are doing that long way of the sum.

P5: And when splitting the number up. I can't understand that.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: Yes. I do not need to say more. Yes.

P9: Yes I did in the first quarter, but much better now.

P8: In my case not so much, because I feel with the grade twos one thing I am happy about is that they do not do their blue books at home. Reason being, the grade ones last year, they have got three books, I mean they don't have like the grade twos spelling words and those stuff but I mean three books for a grade one is very very much. And that is why I am so grateful with my daughter, she has got her spelling words, the little bit of Maths that she is doing and sentences, uhm that is not too much. That I appreciate, but yes the blue books are helping them a lot with their work, I agree there, but it is a lot for a grade one to handle three books.

P10: I am sorry but for a grade one to come home with the three department books that they have got to do up to ten pages in this book, plus now they are starting doing sentences ect that they now have to practice writing out as well plus now they are starting with their spelling, this children are six and seven. Why do they need to have an eight hour day? My kids get up between half past five and six o'clock every morning and now they have got to work through up to half past 4, five o'clock in the afternoon. It is ridiculous.

P8: It is a lot of work for a grade one.

P10: It is.

P8: I mean look at...as I said grade 2. Most of their work is done at school and that little that they get in the afternoons is half an hour tops forty five minutes, depending on how tired or whatever she is, but tops forty five minutes and she is done.

P10: Yes I agree with you, the grade two homework this year is a breeze, it is excellent, because they are covering the department books and everything else in the classroom.

P11: Well in that case I would say that with my daughter, she will get a paper on Mondays like in grade two with the spelling words, Mathematics and the everything and then they will get their department books as well, but it is only the Afrikaans and English department books that goes home. The Mathematics and Life Skills

they do in class. So I would say it is not so much, I will not complain with homework for grade three, but you have to prepare her, because when she goes to grade four it is going to be more homework. Because it is not only going to be Afrikaans, English, it is going to be more subjects. It is not only going to be one teacher, it is teachers. She is going to move to this teacher and that teacher, and they only get a certain amount of time/minutes in one period and it is a lot of work so I am not sure.

P8: You need to prepare them for that.

P11: You need to prepare them for that and they must work faster. Sometimes she is very slow and I have to tell her "you have to work faster".

P8: Sometimes in the afternoons they are tired, they do not want to do it because I remember one day we were going somewhere in the afternoon and we got home late. I battled so with my daughter to finish her work because we were out for the afternoon the schedule was in turmoil, now she has to do her homework later and she doesn't want to do it because she is tired. So that is also affecting homework.

8. **What do you do if your child is not in the mood to do his/her homework?**

Positive set parents

P1: "Okay, don't do your homework, you know what I am going to do, I am going to close your book", because as soon as I get home in the afternoons I go through all of her books and checks if the teachers has marked it, see what homework she's got, put it down on the table...I set it up for her...okay so there is your homework. You are either going to do it or close that book and tomorrow morning you go to school without doing your homework. Then she gets up and says "okay ma I will do it I will do it". So that is what I do.

P2: Rewards and incentives work really well with my own kids and homework.

P4: Well I will tell my kids that if they don't want to sit and do it because then they want to go and play a little bit outside, go and jump on the trampoline for ten minutes, come back, otherwise if you don't want to do it now you do it later on your own and I am not helping you. Don't ask me any questions, nothing. Then you have to do it on your own and explain to teacher if you didn't do half of your work.

P3: I think I still use the old fashion reward method in my household. If you are going to do what needs to be done the I don't have to be, or should I say the care ton stick. I haven't yet gotten to use the stick, maybe because I have two girls, I am not sure. Sometimes they say with boys it is a little bit tougher, I am not sure. So I can't really say that I have experienced that, but in my household it will be the old reward method. So if you now that you need, you get good marks, when the holidays come, whatever you need to be done, if you want to have a break that is how you get rewarded, so it is the old fashion reward system. It is working well, so we will stick to that one for now.

Negative set parents

P7: Scream and shout.

P5: Yes.

P6: I say fine then you tell your teacher why your homework is not done. I've done my school work, I'm done.

P7: But then my kids don't do homework. They don't care to come and say "oh we didn't do it". They are exhausted. The day has been made long so those kids are in school longer than we were in school. The breaks aren't as long as they needed. So they are sitting there from this morning. Some teachers took the kids even all break which is against the law, in all aspects of it. You are not allowed to keep a child in even prisoners have break times that they have to take.

P6: Just because they want to finish their work. They do not consider the child.

P5: I think sometimes I probably overreact, because I get frustrated. Because as I said I can't understand why they don't want to do it. I think that is the frustrating part.

P7: I think they are exhausted.

P5: Maybe they are as I say it fine but I mean I've seen you all day, I don't know if you are that tired, you battle to get up in the morning anyway. You still go to bed at 8 o'clock, so you shouldn't be that tired. I get so frustrated that they don't want to.

P7: You work with paper work every day. By the time school ends, what does your brain feels? You want to go sit and still do the homework?

P5: You know what if I have to, I have to.

P7: Yes but you are an adult. You pay the bills. They don't. You have to look after you children. You have to feed the children. So for you it is a must.

P5: So isn't it a must for us to teach them to do it. It is a must but I get frustrated.

P7: That is how I land up screaming at them.

P6: You know what I do, I ignore you. If you don't want to do your homework, fine.

P5: But do they have to sit there until the hour is up?

P6: No what I will do it put them a movie on so that they can be relaxed and fresh and after that they will do their homework. You must always make them feel relaxed because when you are going to shout and scream, they are not going to relax. You get more frustrated, the child is getting frustrated.

P5: But do you know what happens if you don't have time? Like between, like your hour before they can do homework. You get home late and you know if you don't do it know. You still have to feed them, bath them, and now they have to do homework. Now if you let them relax now it is now 8 o'clock nine o'clock before they go to bed. I can't do that. I don't know which is worse. So if you have to say you go home at five and let them rest till six, now they only have got an hour to do whatever needs to be done.

P6: And there are no games during the week. No computer games, no PlayStation games, nothing. The only games start at Fridays after school. Then they can play games until six o'clock Sundays. School week is school week. I don't even care if tomorrow was an off day, no games.

P7: My kids don't go play games. They would watch TV or they will go outside and physically climb trees. But if they knew they have half an hour homework, they would sit every day and do their half an hour. But if they get five or six books of homework they don't anticipate one or two pages. They see there are five subjects of homework. There is no way. I had enough and then they will step back and go away.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: I had an incident with my child on Tuesday because he does have a lot of behavioural issues as well and I left it. I wrote a little note in his homework book and said that he did not do homework today and that is just that. I am sorry. I am not

going to have this child throw such a fit that he will throw furniture at me just to get his homework done. It is not worth it. I will catch him up in the following day or the day after that for whatever homework he has missed but as far as I am concerned his emotional wellbeing is more important than a page done in the book. I am sorry, the majority of stuff should be covered in the classroom. If he has a bad day and needs to skip homework, then so be it. Obviously I am not going to let it happen three or four days a week but once a month maybe, but no I am sorry it is up to him. If he is having an incredible bad day he will get a pass, he can. I am sorry I am not going to force it.

P11: Well in my case with my daughter, I will say okay fine, if you don't want to do your homework you are going to get a demerit. Do you want a demerit? No then okay fine if you are tired you are tired so rest a little bit but you have to finish your homework because you want her to achieve those goals. She will ask me when she is going to be a leader then I will say well being a leader you have to work hard so do your homework. If you are not able to finish it, just at least try and finish it. Just do something.

P8: That is the same on my side. I try to learn her or teach her how to be responsible. Because I said to her well if you don't want to do it you can go and explain to your teacher why the work is not done, because I am not going to do it. So it is also to teach them responsibility. And yes I agree with you, I am not going to put her through an emotional thing as well, I won't do that. I will also rather write a note, but if it is not the case then, then I say leave it but it is your responsibility.

P10: Well I did tell my son on Tuesday that he will have to explain to his teacher to why his homework is not done, because I am not going to make the excuse for him. However at the same time I wouldn't let say my own son, my biological child get away with that. I would say okay fine go walk around the garden, take ten minutes and then come back and you will do your homework, but with James, he has got alcoholic parents, he had bad visitation on Sunday, there are a lot of other circumstances with him that I am not going to push homework on to him just for the sake of homework being done. But I think every case is individual like I said with Bryce, I expect Bryce to do his homework that is it, sorry your homework has to be done. The same with Jocelyn, your homework has to be done. Yet with James, I don't know, am I wrong? Should I not individualize homework? Should I have a standard? I don't know. In my house we don't.

P9: I honestly have to say (and my son will agree) I get very upset. I will remind him why it is important and why he needs to do his homework. It is also some form of discipline that you need to teach your child. Liam has a lot of dreams about his future and the only way he is going to achieve this is by doing what he needs to.

P8: It is circumstances with each and every child because if I have to compare my two kids, I know my son will not be able to handle it in an English school. I mean I am Afrikaans, my daughter is Afrikaans, but look how she is handling her English. She is very good at it. But I know for a fact my son wont. So I think you need to look at each child individually.

9. Does the homework process sometimes cause tension between you and your child?

Positive set parents

P4: Yes, sometimes, yes. If the work is too much and the kids are irritated and do not know what to do, then sometimes yes there is a little bit of tension.

P3: I think on my side the tension might come, because I must come down to their level, and sometimes you are trying to explain something but it is literally going over their heads. You are speaking like an adult, you are not coming down to their level. I am not a professional teacher so I don't know how you guys come right down, but you explain it on their level, and I think as a parent to come down to that level sometimes we tend to forget that. The tension is probably more caused on my side because I am not coming through to you and I think yes.

P2: Not really. I am not allowed to question the instruction given by her teacher through. From experience, as they get older, tension is caused by disagreement with homework and what is expected.

Negative set parents

P5: Yes.

P7: Yes as mentioned.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P11: Yes. Very much. *Ons baklei* and sometimes I will just tell her I am now tired, *ek het nou verduidelik en verduidelik en vir jou gewys wat om te doen en nogsteeds...*did you listen to me? *Het jy geluister wat ek doen? Het jy gesien wat ek doen?* Or where you here but your mind where somewhere else? And sometimes this causes tension.

P8: The major thing is the listening skills. They do not listen.

P11: She hates it when I say "poor listening skills" she hates it.

P8: My daughter is the same. I talk and I say something and I will tell her that she is a clever girl so don't ask stupid questions. You see and it also has to do with the concentration. When they are tired that is what they do, but yes listening skills definitely comes in there.

P10: Yes there is slight tension but I am lucky with Bryce, he does, he will sit and listen, I will explain something once and that will be the end of that. With James it is always an uphill struggle, but yes it does cause tension.

P9: Yes. We had an incident where he needed to say a rhyme off by heart and refused to as he was very tired. This caused a lot of tension.

10. How does this influence the homework experience for both you and your child?

Positive set parents

P1: I sometimes feel that I want to get this homework over and done with, because I do not need tension.

P3: I think frustration is maybe a good work to describe it because you are right, like you said, you sit for now about two hours and you feel that you are not getting anywhere so frustration is maybe a good word. But they love me the next morning so I can't be doing that bad.

P4: Sometimes I learn something. I sometimes also gets something out of the homework and would say "O I didn't know it was this and that, works like this", so ja I sometimes also learn a little bit of the school stuff that I forgot a long time ago.

P2: Homework time has become routine in my house and when the routine is disturbed or delayed this is what causes tension.

Negative set parents

P7: It is horrific. I hate homework. I think I hate it more than my kids do.

P5: I got to a stage where I used to fight it all the time and now as I said I got to a stage where you know what it is your homework, I have been through school I don't need to do this. You know what you have to do. You are big enough.

P7: When you leave them long enough then they don't read properly.

P5: Yes if you leave it then you end up with other problems as well. So it is a vicious circle actually.

P7: I can do reading every day.

P6: I don't get frustrated.

P5: The thing is the kids are doing it and there is no problem. But I have got both of them for detention for not doing homework. Both. Both my kids.

P6: That is also a way they are going to learn, they won't like detention again.

P5: I don't know, I think that sometimes they…we will see.

P7: They don't like detention. Is not what they want to do but the homework is so frustrating that they stand back.

P5: But if you look at this situation is that I help at aftercare so they get to be in detention while I am working.

P6: So they are not wasting no one's time anyway. They are only wasting their own time. Because now they have to do more work than they usually do.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P8: I would say not that much. I mean ja okay you have a fight or whatever, you struggle a bit but then it pass. I still think it is a very good thing for the kids, because they need to have that extra, they need to get to learn more, because I know for a fact there is no why that you are going to do everything within the period in the mornings, there is no way. So they need to have that extra to help them.

11. What is your general feeling regarding homework?

Positive set parents

P4: Kids must get homework because I ask them every day. I said why don't you do homework and they will respond but they don't have. I would then ask why? Isn't there anything that you can do, any revision? I expect them to get homework every day, because if they do not get homework for over a while then they start to get lazy. When it gets time for exams, then why must we learn? Now we have to learn all these stuff. So yes I think it is a good thing, they must have homework every day, from Monday to Thursday. Over the weekends I expect them not to have homework, because then they must also have a break.

P3: I feel the homework add structure to their lives and life itself is not going to be one big party, so when they are at the homework they know they are getting into a routine about the structure and I feel structure is important. If you do not have structure you are not really going to know it. Primary school is not the only schooling you are going to have so if you start with structure in the primary school, when you get to the high school it should be easy. So for me homework adds a little bit of structure. Whether it is two hours or four hours, you as an individual should give yourself a little bit of structure.

P1: I find again if a child listens in class, I had it with my elder daughter her entire schooling career. If she listens she doesn't have a problem with homework at all. If they do not listen in class, then they pick up problems with their homework. I tend to find, and I am sorry that I keep on going back to the maths because the maths is a big problem. I feel that they need a proper foundation in that maths. If they are struggling with their maths, specifically homework maths, how are they going to get through the next grade? I mean if I can't help her now with her maths. What are we going to do about that? I just find that the maths teacher has got to be a very very good maths teacher otherwise you can do what you like when it comes to maths and they don't understand it they just leave it, finish, she just don't want to do it and that just upsets me a bit, is the maths. Otherwise everything else is fine, the need to do their homework like you say, they need to go over the work that they have done in class and you will find that the majority of children, well I mean my two, if they

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listen in class they do not have to struggle with their homework. It is when they do not listen that they then pick up problems.

P2: As an educator myself I know the importance of homework so I have sort of instilled this in my own kids, so there are no excuses when it comes to homework.

Negative set parents

P6: Just sometimes it is too much for a child. Especially for them. At once because my child, when he gets home he unpacks his whole bag. He put all the books there. If the books are there he knows he must do that subject and that subject. That is what he does.

P5: I don't know I think that sometimes the hard of the homework is that I don't remember having homework in class one and in class two. I remember I think starting having homework in grade 3. So we never had homework. We never needed to do homework.

P7: You used to sit in class and do reading for your teacher.

P5: I remember spending a lot of time in libraries. And I think that is the biggest problem. I don't think the kids learn enough reading from young. They are pushing so many other things on them from grade one that they don't get to read a lot. I think that reading is the biggest thing. If they can read then…if my daughter could read then she would be a better off person than she is now. It is because she can't read, she gets frustrated she can't read.

P7: Reading is a problem in all the schools. Because with me working at another school we've got grade ones to grade sevens. Spelling and reading are the biggest problems. Somehow when we were in school the concept was grasped. You actually got to read. But now the kids have homework, they have got this they've got that. In grade one, they have got to make a sentence.

P5: Isn't there enough time in the class for them to make a sentence?

P7: But we used to be twenty kids in a class but now they are forty kids in a class. Everything has changed. But it is to the kid's detriment. Find more schools, get more teachers, they are qualified. Some schools are using unqualified teachers trying to teach the kids but there are still teachers available.

P5: Well they are still willing. Put it that way. It is those teachers who are willing that actually put in more effort than those who actually gets paid.

P6: We used to be fewer children in a class then it was more one on one. These days the teachers don't even have the time to get that one on one with each child.

P7: I think the teachers are taught differently. I had a teacher that if you got hurt she wanted to know if you were okay. Now the teachers don't have that time for the kids.

P6: Even if they want to have the time there is no time.

P7: If you had twenty kids you could get nineteen to sit and read a book or listen to a story on the radio while you are having a one on one and you can see and control it. You've got forty kids, half of them are ADHD, half of them are ADD, ninety present can hardly speak a word of English when they arrive at the school. You have got a communication barrier and you have to try and deal with everything else apart from teaching.

P5: So I think homework starting so early in homework is a problem and maybe that is what makes it difficult. You know by the time they get to grade four five they spent a lot on homework. And it only gets more.

P6: And then there is the thing with exams.

P5: Mine doesn't even want to study. What is that?

P6: Mine starts even on weekends. He makes time. Without me telling him to do it. He is doing it by himself.

P5: See but that is the thing, my mother never ever had to force me.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P9: Homework is necessary however depending on the workload as that can become very stressful for both parent and child. Especially if you are a single parent.

P8: I think it is a good thing.

P10: It also keeps them busy.

P11: It actually helps you as a parent because then you know what is going on in the class and what the child...*wat word geonderig in die klas, wat het die kind vandag*

gedoen in die klas en dit maak dat jy soveel beter voel om te dink dat ek kon nog nooit hierdie werk gedoen het in so tyd wat jy by die skool is nie en dan kry jy hierdie kind het dit gedoen. Dit maak dat jy bietjie goed voel en dan dink jy okey my kind ken darem hierdie. Jy as 'n ouer hoef nie nog daardie te gaan leer vir jou kind nie, sy leer vir jou. Ons leer mekaar.

P8: It is learning all over again. I mean for me, I am not going to say how long back I was in school but you know it is new things for me. Like for an example yesterday, the prism and the sphere, I looked at it and said to my daughter that your mom does not know. I said just leave it and go on with your sentences and later she came back to me and said you know mom I just remembered teacher told us what they are, and I said well now you teach me. So in a way you learn things as well so I think it is a good thing because you see what they do in class, what they are busy with, what type of things they do and at the end of the day you learn something as well.

P10: To say doing homework is an absolute necessity, yes I have sat here and griped about not having time, fighting and having issues but it is a necessity. And I love sitting there, discovering with them what they are doing in their classroom and the realisation on their face that they actually can do something, like I've got now with Bryce and he sits and he reads something, and I think, gosh my first son, he is reading now. And with the homework I know I was a part of that, even though it is only a small part but I was a part of that. And homework is definitely a necessity, I would not recommend it with five kids but we do the best that we can and it is, it is a necessity.

P8: I also have to say, we are in a very good advantage because we work half day. You have that time with your kid to be able to do it with them. I mean I don't want to know how hard it is for parents that is working full day till five o'clock, because now you get home, mom needs to do washing, ironing, and dishes and make food, supper, bath and now homework in between and by eight o'clock or whatever time they go to sleep it must be done. So ja I think it would be difficult for a parent that is working full day.

P10: No look I am a stay at home, I am at home the whole day and even as it is now, I struggle to get all my household duties done in the morning before I have to come and fetch them from school and start the homework run, so hats off to working mommies, because I don't know how moms do it, I really don't. If I am struggling

like this staying at home...I can't... yes hats off to working moms, I do not know how they do it.

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FROM THE PARENTS' SIDE

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12. What do you as parents recommend the school and teachers to do in order to make the homework process easier?

Positive set parents

P1: I don't know, specifically now with the integration with all the children, I am sure that we have a lot of children that are struggling, there are a lot of children that are struggling and if they do not have the help of the parents and things at home we need you as the teacher to help. Unfortunately I know that it is not your job, you can only do it for a certain time, but then they come to school, they need to have a little bit of discipline. You are one of the discipline teachers. I can name a few of the discipline teachers that I have been through, I mean I have been in this school now for a very very long time, grade R right through to grade seven and back again. And I just tend to find that some of the teachers just really don't care. They just really don't care. But we are lucky at Fleur, we had very good teachers and you as the teacher needs to help them.

P4: That is why I think it is a good thing for the intervention classes, that the kids that really battles, that the teachers do n little bit more effort with the kids that if you have a problem let's sit for a few minutes and see if we can solve it.

P1: It is very difficult to have to scream and shout at them all the time. Keep quiet, keep quiet. It affects all the other children in the class. You can ask teacher Archer. I mean I had it with my elder daughter in grade one. She couldn't handle the screaming in the class. She hated it, she said "mom I can't do it", she used to walk out, she used to want to come home, she wanted to bunk, she would say "mom I am not going to school because the children don't listen" and the teacher is screaming half of the period away. So maybe they need to handle more discipline.

P3: I don't know, I think that question is actually a very selfish question, because I can look at it from both views. I was once a parent that didn't have to get involve with the school and just went to work. And I will be honest with you, now it is easier

sitting in an office doing anything corporate wise than sitting and trying to do what you are doing in a classroom. And I think that is where our parents need to stop, because where do we pick up the rate. It is easy to say that it is the teacher's job, and it is easy to say you know what my child is not. When do we as parents step in. I think when you have your parents evening and a parent comes there, and I could be wrong here, how many times do a parents actually says to you "you know what you are right, what you have said about my child is right". No parent wants to hear that their child is not doing well or that their child is not. But at the end of the day we need to look at who's responsible for that child, because the teacher is only responsible for one year of that child's life and we are responsible for everything else. And yes I know it is hard and we have long hours and whatever but at one stage we were kids too. If our parents didn't give a damn (excuse my language) then it could have been the same story. You were able to take your belt of and give your child a hiding but if a teacher has to even just approach that child, she will be sitting with a law suit now. With we cannot have. And who brought this up? It is this parents who brought is up. So to say that a teacher has to do anything more than she is already doing I think is selfish. We need to change the mindset of parents. So what I feel the school needs to be doing is to have an intervention for parents. That is my opinion, because you as a parent needs to come and see what happens in the school. It is not about the fact that my child is brighter than your child. The teachers cannot do anymore. If we look at the laws that this country is putting as far as the teachers goes, your hands is actually tied, you can only do that thirty five minutes that is what you can do. And know it has become a problem because as soon as I don't like a teacher, or I don't like the way the teacher has spoken to my child, I decide with my child, and my child is going to say you know what, when it comes to that subject, I don't have to listen anymore, because mommy and daddy is actually protecting me when it comes to that subject. But that is just me so intervention for parents, I would say would be helpful.

P1: I agree, the parents needs to be disciplined because they...really some of them...It is easy to say you know what leave it to the teacher.

P3: I would pay for extra classes. It is easy to say I would pay for extra classes but that teacher has sat with the child the whole day, she has tried every way that she possibly knows, like you say you still study so you have even found more ways of trying to get through to children. Okay then we get home and we just, we don't even ask how the intervention was. I mean in my days when you said detention you took

it seriously, now a days you say detention and they laugh at you. It is an afternoon for me to sit with my friends.

P1: I use to come into the classroom and I would walk up to the star chart and I would see her name up there and I would say to her "but why is your name up here" and she will respond that she was talking in class. And really...how do you...like the lady said it is the parents that got to discipline those children. You can't discipline it.

P3: We have actually shut down our responsibility as parents, we have left it up to you, it is the teacher's problem. And then when you do call me in at the end of the year and my child is not making it, then I decide that I now want to get involved because my kid is not repeating. It is just not normal for my child to repeat and sometimes even repeating a grade is a problem for a parent. My child is going to be too old, how can she repeat a grade? You know, we are so focused on what the society is going to say, let us put it that way. Parents are more focused on society that they are forgetting the need of the child nothing else. But that is just my opinion. And I can talk from both ways because I used to be the parent that it is easy to pay for the extra classes, easy, no problem, this is how much it costs, no problem. And you never got any results. My kids have been in more private schools in this country and this is the first school that I can actually see them actually doing better in their school work. And it is not only because of the teachers, even your textbooks explain things better. But you now have to decide as parents, do we put them in a private school because the whole country are talking about private schools being better or do we put them in a school that is actually going to show them...or make the parents more responsible. And that is what Fleur does, I mean there is letters that go out, if the parents haven't done it, there is enough record to say that you know what we gave you enough information to show you your child is struggling.

P1: Yes I agree, totally.

P2: In the Foundation Phase it is easier to understand what is expected. In the intermediate and senior phase, the homework is too demanding and sometimes too much to complete in one evening. Subject teachers need to use diaries and communicate with each other so that the child is not over burdened with homework especially on sport days.

Negative set parents

P7: Choose days for certain subjects to get homework and stick to it. If I come home and I know you have Maths today because today is Maths. I don't have to guess what subject you've got for homework. And limit the homework. So just a subject, your main subjects which is your languages and your maths, give them a day each and then the other subjects can join. They can have certain days and limit it. You know. Because you don't get through fifty questions in the class doesn't mean the kids must get forty questions for homework. Give them five questions in that you can see who is doing what.

P5: But the problem I think is that the class runs behind. You see you are going to have fifty questions in class, some of them are going to do five some are going to do ten some are going to do forty. So you give five and tell them all to finish five. Now those who don't finish the five is a problem, because they left behind and wasn't finished.

P7: Class work is class work, homework is homework. If they can only manage ten questions in class and all the ones they do at home is wrong, you know that child doesn't understanding what you teach him. If they can do the twenty in class they do five at home and three of the five are right, you know that child understand you. I don't need to complete fifty questions for you to see if I can understand a maths question or not. Or I don't have to write twenty sentences for you to see if I can spell and punctuate or not. And in your Foundation Phase, I mean, they are getting a lot. They are grade one. Grade one shouldn't be doing homework until five o'clock, I'm sorry. My kids get home, eat something, three o'clock they start homework. So that is two solid hours.

P5: I mean that little guys are still slower than most anyway. So to say to give them a lot takes too much time.

P6: I mean on a grade one level, if a child gets home, they are exhausted.

P7: My kids do not do homework over the weekend. It is not okay. They need to play, they need to…they need to participate in whatever the family is doing. You can't break the family for the school. If you have limit homework on set days, Monday home language, Tuesday Afrikaans, then you also know mom comes home bring me your Afrikaans book, you don't have to bring me all your books.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P11: Well at this point of time they are making it easier for us. They are making it easier for us. I am not sure if they recommend after classes, but they are already doing it because they have intervention classes. So they are already doing it for us.

P8: They are already going the extra mile. Before I started with being an assistant, I was one of those parents thinking what the devil do these teachers teach my kid because really they are not doing anything. But then I realised you know some of the parents are doing nothing. They sit backwards and feel that the teachers should do everything, it is her job. Why must I do anything? And that is wrong. The parent needs to work with his child as well. They also need to put in effort. Not just the teacher, because it is a two way stream. So from both sides you need that, to help that kid.

P11: And the teachers are already having a lot of work. Over worked and under paid.

P9: I really can't think of anything at this moment as I feel you are doing an amazing job. My son has really progressed and I think it all reflects back on the teacher. If you do not have a caring or not attentive teacher then your child in not going to care either as they will feel discouraged or will not produce results.

13. What strategies do you use to make the homework process easier?

Positive set parents

P1: My daughter loves playing school. She loves it. She has a black board. In my kitchen I have a black board against the wall where she actually does her spelling. I will tell her okay let's do spelling and she would ask "ma can I do it on my black board?" okay then we do it on the black board. Or she plays teacher and she uses this spelling words and she does them or timetables, those type of things. So you must try and make the homework fun for her. Really, because it is the fun part that actually makes them want to do the homework. Because if you don't let them have a little bit of fun, because they think being a teacher is great fun. Love love it. I let her do it. Sometimes it is a little bit distracting for her. Let's get that homework done but you need to let her do that. They have to.

P3: I find if we take things that my kids are really interested in, I will give you an example and you are going to laugh. My daughters are really into hip hop music okay so we take a song that she really likes and we now translate that entire song

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into Afrikaans, which is a joke because Chris Brown doesn't sing Afrikaans but Christopher Bruin does, so we now done that and I tend to find things that they really click with and then now my younger one are really interested into games so she will now pick up a character in a book and then grenade it back to something. So if I take something they find interesting I can make that subject come alive but maybe not all subjects but sometimes there is something that relates to them and then it works every day. But like in my household to bring Afrikaans to the table is really tough so I have got to find challenging ways to make Afrikaans come alive. You can't just put the radio on and say listen, seriously, with the youngsters today it is not going to work. So that is something that has been working well and Riekie says that she has seen a bit of a spike in the Afrikaans marks so Christopher Bruin...I am all for him.

P4: I also have the white boards and for them they also go write stuff on the board and my daughter loves to play even if her cousins come over, they want to play school and she wants to be the teacher and she wants to write everything down. So they also still have a different way of learning their work.

P1: I tend to find that if she does it on the black board, like she will write a word, I believe that they have got to be taught from grade R right through that they must spell properly and then I will say to her, okay I think that spelling is a little bit wrong. No but what is wrong? Just check is and then we will check the spelling. She gets a little bit upset because I can now see it that it is wrong but the spelling I find is important and she loves it, she plays on the board with her spelling and that is a quick and easy way, but like me I struggle with the Afrikaans. *Ek is Afrikaans, ek kan Afrikaans praat, maar om dit vir die kinder te leer is n groot groot uitdaging.*

P3: Another strategy in my household is they both like to write so they have got their little diaries where they write in and sometimes you would be amazed in the stories. As far as I know my family has flown to Paris as well. We have been to be Paris. So where you get your information from...it works a lot on the imagination and sometimes when you have to do things in school where it is unprepared it is amazing how they can stand up and talk about stuff, because somewhere in that book they wrote about something . I am sure the days they have bad days they probably write about their parents as well but the writing system seems to work very well as they are always writing in that little books. It is something that we say okay well if you don't feel like talking then we are going to write down our feelings. So

that is what they write about in their books. It improves on their handwriting a little bit because I have seen now that they are doing cursive. So yes it just works a little bit better on our side.

P2: It has to be quite time. There has to be routine, for example homework should be done every day at three o'clock. No TV. Rewards should be given for completing on time. Teaching my kids time management and trying to complete tasks that are due later on given date to avoid stress. Punishment are given for incomplete homework ect.

Negative set parents

P5: I haven't worked any out yet. I honestly haven't.

P7: We try to keep the house quite. Try to. You have to get them relaxed, like quite them down before they sit down to do homework. But another then that there is nothing, you put on music then they sing to the music. So you can't do that.

P6: No TV no nothing must be on. Nothing to distract them.

P5: They get very easily distracted.

P7: They are exhausted, they can't concentrate.

P6: You should actually teach them to do homework with other noises around, because that is what they are doing in class. There is no silence in class. So that they can get used to the fact that there are other things going on around them.

P7: There are household noises. I mean my domestic worker is permanently busy, if she is not ironing, she is…you can't put on music that they like because they will start singing to it. By the end of the day my kids are so mentally tired that they can't take additional stimuli in, and work and then if they don't understand concentrate on additional work and think of what they are going to do.

Parents from disadvantaged environments

P10: Gold stars. Reward system. Works like a bomb. Instead of getting cross with them, rather praise them for the good behaviour and for everything else. And I have noticed now slowly that things are coming right that if daddy comes home and they have got like twenty million gold stars plastid to their head the next day's homework seems easier because they want to get that reward.

P11: Sometimes I feel just go on, if you have spare time, try and go on. By the time we get home you only have to do a few things and when your homework is done you will get something.

P8: Lucky actually with my daughter, I have got old blue books, and you won't believe it in the holidays when she has got nothing to do, she will grab a blue book and just work. She enjoys it so much

P10: Yes I have got that with Jocelyn, she will actively want to sit there and do her homework, which is awesome. It is the boys, I think maybe it is a girl and a boy thing, because the boys not so much. But yes as I said the reward system most definitely.

P8: Yes rewards are the best thing to do with your child. Because then they feel that they have accomplished something and then the next time they will do it again.

P9: Liam along with a lot of other children attends aftercare and there is not much discipline when it comes to doing homework. It will be really awesome if we can implement this as there are a lot of single hardworking mums out there that also have the same responsibilities as I do (if not worse) that do not have the time to give children the same attention as I can when it comes to homework. However discipline starts at home. If not implemented at home then there will be no discipline at school. It is actually difficult.