

# **Exploring the school culture in a township primary school**

**by**

**Lebesa Mabel Kgomotso**

**January 2015**

# **Exploring the school culture in a township primary school**

by

**Lebesa Mabel Kgomotso**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

## **Master in Education**

**Curriculum and instructional design and development**

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

South Africa

**Supervisor:** **Dr Alta Engelbrecht**

**Co-supervisors:** **Dr Lizette De Jager**

**Dr Vanessa Scherman**

**January 2015**

## DEDICATION

---

I dedicate this Master's dissertation to my beloved late sister, Refiloe Pitse (1965-2009), father in-law, Sabata Lebesa, mother in-law, Matshediso Lebesa (1930-1999) and my late father, Andrew Moseki 'Raphiphi' Pitse (1927-2007) whose passion and purpose was to see his children educated. I further dedicate this degree to my father who always drove me to strive for excellence and who I know would have been proud of me. Even if he is no more, I am grateful to have had such a wonderful father. Rest in peace

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the following people who played a significant role in the completion of this study:

My supervisors: Dr Alta Engelbrecht, Dr Lizette De Jager and Dr Vanessa Scherman for their hard work in assisting me to complete this dissertation. I acknowledge their unfailing commitment, patience, hard work and dedication.

My participants: The principal, teachers, parents and learners who participated in this research, including the school governing body who gave me permission to conduct the study in their school. Their support and passion for this dissertation did not go unnoticed.

My family: This dissertation would not have been possible without the support from my husband, Khafa and my two angels, Thusego and Tokelo. Your patience, love and support kept me inspired through all the challenges during the course of my study.

I also want to thank the Pitse family and the Lebesa family for their support and encouragement, Saki, my mother, for her words of encouragement. My heart-felt gratitude also goes to my sisters Akele and Mmadukane, brothers Moutane and Ramoagi and friends Moni, Ennie and Sonto for their support.

And above all, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and endurance to complete this dissertation.

## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

---

I **LEBESA MABEL KGOMOTSO (28584725)** declare that

- the research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- this dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any university
- this dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being a source from other researchers. Written sources have been quoted, then their words have been re-written but the information attributed to them has been referenced.

---

Mabel Kgomotso Lebesa

---

Date

## ABSTRACT

---

Educational change in most South African public schools resulted in irregular school attendance by learners; poor performing schools; disputed authority relations between principals, teachers, learners and parents; low morale; general demotivation; conflicts and violence around the school. A negative school culture results in low academic achievement and a high number of disciplinary problems that can result in the malfunctioning of the school. Schools that exhibit a negative school culture experience learners that are unmotivated, unwilling to learn and who demonstrate disruptive behaviour. The study was directed by the following research question: How does school culture impact on the functioning of a township primary school? The attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of the principal, teachers, parents and learners towards the school culture were explored through interviews with the principal and four grade 7 teachers, a focus group discussion with the parents, class observations of one grade 7 class and learners' drawings of the school culture. The transcriptions were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings suggest that the learners seem to be the victims in the scenario of this particular school, while all the other stakeholders blame each other and in doing so, add to the negative school culture, rather than trying to improve the school culture in some or other way.

## KEY TERMS

Negative school culture - low academic achievement - disciplinary problems - attitudes - perceptions and beliefs - principal - teachers - parents - learners, content analysis - Critical theory - School improvement model - *Input-process-output* model.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

	<b>Page</b>
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Declaration of authorship	v
Abstract	vi
Table of contents	vii
List of figures	xii
List of tables	xiii
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
	1
1.1. Background and context	1
1.2. Rationale	2
1.3. Problem statement	3
1.4. Research questions	5
1.5. Purpose of the study	5
1.6. Preliminary literature review	5
1.6.1. The influence of the principal in determining school culture	6
1.6.2. The influence of teachers in determining school culture	9
1.6.3. The influence of parental involvement in determining school culture	11
1.6.4. The influence of learners in determining school culture	13
1.6.5. Conclusion of the preliminary literature review	15
1.7. Preliminary conceptual framework	15

1.7.1. Critical theory	16
1.7.2. Models of school culture	16
1.7.3. School culture and school climate	17
1.8. Research design and methodology	19
1.9. Significance of the study	20
1.10 Outline of chapters	21
1.11 Conclusion	21

## Chapter 2: Literature review

	22
2.1 Literature review plan	
2.2 School culture and school climate	24
2.3 Organisational Culture	26
2.4 South African school culture	27
2.5 Factors that influence school culture	30
2.5.1 The influence of the principal in determining school culture	31
2.5.2 The influence of the teachers in determining school culture	34
2.5.3 The influence of the parents in determining school culture	39
2.5.4 The influence of learners in determining school culture	45
2.6 Conceptual framework	50
2.6.1 Critical theory	50
2.6.2 Models of school culture	51
2.6.2.1 Input-process-output model	51
2.6.2.2 School Improvement Model of school culture	54
2.7 Conclusion	56

## Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction	58
3.2 Research design	61
3.2.1 Interpretive paradigm	61
3.2.2 Qualitative research	63
3.2.3 Research method	65
3.3 Research methodology	66
3.3.1 Research sites and participants	66
3.3.2 Researcher's role	68
3.3.3 Data collection	68
3.3.3.1 Introduction	68
3.3.3.2 Data collection strategies	69
3.3.3.3 Face to face interviews	69
3.3.3.4 Focus group discussion	71
3.3.3.5 Observation	73
3.3.3.6 Learners' drawings of school culture	74
3.3.4 Data analysis: Qualitative content analysis	76
3.4 Ethical issues	79
3.5 Quality criteria of the research	79
3.5.1 Trustworthiness	80
3.5.2 Dependability	82
3.5.3 Triangulation	83
3.5.4 Member checking	83
3.6 Conclusion	84

## Chapter 4: Data analysis and findings

4.1 Introduction	85
4.2 Levels of analysis	85
4.2.1 First level of analysis: Categories	86
4.2.1.1 Category 1: The leadership of the principal	86
4.2.1.1.1 Teamwork	87
4.2.1.1.2 Motivation	88
4.2.1.1.3 Effective communication	89
4.2.1.2 Category 2: The roles of teachers in teaching and learning	89
4.2.1.2.1 The teaching challenges faced by teachers	94
4.2.1.2.2 Teacher behaviour and attitude within the school	96
4.2.1.3. Category 3: The role of parents	99
4.2.1.3.1 Challenges faced by parents	99
4.2.1.3.2 Experiences of teachers and the principal with regard to parental involvement	103
4.2.1.4 Category 4: Social factors	105
4.2.1.5 Category 5: Behaviour displayed by learners	105
4.2.2 Second level of analysis: Themes	106
4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Insufficient leadership	106
4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Lack of teacher professionalism	108
4.2.2.3 Theme 3: Low level of parental involvement	110
4.2.2.4 Theme 4: Socio-economic factors	112
4.2.2.5 Theme 5: Behavioural problems of learners	113
4.2.3 Third level of analysis: Theories	116
4.3 Summary of the chapter	121

## **Chapter 5: Overview, synthesis of findings, recommendations and conclusion**

5.1 Introduction	122
5.2 Overview of the chapter	122
5.3 Synthesis of the findings in terms of the research sub-questions	125
5.4 Limitations and strengths of the study	133
5.4.1 Limitations	133
5.4.2 Strengths	134
5.5 Aspects of future research	134
5.6 Recommendations	135
5.7 Conclusion	136

<b>Bibliography</b>	137
---------------------	-----

<b>Appendices</b>	151
-------------------	-----

- A Permission for access from the school governing body
- B Letter of informed consent: principal and the teachers
- C Letter of informed consent: parents (invitation to participate).
- D Letter of informed consent : parents ( permission of learners).
- E Letter of assent: learners
- F Interview schedule for the principal
- G Interview schedule for educators
- H Focus group discussion protocol with parents
- I Observation schedule

## G Guideline for learners' drawings

### LIST OF FIGURES

---

	Page
2.1	Input-process-output model
2.2	School improvement model of school culture
3.1	Schematic diagram of the research process
4.1	Learners' drawings of teaching and learning
4.2	Corporal punishment of learners by teachers
4.3	Littering, bullying and smoking of learners

## LIST OF TABLES

---

	<b>Page</b>
3.1 Schematic representation of the research process.	59
3.2 Interpretative paradigm	62
3.3 Demographic information of the participants	77
4.1 Codes, categories and themes	118

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

---

#### 1.1 Background and context

Since the 1990s, serious attempts have been made by South Africans to construct their social institutions along democratic lines. Education has not been excluded from these efforts of change (Fleisch & Christie 2004). According to Gilmour (2001) the change in education is to serve the demands and pressure through two key organising principles, namely, equity and equality in terms of resource allocation and reprioritisation within and between the provinces.

The aforementioned underscores the argument that even if educational change results in equality of opportunity, equality of outcomes is still compromised through unequal financial and human resources (Gilmour 2001). As Fullan (2002) states, real change involves loss, anxiety and struggle, therefore, successful school improvement depends on an understanding of the problem of change at a level of practice and development. Gilmour (2001) and Fullan (2002) concur that change in the South African education system caused policy tension and contradiction. There is evidence that the new curricula were influenced by Western educational models (Nekhwevha, 1999) and resulted in a lack of indigenous cultural capital of the African masses. Therefore, strategies are required when change occurs (Rhodes, Camic, Milbur & Lowe 2009).

Educational change in most South African schools resulted in irregular school attendance by learners; poor performing schools; disputed authority relations between principals, teachers, learners and parents; low morale; general demotivation; conflicts and violence around the school (Christie 1998). This is supported by Harber (2001) who indicates that where there is violence, availability of weapons and patriarchal values and behaviour, the negative, non-functioning school is prominent. I believe that this influences how people think and act at school level. The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of school culture on the functioning of a school. Change in education can influence the school culture positively or negatively. It is from the background above that my study looked at the school culture and how it impacts the functioning of the school.

## 1.2 Rationale

My observation as a teacher in a township primary school is that teaching and learning in township schools are currently ineffective. On the first day of the new school year, the front page of a daily newspaper, The Sowetan (13 January 2011) reported three secondary school boys in possession of alcohol on their way to school.

In the school where I taught, I observed that not all learners attend on the first day of school, both teachers and learners arrived late at school, the school environment is not clear at the beginning of the year and teaching only starts in the third or fourth week of the new year because time tables and class allocations have not been finalised. Learners who do attend school often do not have the stationery required. This raises the following questions: Are parents responsible enough for the education of their children? What is the nature of the leadership at the school? Are disciplinary measures conducted at schools? Do teachers display negative attitudes towards the learners? Do learners' behaviour and attitudes cause negativity at school?

I have also observed that many teachers are reluctant to work and lack commitment. This might be the result of their attitudes toward Outcomes Based Education (OBE)<sup>1</sup>. It was introduced in 2005. Teachers with Outcome Based Education give children practical experience that actually help them in life. Again their workload, the behaviour of learners and the climate that is not conducive to teaching and learning contributed to the reluctance of the teachers. In my view the relationship between the school and parents is limited. Parents do not participate enough to work effectively with the school. One of the reasons for the lack of parents' participation seems to be the fact that due to the impact of HIV/Aids in the community, learners' guardians are often grandparents, who are illiterate. They are unable to help learners with their school work. The non-involvement of parents impacts negatively on the school culture and results in negative impact on the functionality of the school (Fan 2001). The school, on the other hand, does not help the parents to understand their responsibility toward the well-being of their children.

The lack of physical resources like furniture, textbooks and proper infrastructure also plays a major role in affecting school culture (Maja 1995). The observations above have led me to believe that the functioning of the school is influenced by either an ineffective or effective school culture. It is against this background that I explored the influence of school culture on the functioning of a school.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

School culture is important in learning because of its alignment to the vision and mission of the school. A negative school culture means low academic achievement and a high number of disciplinary problems (Md Nor & Roslan 2009) which can result in the malfunctioning of the school. Keiser and Schulte

---

<sup>1</sup> OBE – Outcome Based Education: An approach to learning that seeks to link education more closely to the real world, giving students skills to access, criticize, analyse and practically apply knowledge (Education in South Africa, University of Michigan)

(2009) support this notion when they indicate that schools that exhibit a negative school culture experience learners that are unmotivated, unwilling to learn and who are disruptive. I believe that variables that can impact on the functioning of the school and result in a negative or positive school culture are the principals' leadership, teachers' attitudes, parental involvement and learners' perceptions about the school culture.

Previous research on school culture has focused more on its impact on the performance of learners and perception of teachers. More studies have focused on creating a positive school culture through safety measures (Furlong, Greif, Bates, Whipple & Jimenez 2005). These studies have led to prevention programmes and intervention. Little research however, has been conducted on the impact of the school culture on the functioning of township schools in South Africa, which this study addressed. School culture includes social systems of shared norms and expectations (Johnson, Stevens & Zvoch 2007) where learners often form peer groups that are stronger social influences for negative behaviour in general. Learners' negative behaviour can contribute to teachers' lack of confidence and determination to overcome their differences and impact on the functioning of the school (Keiser & Schulte 2009).

By investigating school culture, using qualitative approaches and involving organisational structures, we can better understand perceptions and misconceptions about school culture. Principals, teachers and parents can plan interventions to prevent or change attitudes and behaviour towards the school and they can assist with programmes that will promote the existing culture in schools. In this study, I investigated the school culture in one township primary school and my investigation was guided by the research questions below.

## 1.4 Main research question

This study aimed at addressing the following research question: How does school culture impact the functioning of a township primary school? The following sub-questions will be addressed:

- 1 How do the principal's perceptions, beliefs of and attitude regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?
- 2 How do teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?
- 3 How do parents' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?
- 4 How do learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?

## 1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the relationship between school culture and its functioning in a South African public township primary school. An attempt was made to unpack the impact of school culture on the functionality of the school. The school culture involves learners' commitment, well-being, performance, behaviour and learning. It also involves teachers' attitudes towards the school and learners', the principal's perception about school culture and parents' involvement in the school. Through a qualitative content analysis the research endeavoured to identify underlying factors in the school culture that could impact the functionality of the school.

## 1.6 Preliminary literature review

The purpose of this preliminary literature review was to identify relevant sources concerning the variety of factors that may either cause or improve

school culture. According to Bulach, Boothe and Picket (2006) there is a growing mismatch between the types of learners that schools are producing and the needs of the economy. The literature review was based on recent trends in promoting culture from which learners, teachers, parents and the Department of Education will benefit. The following factors influencing school culture are discussed:

- The influence of the principal in determining school culture
- The influence of the teachers determining school culture
- The influence of the parents in determining school culture
- The influence of the learners in determining school culture

#### **1.6.1 The influence of the principal in determining school culture**

Since change occurs consistently, principals are required to convert their schools into learning organisations (Stocklin 2010). A learning organisation is "an organisation skilled at creating, acquiring, transferring knowledge, and modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Stocklin 2010: 445).

To convert schools into learning organisations, school leaders should build organisational capacity in which the development of knowledge and positive consistent behaviour can be established and fostered (Barth 2002). Knowledge and positive behaviour will support and value personal learning and school culture. Barth (2002) further indicates that this can be done if principals reshape the culture of their schools. He states that reshaping the culture is when the principal listens to staff and lays the groundwork for redevelopment of trust. The act of listening builds strength in others because their needs are met when listening occurs. This shows that a leader cares about the organisation's opinions, beliefs and values. It also expresses that a leader is open to changing his/her leadership style to meet the organisation's expectations (Barth 2002).

Gibb (1978) adds that listening results in openness and trust. He states that openness and trust are clearly intertwined and once the institution perceives that the principal is there to serve its interest and that s/he cares and becomes open to these, the foundation for trust has been formed. This will help learners and teachers to become more open and less fearful. This will also improve the culture and the functionality of the school. A school with a high level of trust will outperform a school with a low level of trust (Gibb, 1978). McGuigan and Hoy (2006) argue that to reshape and improve school culture, academic optimism and academic achievement as shared beliefs within the organisation are important. Academic optimism has the capacity to help learners achieve and, therefore, learners and parents can be trusted to co-operate. McGuigan and Hoy (2006) further indicate that this supports the importance of setting high academic expectations; adopting high external standards, gearing school policies and procedures towards pushing learners to excel and behave. This will promote the relationship between features of the principal and features of school culture.

Engels, Hotton, Devos, Boukenooghe and Aelterman (2008) indicate that promoting the relationship that exists within the school requires a strong association between principals' leadership and school culture. They further argue that the crucial roles played by principals in teachers' well-being, professional development as well as school development will enhance a positive school culture and the effective functioning of the school. Such processes can also result in more productive teacher-principal relationships which are critical to a positive school culture.

The teacher-principal relationship is promoted when the principal's leadership focuses on the organisational mission and goal, encourages a collaborative and trusting environment in the school and actively supports instructional improvement (Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2008). This is also supported by

Engels *et al.* (2008) who indicate that the teacher-principal relationship indirectly influences teachers' practices through the fostering of collaboration and communication to improve school effectiveness. As an effective leader the principal should support teachers, encourage participation in decision making, stimulate co-operation and act as a good example (Engels *et al.*, 2008). This could extend teachers' responsibility and recognise their worth as workers within the school, their work will be valued and they will be prepared to do much more in turn (Lance, 2010).

A principal who, within the limits of his/her power, runs the school in such a way that teachers regard this as enabling their work, is seen as caring. (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). S/he will be seen as supporting key academic goals of the school, creating a positive environment in which learners can be taught and explore their experiences within a positive culture. McGuigan and Hoy (2006) state that teachers and learners should be commended and rewarded for outstanding performance as a way of motivating them. This is possible if the principal cultivates a climate of high academic goals. School leaders who want to improve institutional capacity should focus on co-operatively creating an organisation where the emphasis is on authentic self-expression, the development of relationships and the overall development of the community (Stocklin, 2010).

Principals should actively support instructional learning through collaboration and communication, which consistently relates to school effectiveness (Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2008). Their involvement in the design and implementation of the curriculum instruction, assessment practices and monitoring the effectiveness of school practices can improve the functioning of the school (Supovitz *et al.*, 2008). This will lead the principal being accountable for the direction the school takes to encourage authentic learning and bridge the school's learning agenda (Lance, 2010). McGuigan and Hoy (2006) state that accountability leads the principal to organise and run the

school in a way that makes a difference in the teachers' confidence and the possibility of learners' academic success. They also state that a principal must make time for joint planning, as this will help the principal to take the lead in ensuring that professional development is integrally related to the school's academic goal and the curriculum. It is, therefore, important for the principal to encourage the forging of personal connections to help learners and teachers feel needed and competent, and to have a sense of being publicly involved (Lance 2010).

From the above discussion it became clear that the principal who leads the school on a foundation of trust, who promotes decision-making and ensures that the curriculum and learning outcomes are implemented accurately, will help to promote the culture that exists in the school. In order for the school to be manageable, the manager requires leadership qualities such as those I have discussed above.

### **1.6.2. The influence of teachers in determining school culture**

When building school culture, the values of learners, teachers and the community are taken into consideration. An effective school culture is created when teachers value learners by caring deeply, treating learners as individuals and not as learning objects, putting learners first and supporting them to do the best they can in each subject at whatever level of ability (Lance 2010). Lance (2010) further adds that a prerequisite for this is the acknowledgement that learners are at the heart of the learning enterprise and that the culture of teaching and the functionality of the school should improve. Forsey (2010) argues that many teachers find themselves involved in reproducing forms and styles of schooling that suits some, but not all learners. Learners who fit in with the culture of the school, build and maintain experiences and are able to cope with any situation. Teachers can create a positive school culture that enhances teaching and learning, and enables

learners to acquire learning experience and promote the functioning of the school (Forsey 2010).

Hargreaves (1997) indicates that, in order to fully understand how teachers improve the school culture that enhances teaching and learning, it is important to examine the school organisational culture that affects teacher behaviour. The organisational cultures that affect teachers' behaviour are attitudes, beliefs and values that teachers have in common. These result in a teaching culture that affects how teachers define their work, how they react to change, how confident they are in the perception of how they make a difference in the lives of their learners and the nature of the relationship among teachers. This can be done if there are collaborative relationships that promote teamwork, sharing ideas and information. Teachers' collective responsibility for the functioning of the school is strongly and positively associated with school culture (Hargreaves 1997). This emphasises strong academic goals and core curriculum orientation. It is, therefore, concluded that it is important for the principal and staff to positively influence the organisational culture through their approach to decision-making, interaction with learners and parents for the well-being of the school.

Teacher development and in-service training also impact on the functioning of the school and affect the school culture. Johnson, Hodges and Monk (2000) state that teachers working in economically developing countries are constrained by different sets of circumstances, have different perspectives on the work they do and need different in-service provision than those in developed countries.

I believe that schools in South Africa, especially disadvantaged ones, need to train and develop teachers according to the needs of the school, because the needs of teachers are different from those in developed countries. Johnson et al. (2000) believe that teacher development and change used in developed

countries might be poorly matched to the needs of teachers in developing countries like South Africa. In conclusion, teachers who work together as a team and enhance the development of the school will assist in the functioning of the school, which in turn will result in a positive school culture.

### **1.6.3 The influence of parental involvement in determining school culture**

Parents are part of the school community and their involvement plays a role in the promotion of the culture that exists in the school. Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates and Pettit (2004) define parents' involvement as parent's work with the school and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future success. They further indicate that parental involvement is operationalised as volunteering at school, parent-teacher contacts, involvement of related activities at home and the quality of parent-teacher relationship.

The parent-teacher relationship is influenced by effective communication. Effective parent-teacher communication builds working relationships that can support strong home-school collaboration and improve educational outcomes (Mc Naughton & Vostal 2010). They believe that communication and collaboration between parents and teachers encourage schools to recognise parents as key participants in educational decision-making for their children. This will impact on learners' achievement, reduce learner absenteeism, increase graduation rates, improve learners' attitudes and behaviour, and increase learners enrolment. Brandon, Higgins, Pierce and Sileo (2010) add that poor communication between teachers and parents makes parents feel that their children are not receiving appropriate educational services. Therefore, communication is primary in the promotion of family involvement (Farrel & Collier 2010). Home-school communication must be informed by an understanding of culture, which includes ethnicity, socio-economic status,

neighbourhood and related cultural characteristics. Consequently, these factors improve learners' grades, test scores, attitudes and behaviour. Fan (2001) in part agrees with the above idea by saying that parental academic involvement with their children has great effects on learners' academic growth, while communication and volunteering have lesser effects.

Gonzalez-De Haas, Willem and Holbein (2005) argue that parental involvement benefits children's learning and academic success and thus improve learners' academic outcomes. This is supported by Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (1999) when they indicate that parental involvement contributes to better teaching and learning. Gonzalez-De Haas *et al.* (2005) further note that parental involvement results in support that is related to motivation, autonomy, self-regulation, mastery of goal orientation and motivation to read. This engenders a positive spirit between parents and teachers, and the restoration of trust between home and school. Parental involvement helps the teacher to rely on parental support for learner performance and school attendance, which promotes the functionality of the school.

Parental support develops parents' aspirations for their children to have strong positive affects on engagement, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Fan & Williams, 2009) and this effects learner achievement and motivation, for example learners were found to be more engaged with school activities when their parents participate more frequently in school functions. Sarason (1995) contends parental involvement is not the key to positive school culture. He argues that parental involvement can claim no victories in the learning process of children. He believes that state legislature should mandate parental involvement by organising, recommending and supporting preventative courses of action that can lead to good relations which will promote school culture.

However, Epstein and Sanders (2006) argue that teachers find it challenging to increase involvement with parents and members of diverse communities. Brandon *et al.* (2010) maintain that even if parents are key components of their children's success in school, in today's world parents often work long hours, have more than one job and participate in multiple responsibilities that may limit their participation. One solution to this is to use effective information and communication technology, to increase family and community involvement. Even if some of the literature contends that parental involvement is not important, I believe that parents who are actively involved in the education of their children improve the culture and the functionality of the school. My proposition is strengthened by Epstein (2005) who comments that community involvement in schools has been reported to improve learner achievement, decrease delinquency, and improve overall learner behaviour.

#### **1.6.4 The influence of learners in determining school culture**

The concept of attitude includes ways of feeling, thinking, behaving and maintaining any expression of one's identity within the environment. It is the emotion to think or behave. Schools are partially responsible for learners' moral and social development (Hayes, Ryan & Zsoller 1994). Learners' attitudes, perceptions and behaviours are determined by caring, which fosters learners' emotional and intellectual growth (Hayes *et al.* 1994). In addition, love and caring are basic requirements for growth and development. Development depends on involvement of one or more adults in care and joint activity with the child (Hayes *et al.* 1994). Children developing in such environments gain competency and are able to master situations of greater complexity. The functioning of the school is positively enhanced by valuing learners' capabilities, interests and learning styles.

By developing positive and personal relationship with their learners, teachers can help learners feel like important members of the school community

(Hayes *et al.*, 1994) and I believe that this can change the environment of the school. Hayes *et al.* (1994) maintain that traditional learning is based on a personal relationship between teacher and learner, a strategy which may result in learners' positive attitudes towards the school environment. Positive attitudes towards the school environment enhance learners' well-being. Engels, Aelterman, Van Petegem and Schepens (2004) add to the previous statement by mentioning that the degree to which learners participate in the classroom has a positive effect on their well-being. This enhances the feeling of responsibility for one's own learning and behaviour. They believe that teachers who treat their learners with respect and encourage them whenever they do something good during lessons, contribute considerably to learners' well-being. Engels *et al.* (2004) further state that subjective perceptions of study pressures connected to unclear expectations of the teacher's poor setting of tasks and tests, cause negative perceptions on the culture of teaching and learning. If learners get little support from teachers they will never understand the importance and the usefulness of learning and good behaviour. Learners are interested in and are prepared to try harder in subjects which they perceive as up to date, useful and connected to their perceptions of the world. The teacher, as a supervisor of learning and development, is responsible for the development of an effective learning environment, as learners appreciate teachers who show signs of competence, expertise and commitment (Engels *et al.*, 2004).

A feeling of security also positively influences learners' well-being (Engels *et al.*, 2004). Engels *et al.* (2008) also maintain that it is important for the school to be seen as taking action to deal with problems like violence, disturbances, drugs and bullying. Learners rate schools that take action to curb problem behaviour very highly. Schools that are rated low with regard to infrastructure and facilities are not perceived as learning institutions by learners. Schools where buildings are not properly maintained and classrooms are poorly laid out are viewed negatively by learners. It goes without saying that a pleasant

environment and involvement in that environment is conducive to a positive atmosphere at school (Engels *et al.*, 2004).

### **1.6.6 Conclusion of the preliminary literature review**

The preliminary literature review helped me understand how features of school culture can affect school functioning. In my reading of the literature, I found that more research is evident on the impact of school culture on learners' performance; little has been written about the impact of school culture on the functioning of the school. Current information about school culture states that integration should exist between the school principal, teachers, parents and learners in order to promote a positive school environment (Engels *et al.* 2008). Furthermore, the features of school culture and the school principal should form a relationship that will promote teaching and learning, teachers' well-being and the development of the school.

The principal's leadership practices influence improvement and the effectiveness of the school (Hallinger & Heck 1998). These practices cannot be successful if teachers, parents and learners do not work together with the principal to promote school culture and learning within the school. Lance (2010) maintains that it is important for teachers to support learners and to work with parents to contribute to better teaching and learning. It is clear that the four stakeholders identified in this literature review are all involved in the way in which school culture impacts on the functioning of the school.

### **1.7 Preliminary Conceptual framework**

Critical theory is the theoretical lens through which I looked at my study. I describe two models that explain school culture as a phenomenon and I conceptually unpack the terms "school culture" and "school climate". This is a

preliminary and condensed theoretical discussion to show how the study was directed. In chapter 2 the conceptual framework will be unpacked thoroughly.

### 1.7.1 Critical theory

Critical theory is concerned with social and cultural transformation within an organisation. The evaluative standard of critical theory can contribute in overcoming social injustices and inequalities (Higgs, Titchen, Horsfall & Armstrong, 2007). This is supported by Bohman (2005) who states that critical theory is explanatory, practical and normative. He mentions the following key principles of critical theory:

- It explains the wrongs within the current social reality.
- It provides norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation.
- It proposes changes to the status quo.

On the other hand, Higgs *et al* (2007) defines critical theory as a positive utopianism and optimism towards possibility of revolutionary change. It is the theory that deals with social and cultural transformation. Critical theory in my study assisted me in describing the culture that exists in a township primary schools and the impact it has on the functioning of the school. This section will be elaborated on in chapter 2.

### 1.7.2 Models of school culture

Two models, which is the Input-process-output model (Bushnell, 2003) and the School improvement model of school culture (Cavanaugh and Deller, 1997), were also used to guide my research. Cavanaugh and Deller (1997) emphasise that the school improvement model of

school culture depicts the relationship among the six cultural elements and their effects on the overall school culture.

The six elements that relate to school improvement include teacher efficacy, emphasis on learning, collegiality, collaboration, shared planning and transformational leadership. This model views school culture as an open-systems structure in which equilibrium is maintained between interactive, internal elements and external factors. The model also embodies that school culture involves cultural elements that facilitate cultural maintenance and growth. The cultural elements are vehicles for improving the effectiveness of schools. When the cultural elements are well developed, cultural growth and school improvement occur. This model is dependent on utilisation of culturally oriented planning and implementation strategies.

The second model that I used is the Input-process-output model (Bushnell, 2003). This model was used to mediate the structural features of the school with the outcomes of learners and teachers (Van Houtte, 2005). I looked at school culture and considered the outcomes based on discipline, learning, communication and the overall environment of the school. This could assist in good functioning of the school. In this study, the above-mentioned models were used as guides to the analysis of school culture and how it impacts on the functioning of the school.

### **1.7.3 School culture and school climate**

School culture is defined as a system of related subsystems which includes organising, communication, resources, social interaction, reproduction and ideology (Engels *et al.*, 2008). It is the basic assumptions, norms, values and cultural artifacts that are shared by school members, which influence the functioning of the school and enhance school effectiveness. Engels *et al.*

(2008) believe that positive school culture is considered as one in which there is meaningful staff development and also enhanced learning and practices.

Van Houtte (2005) defines school culture as a set of shared meaning, shared beliefs and shared assumptions among the members of the organisation. The culture that exists in the school is organisational culture, which is a system of shared values and beliefs that interacts with an organisation's people, structures and control system to produce behavioural norms (Zollers, Rathman & Yu 1999). In addition, Mok and Flynn (1998) define school culture as a particular configuration of the core beliefs and values, symbols, traditions and patterns of behaviour. They further state that school culture combines both the in-depth ethnographic study of the human relationships within the school and objective measures of school life. The important components of school culture are the sense of community cultivated in learners and bonding to members of the school community, which extends the physical boundaries of the classroom. The four dimensions of school culture that contribute to learning are motivation to stay at school, expectation, effectiveness and educational well-being (Mok & Flynn 1998).

Every school setting has a set of psychological and institutional attributes that gives it a distinctive interpersonal climate (Rhodes *et al.* 2009). Psychological attributes include the level of trust and co-operate openness among teachers and learners. Institutional attributes include teaching practice and levels of collaboration of teachers, staff and parents.

Closely related to school culture is school climate, which theorists have described as overlapping concepts (Macneil, Prater & Busch 2009). They view this as behaviour and the total environmental quality within an organisation. Macneil *et al.* (2009) also believe that the recent attention to the effectiveness of public schools and their culture has given more interest to the importance of school climate.

The definition of organisational climate depends on the approach taken (Van Houtte 2005). One approach is the multiple measurement organisational attribute approach. This approach is defined as a set of characteristics that describe and distinguish itself from other organisations, and influence the behaviour of people in the organisation. Van Houtte (2005) mentions another approach, the perceptual measurements organisational climate approach, which is a set of attributes that can be perceived about a particular organisation as well as the sub system that deals with members and the environment.

### **1.8 Research design and methodology**

My central endeavour is "to understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2005:22). I studied constructed school culture and the functioning of a rural school. The participants comprised of the school principal, grade seven teachers, grade seven learners and learner's parent/ guardians. This will be fully discussed in chapter 3.

The interpretive nature of the qualitative case study design that I used aligns itself to the interpretation of phenomena through the eyes of the people involved. I accepted that there is a range of different viewpoints or ways of understanding the world, I focused on discovering and understanding the views and perspectives of the participants, rather than my own. In this study, through an interpretive qualitative case study paradigm, I explored the impact of school culture on the functioning of the school.

The study is descriptive and exploratory with a research problem constituted by the role of school culture with regard to the functionality. Understanding the meaning and impact of school culture content requires the study to be

situated contextually. A thorough literature investigation, a qualitative method with data collection through interviews with the principal and four grade 7 teachers, class observation, learners' drawings and a focus group discussion with four parents were used to explore the culture that exists in the sampled school. I used qualitative content analysis as an approach to analyse and interpret data inductively. Furthermore the study is positioned in the interpretive paradigm. I adhered to the University of Pretoria's policy on ethical issues. The quality of data was measured by the trustworthiness of the research, member checking, triangulation, and dependability. More details of the research design are contained in chapter 3.

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

The culture that prevails in schools serves as a starting point for the educational well-being of the learners and learning. This study raises important questions, not just about how we want to organise our schools and education system, but ultimately about what kind of society we are seeking to build (Forsey, 2010). I believe that a positive school culture can improve learning if teachers, administrators, learners and parents are engaged in a reproductive process that simultaneously reinforces and reinvents school and schooling.

This research has value because every stakeholder in the school is affected by the present culture that prevails in the South African township schools. The findings of this study could be useful for schools struggling with a negative school culture that result in ineffective schools. I believe that the findings of this study could guide schools to identify aspects to concentrate on in order to rectify mistakes and eventually improve school culture, ultimately resulting in the effective functioning of the school.

## 1.10 Outline of the chapters

My study has five chapters. Chapter one gives the background and significance of the study. I presented the rationale, research questions and purpose of the study as well as defined the key theoretical concepts of the study, such as the difference between school culture and school climate and the theoretical lenses used. The literature on school culture is reviewed extensively in chapter two and the conceptual framework was unpacked. Chapter three is concerned with the research process and details how I conducted the data collection and analysis. It covers my philosophical views about research and the procedures and steps I followed because I held those views. Data collected were analysed and interpreted in chapter four, showing how the report of the findings evolved. Chapter five is the summary of the study in terms of how the research questions were answered and also provides the strengths and limitations as well as the recommendations from the findings in chapter 4.

## 1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I have contextualised the research problem and research questions by providing the rationale and the purpose of the study. A preliminary literature review as well as a preliminary conceptual framework were discussed as an introduction to the study. The research design and methodology was indicated and the chapter is concluded by the outline and purpose of all the chapters and the significance of the study. The next chapter deals with the literature of this study.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

---

#### 2.1 Literature review plan

School culture consists of the basic assumptions, norms, values and cultural artefacts that are shared by school members in order to enhance school effectiveness (Engels *et al.* 2008). Freiberg (1998) adds that the culture of a school reflects the commitment levels of everyone within the school. When the culture of the school is positive, the motivation and commitment levels of teachers and learners improve. Negative school culture often implies low academic performance and a high number of disciplinary problems (Md Nor & Roslan 2009) which could result in the malfunctioning of the school.

Van der Westhuizen, Oosthuizen and Wolhuter (2008) regard the role of the principal and his managerial style as a crucial factor in encouraging collective responsibility among staff, as well as a sense of commitment among learners and parents. According to Morrow (1994), teachers are among the most important influences of the school environment. They play a key role in the transformation of education and the reconstruction of society in South Africa. Christie (1998) describes the school and the parents as the two major societal influences on learners in modern society and advocates the interaction of these two agencies in order to improve the school culture with regard to how well a school functions. Positive attitudes from the learners towards the school environment enhance the functioning of the school and learner involvement is conducive to a positive school culture (Engels *et al.* 2004).

Based on the above introductory definitions of school culture, this literature review explores the relationship between school culture and how well a school functions. The chapter begins by describing the similarities and differences between school culture and school climate, as these two concepts cannot be used interchangeably. This chapter also explores the organisational culture and school culture in South Africa, focusing specifically on township schools as this is the main interest of this study. Thereafter, the role of the four stakeholders of school culture is explored.

Specific attention is given to South African township school culture. The following factors are discussed in this study: the principal leadership, the role of teachers and learners, and parental involvement. The literature review covers critical theory, Input-process-output model and the school improvement model of school culture as the theoretical lens that the study used to direct the research process.

In Section 2.2 the difference between school culture and school climate is elaborated on after which perspectives on organisational culture follows. The discussion centred on school culture which is contextualised to South African schools; whereafter factors that influence school culture are introduced. The influence of the principal, teaching staff, parents and learners on the school culture forms the main discussion of the literature review. The conceptual framework concludes the chapter, discussing the lens of critical theory and the two models of school culture in sections 2.7.1-2.7.2

## 2.2 School culture and school climate

The literature tends to liken the concepts of school culture and school climate (van Houtte, 2005). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993), for instance, are of the opinion that any aspect of culture or climate that exists within the school as an organisation can be referred to as either organisational culture or organisational climate. Gonder and Hymes (1994) also believe that both school culture and school climate are related to the environment that exists within the school.

Van Houtte (2005) criticises the fact that culture and climate are considered as interchangeable concepts in school effectiveness research. According to Van Houtte (2005), both school climate and school culture are used to describe the character of the school as an organisation, but school climate is seen in terms of shared perceptions, while school culture is seen as shared assumptions, shared meanings and shared beliefs. Denison (1996) concurs with Van Houtte (2005) in that school climate researchers measure how organisation members perceive the organisational climate, while in school culture researchers look for what members think and believe. School culture is concerned with values, meanings and beliefs, while school climate is concerned with the perceptions of values, meanings and beliefs. School culture measurements are based on what individual members of the organisation believe or assume while school climate measurements are based on what individual members perceive their colleagues to believe (Van Houtte 2005). Each member of a school is an important and integral part of the school culture (Recepoclu, 2013).

According to Keiser and Schulte (2009), school climate is the quality and consistency of interpersonal interaction within the school community that influences children's cognitive, social and psychological development. They further indicate that these interactions form specific relationships that evoke a

sense of school community. The elements of a sense of school community are shared values, commitments, a feeling of belonging, caring, interdependence and regular contact (Belenardo, 2001). Schools that display the shared values of fairness, justice, respect, co-operation and compassion have a positive sense of community and these schools further support and motivate both teachers and learners (Keiser & Schulte 2009). However, Md Nor *et al.* (2009) define school climate as a sum of values, cultures, safety practices and organisational structures in a school that cause it to function and react in particular ways. This includes how learners, staff and community interact and what approaches are used to solve school problems. School climate is also based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning and organisational structures (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

Smircich in Van Houtte (2005) states that school culture can be viewed as a system of meanings, which are shared to a varying degree, or as a stable set of assumptions that are taken for granted. Fullan (1997) adds to this definition of school culture by describing the values, beliefs, behaviours, rules, products, signs and symbols of a school in order for it to serve as a mediating factor in school reform change. Fullan (1997) also states that school culture can act either as a bridge or as a barrier to change when school improvement programs are attempted.

There are several perspectives on school culture and school climate although from this discussion, it became clear that both a positive school climate and an appropriate school culture are necessary ingredients for implementing change in order to enhance the efficiency of the functioning of schools (Gonder & Hymes 1994). The next section considers the impact of school culture in South African schools, especially in black township schools

## 2.3 Organisational culture

Martins (1992) compares a number of definitions of organisational culture and draws a conclusion that, although organisational culture is usually defined as shared norms and beliefs, there is a disagreement about what is being shared. Martins (1992) consequently depicts another attribute of organisational culture as the uniqueness of every organisation's culture. When studying an organisation's organisational culture, the interest should be directed towards the unique features from a cultural viewpoint of that organisation. Special attention should be given to how things are done within a particular school, for example, arrangement of office or playground, the working atmosphere and the relationship between all organisational structures. Van Houtte (2005) also considers organisational culture as the personal characteristics of the members of an organisation.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) adds that organisational culture manifests at four levels, namely: artefacts, perspectives, values and suppositions, whereas Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2008) describe organisational culture as consisting of two main aspects, the intangible foundation and the tangible manifestation. Intangible foundations include common beliefs; philosophy; mission; vision; goals and objectives; suppositions; ethos; values and norms of an organisation. Tangible manifestation includes verbal manifestation, behavioural manifestation and visual manifestations. Verbal manifestation involves communication and revolves around the manner in which the language is used within the organisation. It also focuses on specific events in the history of the organisation. In school, the curriculum is viewed as an aspect of the visual manifestation. Visual manifestation also refers to the physical facilities and symbols of organisation such as official school attire. From the aforementioned information, it is obvious that there are a variety of ways in which organisational culture can be viewed. The section that follows provides an in-depth discussion of South African school culture.

## 2.4 South African school culture

According to Salfi and Saeed (2007), South African schools with a positive culture have better physical facilities, learning environment, teachers' individual attention to learners, principal's good management and supervision skills and parental encouragement and involvement. Teachers from such schools are involved in the decision making process; teacher-parent interaction is frequent; teachers are highly qualified and there is a better cooperation and relationship between teaching and supporting staff. On the other hand, Derosier and Newcity (2005) posit that positive school culture is where academic learning, effective discipline, policies, learners' safety, and involvement with the family and community are emphasised. Schools with a positive culture perform better than schools with a negative culture (Rhodes, Camic & Lowe 2009). In South African township schools, these traits of positive school culture are hardly evident. Maja (1995) explains that the culture that exists in schools demotivates motivated teachers. Motivated teachers find themselves teaching in situations that go against systematic learning and a healthy environment. Maja (1995) further argues that in most South African township schools, teaching and learning are ineffective. During the first week schools opening in the new year, some schools are still issuing report cards for the previous year, learners are returning textbooks, new learners are being admitted, the school is distributing available textbooks to learners, teachers are being allocated subjects, the time table is still being drafted and learners' are being allocated classes. As a result, very little teaching is done during January as no time table exists and teachers attend classes at random. This is a major problem that influences the functioning of township schools and results in ineffective teaching and learning (Banda, 2003).

According to Fataar and Patterson (1998), there are two extremes that exist in South African schooling. These are functional versus dysfunctional schools.

Fataar and Patterson (1998) define functional schools as schools in which necessary structures and leadership are in place so that systematic learning can take place. A dysfunctional school is the opposite, in which the necessary structure and leadership are not in place and this affects the systematic learning in the school. Dysfunctional schools also obtain less than 20% pass rates at the matriculation examination (Banda 2003).

A dysfunctional school is characterised by a poor culture of teaching and learning (Chisholm & Vally 1996); disorderly environment; intermittent interruptions in the school's daily programme (Fataar & Patterson 1998); poor infrastructure, lack of libraries, lack of teaching resources; untrained teachers and poor quality of education (Banda 2003). In dysfunctional schools, starting and closing times are seldom consistent and learners and teachers coming late are a perennial problem (Maja 1995).

Fataar and Patterson (1998) further argue that learners at dysfunctional schools are shaped by peer pressure, lack of educational support structures, sport and recreational facilities. Currently high levels of unemployment and negative perception of future employment in these schools cause learners to discount the value of attending classes.

Although most township schools are dysfunctional, Christie and Potterton (1997) identify resilient schools in South African townships. Resilient schools, according to Christie and Potterton (1997), refer to the ability of a school to survive and develop in contexts of extreme adversity. These schools are situated in communities that are wracked by poverty, unemployment, violence, socio-economic and political influence (Carrim 1999). The main feature of these schools is a sense of responsibility that goes beyond accountability and prevents teachers from seeing themselves as victims, but rather as survivors (Christie & Potterton 1997), even if they work in appalling

conditions and struggle to maintain their practice against overwhelming odds (Morrow, 1994). These schools manage to survive in contexts where there is a breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning in neighbouring schools (Christie & Potterton, 1997).

The most significant manifestation of these schools is willingness and the ability to take initiative. Christie and Potterton (1997) further indicate that resilient schools always take actions in order to gain the necessary skills. These schools also provide a purposeful and supportive framework for learning and teaching to their learners and staff (Christie & Potterton 1997). Barth (2002) concurs with this statement by pointing out that the act of converting a school into a learning organisation can improve the culture of the school. According to Christie and Potterton (1997), agency can include small things within the school such as sweeping classes, picking up papers on the playground, bringing community people in to help with maintenance of school boundaries so that drugs and alcohol are not sold through fences, and raising funds to protect the physical facilities of the school. Christie and Potterton (1997) believe that a key characteristic of resilient schools is a sense of responsibility that follows policies for school improvement.

In most of the South African township schools, the physical facilities are not taken care of. According to Maja (1995), after 1994 more school buildings in townships were erected. Most of the schools are double storey buildings that started out as well furnished. In the following years, the windows and doors were broken and others removed; classes were dilapidated with papers lying around and most of the furniture had been stolen (Carrim 1999). Even if there was a fence surrounding the property, it was often cut at the back of the school grounds that resulted in theft (Maja 1995). Maja (1995) further indicates that often township boys from the surrounding location used classes for their recreational use. Toilets were blocked and electrical wires were stolen. According to the South African school register of needs survey report

(2000), since 1996, there has been a decline in the number of schools that had buildings in excellent and good conditions. The decline could be an indication of low investment in infrastructure maintenance. All of these conditions affect the functioning of a school and result in negative school culture. Even if there are resources for teaching and learning, due to constant break-ins at schools, most of the teaching resources are kept at a caretaker's house (Maja, 1995). Teachers seldom use the resources provided to them because it is too much effort to collect and return the resources. Banda (2003) supports Maja (1995) as when says that most of the South African township school conditions are not conducive to teaching and learning. This indicates that the environment where the school is located determines the functioning of the school and this affects the culture that exists in the school.

The next section will consider the following factors: the principal's role in determining school culture, the influence of teachers on school culture, parental involvement in the education of their children and the learners' role in school culture and how these factors impact the functioning of a school and promotion of school culture.

## **2.5 Factors that influence school culture**

Many factors have been identified from the literature as having an impact on school culture, the main factors being the four stakeholders mentioned briefly in the introduction. The role of the principal, the teachers, the parents, and the learners are discussed (2.5.1-2.5.4) in relation to school culture, which ensures that a school functions properly.

### 2.5.1 The influence of the principal in determining school culture

Macneil *et al.* (2009) indicate that, paying attention to the culture of the school is the most important action a leader can perform. If the culture of the school is not positive, effective learning cannot take place, therefore the principal's impact on learning is mediated through the culture of a school. They further argue that principals are responsible for establishing a pervasive culture of teaching and learning through long term goals in order to strengthen the learning environment. Van der Westhuizen (1997) concurs that the principal of a school plays a decisive role in initiating and maintaining the school culture and also that his/her style of management and leadership can improve the degree of professionalism among teachers as well as influencing discipline, collaboration and team work (Van der Westhuizen, Oosthuizen & Wolhuter 2008). This can only be done through a principal's effective leadership (Van der Westhuizen, 1997). Griffith (1999) also believes that an effective principal always focuses on the school's process of instruction, makes frequent visits to classrooms and provide suggestions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is supported by Edmonds (1979), who explains that although principals are committed to different activities within the school, an effective principal is always involved in academic instruction, for example he/she maintains an orderly school environment, encourages teaching the basics, monitors learners' achievement progress, is actively immersed in day to day activities of the school and sets clear and high academic expectations.

Sagnak (2010) indicates that for a principal to be able to control the school, and for the organisation to fulfil its purpose effectively, leadership should be based on two approaches, the transformational and transactional leadership approaches. In Sagnak (2010), Burns (1978) defines transformational and transactional leadership as a moral leadership where leaders and followers take each other's motivation and morality to a higher level. Bass (1985)

further advances transformational and transactional leadership as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration where leaders ensure that employees are able to look beyond their self-interest and succeed in their objective by means of one or more ways. Effective leadership also motivates, creates and maintains the conditions necessary for the building of professional learning communities within the school (Deal & Peterson 1999 & Flores 2004).

As school culture is built on the shared values, norms and beliefs of members of school community and shapes the social environment of the school. Md Nor *et al.* (2009) state that in order to build positive relationships, the principal should create a sense of belonging and positive self-concepts amongst members of the school. They further indicate that principals should play an important role in moulding, showing priority and focus, initiating collaborations and innovations in the school. This occurs only if principals become effective role models who change the way others think, behave, and define priorities. This will help learners to have a sense of belonging as well as confidence in their self-worth and this will influence the morale of teachers.

According to Blasé and Kirby (1992), effective principals serve as guardians of teachers' instructional time, assist teachers with learner discipline matters, allow teachers to develop learners' code of conduct and support teachers' authority in enforcing policies. Blasé and Kirby (1992) further state that although teachers can themselves take steps to preserve their professional satisfaction and morale, they must also be nurtured, supported and valued by their principals. This will influence their morale and contribute to a positive school culture that will ensure quality teaching and learning and the realisation of learner performance. However Hart (1992) in Griffith (1992) believes that a principal's effectiveness is also associated with school structural

characteristics, learners' population and broader organisational contexts, which are called organisational configurations.

An organisational configuration is a set of identifiable common characteristics of organisations that are useful in predicting organisational performance and effectiveness. Hart (1992) in Griffith (1992) further states that empirical studies have shown that organisations whose configurations are aligned with their environment perform better than organisations with non-aligned configurations. Md Nor and Roslan (2009) believe that the three components that result in improving the culture of the school are the physical, social and academic environment. They indicate that principals should understand that the physical aspects of the school contribute to an environment that is conducive to learning (Maja 1995) and that learners should feel that their school is not different from other schools. This can be done, for example, by designing the layout of gardens, planting trees and obtaining the involvement of learners in transforming their schools through art and drawings that can make them feel that they have a sense of belonging (Griffith 1992). The social environment can be improved if principals celebrate the success of the learners (Griffith 1992) through awards and certification. Principals should also enhance ethnic connections through learners' participation in cultural activities. These activities will result in learners respecting one another. The academic environment is stimulated when the principal introduces extra classes and programmes to increase academic performance that will foster the willingness to learn amongst weak and recalcitrant learners (Md Nor & Roslan 2009).

Fullan (2002) furthers the argument that effective leadership is not only about setting the vision and the mission of the school, or working as a team, but it is to be much more attuned to the bigger picture. He believes that effective leadership focuses on the relationship between moral purpose and

leadership. Moral purpose means closing the gap between high performing schools and low performing schools and it plays a larger role in transforming and sustaining system change. Fullan (2002) states that moral purpose can be practiced within the organisation where leaders work together for organisation development, or it can practised outside the organisation where leaders make a difference in the social environment through system improvement. He believes that school principals should be concerned with the success of other schools in the district; this results in learning in context.

According to Fullan (2002), learning in context occurs when principals are members of the inter-visitation study teams in a district. These teams assist principals to observe specific instructional practices and develop a new set of instructional practices as management strategies for their schools. They also examine real problems and solutions as they evolve in their own system. Fullan (2002) further indicates that learning in context is related to sustainability because it improves the system in a way that establishes conditions conducive to continuous development. These conditions include opportunities to learn from others in the workplace, daily fostering of current and future leaders, and the selective retention of good ideas and best practices. This results in knowledge creation and sharing, as it is central to effective leadership where information becomes knowledge through a social practice. Creemer and Reezigt (2005) conclude that without effective leadership, improvement efforts are unlikely to succeed. Therefore, principal leadership is the core to improving school culture.

### **2.5.2 The influence of teachers in determining school culture**

Schools are places where teaching and learning occur, but they are also places where teachers learn and develop (Flores, 2004) with the implication for quality education that should be provided to learners (Hargreaves, 1994).

To improve the functioning of a school, a positive school culture should be created. An effective positive school culture is created when teachers' cooperation and characteristics are seen as a condition for the educational process (Carim, 1999). One of the characteristics of a good teacher, as indicated by Kohl (1986), is the nurturing love and observation of growth in the life of the learner. The best teaching of learners is sustained by the love of growth in learners, and a belief that all learners can develop and learn no matter what disabilities they appear to have. Kohl (1986) further indicates that teachers should believe and understand their learners and know that not all learners are the same. This will occur when teachers prepare themselves for classroom situations in which they can display their professionalism and care, the effect of which will show in the life of the learners (Kohl 1986).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) support the importance of professionalism in that it is not about the possession of a certain level of qualification or status, nor the possession of a set of technical teaching skills, it is the full acceptance of the moral responsibility that is attached to the role of teachers, and the ability to make professional judgement in complex and uncertain situations. The degree of professionalism among teachers is related to their autonomy and responsibility (Maeroff, 1988), where teachers are continuously involved in making innumerable, practical, everyday small decisions that are of great importance to learners (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Those decisions include discipline, classroom management, classroom fairness and the freedom of the child versus the need for teacher intervention and support. All these embody complex social, philosophical, psychological and moral judgements and assist teachers to better understand their needs, expectations and be committed to the life of a learner in order to improve the functioning of a school (Hargreaves 1994).

According to Hammon (1989), all professionals should be accountable in various ways for the quality of service that they render to their clients, to the public and to their colleagues. Hammon (1989) identifies two forms of accountability that should be regularly applied to teachers and teaching. One of the two forms of accountability is professional accountability, which is used to cater for the needs of learners. Professional accountability has set educationally meaningful standards for what parents and the public can rightfully expect of a school system, school, or teacher. It also established reasonable and practical means by which these standards can be implemented and upheld, and it provides avenues for redress or corrections in practice when these standards are not met. Teachers are now accountable for the faithfulness with which they have followed standard procedure and implemented policies.

According to Morrow (1994), teachers are central to the transformation of education and the reconstruction of society. In order to carry out this role, teachers themselves must rediscover their special professional responsibilities, and come to see themselves as agents, not as victims. What underlines this view in this context is that political involvement would not solve this problem. The crisis where teachers see themselves as victims and the struggle to which it has given rise, has led to a profound deterioration of some of the basic conditions of teaching (Morrow 1994). Carrim (1994) quotes a statement made by one deputy principal in a South African school who noted that the unprofessionalism that is displayed by teachers is the fact that when controlling late coming in schools by closing gates for learners, you find that most of the late-comers are teachers and not learners. Again, in a range of educational institutions across the country, there is disintegration that is unrealistic based on the restructuring of the governance of the school, salaries of teachers and resourcing of the system which are not helping much in the teaching and learning environment (Morrow 1994).

Maja (1995) concurs to the importance of professionalism and argues that in most of the South African township schools, most teachers are not motivated and willing to work, and there is no emphasis on professional development. Those who are not motivated are unwilling to work and be supervised as they believe that they are independent. Some of those teachers want to stay in the staffroom all day and do not attend classes. Maja (1995) further argues that most teachers are engaged in upgrading their qualifications and this is done at the expense of learners in that it takes away time from the classroom.

Academic planning and professional consultation happen but only in certain subjects where there are subject committees. This aligns with Van den Heever's (1994) statement that society's needs are an improvement in the standard of professionalism among all teachers. Professionalism is an action that involves making discretionary judgement in situations of unavoidable uncertainty and it should not be defined or described in terms of pay or status or qualification, but rather in terms of the distinctive kinds of actions and judgement that professionals typically made (Fullan & Haggreaves 1992).

Hammon (1989) further adds that the management of education should be able to draw attention to the professional competencies of teachers, build a sense of unity of purpose, and reinforce the belief that they can make a difference. The South Africa Education Labour Relation Act (1998) of South Africa outlines the following duties of teachers: teachers should engage in classroom teaching that will foster a purposeful progression in learning and it should be consistent with learning areas and programmes of subjects and grades, as determined. Teachers should prepare lessons taking into account orientation, regional courses, new approaches, techniques, evaluation, and teaching aids. Teachers should also take a leadership role with respect to subjects, learning areas or phases. They should also plan, co-ordinate, control, administer, evaluate and report on learners' academic progress.

Teachers should recognise that learning is an active process and should be prepared to use a variety of strategies to meet the outcomes of the curriculum. Teachers should also establish a classroom environment that stimulates positive learning and actively engages learners in the learning process. These should be done through the consideration and utilisation of learners' own experiences as a fundamental and valuable resource. The roles of teachers are extended to extra and co-curricular activities and administrative work. They should also interact with all the stakeholders and be able to communicate effectively with other teachers.

The Education labour relation council (1998) also indicates that in order to improve teachers' professionalism, an integrated quality management system should be introduced and should be applied to teachers in order to facilitate personal and professional development. This will improve the quality of teaching practice and education management. The integrated quality management system is based on the fundamental principle of lifelong learning. One has to prioritise areas for development and growth throughout one's career in education.

In the bureaucratic model, teachers are viewed as functionaries rather than well-trained and highly skilled professionals. This results in little investment in teacher preparation, induction, or professional development. There is not enough time for joint planning or collegial consultation about problem of practice (Hammon 1989). Fataar and Patterson (1998) indicate that there are unproductive ways in which the staff and management of dysfunctional schools experience their profession. The first way is the moral minimising approach, which refers to the development of an identity among teachers that is rooted in the helplessness of not being able to change their school context. In this approach, the school holds a strong negative conviction about the ability of an idea to be supported in an argument in order to improve school

functioning and systematic change. Teachers of a dysfunctional school employ discourses that diffuse moral responsibility, minimum participation, and decreased commitment. They believe that innovation can be successful if their school is to be preceded by stabilised improved school environment. They expect the education department to deliver the resources in order for teaching and learning to take place. Most of these teachers are conditioned by the power of apartheid and believe that the new state has the same power. The moral minimising approach represents a range of attitudinal and behavioural responses as a defence reaction to difficult contexts. These attitudes and behaviour are their way of coping with stress, but in turn may have long term effects on institutional functioning. It is therefore important for the teachers to promote their professionalism for the school to function effectively.

### **2.5.3 The influence of the parents in determining school culture**

Parental involvement in education is a key focus of current policies and programs (Altschul, 2011). Parental involvement also has a protective effect against the development of problematic behaviours in learners who are exposed to risks caused by peer pressure and behavioural problems (Farrel, Henry, Mays & Schoeny 2011). Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) further indicate that parental involvement has a positive effect on student grades, attendance, attitudes and motivation and this is empirical evidence that parents retain substantial influence over their children's education.

According to LaRocque, Kleinman and Darling (2011), children whose parents are more involved in their education tend to come from a higher social class, have higher maternal education qualification, live in two-parent households and have parents who take a very active role in mediating their children's lives and the school their children attend. This is supported by a statement made by professor Jansen in a local news-paper, *Rapport* (Marlan,

2013) that most South African township schools' parents who can afford it choose the schools that produce the best results. Therefore, there is a migration of learners from township schools to former model C schools. When parents participate in their children's education, there is an increase in learner achievement, attendance and an improvement with regard to discipline and high aspirations (Farrel, Henry, Mays & Schoeny, 2011).

Regling, Cameron and Losike-Sedimo (2010) also indicate that the major factor that influences the functioning of a school is the effect of parental involvement. The belief is that parental involvement shows a consistent, positive relationship between parents' engagement in their children's education with education outcomes. It also plays a significant role in improving learners' reading achievement and increases a school's probability of attaining the standards of adequate yearly progress. Regling *et al.* (2010) believe that in order to increase the probability of a school to the standards of adequate yearly progress, the dimensions of parental involvement must be considered.

Regling *et al.* (2010) state the three dimensions of parental involvement as behavioural involvement, personal involvement and cognitive involvement. Behavioural involvement refers to parents' actions representing their children's education, such as attending open house, or volunteering at school. Personal involvement includes parent-child interactions that communicate positive attitudes about the school. The last dimension is cognitive involvement, which refers to the behaviour that promotes skill development and knowledge, such as educational excursions and reading books. Altschul (2011) also adds that studies in parental involvement in academics include home-based involvement and school-based involvement. School-based involvement includes activities such as parent-teacher conferences, and attendance to school meetings or events. Home-based involvement includes

assisting children with home-work, discussing school related matters with children at home and engaging with children in intellectual activities. All these involvements can be achieved if parents and the school work as partners to make a positive difference in the education and transition outcomes of learners (De Fur 2012). De Fur (2012) further defines partnership as partners who define roles and responsibilities and who are accountable for carrying out those responsibilities. One major responsibility of partners, for example is when parents and teachers work collaboratively towards the realisation of a mutual goal regarding the child (Morewood & Bond 2012). Teachers gain insights on how to meet the needs of their learners if they get information from parents to set their activities and set appropriate goals for learners (LaRocque, et al, 2011). Reglin et al. (2010) further indicate that home-school partnerships help all youngsters to succeed in school and at a later stage in life. This can occur if the school establishes effective communication and collaboration between parents and teachers (Morewood & Bond 2012)

The above statement is supported by the Lamb Inquiry (2009) in Morewood and Bond (2012) that greater engagement with parents through honest and open communication improve teacher-parent relationship. Epstein (2008) believes that open communication serves as proof that teachers and parents can be a strong, combined force of accountability in education, ensuring that learners receive and benefit from an effective education. Effective communication can only be done if the school can create a culture for genuine parent-school collaboration, which increases trust and improves results (Reglin et al. 2010). Institutional methods of communication such as parent-teacher associations, open house, and newsletters can improve the relationship with parents (Lloyd-Smith & Baron 2010). This relationship can build relational trust that is constructed through consistency of interactions at a group level where parents interact with teachers as a whole (De Fur 2012). According to Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010), a communication breakdown that

exists between the school and parents results in a decline in parental involvement.

Teachers' attitudes and actions greatly influence how parents perceive the school (Morewood & Bond, 2012). Schools are becoming more diverse, and a great challenge facing teachers is meeting the needs of learners from different backgrounds (Larocque, Kleinman & Darling 2011). Larocque *et al.* (2011) further indicate that teachers have little information or training on how to work with diverse learners. If, for example, the teacher considers a learner who has been reared in the cultural belief that touching is frequent and welcomed, or there is no personal ownership of learners' things, a teacher who is unfamiliar with this may view the learner as a disrespectful child. These types of cultural conflicts can result with a negative parents-teacher interaction. Larocque *et al.* (2011) further indicate that this dichotomous interaction may also affect the ways in which parent involvement is perceived by teacher and parents. Even if families want to build a positive relationship with school personnel, they are not always sure of how to become involved in a way that the school personnel values. This uncertainty leads to a decreased involvement for parents from diverse backgrounds.

However, Altschul (2011) has a different view of how parents get involved in the education of their children. Altschul (2011) indicates that there are parents who introduce their children to life lessons, including early introduction to hard labour that will demonstrate the value of education. Their involvement means that they keep telling their children to do well in school so that they do not end up working in low-wage, manual work positions. Altschul (2011) believes that in this way, parents attempt to socialise with their children to achieve in school, without directly engaging with the educational system. Such forms of parental involvement are not visible to the school and teachers often label these parents as uninvolved.

Too many learners in schools around the world are struggling with reading (Reglin *et al.* 2010). Failure to read during the elementary and middle school years has long-term consequences for children. This results in a lack of self-confidence and motivation to learn, frustrations, which lead to problem behaviour, dropping out of school, and an increase in engaging in delinquent acts. One of the factors that lead to this is the educational level of the parents (Reglin *et al.* 2010). Larocque *et al.* (2011) further indicate that parents who do not feel adequate to support their children because of their low level of education should be reassured that they are not expected to understand the content in order to support their children academically. The support can be in the form of non-academic tasks such as providing a regular place and time to complete home-work, or contacting the teacher if the child is struggling with school work. According to Morewood and Bond (2012), the educational level of parents is not the only factor that hinders parental involvement; there are other factors that have a negative effect on the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Morewood and Bond (2012) believe that some parents feel intimidated by school personnel. Others are discouraged because they experienced many failures and bad experiences during their own school going.

Cultural and language barriers between a school and the parents, and the economic circumstances of families can also be a barrier to parents because parents direct most of their energies towards providing basic needs, leaving little time for their involvement in school activities (Farrel, Henry, Mays & Schoeny, 2011). Altschul (2011) believes that the above difficulties can be addressed and resolved through school based programs and can ultimately connect parents with the school to support the functioning of the school. Morewood and Bond (2012) further argue that sometimes it is not the above factors that hinder parental involvement, but rather teachers' view of parents as threats.

Epstein (2008) indicates that parents must not be seen as threats to teachers, but rather as willing and capable partners who want their children to be educated. Epstein (2008) further states that many teachers feel that parents are not willing to become involved in their children's education, and on the other side, parents are not aware of opportunities for involvement. Morewood and Bond (2012) state that this can only be resolved if teachers work collaboratively with parents towards a common goal regarding childrens' success. Morewood and Bond (2012) further indicate that the more information teachers have about the children's home environment, the better. This will help teachers to accommodate the needs of the parents and the children. Once the parents and teachers realise their capabilities and roles, they can work together effectively in helping their children further, especially during a transition period.

According to Nadeau and Scaramella (2012), greater assistance is needed from parents when children transition from elementary school to secondary school. This is the stage where parents must have a close relationship with their children's teacher(s) in order to help the child cope with a new environment. De Fur (2012) indicates the following strategies that contribute to collaborative transitions: there must be student and parent centeredness throughout the transition process; developing a shared vision for learners for transition outcomes; being culturally responsive and recognising that families, learners and service providers have complementary expertise to contribute to the transition process; communicating pro-actively; being caring and committed; giving choice and voice to all parties involved in the transition process; facilitating creative problem solving; offering helpful connections for families and learners and reflection on and celebrating accomplishment during transition. All these strategies offer an opportunity to improve the quality of relationship between parents and teachers.

However, Altschul (2011) believes that parental involvement declines as learners grow older. By the time a child reaches secondary school, few parents remain active in the educational process. Altschul (2011) further indicates that the decline in parental involvement may occur for a variety of reasons, including the structure of the school and the increased difficulty level of a secondary curriculum.

In conclusion, for the effective functioning of a school and positive school culture, parental involvement is needed in the whole life (and educational) process of raising a child.

#### **2.5.4 The influence of learners in determining the school culture**

Principals and teachers must create a positive environment for learners and hold all learners to the same high standard (Sirin & Roger-Sirin 2005). Sirin and Roger-Sirin (2005) further indicate that a positive environment is a safe environment, and a safe school environment has been identified as a key factor in improving learners' learning. Juvonen, Nishina and Graham (2000) concur with the statement above in that it is important for the school to create an environment that is welcoming, active and well organised which will result in a feeling of belonging for the learners, as most of them are needy and seek attention, love and guidance. Learners' feelings of belonging in a school setting make them value the school (Sirin & Roger-Sirin 2005). Nurturing staff, basic services and consistent classroom routines within the school create settings that are more stable and safe than learner home environments (Sirin & Roger-Sirin 2005).

According to Daniel and Steres (2011), learners need to feel safe and accepted in their learning environment. Daniel and Steres (2011) believe

that in cases where adolescents are bullying other learners, teachers should apply school rules. This builds positive and personal relationships amongst learners and teachers that will result in motivation and engagement. This relationship will help learners feel like important members of the school community (Hayes, Ryan and Zseller 1994). Daniels (2010) states that the activities in which learners are engaged in, the interactions they have with their peers and adults, and the physical characteristics of their learning environment contribute to their motivation to learn and their desire to engage with others and their environment.

Motivation and engagement are recognised as important for all learners, therefore the school needs to create a motivational learning environment (Daniels & Steres 2011). According to Daniels (2010), one of the elements of motivation is autonomy. Autonomy is defined as something being independent or uncontrolled by others. Daniels (2010) further states that learners are humans that need to feel that they are in control of their actions and decisions as they believe that they are able to determine for themselves the course of their lives. When they feel that what they do is in someone else's control, they lose motivation. This is supported by Wigfield and Eccles (2002), who explain that when learners realise that they can control how they react to the process, they feel empowered and in control of their reactions and attitudes. Daniels (2010) believes that teachers should apply an understanding of autonomy in the school environment to include learners in class or school decision-making. These learners are more likely to work diligently if they see that their voices are valued and incorporated into what happens during the school day, and in this way they will not feel as if things are being done for them. This increases their motivation, which improves the culture that exists in the school.

Cressy (2011) also believes in learner engagement support learning as it involves everything in the school, that is, curriculum, educationally purposeful

activities, support services and so forth. He defines learner engagement as the effort interest and time that a learner invests in a meaningful educational experience inside and outside the classroom. Conner (2009) defines engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of three distinct factors that are: an affective or emotional factor, a behavioural factor and a cognitive factor. These three factors pertain to what learners feel, do and think and form an integrative interaction that takes place between the learner and the school, and links learner behaviour and learning (Cressy 2011). This integrative interaction forms a sense of belonging or cohesion. As learners form relationships with peers, the school and the teachers develop a sense of belonging that is integrated with school culture. These relationships are a major source of happiness that promotes learning. This is supported by Daniels and Steres (2011) in that the activities in which learners are engaged such as interactions that they have with peers and adults and the physical characteristics of their learning environment all contribute to their motivation to learn.

Conner (2009) further states that engagement arises from three feelings, which are: autonomy, belonging and competency. Learners who do not feel a sense of autonomy, a sense of belonging and a sense of competency are reluctant to learn. These three contextual elements create a supportive learning environment that enables the learner to act in accordance with his or her personal goals, values and interest. This will lead to positive learning outcomes, performance, and acquisition of new skills, long term learning and motivation (Conner, 2009).

However, Mc Clure, Yonezawa and Jones (2010) believe that there are other factors that impact learners' level of engagement. Those factors are class and school size. They believe that if teachers and policy makers can reduce class and school size, the engagement of learners will increase. This can lead to

improvement of relationships and an overall feeling of connectedness among learners, teachers and the school.

According to Mc Clure *et al.* (2010), a feeling of connectedness among learners, teachers and the school is called personalisation. A key component of improving school culture is improving personalisation, which is, tightening the connection between learners and their learning environment. Learners who are connected to their school become motivated, and this is linked to good attendance of school and learning. Wigfield and Eccles (2002) add that learners' cognitive skills lead them to crave decision-making opportunities. They believe that learners are social beings and are learning to navigate among their peer, academic and home worlds. The social aspect of a school is an integral part of the learners' lives and one in which many learners feel autonomous because they choose with whom to associate and how to interact. In this way, learners' motivation will be emphasised and this will create a culture of learning.

However, there are learners who experience problematic behaviour that affects their learning and affects the school culture. According to Marchant and Anderson (2012), learners who frequently engage in problematic behaviour tend to disrupt teacher instruction and impede others' learning. These learners could seriously limit their own opportunities for academic and social success. Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, Al-Hendani and Vo (2009) further indicate that a positive and engaging culture is one of the most influential tools teachers have to support learners' learning and prevent problematic behaviour. Again, the creation of a positive classroom environment can limit the inappropriate behaviour of learners (Marchant & Anderson, 2012). To create a positive environment, teachers must communicate clear expectations, teaching classroom rules explicitly, acknowledging appropriate behaviour through specific praise, intervening

early with inappropriate behaviour and provide consistent consequences for desired and undesired behaviour (Marchant & Anderson, 2012).

Boyd (2012) believes that learners' problematic behaviour can be solved by applying the school discipline system. The school discipline system has the potential to make learners enjoy and love their school through being physically and psychologically safe. Boyd (2012) indicates that there are false statements that relate to learner discipline such as if teachers believe that their lessons are engaging, they will not have discipline problems. Learners are not only disengaged by lessons but there are other factors that contribute to their disengagement during lesson presentation. Boyd (2012) further indicates that teachers need to find their own style of discipline. The disciplinary procedure of the teacher must motivate and encourage learners through positive classroom management. Effective teachers do not have power struggles with learners. It is more important for every learner to get what s/he needs including discipline, than for the teacher to feel loved and accepted by the learners (Boyd, 2012).

However, Sterrett (2011) disagrees that the success of the school is to build an effective relationship with learners. If the school shifts from discipline to relationships, the school culture will improve. Building positive relationships means that the school's vision is promoted, which is to build teacher-learner relationships and support, create classroom communities where learners are connected to their fellow learners and to learn interesting facts about their classmates. This will improve communication, which results in a positive school culture.

## 2.6 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study draws on critical theory as the theoretical lens and there are two models presented that depict how the culture of a township primary school needs to be improved. The two models are the Input-process-output (Bushnell, 2003) and the School improvement model (Cavanaugh & Deller, 1997) also influence how I looked at school culture.

### 2.6.1 Critical theory

Sim and Van Loon (2001) define critical theory as an amalgam of philosophical and social-scientific techniques that have wide ranging applications. They further explain it as an innately pluralist exercise which presents a range of possible methods and perspectives by which to analyse not only cultural artifacts, but also social and ethnic contexts. It fosters debate between various readings and multiple interpretations. In that sense, critical theory helps to promote the cause of democratic pluralism and is therefore an integral part of current science. Higgs (2007) also defines critical theory as a positive utopianism and optimism towards a possibility of revolutionary change.

The application of critical theory into this study addresses the concept of cultural hegemony. According to Sim and Van Loon (2001), cultural hegemony is the domination of a culturally diverse society. Sim and Van Loon (2001) further indicate that cultural hegemony proposes that the prevailing cultural norms of a society must not be perceived as natural and inevitable, but must be recognised as an artificial social construct that must be investigated to discover their philosophical roots as instrument of social-class dominations. This knowledge can guide society to create their own working-class culture which addresses social and economic needs.

Humphrey and Brown (2002) also indicate that hegemony uses different methods to influence the organisation to conform or emulate the ways in which the organisation is viewed and how the organisation carries out policies, functions, and its approach to the political and economic system. Critical theory in this study addresses the concept of hegemony in that the negative culture that exists in the township schools is not permanent and natural, it is the stereotyping that exist within members of the organisation.

## **2.6.2 Models of school culture**

Models of school culture, which are the Input-process-output model and the School improvement model of school culture is used to demonstrate the school culture of a township primary school and as a guide to my research.

### **2.6.2.1 Input-process-output model (Bushnell, 2003)**

Miller and Wiener (2003) indicate that the Input-process-output model is an interrelated system that controls the flow of information from one unit to another. Robbins (1989) also views organisations as operating within a symbiotic relationship with their environment because the survival of any environment depends on what they draw from their environment (input), how to use the input (process) and the benefits of all the processes for their environment (output). This is an educational environment which is creative, stimulating, and appropriate for the developmental interest of learners (Miller & Wiener 2003).

According to Bushnell (2003), the Input-process-output model enables decision-makers to select from several options the package that will optimise the overall effectiveness of the school. This model can assist the school to determine whether the functioning of a school is achievable. It also enables a school to detect the type of changes that they should make to improve the

overall culture of the school. The input stage contributes to the overall effectiveness of the school and falls into categories such as human resources, qualifications and experience, instructional material, equipment and training facilities (Bushnell 2003). The input, as depicted in this study, include the principal, teachers, parents and learners.

The process stage involves all the factors mentioned above. In this stage, teachers need to specify their teaching objective, develop design criteria, and select teaching and assessment strategies. At this stage, teaching and learning must take place. The principal must control discipline, communicate effectively with all stake holders, promote team work and develop teachers and parents. There must be effective involvement of parents in the education of their children. Effective home-school interaction through teacher-parent conferences should also take place. Learners must attend classes so that learning can take place, and the role of discipline in the classroom should be emphasised.

The last stage is the output stage which is the outcome/result after the entire process has taken place. In this study, the output result indicates a positive school culture. During this stage, the school meets the state of academic standard, behavioural expectations and adherence to the social norms established by the school whereby everyone is adopted by the school culture (Bushnell, 2003). The output stage can assist the school with the decision making process regarding the culture that exists in the school. This approach is operational because it allows the school to be seen in totality with their independent parts (see figure 2.1)

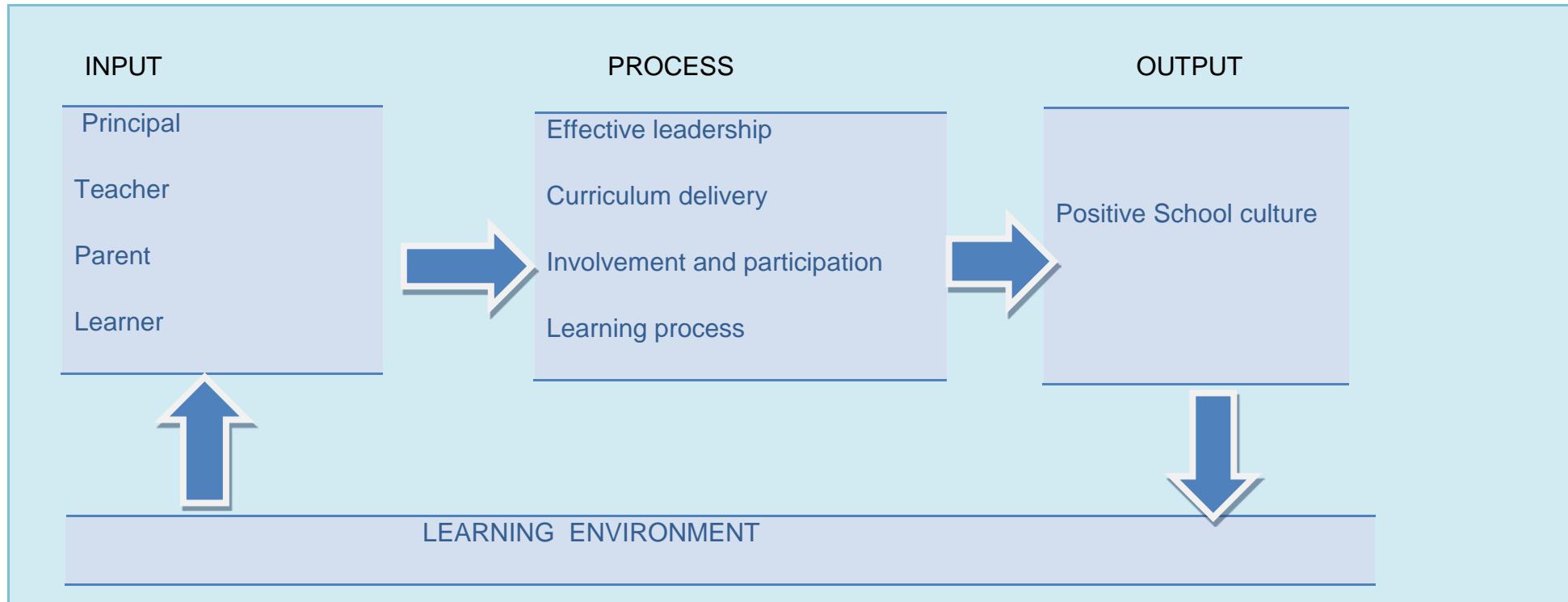
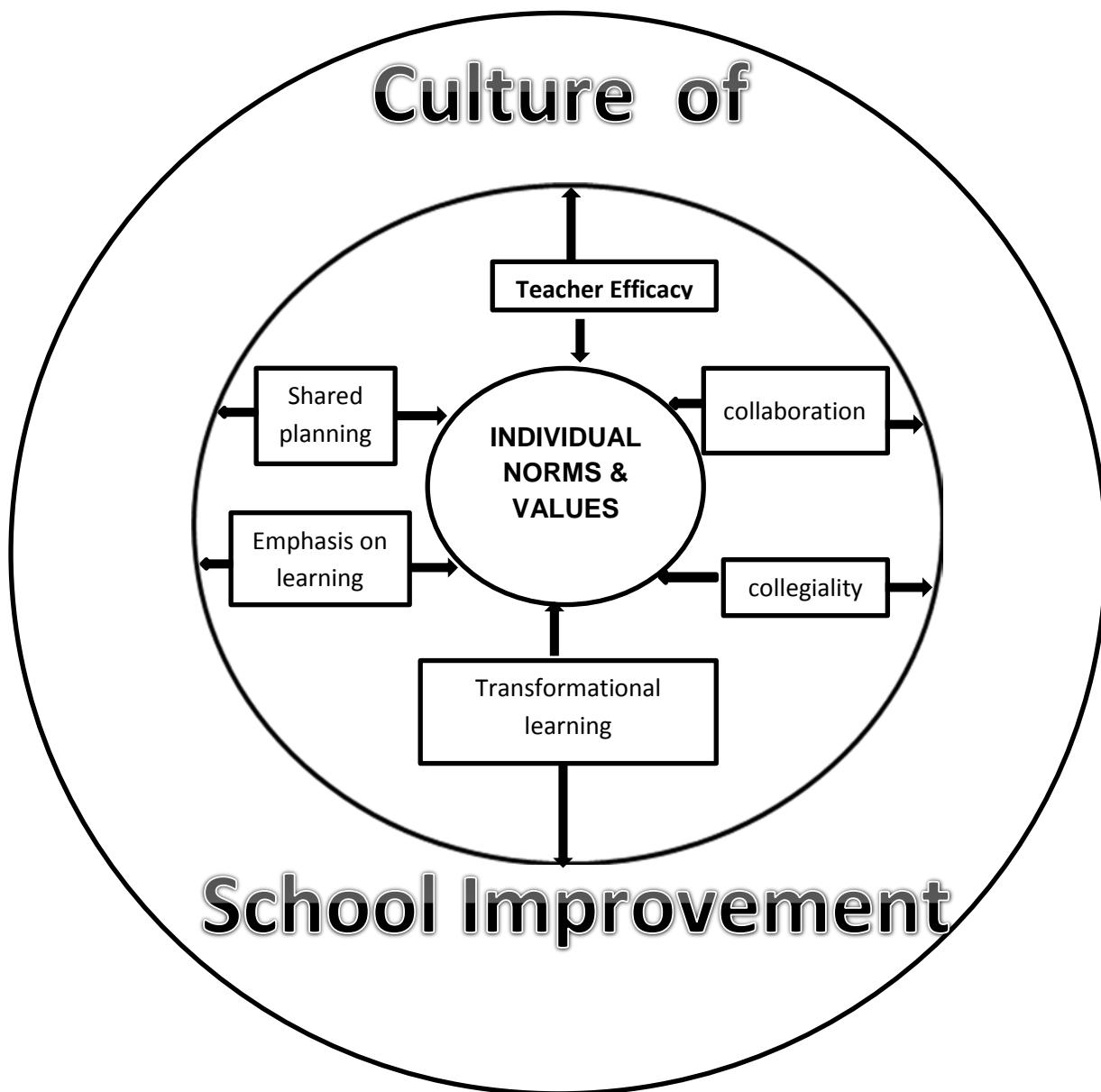


Figure 2.1 : Input-process-output Model

### **2.6.2.2 School improvement model of school culture (Cavanaugh and Deller, 1997)**

Cavanaugh and Deller (1997) introduced the school improvement model of school culture which depicts the relationship between the six cultural elements and their effects on the overall school culture. According to Cavanaugh and Deller (1997), the six elements that relate to school improvement include teacher efficacy, emphasis on learning, collegiality, collaboration, shared planning and transformational leadership. Teacher efficacy concerns the value which teachers place on the social institution of education and the application of pedagogical principles in their work. An emphasis on learning concerns individual school's learning programme including the learning of the teachers and the learners. Collegiality includes propositions about interpersonal relationship amongst members of the school organisational structures. Collaboration is the interaction of the school structures and also focuses on the discourse of a more formal nature which is related to the operation of the school. Shared planning is a school-wide construct which assumes that teachers have a mutual understanding of their school's goals and also participate in programmes to evaluate and implement the goals. The last element is the transformational leadership which concerns the role of the school administration in supporting teachers and school programmes.

This model views school culture as an open-systems structure in which equilibrium is maintained between interactive internal elements and external factors. This model also embodies the fact that school culture involves cultural elements that facilitates cultural maintenance and growth. Cultural elements are vehicles for improving the effectiveness of schools. When the school's cultural elements are well developed, cultural growth and school improvement occur. This model is dependent on the utilisation of culturally oriented planning and implementation strategies as seen in figure 2.2 below. The above-mentioned theory and the two models guided the analysis of school culture to promote the functioning of the school as depicted in chapter 4.



**Figure 2.2 : School Improvement Model of School Culture**  
**(Cavanaugh & Deller, 1997, pg10).**

## 2.7 Conclusion

In chapter 2, the concept of school culture was comprehensively explored as the insights of different writers were gathered. Firstly terminology, definitions and the clarification between school culture and school climate were conceptualised as people tend to view the two concepts as the same. South African school culture was also conceptualised and special emphasis was placed on the South African township primary school. The following factors were discussed: The principal's role in determining school culture, teachers' influence on school culture, parental involvement in the education of their children and the role of learners in school culture. For example the principals' role in determining school culture was defined as referring to the leadership of the principal in order to ensure the functioning of a school, whilst teacher influence on school culture was viewed as an emphasis on effective curriculum delivery through team work, willingness to exchange and share ideas and working together for the benefit of learners. Parental involvement was conceptualised as referring to the school-home relationship. The school must understand learners' background and work with parents to assist one another for the well-being of learners. The last factor, learners' role in the culture that exists in a school, was conceptualised as referring to the commitment of learners to their school work. This involves discipline, behavioural expectation, ability to adhere to social norms and ability to meet the learning standard.

A summary view of critical theory and the two models of school culture, which include the Input-process-output model and School improvement model of school culture, were given. Critical theory is concerned with the social and cultural transformation that contributes to overcoming social injustices and inequalities within schools. The Input-process-output model is an interrelated system which controls the flow of information from one unit to the other. The

School improvement model of school culture depicts the relationship between the six cultural elements and their effect on the overall culture of the school.

Chapter 3 provides the design and methodological strategies for this study by outlining the research approach, specific research questions, population and sample, instrument, data collection, data analysis and limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

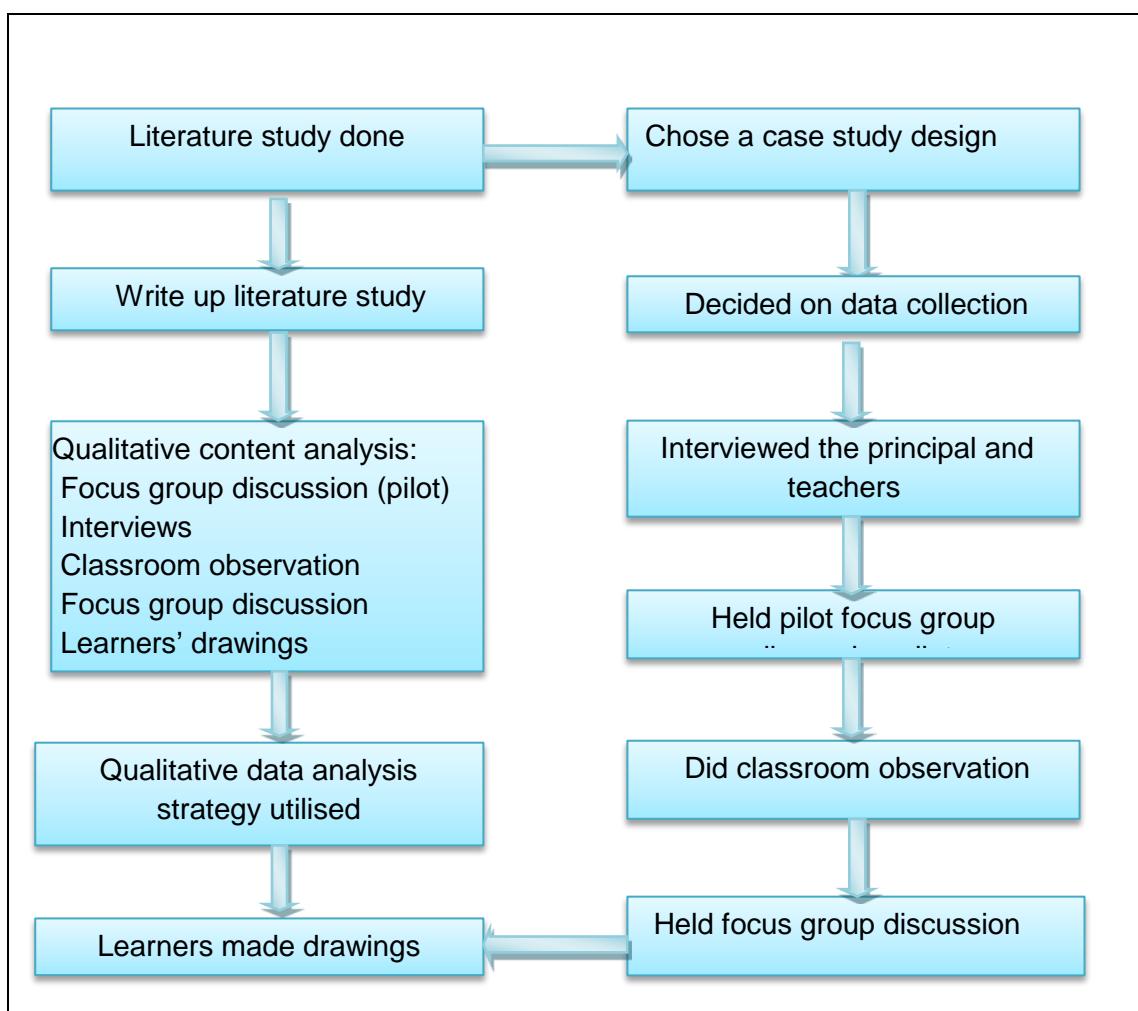
---

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the literature was used to validate the research and I explained my decision to work within the parameters of the theoretical framework of critical theory and models of school culture. Critical theory concerns social and cultural transformation within the organisation and it is also explanatory, practical and normative (Higgs 2007). The principles of critical theory explain the wrongs within current social reality. This theory provides norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation (Higgs 2007). The two models of school culture, which are the Input-process-output model and the School improvement model of school culture, were also considered. The Input-process-output model interrelates systems that control the flow of information from one unit to another. This model assisted in determining whether the functioning of a school is achievable (Miller & Wiener 2003). The School improvement model of school culture depicts the relationship between the six cultural elements and their effects on the overall school culture (Cavanaugh & Deller 1997). The six cultural elements are: teacher efficacy, emphasis on learning, collegiality, collaboration, shared planning, and transformational leader

This chapter provides details of the research design and methodology which were used as a blue print to translate the research from general to specific so that the research questions could be answered in a specific, concrete way (Schofield 1993). This chapter also gives an account of the data collection procedure, and provides information on addressing issues in practice.

The research question, "How does school culture impact on the functioning of a township primary school?" was answered using a qualitative methodology and the use of multiple data collection methods. In order to answer the research questions of this study, a schematic diagram of the research process is shown in figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1: Schematic representation of the research process**

The schematic representation in figure 3.1 indicates the research steps undertaken in order to provide answers to the research questions, which address the impact of school culture on the functioning of the school.

In this chapter, I present my epistemological and ontological stance based on an interpretive paradigm. I further present an explanation of how important issues relating to trustworthiness and credibility are addressed. The ethical considerations of the research are presented according to the regulations of the University of Pretoria and general ethics in educational research. In order to explain and describe the research process for this study, a holistic picture is created in table 3.1 to illustrate the research design, research methodology, quality criteria of the research and ethical considerations.

**Table 3.1: Research process**

<b>RESEARCH DESIGN</b>	
Research type	Phenomenological research
Interpretive paradigm	Ontological and epistemological models
Methodological model	Qualitative approach
Research strategy	Case study
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	
Sampling site	School A Primary School
Sampling	Convenient and purposive sampling
Data collection method	Individual open-ended interviews, non-participant observation, focus group discussion and learners' drawings
Data Analysis	Content analysis
<b>QUALITY OF CRITERIA OF THE RESEARCH</b>	
<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE RESEARCH</b>	
Informed consent, anonymity, safety considerations and confidentiality	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	

## 3.2 Research Design

### 3.2.1 Interpretive Paradigm

This study is positioned in the interpretive paradigm. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2005) state that an interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for the individual. The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience and it lends itself to the interpretation of phenomena through the eyes of the people involved. The interpretive paradigm also focuses on actions that are meaningful to ascertain the intentions of actors in sharing their experiences. A large number of our everyday interaction with one another relies on such shared experiences (Douglas, 1976). The shared experiences by the researcher draws meaning from the findings of data analysis which may result in information that can be compared with the literature or personal experiences (Cresswell 2009).

There are three basic assumptions that are generated from the interpretive paradigm (Lincoln & Guba 1994). Firstly, interpretivists assume that the purpose of educational research is to understand the meaning which informs human behaviour. Secondly, interpretivists assume that there is no single reality but that there are multiple realities, which are local, specific, historical, and non-generable. Lastly, they assume that research findings do not come from the researcher, but are created through the interpretation of data (Lincoln & Guba 1994).

According to Cohen *et al.* (2005), there are challenges within the interpretive paradigm. They argue that although the interpretive paradigm focuses on understanding the actions of our fellow-beings to acquire knowledge of their intentions, it also presents incomplete accounts of social behaviour because interpretivists neglect the political and ideological contexts of educational

research. However, the focus of this research is not social behaviour, but mainly acquiring an in-depth understanding of how participants experience a situation or phenomenon.

The integrity of the phenomenon being investigated is retained if efforts are made to understand the meaning created by the participants. There is a range of different viewpoints or ways of understanding the world and this study focused on understanding the views and perspectives of the participants, rather than my own. I propose to study constructed school culture and the functioning of the school holistically (Lincoln & Guba 1994), to try to achieve a high level of understanding, since paradigms "represent a distillation of what we think about the world" (Lincoln & Guba 1994:15) and influence the actions of researchers. The interpretive paradigm involves assumptions on determining meaning and understanding through the views and perspectives of participants. These assumptions are our ontological and epistemological assumptions. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the assumptions in the interpretive paradigm and specifically in this study.

**Table 3.2: Interpretive paradigm (Adapted from Van der Westhuizen and Maree 2009 ).**

Paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Data collection
Determining meaning and understanding through the views and perspectives of participants	Reality can be understood and interpreted, but not controlled.  Participants' internal and subjective experiences are important, as many realities exist.	Knowledge is gained through observation and interpretation.  The researcher is empathetic and subjectively involved, as knowledge is personal, subjective and unique	Non-participant class observation, interviews, focus group discussions as well as learners' drawings

According to Lichtman (2010), ontological assumptions are concerned with what is real regarding the nature of the social phenomenon being investigated or researched. Reality is socially constructed, can be understood and interpreted and is also contextual in nature. There is no single reality, but multiple realities exist which the researcher needs in order to understand the phenomenon under scrutiny, which in this study is the culture that exists in the township primary school.

Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how individuals come to know or how knowledge is acquired. It informs methodologies about the nature of the knowledge acquired in a research study. In this study, I used a method that enabled direct interaction with participants because I believe that knowledge is created by the knower based on experience. This assumption further influenced the methodological preferences of this study (McNiff & Whitehead 2009).

### **3.2.2 Qualitative research**

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore and understand how participants make meaning of a situation. The central focus of this research was to provide an understanding of a social setting as viewed from the perspective of the research participants (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. It involves emerging questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants' setting, analysing data inductively, building from particulars to a general theme, and making interpretations of the meaning of data. Cohen *et al.* (2005) further the notion of qualitative research as an approach concerned with an in-depth, complex, and detailed understanding of behaviour; meanings; phenomena; actions and attitudes. Thus, for the

purpose of this study, the qualitative research approach was chosen to address the culture that exists in the sampled township primary school.

The qualitative research approach helped me as a researcher to explore the research questions in order to understand and make sense of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The detailed recording of the processes occurring in their natural setting provided the basis for understanding the setting, the participants and their interaction (Gay *et al.* 2009) as they exist. This study sought a detailed engagement with the participants of a township primary school, which includes teachers, a principal, the parents of a selected Grade 7 class, and the learners of that selected Grade 7 class to generate rich and deep data in the form of text, and commenced inductively to establish a theory. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the context of the study, multiple sources of data were essential. I used face-to-face open-ended interviews with teachers and the principal, focus group discussions with parents of the selected Grade 7 class, non-participatory observation in the Grade 7 class and the Grade 7 learners' drawings of their perception of school culture as added information to address the research question.

There are advantages and disadvantages to conducting qualitative research. Creswell (2009) indicates that the advantages of qualitative research are that it emphasises the importance of the participants' views, stresses the setting in which the participants express their views, and highlights the meaning people hold about educational and social issues. Furthermore, Potter (2002) indicates that the disadvantages of qualitative research is that it cannot be done in an objective, neutral and disengaged manner if it is to yield any worthwhile insight into the informant's world, and it has the potential to become one-sided if the researcher is either narrow minded or prejudiced. To guard against these challenges, I attempted to be as authentic as possible, and to declare my subjectivity, and that I am aware of the fact that multiple realities exist (Cohen *et al.* 2005).

The quantitative research method would not have worked well in this study because, as Creswell (2007) explains that it is a type of research that asks specific, narrow questions using instruments with pre-set questions and responses. It also collects quantifiable data from a large number of individuals. Quantitative research analyses numbers using statistics and the data analysis tends to involve describing trends, comparing group difference or relating variables which was not the thrust of this study.

### 3.2.3 Research design

The research method adopted for this study was a single in-depth case study because I was concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question. It was useful to consider a distinction between the different types of cases and then to select the most suitable case for this study. Different researchers indicate that there are different types of case studies. Yin (2003) distinguishes three types of case studies, namely, the critical case, which allows a better understanding of the circumstances; the unique case, which focuses on clinical studies, and lastly the revelatory case, which exists when an investigator has the opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using a case study design in a research project. Its strength lies in its attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right (Cohen *et al.* 2005). Gray (2009) also indicates that case study research focuses directly on a case study topic and provides original and illuminating data. He further indicates that a case study covers the events in real time as well as the context of the events. It also provides insight into cultural features and technical operations.

There are also limitations with regard to the use of case studies. The disadvantages of the case study design are that it has a problem with regard to confidentiality in many organisations (Gray, 2009); it is also biased due to poorly constructed questions used in interviews (Yin, 2003). However, I guarded against such limitations during my study by considering ethical issues and constructing good interview questions.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Research sites and participants**

The research site for this study was a rural primary school. The school is situated next to a main road, community hall, and mini shopping complex. The mentioned places provide many disturbances from outside the school. The school is fenced, with few sporting activities because of limited space.

The school was chosen because it is a primary school in a township. This site was conveniently chosen. I used convenience sampling because the participants were able and willing to participate on the set date. Convenience sampling does not represent any group apart from itself and also does not seek to generalise to the wider population (Cohen, *et al.*, 2005). As I was a township primary school teacher who used to be affected by the culture that exists in the township schools, it was also convenient for me to conduct the research at this school.

Purposive sampling was also used because it is the type of sampling that represents a particular group (Cresswell, 2008), and it was chosen for a specific purpose. I determined the sample by selecting one Grade 7 class that was taught by the teachers who participated in the interviews, again, they were the last grade of the primary school. These learners understand the culture in their school more than any of the other grades. I chose the learners

in order to observe their behaviour during their contact time with their teachers and also to observe their drawn pictures.

I also selected four out of a possible seven grade 7 teachers. Two are male teachers with more than five years' experience in teaching the Grade 7 class, and the remaining two are female Grade 7 teachers with fewer than five years of experience. The teachers were chosen because they witnessed the behaviour displayed by the Grade 7 learners during teaching and learning and they also teach major subjects which are Maths, English, Home language and Natural science.

Five parents, three females and two males, of the selected Grade 7 class were also selected on a voluntary basis to participate in a pilot focus group discussion in order to try to understand the learners' home backgrounds. Another four parents were also selected on a voluntary basis to participate in a focus group discussion. The parents were community members within the area where the school is situated. The focus group was conducted in mother tongue so as the parents can understand.

The principal of the school was also sampled as the manager and leader of the school. The reason for this was that, as a manager, he was in a position to offer the an excellent picture of what transpires in the school with regard to school culture. The sampling selection helped me to get acquainted with the different stakeholders and developed an understanding that provided useful information. The data were captured over three months and I used the same participants during this time. With the help of the principal, I designed a management plan that indicated dates for data collection so as to avoid inconveniences and so as not to disrupt the smooth running of the school.

### **3.3.2 Researcher's role**

As a primary instrument in qualitative research, Merriam (2002) holds that the researcher can influence the data collection process. I explained to the participants that my role in this study was as a non-participating observer and interviewer in order to avoid any bias in my interpretation with regard to school culture. On the other hand, being a researcher, close interaction with the participants was necessary (Creswell, 2007). I also focused on each participant's perspectives and subjective meaning. I did not interfere in the progress of the lessons during the contact time with learners unless an arrangement was otherwise made with the teacher concerned prior to the lesson. My study constituted an observation of one Grade 7 class, interviews with the principal and teachers, a pilot focus group and a focus group discussion with the parents of the selected Grade 7 class and the use of learners' drawings of their perception of school culture in order to add more data about school culture.

The collected data were analysed and coded, and the codes that emerged formed the categories, which resulted in themes. Further functions performed were the designing of interview schedules, observation sheets, and leading questions for the focus group used to gather data. Finally, my research results required that I should report multiple and complex perspectives of the culture that exists in a primary school.

### **3.3.3 Data collection**

#### **3.3.3.1 Introduction**

The process of data collection was conducted in a township primary school over a period of three months. Interviews with the principal and teachers,

focus group discussion with parents, observation of learners during lessons and learners' drawings were used as data collection strategies.

### **3.3.3.2 Data collection strategies**

In qualitative research, the researchers are primary instruments for gathering and analysing data (Cohen *et al.* 2005); therefore, interpretations of reality were accessed directly through different data collection tools. These data collection tools allowed me a deeper understanding of the challenges with regard to the existing culture in township schools. A comparison of the following data collection methods enabled a reflection on the functioning of the school.

### **3.3.3.3 Face to face open ended interviews**

Face to face, open-ended interviews with the teachers and the principal were conducted. An interview is the most prominent data collection tool in accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and construction of reality (Punch 2009). The interview provided a potent way of understanding others, according to Jones (1985:46)

In order to understand other persons' construction of reality, we would do well to ask them... and ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meaning .

The interviews allowed for sequential interaction between the participants and I as the researcher. It allowed all the parties involved to deliberate on their views regarding their interpretation of their social context in relation to the culture that exists in a township primary school (Cohen *et al.*, 2005). Hence, face to face open ended interviews were a relevant choice for this study as they provided in-depth information from which I was able to see the

phenomenon of school culture through the eyes of the participants (Barker & Johnson 1998).

As a researcher, I ensured that attention was given to the participants during the interviews. I became focused, a good listener and non-judgemental (Nieuwenhuis 2007). The individual face-to-face open-ended interviews allowed me to probe the participants in order to access details and acquire a more elaborate explanation of details. The interview schedules (Appendix F & G) were used for four Grade 7 teachers and the principal of the school. I interviewed the participants in a quiet, organised deputy principal's office to avoid disturbances. During the introductory stage of the interview process, I was able to explain to the participants the importance of this research. This explanation assisted me in winning their confidence during their participation in the study. The vital data provided by the participants in the interview sessions determined their perspective on the degree of influence that the school culture had on the functioning of the school (Yin 2003). The principal was the first to be interviewed about school culture, followed by the four Grade 7 teachers. The interviews were recorded on audio tapes to provide an accurate record of the conversations. Brief notes were also taken to reflect on what was said during the interviews. This data collection strategy made participants extremely responsive, and they expressed themselves freely in a distinctive way. Their responses provided useful and important information to answer the research question.

Interviews in qualitative research have both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages are that they provide useful information when one cannot directly observe participants, and they permit participants to describe detailed personal information (Creswell 2009). During the interview, the interviewer has better control over the types of information received, because the interviewer can ask specific questions to elicit the information (Punch 2009).

Some of the disadvantages of interviews are that interviews provide only information filtered through the views of the interviewees (Lichtman, 2010). Also, similar to observation, interview data may be deceptive and provide the perspective the interviewee wants the researcher to see (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). Creswell (2008) indicates that the presence of the researcher can affect how the interviewee responds during interviews. However, as a researcher I ensured that I guarded against such limitations.

### **3.3.3.4 Focus group discussion**

Another strategy used to collect data was a focus group discussion. A focus group discussion is the interaction within a group such that the views of the participants can emerge through the discussion of a topic supplied by the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). According to Cohen *et al.* (2005), a focus group is a planned setting, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given topic where the interaction leads to an outcome. The focus group discussion allowed me to obtain a better understanding via the parents' personal opinion of the culture that exists in a primary school.

#### **a. Piloting of the focus group discussion**

A pilot study was first conducted to see if a focus group discussion would be a suitable data collection tool to be used in this study. Five parents of the selected Grade 7 class from another school formed a voluntary pilot focus group. They were chosen out of convenience, but also because they could give insight about the learners' backgrounds. The focus group consisted of three women and two men who were parents of the learners. The focus group discussion was conducted in a staffroom in a semi-circular seating

arrangement that allowed participants to freely interact not only with me as a researcher, but particularly with one another.

### b. Focus group discussion

Four parents of the selected Grade 7 learners formed a voluntary focus group. The parents who participated in the focus group discussion were not the ones who participated in the pilot study. Four of them were women, three parents and a grandparent who serve as a guardian. The discussion was also conducted in the staff room in a semi-circular seating arrangement that allowed interaction between the participants as well as with me as the researcher.

During the pilot focus group discussion and the focus group discussion, the aim of the discussion was to gather in-depth information about the influence of school culture on learning; I was able to bring out important information from the group through presenting questions based on codes. During the introductory stages of the process, I was able to explain the purpose and the scope of the discussion to the participants in order to win their support. I requested the participants to give me their names and used nametags to remember their names. This was useful because it enabled me as the researcher to call participants who were shy to express their opinions. To keep the session on track while allowing participants to talk freely and spontaneously, I used a discussion guide (Appendix H) that listed questions that served as a road map. The discussion guide allowed me to obtain a better understanding of school culture through parents' personal opinions. In order to facilitate the discussion, I used probe questions without leading the participants. During the discussion, all the participants were given an opportunity to participate. An audiotape was used as a resource to record the data during the focus group discussion, not the pilot study, in order to give an accurate record of the data presented. I also captured the discussion in

writing during the pilot focus group discussion and during the focus group discussion. It was important to exercise some form of control as a researcher to ensure that I was attentive to the discussions and that I could access the data that was relevant.

A focus group discussion, as with any source of data collection tool, has advantages and disadvantages. It was imperative to take into consideration that group dynamics and group interactions can influence the facts acquired because the participants feel free from anxiety in disclosing information as they were in a group situation (Cohen *et al.* 2005). Gay *et al.* (2009) indicate that one of the disadvantages of focus group discussions is that they are time consuming. I allocated more time to this in order to get shared understanding that emerged from the discussion.

### **3.3.3.5 Observation**

According to Creswell (2007), observation is the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site. Observation as a source of data collection gave me the opportunity to gather live data because I looked at what was taking place in a specific situation. The goal of observation in qualitative research is to assist the researcher in learning different viewpoints held by a target group (Creswell 2009). This enabled me as a researcher to understand the context of the programme and to see things that might be unconsciously missed, as well as to record interesting aspects of the session on an observation sheet as they occurred.

In this study, non-participant observation of the selected class of grade 7 learners was used to assist in understanding and interpreting cultural behaviour during teaching and learning at a distance. The observations occurred in four different sessions during the Maths, Home language, English,

and Natural Science periods. These were learning areas taught by the participating four teachers in the study. Each observation session was recorded on the designed observation sheet (Appendix I) to help determine the behaviour of the learners by focusing on actions, dialogue, the work given and how they interacted with the teacher. During and after the observation, I recorded descriptive and reflective field notes. This assisted me as a researcher not only to record what I saw during the observation but also to give my reflection on what had occurred.

As a form of data collection, observation has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of observations include the opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting, to study actual behaviour, and to study individuals who have difficulty in verbalising their ideas (Punch 2009). Creswell (2009) indicates that the disadvantage of observations is that sometimes you will be limited to the sites and situations, and have difficulty in developing a rapport with the participant. Observation in a setting requires good listening skills and careful attention to visual detail (Mouton 2001). Observations also require management of issues such as the potential deception created by people being observed. The initial awkwardness of being an outsider without initial personal support in a setting (Hammerly & Atkinson 1995) is a challenge with regard to observation. However, with regard to my study, I was able to conduct observations in such a way that I recorded information as it occurred.

### **3.3.3.6 Learners' drawings of school culture**

While language-based strategies have long dominated the spectrum of communication research, a new range of non-textual strategies is gradually emerging as an alternative and highly versatile way of collecting data (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), artifact collection is a non-interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative

data with little or no reciprocity between the researcher and the participants. In this study participatory drawing was used as another method of collecting data. According to Singhal and Rattine-Flaherty (2006), participatory drawing is a quality visual research method that is authentic, non textual, and one that activates the performative dimensions of image making. Through the process of visual conceptualisation, and the reflective discussion of these images in the context of their production, participants were given an expressive channel to voice their inner stories as well as an active and empowering stake in the research study (Literat 2013).

In this study, the selected Grade 7 class was given 30 minutes after normal contact time with their teachers to make drawings. In order to obtain the best information, learners were asked to draw things that make them happy and also sad about their school. The drawn images served as a metaphor for complex emotions, perceptions and identities (Gauntlett 2007) and depicted internal realities. A drawing guideline (Appendix J) with instructions was used to guide the learners when drawing. Learners were requested to make use of a pencil, eraser and a clean page when drawing. No restrictions on the number of pictures were given. The drawings served as additional information in order to enrich the understanding of the central phenomenon and to provide information about school culture as experienced by the learners.

One of the greatest advantages of drawings is their playful nature, inexpensiveness and the ease with which this strategy can be implemented. This data collection tool is suitable to work with children and youth across a variety of backgrounds and cultural contexts (McMillan et al. 2010). The other advantage of drawings is that they enhance the communication between the researcher and the learners by providing further insight into the children's perspectives. This method also describes people's experience, knowledge, actions and values. The disadvantage is that it is less reactive in that the researcher does not extract the evidence.

### 3.3.4 Data analysis: Qualitative content analysis

According to Mc Millan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative data analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what, as a researcher, you will tell others. In this study, qualitative content analysis was used as an approach to analyse and interpret data inductively. There are numerous interpretations and definitions regarding content analysis. Different authors define content analysis as follows:

Content analysis is a method used to determine the content of written, recorded, or published communications via a systematic, objective procedure. Thus, it is a set of procedures for collecting and organising information in a standard format that allows analysts to draw inferences about the characteristics and meaning of recorded material.

Bryman (2001) defines content analysis as a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of the message. Mayer (2002) defines qualitative content analysis as an approach that is empirical, methodological, controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and systematic models, and without rash quantification. All the definitions emphasise the objective, systematic inferences of content analysis. Content analysis was used to analyse the transcribed data from the individual interviews with the teachers and the principal, observation of the learners, the focus group discussion with the parents and the learners' drawings of their perception of school culture. In table 3.3, the demographic information of the participants' is summarised:

**Table 3.3 Demographic information of the participants**

Principal	Teachers	Parents	learners
Principal (P) - Male - 25 years of experience	Teacher 1 (T1) Female, teaching Natural science with 4 years' experience  Teacher 2 (T2) Male, teaching Home language with 11 years' experience  Teacher 3 (T3) Female, teaching First Additional Language (English) with 5 years' experience  Teacher 4 (T4) Male, teaching Mathematics, with 7 years of experience	Parents:(pilot) P1 - female P2 – female P3 - male P4 – female P5 - male  Parents (FGD) P1 - female P2 - female P3 - female P4 - female	68 Grade 7 learners 33 – boys 35 - girls

Table 3.3 represents the demographic information of the participants of the study. The information of participants include gender and teaching experience as well as the speciality areas of the teachers.

To enable a comprehensive analysis of the data during this study, it was necessary for manual procedures to be executed since the data analysis was an on-going process. I started with qualitative content analysis at an early stage of data collection. This early involvement in the analysis phase assisted me in moving back and forth between concepts in order to guide my data analysis, which addressed the research questions (Miles & Huberman 1994). This assisted me during the initial interviews with less experienced teachers. I realised that both teachers were often hesitant to mention certain aspects. Creswell (2007) calls this a Data Analysis Spiral. It enabled me to move in

analytic circles in order to identify gaps that had to be filled later on in the analysis of the data.

The transcribed data from the interviews, pilot and focus group discussions, observations, and learners' drawings of their perception of school culture were analysed inductively. The data were read and reread in order to make sense out of them. I identified text segments, key words, phrases and sentences from the data that transmitted the same meaning and assigned the code word or phrase at the margin of that word or phrase. According to Creswell (2007), coding is the process of segmenting and labelling text to form categories. Codes are assigned to specific areas of interest in the transcribed data that appear to give answers to my research question. After coding all the data, I collapsed the codes to form categories. The categories resulted from groups of codes that were assigned to different parts of the transcriptions to reveal symbols, descriptive words, or unique names relating to broad themes. After identifying the themes, I analysed them considering all the transcribed data from the different data collection tools. It was during this stage that the data were interpreted.

Content analysis has advantages and disadvantages. According to Mouton (2002), content analysis is advantageous because it is a very transparent method that can be referred to as an objective method of analysis. It also allows the researcher to make track changes frequently over time and has no reactive effect. It is a highly flexible method as it can be applied to a wide variety of unstructured information. Lastly, it also allows information to be generated about social groups that are difficult to access. Mouton (2002) also points out a number of disadvantages regarding content analysis, namely: that it poses reliability and validity problems and that it can be challenged as too subjective. It can be also costly and time consuming. Cohen and Manion (1995) indicate that another disadvantage of content analysis is that it is

limited to the examination of recorded communications which can be oral, written and graphical.

### **3.4 Ethical Issues**

The study did not commence until permission was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. I adhered to the University of Pretoria's policy on ethical issues. The Gauteng Department of Education was also contacted to seek permission to conduct research at the research site. Consent was received from the school governing body, principal, teachers, parents and the Grade 7 learners. (Appendix A, B, C, D and E).

I respected the participants and the research site and ensured that the research I conducted was not harmful to the participants. Any individual participating in the research had a reasonable expectation of privacy and anonymity. In this study, no identifying information about the participants was revealed in written or verbal communication. The information provided during this study was treated with confidentiality and the participants were assured that any information given during this study would not be given to anyone else but would only be used for the purpose of the research.

At the beginning of each data collection session, the purpose of conducting the research, the processes to be carried out when conducting the research and the assurance that strict confidentiality were applied to protect the anonymity of the participants were explained. I also ensured that there was no intrusiveness with regard to their time, their space, and their personal lives during the research.

### **3.5 Quality criteria of the research**

In this study, the quality of data was measured by the trustworthiness of the research, member checking, triangulation, and dependability. These qualitative concepts assisted throughout the process of data collection and data analysis to ensure that the findings and interpretations were accurate.

#### **3.5.1 Trustworthiness**

According to Boudah (2011), trustworthiness is how the researcher convinces the audience that the findings described are credible and provides findings and conclusions that are appropriate and fully developed. The emphasis of trustworthiness is on the concept of credibility, which is establishing the truth-value of the study. In this study, in order to determine credibility, I sought to investigate what the study was designed to study. According to Gay et al. (2009), the concept of credibility ensures the ability to take into account all of the complexities that present themselves in the study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained. Boudah (2011) explains that the credibility of qualitative research depends on the credibility of the researcher and the credibility of the methods and the findings.

##### **3.5.1.1 Credibility of the research**

To ensure the credibility of the research, I entered the research site respectfully, made participants feel comfortable, collected, and analysed data meticulously, and provided the findings and the recommendations (Patton, 2002). I also considered all personal and professional information that may have affected data collection, data analysis, and interpretation either negatively or positively. Credibility was also ensured by taking the diverse realities and subjective experiences of the research participants into

consideration. The next section provides a discussion of the credibility of the methods and findings.

### **3.5.1.2 Credibility of methods and findings**

Once the credibility of the researcher is established, the credibility of the methods chosen must be addressed. The research methods chosen for the study must fit the research question (Lincoln & Cuba 1985). In order for the research methods to fit the research question, the following four aspects were considered as mentioned by Boudah (2011).

#### **a. Truth value**

The first item of concern regarding the credibility of methods and findings is that of truth-value. One question may be asked, “how does a researcher establish that the description given is one of truth” (Marshall & Rossman 1995: pg 95) To address this question as a researcher, I ensured that multiple perspectives were used over a period. Multiple perspectives are a prolonged engagement, where as a researcher I stayed in the context of the study for an extended period. The other perspective is persistent observation where I conducted observations consistently and of sufficient duration. The last is peer debriefing where as a researcher I always reviewed data with participants to fill the identified gaps.

#### **b. Applicability**

Another way that the credibility of methods and findings can be enhanced is by applicability. In qualitative research, researchers do not generally conduct research for the purpose of broad generalisation. Therefore, in this study, I

included rich description of every aspect of the study to understand the situation in detail.

### **c. Consistency**

Boudah (2011) indicates that consistency also enhances the credibility of methods and findings. In qualitative methodology, consistency means that the researcher could come to conclusions similar to those of the original study of the culture that exists in the primary school even, if the means by which they do so are not identical. For me as a researcher giving consistency, a rich description of the data collection and analysis was required to evaluate the consistency of the study.

### **d. Conformability**

Conformability takes place when the researcher has identified an acceptable process of conducting the inquiry so that the findings are consistent. In this study, to determine conformability, I was neutral and objective when collecting (Punch 2009).

#### **3.5.2. Dependability**

Dependability was also considered in this research to determine quality. Dependability is when one looks to see if the researcher has been careless or made mistakes in conceptualising the study, collecting data, interpreting the findings and reporting the results.

A major technique for assessing dependability is the dependability audit, in which the data is recorded as an audit trail in field notes to see how well the

techniques for meeting the credibility and transferability standards have been followed. If the researcher does not maintain any kind of audit trail, the dependability cannot be assessed and therefore the dependability and trustworthiness of the study are diminished.

As a researcher, I ensured that I was logical in selecting participants and events and used audio taping to observe, interview, and discuss. My supervisors also assisted in making sure that I conceptualised the study, collected data, interpreted the findings, and at the end, gave the results. I also used triangulation to determine quality.

### **3.5.3 Triangulation**

Another way of determining quality in this study is the use of triangulation. Cohen and Manion (1994) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. In this study, the type of triangulation used was methodological triangulation where different data collection tools were used to determine the culture that exists in the township primary school. I used triangulation since it is at the heart of the intention of the case study worker to respond to the multiplicity of the perspectives present in a social situation. One of the greatest disadvantages of triangulation in qualitative research is that there is no absolute guarantee that a number of data sources that purport to provide evidence concerning the same construction can do so. Member checking is the last quality criteria used in this research.

### **3.5.4 Member Checking**

Boudah (2011) defines member checking as a potent way to establish credibility. In member checking, I as a researcher reviewed the patterns, characteristics, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions. I also checked with

my supervisors to confirm or deny any ideas that emerged in this study. Again, I consulted with the participants to see if there was a portion where I needed clarity. Of course, there are difficulties experienced in member checking. Participants may be wary of how interpretations are to be used or about what they may say. However, these situations maybe overcome by prolonged engagement.

My research strived to present an accurate illustration of the culture that exists in a township primary school and was enhanced by the use of audio recordings of individual interviews and focus group discussions, observation notes, and learners' drawings of their perception of school culture.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, the research design and research methodology used were outlined. The study was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm in order to understand subjective world of human experience. The research strategy chosen for this study was the case study design.

A qualitative research approach was chosen and together with this approach, phenomenological research was employed. The research techniques used for this study were individual interviews with the teachers and the principal, observation of a selected Grade 7 class, a pilot focus group discussion, and a focus group discussion with selected Grade 7 class parents, and the learners' drawings. This ensured the trustworthiness of the study. Ethical guidelines were also adhered to in order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The next chapter deals with the analysis of the results.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

---

#### 4.1 Introduction

In chapter 3, I clarified the research design for this empirical study on the culture that exists in a township primary school. I explained how the research design was used to provide answers to the research questions and explained the important features related to the design and the methodology employed. In this chapter, I offer a description of the data that I collected during the fieldwork at a township primary school in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The data were collected using interviews with the principal and teachers, a pilot focus group and a focus group with the parents, class observations, and learners' drawings of their experience of the school culture. Three levels of analysis were used to answer the research question: How does school culture impact the functioning of a township primary school and the sub-questions, determining how the principal's, teachers', parents' and learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the school culture influence the functioning of the school.

#### 4.2 Levels of analysis

The main findings of the study were reached using three levels of analysis. The results of the findings showed a negative culture existing in the school. The first level of analysis addressed the themes and categories that were derived from the codes and which indicated how each participant viewed the culture of the school. The second analysis compared the categories or

themes against what can be found in the literature. The last level of analysis considered the results of the study in light of the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework was informed by critical theory, and two models of school culture (Bushnell 2003; Leithwood *et al.* 2006).

#### **4.2.1 First level of analysis: Categories**

In order to respond to the research question, I utilised a process of coding and collapsed all the codes into categories or themes. This process allowed me to create defining patterns from the transcripts of the data collection tools: the interviews with the principal and the Grade 7 teachers, the focus group discussions with the parents, the observation of the learners during teaching and learning, and the learners' drawings of the culture of their school. The categories that were identified were (i) leadership of the principal, (ii) the roles of teachers in teaching and learning, (iii) the role of parents in the education of their children, (iv) social factors, and (v) learner behaviour. The following abbreviations will be used to refer to the participants: Principal is represented by P, teachers are represented by T1, T2, T3 and T4 and parents are represented by P1, P2, P3, and P4.

##### **4.2.1.1 Category 1: The leadership of the principal**

This category is based on how the principal leads and manages the school. During the interview with the principal, he described his leadership as one that promotes good working relationships within all the structures of the school: "A good working relationship is one that promote team work, where teachers are encouraged to work as a team to promote teaching and learning" (P). The principal also indicated that he usually motivates and supports the teachers who work under stressful situations: "Teachers work under stressful situations. I always motivate them to boost their morale" (P). Lastly, the principal explained the importance of effective communication among all members of

the school organisational structures. He highlighted that he promoted teamwork, motivation and effective communication as part of his leadership.

#### 4.2.1.1.1 Team work

Regarding teamwork, the principal viewed himself as one who promotes teamwork among teachers in order to achieve a common goal. He gave an example where teachers worked as a team to register the learners with a radio programme called Rhivingo. He stressed that such radio programmes motivated learners to express themselves in English and promoted teamwork among teachers. He commented:

I always motivate teachers to work as a team... this helps teachers to know that any achievement is for the whole team, not for an individual. It also reduces competition amongst teachers.

There was no consensus in the teachers' responses on the issue of teamwork. T1 and T3 who are less experienced teachers viewed teamwork as ineffective: "Teamwork is not effective as some of the teachers who have been in service were not willing to help, especially with the resources needed" (T1). On the other hand, T2 and T4, who are experienced teachers, highlighted that they worked as a team with their colleagues as they planned for lessons and class activities: "... there is team work among us as teachers, we plan and share the ideas together" (T4). Although T4 indicated that teamwork existed amongst teachers, his main concern was teamwork between management and teachers. He indicated that there was no team work between management and teachers as the former often took decisions without informing the teachers: "I do not have a problem in working together with other teachers, my problem is with the management of the school. Teamwork does not exist among us as teachers and management as they take decisions without even involving teachers" (T4).

#### 4.2.1.1.2 Motivation

Another factor that the principal described as promoting work relationships was motivation. The principal indicated that he motivated the learner's parents by allowing them to take part in their children's education through attending meetings and volunteering in whatever activity they could help with, for example helping in sports, assisting in the feeding scheme, cleaning classes and most importantly, assisting learners with their school work. He added, "I always motivate parents to take part in the education of their children, but they are not willing to do what is right for their children" (P). However, during the focus group discussion with the parents, none of them mentioned ever being motivated by the principal. The principal also mentioned that the teachers seemed motivated since they worked very hard. He mentioned that even if there were no incentives given to them, gestures like appreciation through talking to the teachers was positive motivation, "teachers need to be motivated, to say a word like thank you really motivate the teachers" (P). He believed that his motivational talks kept the teachers going and served as support in the production of good results. Again, none of the teachers mentioned ever being motivated by the principal.

During the class observation of the Grade 7 learners, T4 motivated learners on the importance of doing their Maths homework: "It is important to do homework in order to excel in the subject" (T4). He mentioned the importance of doing homework because there were learners who had not done their Maths homework in his class. The teacher motivated the learners in a way that their reaction towards him appeared positive. I observed that the learners all listened attentively when he was teaching. Such learner motivation did not only serve to inspire the learners but also displayed the teacher's leadership qualities (observation of T4 lesson).

#### **4.2.1.1.3 Effective communication**

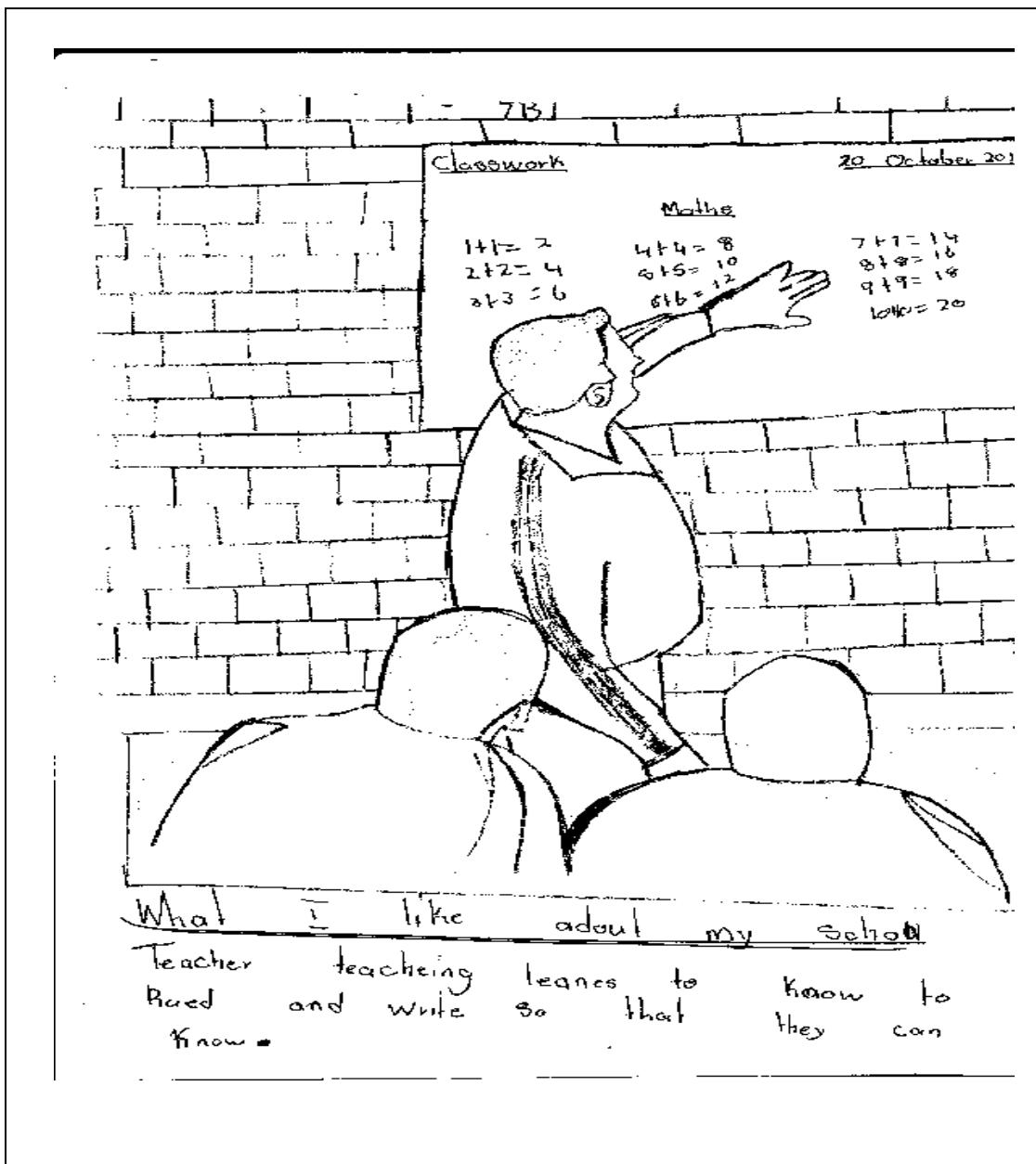
The principal described effective communication as another way of promoting working relationships within the school. The principal explained that he communicated effectively with all school stakeholders, for example teachers, parents, the Department of Education and Non-governmental organisations, to promote effective teaching and learning in the school. He mentioned, “As a principal I promote effective communication with all stake holders which are the parents, the department, and non-organisational structures to promote teaching and learning” (P). However, he complained that when he communicated with parents, they remained unresponsive. The teachers also complained about the communication between themselves and the parents. All the stakeholders, which is, the parents, teachers, and the principal blamed each other for the lack of communication. All the four teachers mentioned that when they communicated with the parents, the parents were unresponsive. Parents who participated in the pilot and focus group discussions complained about the lack of teacher-parent communication, which they believed was caused by the negative attitudes displayed by teachers, “Sometimes as parents we are afraid to communicate with the teachers because of their bad attitude that they displayed to us” (P2 and P3). None of the parents from the pilot and focus group discussion mentioned the principal as a promoter of effective communication as they focused more on parent-teacher communication. The next category discusses the role of teachers in teaching and learning.

#### **4.2.1.2 Category 2: The roles of teachers in teaching and learning**

During the interviews with the teachers, they identified their roles as teachers very clearly: “My role as a teacher is to teach learners” (T1, T2, T3, and T4). The four teachers mentioned that their primary role was to teach learners.

This was also supported by most of the learners' drawings in which 48 out of 61 learners' drawings showed the pictures of teachers teaching. The learners' pictures indicated that teaching and learning were taking place.

Teachers believe that their role is to prepare learners for a better future. T3, one of the Home Language teachers, mentioned that most of the township school learners experienced problems in reading and writing, especially in their mother tongue: "Most of our learners do not know how to read and write, my aim is to help learners develop writing and reading skills in order to become better citizens of their country" (T3). T4 suggested that teachers should not allow bad behaviour displayed by learners to disturb them while teaching: T4 also viewed discipline as the most important factor in teaching and felt that all teachers should have strong disciplinary methods. This was evident during my classroom observation of T4 as he exercised discipline in a way that made learners very cooperative. In most of my observation sessions with the other teachers, a lack of learners' discipline was evident. Figure 4 is a learner's drawing showing teaching and learning in the classroom:



**Figure 4.1: Learners' drawings of teaching and learning**

The drawing included as figure 4.1 is an example among many drawn by the learners of an indication that teaching and learning are taking place, and learners appreciated work done by their teachers. The picture shows learners listening attentively during a Maths lesson by T4. Even though the drawing is about the Maths classroom, the learner wrote on the drawing that the teacher

taught them how to write and read. Literacy skills, such as writing and reading, normally occur in other learning areas as well. This is an indication that the drawing acknowledges teachers in all learning areas.

Generally, when teachers are appointed, it is assumed that they will carry out the duties that they are appointed for, namely, to teach the learners. However, one of the parents who participated in the study was unsure whether teaching was actually taking place in the classroom, as naturally they were unable to sit in during the lessons to see the classroom process for themselves: "I do not believe teachers are teaching our children because of their attitude" (P1). Other parents believed that teaching was taking place, despite the lack of communication between them and the teachers. One of the parents explained it as follows: "We assume that teachers are doing their job because we are not with them when they are teaching our children" (P2). Again, this was evident during the Maths period where the learners were disciplined and focused. When the teacher asked questions, they responded by raising their hands. There was teacher-learner interaction and the learners were motivated to take part in the class discussion. However, during the English and Natural Sciences periods, the same learners who behaved during the Maths period now behaved differently as they made a lot of noise during the lessons. Teacher-learner interaction was limited in T3 class room and she kept cautioning the learners by saying "You are making noise, hey! Keep quiet" (T3) which did not yield a positive response.

The principal further explained the importance of other roles such as teaching learners outside the classroom: "A teacher's role is to teach, give pastoral care, motivate learners in and outside the class, mentor and develop them with regard to extra-mural activities and lastly equip learners with skills of life" (P). However, P3, during the focus group discussion, was concerned about the extra-mural activities that took place on Wednesdays. She explained that

teachers were not playing any role during these activities; instead learners roamed freely around the playground without any supervision which resulted in the learners hurting each other:

"I have got a problem with the sports day, according to my experience teachers are doing nothing, learners are playing by themselves and they hurt one another. They waste our children's time of teaching and learning" (P2).

The principal felt strongly that, although the role of teachers is to teach learners, teaching learners morals is not the role or responsibility of the teachers and the principal, but the sole responsibility of the parents. He posit that:

Parents must teach learners morals. We teach learners how to read and write but teaching learners morals is the responsibility of parents. Learners must understand from home that they are not supposed to steal or damage property... they must respect other learners, the school property and their teachers.

Although there is an assumption by parents that learning is taking place, the type of learning may not be effective. This is due to disturbances in the classroom where learners make a lot of noise, or disturbances from outside the classroom where for example, the principal calls an urgent meeting during the learners' contact time:

"When we teach, there are many disturbances, for example the principal can call a so called urgent meeting and, again learners who are problematic cause the disturbance during teaching" (T2).

This forms part of the challenges faced by teachers, which is discussed in the next section.

#### 4.2.1.2.1 The teaching challenges faced by teachers

This category is based on the challenges faced by Grade 7 teachers during teaching and learning. The challenges mentioned by the teachers who participated in this study were lack of support from management and the department with regard to curriculum knowledge, lack of formal training, limited allocation of time, lack of resources, and learners with learning barriers.

During the interview with the principal, he mentioned that most of the teachers needed counselling because they worked under stressful circumstances: "You know what Mam, most of our teachers need counselling, they work under stressful situation, and they need to be supported" (P). The teachers also provided reasons for the stressful circumstances that included lack of support from management and the Department of Education. Despite the fact that the principal described his leadership style as motivating and communicative, the teachers complained about lack of motivation and support from the department and the principal to assist them in the delivery of the new curriculum. The teachers mentioned this in all of the interviews. They complained that since 1994, the curriculum has been changed many times and this has caused confusion in their teaching. T2 was of the opinion that changes in the curriculum de-motivated them, as they were not sure what was expected of them in conveying the curriculum to learners:

As teachers we are confused in the delivery of the curriculum. First it was OBE then it was RNCS<sup>2</sup> and now CAPS<sup>3</sup>... changing the curriculum every time is a problem because at the end of the day you know nothing ... (T2).

---

<sup>2</sup> RNCS - Revised National Curriculum Statement

<sup>3</sup> CAPS - Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

The teachers also complained about changes in the curriculum and also felt that the non-availability and limited resources contributed toward the ineffective implementation of the curriculum. Their experience with regard to curriculum implementation was that there were not enough resources to assist them during teaching and learning: "All of the language resources were written in English, not in Venda" (T3). T3 indicated that it was the never-ending responsibility of the teacher to convert the content from English to Venda and this was time-consuming and frustrating. T2 indicated that the lack of resources forced teachers to combine classes in order to use available resources to help learners: "As teachers we experience shortage of resources and this forced us to combine classes in order to use available resources" (T2). The combination of classes resulted in over-crowding of learners, which made teaching and learning ineffective: "The non-delivery of other resources, delayed the use of available resources, for example learners cannot use workbooks if there is no teachers' guide to assist the teacher" (T4).

A lack of formal training in the teaching of the curriculum is another challenge faced by the teachers: "If the department and the principal had organised enough time for workshops and in-service training, the teachers could have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the curriculum" (T4). All the teachers expressed concern that adequate time was needed for workshops and training in order for them to be conversant with the curriculum: "... as a teacher you cannot excel in the delivery of a new curriculum if you have only attended a 3 days' workshop" (T1); "we have been trained as professional teachers for three years but the department wants to train us for 3 days! That is impossible" (T4).

Although the teachers did not directly link learner behaviour to their stressful circumstances, it may be a strong contributing factor as all of the teachers complained throughout their interviews about the bad behaviour displayed by the learners: "Learners with learning barriers are learners with behavioural

problems" (all teachers). All four teachers blamed management for not channelling learners who experience learning barriers to special schools. T2 indicated that most of the learners experience problems in reading and writing. T3 agreed with T2 by stating that 75% of the Grade 7 learners showed behavioural problems during teaching and learning: "Referral of learners with learning barriers should take place when learners are in lower grades" (T3 and T2).

#### **4.2.1.2.2 Teacher behaviour and attitude within the school**

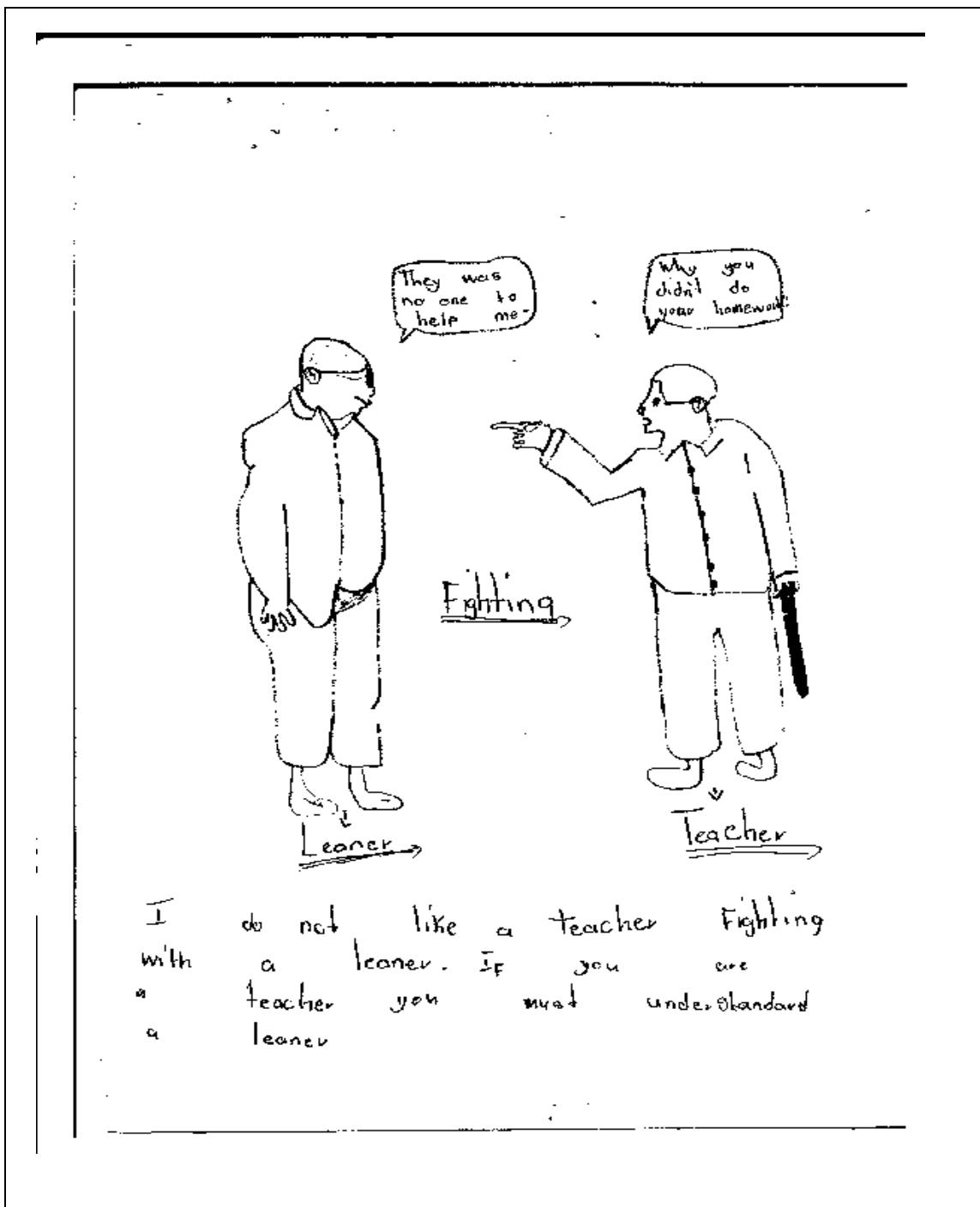
The attitude of teachers towards their work, colleagues, learners, and parents is another contributing factor that influences school culture negatively. Although learners' drawings showed that teachers are working, and some parents believe that teachers are doing their work, the principal's view on this is that not all teachers are committed to their work: "Teachers are salary collectors since teaching is not a priority to them but only a second career option" (P). The principal also complained that most of the teachers were latecomers who showed no passion for their work. The principal felt so strongly about this that he suggested the retrenchment of teachers who are not committed to the profession: "... train young and committed teachers who are willing to work... retrain teachers who are employable and who have passion to work as a teacher and give voluntary packages to those who are unwilling to work" (P). T2 agreed with the principal that some teachers were always late for school. It became a problem in learner discipline because both learners and teachers are always late.

Another concern, which emerged from the interviews, was that the teachers did not support one another as colleagues:

“There are teachers who are more informed than others (especially those with more teaching experience), however, they are selfish and do not want to share useful information that they had attained” (T1).

She specifically referred to their teaching materials and resources, which had been accumulated over time. T4 was concerned about discipline in the classroom. He indicated that collegiality should have been seen the willingness for teachers to help one another, for instance in the event where a teacher is absent from school. He however revealed that teachers would rather have conversations in the staffroom than add value to the disciplinary system of the school: “When a teacher is absent, it is important for other teachers to keep discipline in that class” (T4).

“Teachers’ behaviour contributed towards a poor teacher-parent relationship” (P1, P2, P3, P4). The parents indicated that teachers utter statements that affected learners’ emotionally. Another alarming consensus point was complaints about corporal punishment. Most of the parents’ views and the learners’ drawings confirmed that the antiquated system of corporal punishment was still being used as a means of discipline in the school, which is reflected in figure 4.2:



**Figure 4.2: Corporal punishment of learners by teachers**

The drawing in figure 4.2 shows that teachers at the sampled school still used corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure. From the learner's drawing it is clear that teachers disciplined learners using corporal punishment. Some of the parents and learners even reported teachers to the police. One of the parents felt strongly about the use of corporal punishment and she suggested that there are other ways of disciplining: "As parents we do not have any problem with disciplinary action by the teachers, but not corporal punishment" (P3). However T3 and T4 complained about the behaviour of the parents: "Parents do not understand their parental role as they (parents) only come to school if something bad had happened to their children" (T3 and T4). The next category considers the role of parents in the education of their children.

#### **4.2.1.3 Category 3: The role of parents**

This category is based on the role of parents in the education of their children and how parents could support the school through involving themselves in school activities. Parents said, "Our responsibility as parents is to support and assist our children with their school work" (P1 and P3). Despite knowing the responsibility of assisting their children with their homework, the parents admitted that they experienced challenges in doing that.

##### **4.2.1.3.1 Challenges faced by parents**

While the teachers complained about parents who were not responsive, the parents responded by indicating the challenges that they experienced which affected their participation in the education of their children. Curriculum knowledge was not only a problem to the teachers, but also to the parents. P3, during the focus group discussion, explained that teachers should not blame them if they did not assist their children with schoolwork. She was of

the opinion that the school should train them as parents so that when they assist their children, they know as parents what is expected of them:

I always wanted to assist my child with schoolwork, but I do not know where to start. I need teachers to train us as parents first before I can assist my child. I do not understand the curriculum. My child will never believe in me if he performed poor from the work I assisted him with. Please let teachers assist us first so that we will be in a position to assist our children.

This was supported by P1 (a grandparent): "It is difficult for me as a grandmother to assist my child because I do not understand the learners' work." The only support that she gave her grandchild was to sit with her at the table when she did her homework. This was also confirmed by the previous drawing where the learner explained that there was no one at home to assist him with his schoolwork.

Some of the parents complained about lack of resources: "I can read and write but the school do not provide us with resources to support our children" (P2). She explained that sometimes learners shared the workbook (activity book), and they stay far away from one-another. If the child did not finish his/her homework at school, s/he would be forced to complete it the next morning when the learner who had the book arrived at school with the workbook. She further explained about projects that needed resources. As parents, they are expected to buy the resources in order for their children to do the project: "The resources are expensive and most of us as parents, we are unemployed" (P3). P4's concern was about the amount of homework given to learners: "Our children are doing more than six subjects and each teacher gives them homework every day. Children were unable to finish all the homework" (P4). She suggested that teachers should reflect on the amount of homework to be given to learners per day.

P4 was concerned about her child who is a slow learner a situation that she has accepted. She noted that “As a parent, the problem that I am faced with is that the teacher always requested “clever” learners to teach my child” (P4). She explained that this resulted in competent learners teasing her child for not being able to read and write. She suggested that teachers should have time for remedial programmes for slow learners: “Teachers must organise remedial classes to assist slow learners and not to allow other learners to teach learners with learning barriers” (P4).

P3 also complained about the monetary contributions they made toward the purchase of cleaning materials. She explained that during parents’ meetings, the principal requested parents to contribute R10.00 every month for the purchase of cleaning equipment. Her concern was that the teachers also requested money for cleaning equipment from their learners. She explained that they were frustrated with the way they were required to contribute money: “The money for the cleaning equipment do not reflect in the annual financial statement of the school” (P2). Her advice was that all of the money contributed by the parents must appear on the financial statement so that they would know how the money was utilised.

P4’s concern was about stationery, he explained that throughout the year, the school requested stationery from the parents:

As parents, we do not have a problem in buying the stationery required by the school. My problem is, in the middle of the year there are no shops around the location that sell stationery. Let the school request us to buy the stationery that will be used for the whole year at the beginning of the year.

Another challenge experienced by the parents was their own work situation. Three of the parents explained that a contributing factor to their poor relationship with the teachers was their own time-consuming work that

resulted in insufficient time to visit the teachers. They described their work as a challenging factor that sometimes prevented them from attending parents' meetings. However, P3 indicated that in spite of the work demands of most parents, they were still unwilling to attend meetings organised by the school because of an uncaring and irresponsible attitude stemming from the belief that the school carried the sole responsibility for the education of their children. She mentions that:

I always attend parents meeting. Most of the parents did not attend parents meetings even if the school organise the meetings on Saturday or at night. They do not care about the education of their children. The only time for the school to see parents is at the end of the year when they collect learners' reports.

This was supported by P2, who added that she had developed a good relationship with her child's teachers. Working together with the school and with the teachers helped her to understand her child's progress: "I always communicate with the teachers about my child's progress. The teacher-parent contact is effective and this helps me as a parent to have time to help my child with her school work" (P2).

"Teachers are not doing their job because they are affiliated with unions (South African Democratic Teachers Union)" (P3). The parent believed that teachers who were affiliated with unions are at times involved in strike action. The parent furthered her argument that the teachers' children are attending former model C schools which are not affected by strike action, resulting in teaching that is more effective. She emphasised that teaching is a calling not what she sees with most teachers who are only concerned with the raise in salary and not with teaching the learners. All five parents were of the opinion that the Department of Education should organise school inspectors to come and visit the teachers during class hours to check if teaching and learning

were effective: “If teaching at a township school is effective, the teachers would allow their own children to attend township schools” (P2 and P3). They believed that this would force them to teach because they would be teaching their own children. Teachers also had the experience of working with parents, which is explained in the next section.

#### **4.2.1.3.2 Experience of the teachers and the principal with regard to parental involvement**

According to the teachers and the principal, most of the learners’ parents were hardly involved in the education of their children. The principal explained that the absence of parents in their children’s education meant that there was no one at home monitoring their progress. The principal described the involvement of parents as minimal and that most parents shifted their responsibilities as parents to teachers in the school:

...there are parents who care about their children and those who do not care at all. Most parents come to school at the end of the year to collect their children’s reports. Once they sent their children to school, they believe it is the responsibility of the school to take over. Most parents do not care about the development of their children. When you call them to discuss the progress of their children, they just disappear.

All four teachers agreed with the principal that, from their experience, most of the learners’ parents were not willing to work with them to promote the education of their children. The teachers believed that learning takes place at home and at school, and that the teachers must work with the parents. When teachers assign homework, they believe that it is the responsibility of the parents to make sure that they assist the learners at home. “Sometimes as a teacher, one realises that the learner needs support” (T2). Despite teacher support, parents were reluctant to actively create learning opportunities for

their children. “It is impossible for me to present extra lessons to help learners as the parents did not organise transport for learners” (T2).

Most of the teachers agreed that the lack of relationship and trust between teachers and parents results in bad behaviour of learners: “There is no mechanism in place to solve the problem between the parents and the teachers” (T4). Instead, the parents criticized the teachers in front of the learners or reported the teacher to the police. This corresponds with the principal’s view that learners’ primary education should start at home with parents teaching and taking responsibility for the morals.

During the interviews with both the principal and the teachers, it was mentioned that most of the parents did not attend parents’ meetings organised by the school. The principal confirmed that even after trying to use different communication techniques most of the parents still did not attend the meetings. T2 described the communication between parents and teachers as one-sided and he commented:

“We communicate with them through letters, invite them to school, and give them their school reports at the end of the term. The problem is that learners’ parents always have excuses to attend the meetings.

The principal, teachers and parents confirmed that there was no working relationships among them, they all voiced a strong need to meet regularly to discuss the progress and the challenges experienced by their children. They believe that such meetings may result in fewer behavioural problems and, as a result, there might be an improvement in the learners’ academic performance. However, there are social factors that prevent the parents from getting involved in the school.

#### **4.2.1.4 Category 4: Social factors**

The principal mentioned that social factors such as illiteracy and unemployment sometimes deprived parents from being involved in the education of their children: "As parents we are unable to assist our children with their homework because we are not educated" (P1, P3, and P5). The parents' unemployment status resulted in them being unable to buy resources needed by the school. One of the parents was very concerned about the money needed for the resources, as most of them were unemployed. Another alarming social factor is families headed by older children because of parent mortality. The principal explained that there are families in which both parents had passed away because of HIV/AIDS. In such situations, older children were responsible to take care of their siblings: "The responsibility that they carry, deprive them from concentrating on their own school work. This results in poor learner performance. Poor learner performance resulted in negative behaviour and attitudes of learners" (P). The next category is based on the behaviour displayed by the learners.

#### **4.2.1.5 Category 5: Behaviour displayed by learners**

Both the teachers and the principal were concerned about learners' behaviour. According to T2, learners' problematic behaviour was experienced in and outside the classroom. T2 mentioned that older learners mostly disturbed younger learners during learning. Learners' drawings also showed that learners' bullying was a reality. Learners' drawings showed that older boys had already started smoking. Almost half of learners' drawings showed that littering around the school was a general problem. This indicated that learners were not taking ownership of their school. Parents were also concerned about their children' behaviour as one of the parents during the focus group discussion indicated that her child was problematic at home and she believed that the child is a problem at school as well:

Our children at home do not respect us as parents. For them to be better citizens of this country we need them to be respectful. We cannot assist them with schoolwork because they are not willing to work. Our children are disrespecting us as parents.

All of the categories explained above were merged into themes; these themes are discussed in the second level of analysis below.

#### **4.2.2 Second level of analysis: Themes**

The themes that are discussed in this section emerged from the collapsed categories. These themes were analysed against views expressed in the literature. The themes that emerged are insufficient leadership, lack of teacher professionalism, low level of parental involvement, socio-economic factors, and behavioural learners' problems. These are discussed in detail below in sections 4.3.1-4.3.5.

##### **4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Insufficient leadership**

Although the principal believes that his leadership promotes a good working relationship among members of the school community, it seems as if this is not a reality because, during the interviews and focus group discussion, all of the teachers and the parents complained about the poor working relationship that exists within the school. The poor working relationship resulted in everyone within the school shifting his/her responsibility by blaming others. The teachers blamed the principal for not assisting them to refer learners with barriers to special schools. The parents blamed the teachers for the attitudes they display and the principal and the teachers blamed parents for their non-involvement in the education of their children. At the end, there is no culture of passion between the principal, teachers, and parents. The blame-giving and

lack of passion impact negatively on the school culture and is in contrast with Engels *et al.* (2008) who indicate that school culture is the basic assumptions, norms, values and cultural artefacts shared by all school members.

The culture of no passion between the stakeholders is addressed in Critical theory where the concept of cultural hegemony refers to what a community accepts as normal; all stakeholders in this school have accepted the status quo of a dysfunctional school. Through the principal's effective leadership the school should create their own culture, which addresses the social and economic needs and improves the motivation and commitment level of everyone involved (Freiberg, 1998). Salfi and Saaed (2007) add that good principal leadership does not only improve motivation and commitment levels of everyone but also improves the physical facilities, learning environment, teachers' individual attention to learners and teacher-parent interaction. In order for the school to function well, the role of the principal and his managerial style is a crucial factor in encouraging collective responsibility among staff, as well as a sense of commitment among learners, teachers, and parents (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 2008).

Leadership within the school is not a reserve of the principal but also of the teachers. Teachers are leaders within the school and in their classroom. T2, during the interviews, complained about some teachers' late coming. Maja (1995) explains that the teachers must serve as examples to the learners by being punctual, organised, and understanding the importance of professionalism. This is supported by Hammon (1989) who claims that teachers should take a leadership role with respect to classroom management, subject planning, and establishment of a classroom environment that stimulates positive learning and active engagement of learners in the learning process.

Parents are also leaders at home. They must play a leadership role through motivating learners on the importance of education. Even if they are illiterate, their interest in the education of their children can commit their children to do their schoolwork. Altschul (2011) adds that home-based involvement includes assisting children with homework, discussing school related matters with children, and engaging with children in intellectual activities. Parents' leadership may also motivate learners if they see that their parents and teachers work together towards their education (Altschul 2011).

#### **4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Lack of teacher professionalism**

Based on the information gathered during the interviews with the teachers and the principal, it became clear that teacher development is needed. All of the teachers requested capacity building with regard to curriculum knowledge. Even though the principal was of the opinion that he indeed supported the teachers, the data showed that more support is still needed for the teachers because they did not know the curriculum expectations. Teacher support is located with the school principal and also the Department of Education who must provide enough time for workshops and in-service training and resources needed for the delivery of the curriculum. The Education Labour Relation Council (1998) indicated that an integrated quality management should be introduced in schools and applied to teachers in order to facilitate personal and professional development that may improve the quality of teaching practice and education management.

From the data set, a clear pattern emerged that responsibilities are shifted among the stakeholders. Parents shift their responsibilities to teachers and the principal, and teachers blame parents, and the principal blames the parents. It is easier to assign blame to others than to accept responsibility for one's own role in a situation. Teacher support and development should start

from teachers themselves before they expect it from the principal and the Department of Education (Maja 1995). Teacher development occurs if teachers promote teamwork, motivate one another, and share information; few of these traits were observed in the data set as indicated by T2, who noted that information sharing is a problem among teachers. Flores (2004) explains that teachers can be supported and developed in schools through the encouragement of teamwork with the intention of producing quality teaching. Fataar and Patterson (1998) add that teachers often employ discourses that diffuse moral responsibility, minimum participation, and decreased commitment. This is evident in the data when teachers expect the Department of Education to deliver the resources in order for teaching and learning to take place. The teachers are not creative enough to make use of available resources in their surroundings; instead, they represent a range of attitudinal and behavioural responses as a defence reaction (Hammon 1989).

All four teachers complained about learners with learning barriers. It became clear that the teachers did not want to take responsibility for supporting learners through remedial programmes. This can be seen in the teachers' responses in that they were unwilling to deal with, or support, learners with learning barriers. Their responses indicated that they preferred these learners to be sent away to a special school rather than to provide remedial support themselves. Teachers are the ones who should identify the barriers experienced by learners during teaching and consult with the school-based-support team to assist them with the development of the remedial support programme. As Kohl (1986) explains, one of the characteristics of a good teacher is to nurture, love and observe growth in the life of the learner and a belief that all learners can develop and learn no matter what disabilities they appear to have. Development of teachers can only occur if the teachers are willing to be developed.

#### **4.2.2.3 Theme 3: Low level of parental involvement**

Parents need to be involved in their children's lives and in their school and can only do their best if they raise their children in a healthy and normal manner and create a loving, supportive living environment. This should start from teaching their children morals at home at an early stage as the principal explained. Instilling respect and discipline at home will assist in creating a better, safer, and more disciplined school environment (Van Jaarsveld 2011). This could limit peer pressure and behavioural problems as parental involvement has a protective effect against the development of problematic behaviour (Farrel *et al.* 2011). From the data, it became clear that there is a lack of parental involvement which can be attributed as a contributing factor to the negative school culture. Although there are parents who have a protective effect on their children, the data indicate that they are the exception rather than the rule.

When the parents have a good relationship with the school, there is an increase in learner achievement, attendance and improvement (Farrel *et al.* 2011). During the pilot and focus group discussion with the parents, most of them explained their poor relationship with the teachers. If parents and the school work as partners, a positive difference in the education and transition outcomes of the learners occurs (De Fur 2012). As partners, they work collaboratively towards the realisation of a mutual goal of the learner, and the teachers would gain insights in how to meet the educational needs of the learners (Farrel *et al.* 2011). Morewood and Bond (2012) add that teachers' attitudes and actions greatly influence how parents perceive the school and affect their relationship with the parents. Morewood and Bond (2012) further explain that schools are becoming more diverse with regard to cultural background and language. One of the parents during the pilot focus group discussion explained that he was forced to allow his child to attend the Venda

school while he is actually a Zulu speaking person. The reason for this is that the school is closer to his home. Larocque *et al.* (2011) explain that teachers should gather more information about learners' backgrounds so that they can know how to deal with cultural conflict that result in teachers punishing the learner for something that the learner (culturally) believes is right. Larocque *et al.* (2011) indicate that some parents' non-attendance of meetings is the result of unmanaged diversity where parents and teachers have little information about the cultural background of one another. One of the parents during the focus group discussion complained that sometimes teachers punish their children for cultural practices.

Parents' meetings are vital, as this is when parents are given an opportunity to meet with their children's teachers. According to Morewood and Bond (2012), some parents feel intimidated by the school since they had experienced many failures and negative experiences during their own schooling days. This poor interaction between the parents and the teachers may affect the ways in which teachers perceive parent involvement. In the end, this can influence negatively on the school culture.

Another noteworthy factor is the learners' commitment at home especially those that have to do with house chores. Most of the learners' drawings gave an indication that learners did a lot of house chores after school and by the time they did their homework, they were tired. During the interview with the principal, he indicated that learners were forced to perform house chores, as they were heads of their families. Altschul (2011) argues that there are parents who introduce their children to life lessons, which include early introduction to hard labour that they believe demonstrate the value of education. Their involvement means that they keep telling their children to do well in school so that they do not end up working in low wage, manual work (Altschul, 2011). This is an indication that contrasting beliefs between the school and home impact negatively on school culture. Teachers believe that

parents' assistance in their child's homework supports learners; parents on the other hand believe that involving their children in hard labour is a way of motivating them to do well in their schoolwork. Other factors that contributed negatively to the school culture were socio economic factors that are discussed below.

#### **4.2.2.4 Theme 4: Socio-economic factors**

It was evident from the data that social factors negatively affected school culture but it also seems as if parents use these factors as an excuse to relegate the responsibility for the education of their children. Larocque *et al.* (2011) indicate that parents who feel inadequate to support their children because of a low level of education should be reassured by the school that they are not expected to understand the content but to give their children support in the form of non-academic tasks. Such support includes providing a regular space and time to complete homework, or make contact with the teachers when learners experience problems with their schoolwork.

Another socio-economic factor that impacts on the involvement of parents is unemployment that results in hunger and poverty. The principal described the rate of unemployment as high and offered it as the reason that discouraged some parents from attending school activities. However, the principal indicated that he advised the parents to cultivate a vegetable garden and sell vegetables for a living. The issue of hunger and poverty was also evident in the learners' drawings. Almost all learners' drawings were positive about the feeding scheme programme at school. This is an indication that learners leave home hungry when they come to school. It was also evident during my classroom observation of the Grade 7 learners as during the first period, half of the learners looked tired and hungry and were not concentrating. After lunch, most learners looked active and energetic even if most of them were still not concentrating because of ill behaviour.

Another socio-economic factor is child-headed families. Considering grade 7 classes, 18 learners out of 61 learners of the Grade 7 class are orphans and most of their parents died of HIV/AIDS related diseases. The principal linked the learners' bad performance to their responsibility to their siblings as headed their families. The principal explained that after school, the child embarks on house chores, does his/her schoolwork, and assists his/her siblings with their schoolwork. This logically results in poor performance. The principal explained that all the socio-economic factors stated above, influence learners' behaviour negatively.

#### **4.2.2.5 Theme 5: Behavioural problems of learners**

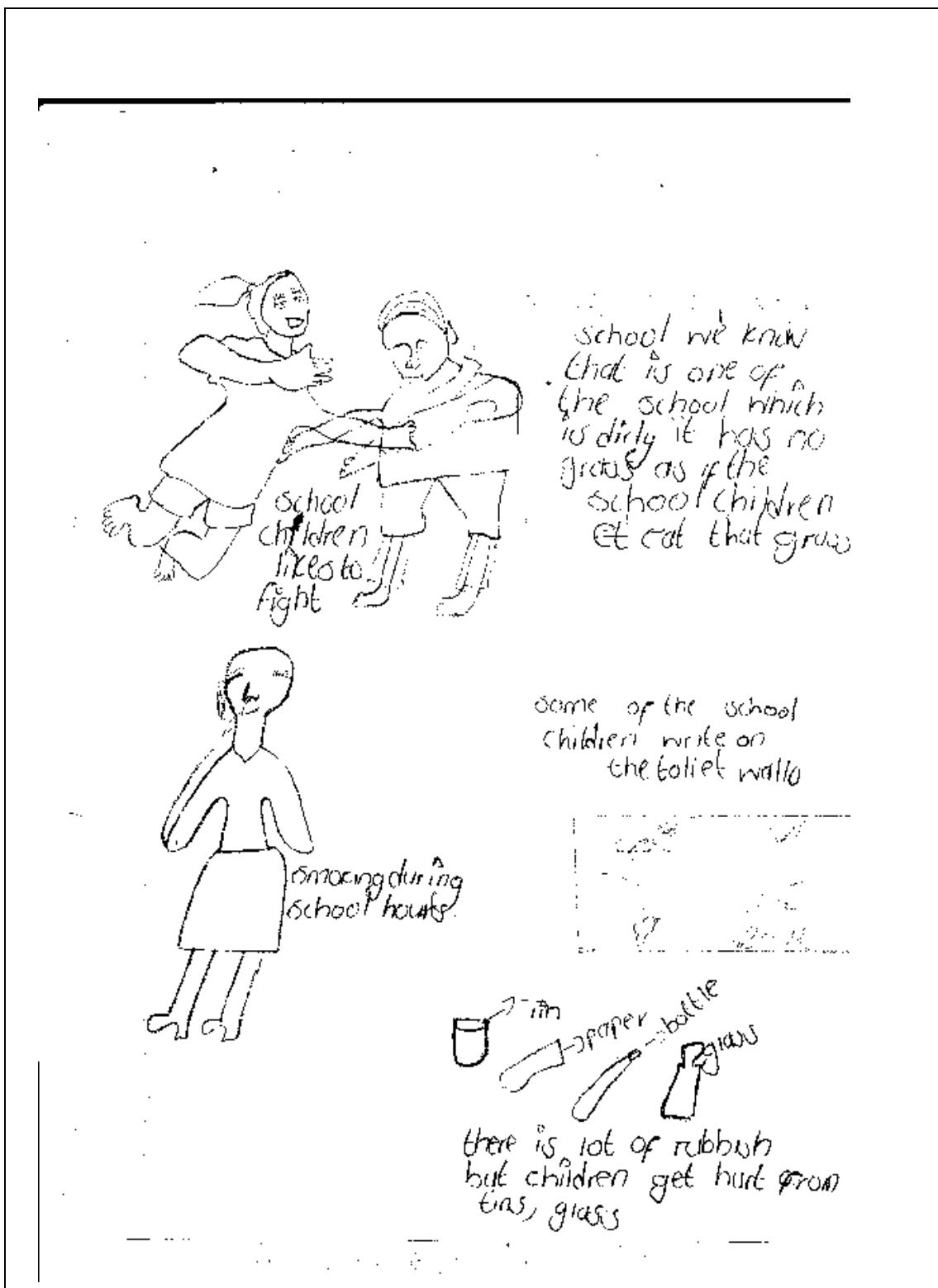
The negative behaviour displayed by most of the learners does not only affect the teachers, but also affects their parents and peers. Rossouw (2003) states that the most prominent factor that influences the learning environment in South African schools is learner conduct. Learners' bad behaviour was evident during my classroom observation. Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003) furthers this as they explain that the breakdown in discipline in South African schools is due to learners disrespecting their teachers, refusing to obey commands, making comments during lessons, skipping classes and having an overall carefree attitude about the school. Such an attitude impacts negatively on the functioning of the school and necessitates that the parents and the teachers working together towards raising and building up a child in terms of education and self-esteem. Both parents and teachers complained about ill behaviour, but no one is taking action to change the situation.

As mentioned by all interviewed teachers, learners with behavioural problems might be learners with learning barriers. Andrew and Taylor (1998) claim that learners who misbehave tend to perform poorly in school and tend to be

absent from school frequently. The teachers were unable to discipline learners in front of me during the classroom observations, except for T4, who was in control throughout the lesson. Learners' bad behaviour is proof that they are failing to understand what is being taught and they resort to disturbing the teacher and the other learners. This is in agreement with Marchant and Anderson (2012) who state that learners who engage in problematic behaviour tend to disrupt teacher instruction and impede others' learning. Such disruptive behaviour can be minimized by the teacher managing to create a positive environment through communicating clear expectations, classroom rules and acknowledging appropriate behaviour.

Fellow learners were also affected by this behaviour. Again, 21 out of 61 learners' drawings showed that older learners were bullies. However, during the interview with teachers and parents, neither the teachers nor the parents mentioned bullying among the learners. According to Govender and Dlamini (2010), bullying can become dangerous as it can promote school violence. Daniels and Steres (2011) believe that in cases where older learners bully others, teachers should apply the school rules. The data indicate that the teachers and the parents may not be aware that bullying is taking place because the learners who are bullied might be afraid to report the bullies to their teachers and parents.

Furthermore, 31 out of 61 learners' drawings indicated concern about a lack of cleanliness in the classrooms and school surroundings. Their drawings showed littering of papers and food from the feeding scheme. They wrote vulgar words on the toilet walls and sullied the toilets. This refers back to earlier statements by the principal that parents should teach learners morals at home. It also seemed as if the school did not identify learners that needed food from the school. The school should only feed learners who are in need of food. Those whose parents can afford food should not be served because they are wasteful. Another factor that learners revealed was about learners



**Figure 4.3: Littering, bullying and smoking of learners**

who are smoking. The learners indicated through their drawings that during break, the older learners smoke. The learners can not report them to the principal because they are afraid of being bullied. Figure 4.3. serves as evidence that learners' behaviour is a major problem in the school. The drawing in figure 4.3. shows older learners bullying younger learners, littering by learners around the school premises, defaced toilet walls, and learners who are involved in drugs use. The drawings show behavioural problems displayed by learners which impacts negatively on the functioning of the school. All the themes discussed above are further dealt with in the third level of analysis.

#### **4.2.3 Third level of analysis: Theories**

From a Critical theory perspective, there are real problems with the culture and climate of the school that was investigated. Critical theory's assumes that if one looks beyond the surface, one will find the need for social and cultural transformation is applicable here (cf section 2.3:17). It is indeed clear that the "wrongs within the current social reality" have to be addressed (cf 2.3:17).

Critical theory further advocates overcoming injustices and inequalities and provides a vision of "positive utopianism" (Higgs 2007). The data indeed indicate the necessity for change in this township school. In this study, the learners are the victims of an unjust and unfair organisational culture. Learners are extradited to a school that does not offer them more than just a feeding plan; dilapidated classrooms and teachers who are not motivated to teach them. This school can be categorised as a dysfunctional school as it is characterised by a poor culture of teaching and learning, disorderly environment and intermittent interruptions in the school's daily programme (Fataar & Patterson 1998).

The school stakeholders must work together to change this dysfunctional school into a resilient school. Being resilient is the ability of the school to survive and develop in contexts of extreme adversity (Christie & Potterton, 1997). Even if this primary school is situated in a community that is racked by poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic influences there should be a sense of responsibility that goes beyond accountability in order to create a positive school culture (section 2.4). In this way the school could manage to provide a purposeful and supportive framework for teaching and learning for its learners and become a learning organisation (section 2.4). To convert the school to a learning organisation, all its structures should work together to build organisational capacity which develops knowledge and positive behaviour that support and value personal learning and school culture (section 2.4).

The school improvement model as an open system maintains and interacts internal elements (teachers and the principal) with the external elements (parents and the department) to improve school effectiveness (Cavanagh & Deller, 1997). The teachers, the parents, and the Department of Education must work closely with the principal to create a positive school culture that enhances teaching and learning, and enables learners to acquire a learning experience. The Input-process-output model will also interrelate the flow of information from one unit to the other (section 2.6) in order to enhance school culture. This will happen when the principal involves the teachers in the decision making process, updates the parents with all activities of the school and disseminates all information from the department to the relevant people. In this way, the school culture has the potential to improve.

Table 4.1 summarises the themes which emerged from the collapsed codes as well as literature control which emerged from the collapsed categories.

**Table 4.1: Codes, categories and themes**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Literature control</b>	<b>Research question and sub question</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of information</li> <li>• Approach</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Organisation</li> <li>• Control</li> <li>• Involvement of different committees</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Working relationship</li> <li>• Comfort</li> <li>• Openness</li> </ul>	Category 1	<p>The leadership of the principal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Team work</li> <li>• Effective communication</li> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	Leadership and management of the school	How does the principal's perception of school culture influence the functioning of the school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and learning of learners</li> <li>• The role of the teachers</li> <li>• Work of teachers</li> </ul>	Category 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges faced by teachers</li> <li>- Lack of support by management</li> <li>- Lack of curriculum</li> </ul>	Teacher support and development	How do teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of school culture influence the functioning of the school?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility of teachers</li> <li>• Curriculum content and training</li> <li>• Curriculum changes</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Knowledge of curriculum</li> <li>• Teaching curriculum</li> <li>• Use and access of resources</li> <li>• Behaviour of learners</li> <li>• Corporal punishment</li> <li>• Overcrowding</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of training, time, resources</li> <li>- Learners learning barriers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication with the teachers</li> <li>• The role of parents</li> <li>• Support of children</li> <li>• Knowledge of curriculum</li> <li>• Behaviour of parents</li> <li>• Non-involvement of parents</li> <li>• Parents meetings</li> <li>• Working relationship</li> </ul>	Category 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The challenges faced by parents</li> <li>• Teachers and principal experiences with regard to parents</li> </ul>	Parental involvement	How does parents' involvement impact school culture

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working of parents</li> <li>• Teacher attitudes and behaviour</li> <li>• Parents attitudes and behaviour</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of information</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge</li> <li>• Learner performance</li> <li>• Learner problems</li> <li>• Parents problems</li> <li>• Affordability of parents</li> <li>• Parents mortality</li> <li>• Hunger</li> </ul>	Category 4	<p>The role of socio economic factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illiteracy</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS</li> <li>• Child-headed families</li> <li>• Unemployment and poverty</li> </ul>	Socio economic factors	How does parents' involvement impact on school culture?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fighting of learners</li> <li>• Learning of learners</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Learner performance</li> <li>• Littering</li> <li>• Use of drugs</li> </ul>	Category 5	<p>Learner behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Lack of concentration</li> <li>• Ill-disciplined learners</li> <li>• Isolation</li> </ul>	Behavioural problems of learners	How do learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of school culture influence their behaviour?

The analysis of categories and themes as shown in table 4.1 assisted me in answering the main research question and the sub questions.

### **4.3 Summary of the chapter**

The discussions in this chapter explored the perceptions and interpretation of the participants with regard to the culture that exists within the school. The findings emerged from the data collected from the interviews with the principal and four of the Grade 7 teachers, a pilot, and a focus group discussion with the parents, classroom observations of the sampled Grade 7 class, and the learners' drawings of their perception of school culture. The results were sifted through three levels of analysis. The main findings that emerged from the analysis are insufficient leadership, lack of teacher professionalism, low level of parental involvement, challenging socio-economic factors and behavioural problems of learners. The negative school culture is resulting in a dysfunctional school. In chapter 5, recommendations from this study, as well as a summary of the responses discussed in chapter 4 are presented. These culminate in answering the main research question as well as the sub questions.

## CHAPTER 5

### OVERVIEW, SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

---

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the analysed data from interviews, a focus group discussion, observations and learners' drawings of the school culture of one township primary school in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The responses from the participants were coded and categorised to form themes that focused on the research question. The research findings were discussed and contributed to a better understanding of the relationship between the functioning of the sampled school and the culture in the school. The data confirmed that the culture within this particular school negatively affected the functioning of the school.

In this chapter, I present a summary of the research aimed at exploring the effects of school culture on the functioning of a township primary school as it relates to the research questions that I posed in the first chapter. Secondly, the findings are synthesised. The synthesis was done to answer the main and secondary research questions. Thirdly, the recommendations from the study, limitations of the study and the need for further research are presented.

#### 5.2 Overview of the chapters

An overview of each chapter is highlighted below.

#### Chapter 1

In this chapter, I introduced the study by explaining the need for this research and presented the main research question and sub questions. The rationale, problem statement and aim of the research were then discussed. A preliminary literature review, conceptual framework and the methodology provided an orientation and background of the study. The clarification of the

concepts *school culture*, *school climate* and *school organisational structures* directed the study. The lenses of critical theory and two models of school culture were introduced. The two models are the Input-process-output model (Bushnell, 2003) and the School improvement model (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006). The research methodology and how the data would be analysed were briefly discussed in order for the reader to understand the nature of the research and to establish a foundation on which the next chapter could build.

## **Chapter 2**

The literature review of my study examined scholarly work on the impact of school culture on the functioning of the school. The aspects covered in the literature included the principals, teachers, parents and learners who are important elements in the formation of any school culture. It emerged from the review of literature that school culture is influenced by the beliefs, perceptions and values of stakeholders of the school. Principals, teachers and parents have different leadership roles that impact not only on learner's well-being, but also on the school culture. Included in this chapter is also an expansion of the conceptual framework, mentioned in chapter one. I have unpacked Critical theory and the two models of school culture in relation to my research.

## **Chapter 3**

This chapter discussed the paradigms and methodology that guided the study. As the interpretive paradigm aims to understand the subjective world of human experience, this paradigm guided me in understanding the organisational structures of the school in terms of the values, beliefs, knowledge and attitudes underpinning the school culture. The implementation of a qualitative case study design enabled me to collect data that informed the research questions. Open ended individual interviews with the principal and the teachers, a focus group discussion with parents, class observations and learners' drawings of the school culture were the data collection strategies. I

adhered to the ethical standards of the University of Pretoria by ensuring confidentiality and by obtaining the right to engage with the stakeholders mentioned.

## **Chapter 4**

Data analysis and interpretation were presented in chapter 4. Data were analysed on three levels of analysis. The first level of analysis was dissecting the raw data to obtain different codes and to eventually form categories. In the second level of analysis, the five themes that emerged from the codes and categories were discussed, insufficient leadership, lack of teacher professionalism, low level of parental involvement, challenging socio-economic factors, and behavioural problems of learners. These five themes were then linked to the literature on school culture as well as the conceptual framework.

## **Chapter 5**

In this chapter the synthesis in terms of the research findings was linked to the main research question and the sub-questions in order to facilitate a meaningful discussion of the key findings. The study had limitations which do not in any way diminish the significance of the study but serve as parameters for future studies in the same field. The strengths and recommendations were also presented in this chapter.

### 5.3 Synthesis of the findings in terms of the research questions

In order to facilitate a meaningful discussion of the key findings of the research, the synthesis was chronologically presented according to the main research question and the research sub-questions.

#### Main research question

How does school culture impact on the functioning of a township primary school?

#### Research sub-question 1

**How do the principal's perception, beliefs and attitude regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?**

According to Van der Westhuizen (2008), the principal plays a decisive role in initiating and maintaining a positive school culture. His/her management and leadership style can improve the motivation and professionalism of teachers and influence discipline, collaboration and teamwork within the school. In this study, there is a discrepancy between the perception of the principal of his role in the school and the reality of the school culture. The principal reflected on his own managerial style by pointing out his endeavour to motivate and support teachers who work under stressful circumstances. He gave examples of how he motivated parents and teachers, but in that, especially parents, stayed unresponsive. Despite the fact that the principal views himself as motivating and communicative, there seems to be no corresponding evidence from neither the teachers nor the parents to support his claim. There was one instance where a teacher complained about lack of support from 'management', but nowhere in the data set was the influence of the principal even mentioned. Also, in the drawings of the learners the role of the principal

was not evident; he featured in none of the drawings. Teachers were not motivated by the principal. Teamwork was also a problem amongst teachers as information sharing was problematic, even non-existent. Overall, effective communication amongst all members of the school structure was problematic.

Both teachers and parents complained about the 'poor working relationship' in the school, although they did not specifically refer to the principal. The literature clearly indicates that the culture of the school is to a large extent determined by the effective leadership of the principal to promote good working relationships amongst all organisational structures of the school (Chapter 4:3-4) and that paying attention to the culture of the school is the most important action a leader can perform (Macneil *et al*, 2009). It, therefore, seems that the principal does not positively impact the school culture.

### **Research sub-question 2**

#### **How do teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?**

Teachers are appointed in their position to teach learners and promote a culture of teaching and learning in a school. This assumption is challenged by the findings of this research. The negative attitudes of teachers and how they perceive their work, their colleagues, learners and parents are a contributing factor that impact on school culture (Chapter 4:10).

The findings of this study showed that a lack of supportive team work exists amongst teachers. Experienced teachers were not willing to assist and work with the newly appointed teachers with regard to planning of lessons and the resources that were accumulated by the experienced teachers over a period of time (Chapter 4:84). This is further demonstrated by the behaviour

mentioned by one of the teachers (T4) that teachers would not stand in for each other when one of them is absent. They would rather sit in the staffroom and ignore the fact that a class is without a teacher. Lack of collaboration amongst teachers seems to be one of the symptoms of a negative school culture. Negative attitudes and behaviour of teachers affects the functioning of the school.

Teacher professionalism implies a full acceptance of moral responsibility (chapter 2: 36). The findings of this study, however, showed lack of professionalism by most of the teachers as many of them came to school late (Chapter 4: 84). Some of the teachers were not committed to their work to such an extent that the principal suggested the retrenchment of teachers who were not committed to do their work (Chapter 4: 84). Lack of commitment also became evident when the teachers did not want to assist learners with learning barriers (Chapter 4: 83). They insisted that the school had to refer learners with learning barriers to special schools.

Professionalism goes hand in hand with discipline. The findings showed that the majority of teachers did not know how to discipline themselves, let alone the learners. The fact that they still believe that the administration of corporal punishment is the only means of disciplining learners (Chapter 4: 85), was one of the worrying findings that emerged from the data. Three of the four interviewed teachers were unable to discipline their learners in order for teaching and learning to take place. This became evident during the lesson observations of four teachers teaching a grade 7 class.

All the sampled teachers complained about the curriculum changes and how this impacted their teaching. They blamed the Department of Education for not training them thoroughly enough to implement the curriculum (Chapter 4: 74) and for not delivering resources that could assist them in teaching and

learning. They even went so far as to point out that the lack of resources resulted in learners sharing workbooks and classes being combined so that the available resources could be shared. Teachers showed no creativity to utilise the resources around them; instead, they expected the Department of Education to provide them with everything. It is clear that teachers act as victims instead of agent (Morrow, 1994).

One of the characteristics of a good teacher is the nurturing love and observation of growth in the life of the learner (Chapter 2: 35). However, the findings of this study indicate that teachers constantly displayed a negative attitude towards the learners and the parents. This especially became evident from learners' drawings. Many teachers were portrayed as hostile, using corporal punishment (Chapter 4: 81) and showing no empathy for the sometimes atrocious circumstances the learners live in. These attitudes displayed by the teachers resulted in poor teacher-parent relationships. Ineffective communication between school and home is the result and in the end it is the learner who is the victim. Maths teachers were the exception to the rule. When teaching and learning in these classes were portrayed, it was positively portrayed and I could sense that the learners experienced that teaching and learning did take place (cf. Figure 4.1).

### **Research sub question 3**

**How do parents' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?**

In the literature scholars (Epstein, 2005; Fan, 2001 & Kruger & van Schalkwyk, 1997) agree that parental involvement has a positive effect on learners' grades, attendance, attitudes and motivation and subsequently on the school culture (Chapter 4: 89). The findings from the data show that the parents faced many challenges in this regard, such as their own work

situation, inability to academically support their children and poor teacher/parent relationships.

Firstly, parents indicated that their own work prevented them from supporting the school and assisting their children with homework. They do not have the time to attend parent meetings. Both the principal and some of the teachers disregarded this argument. They were of the opinion that parents have an uncaring and irresponsible attitude towards the school. The principal also believed that parents see the education of their children as the sole responsibility of the school.

Another major problem was the inability of many parents to assist their children with homework. They do not know how to assist them because of a high level of illiteracy in the community (Chapter 4: 90). Added to this is the socio-economic phenomenon of child-headed families where children not only have no adult to assist them, but also have to take care of siblings and help them with their schoolwork. One of the drawings showed a submissive learner explaining to the teacher that his homework was not done because "there was no one to help me" (Fig 4.2).

Parents also indicated that they felt unsure of how to help their children because they do not understand the curriculum (Chapter 4: 86). They also complained about the lack of resources and financial contributions they have to make to the school for cleaning purposes.

The relationship between the parents and the teachers is not conducive for the learners' education. In the sampled school poor teacher-parent relationships resulted in lack of trust, which resulted in negative attitudes that affect the school culture (Chapter 4: 89). Instances were reported of parents

and teachers shouting at one another in front of learners and even of a parent reporting a teacher to the police (Chapter 4: 86; 89).

Parents who participated in the study were aware of the fact that non-parental involvement affects negatively on their children. They ascertained that unemployment is a contributing factor as parents suffer to assist their children financially (Chapter 4: 90). According to the principal, parents even refrained from attending school meetings as they know that the school needs money and will ask for contributions from them.

The findings further revealed that diversity affected the non-involvement of parents. Cultural differences sometimes inform misunderstandings (Mc Naughton, 2010) Parents perceive teachers displaying a negative attitude whilst it has more to do with cultural background. One parent gave an example of her child being punished for something he had done, whilst his behaviour was accepted in their culture.

Not all parents were unsupportive to the education of their children, but it seems that the majority, although they admit to the need for parental involvement, were not involved and did not make any contribution towards establishing a positive school culture. All of the parents who participated in this study were aware and agreed that their non-involvement in the education of their children affected the existing culture of the school.

## Research sub question 4

**How do learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding the school culture influence the functioning of the school?**

Learner conduct is one of the most prominent factors that influence the learning environment in South African schools (Chapter 2: 47-48). All of the teachers complained throughout their interviews about the negative behaviour displayed by the learners and the impact that it has on the culture of the school. Some of the parents also indicated that there is a lack of respect for elders at home.

Only one teacher, who is adamant about discipline in his classroom because he applied rules and regulations consistently, did not experience disciplinary problems. During his class observations, I experienced the only incident of successful teaching and learning, where learners were not only listening, but also taking part in class discussions because of the disciplined teacher. One of the learners drew the classroom as one of the things that he liked about his school (Figure 4.1). While the teacher explains something on the blackboard, the learners are attentively engaged. During the other classroom observations, learners were playing and talking whilst the teachers teaching and the teachers were unable to discipline those learners. My observation was that the bad behaviour of learners was almost proof of the fact that learners do not understand what had been taught. The teachers did not succeed in creating a positive learning environment (Chapter 4: 108). Clear expectations and goals were not expressed, classroom rules were not evident and teachers did not acknowledge positive behaviour of learners (Maja, 1995).

From the drawings of the learners, it became clear that teachers at the sampled school still use corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure.

Learners' artefacts clearly showed teachers scolding them about homework that was not done. In Figure 4.2 the teacher's body language is threatening and he is portrayed with a long stick in his hand. The learner wrote under the drawing that he/she didn't like all the fighting between teachers and learners and that a teacher should understand what learners go through (Fig 4.2).

One of the worrying factors of negative learner behaviour is the existence of bullying in this township primary school. It became clear from the data that bullying is a severe problem, especially since most learners cannot report bullies to their teachers or their parents because of fear for the bullies (Chapter 1:8). Older learners bullying younger learners on the school premises were one of the themes that emerged from the artefacts of the learners, but it also seems as if teachers and parents are oblivious to the bullying that is taking place, since they did not mention anything in the interviews or the focus group discussion.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews with the teachers was the problematic dealing with learners who experience learning barriers such as difficulty with reading or concentrating (Chapter 4: 101). One teacher indicated that most of the learners experience problems in reading and writing and another agreed by stating that 75% of the Grade 7 learners showed behavioural problems during teaching and learning generally.

All of the teachers were of the opinion that learners with learning barriers are learners with behavioural problems. Some of the teachers openly admitted that they cannot handle learners with learning barriers and that they should be identified at an earlier stage so that they can be sent to 'special' schools. They also admitted that they just ignore these learners in class and that this resulted in these learners disturbing other learners in class.

Lastly, 31 of the 61 learners' drawings indicated concern about a lack of cleanliness of classrooms and school surroundings. Almost half of the drawings showed that littering around the school was a general problem (See Figure 4.3). Their drawings showed littering of papers and the food from the feeding scheme at the school. They also showed that vulgar words were written on the toilet walls and doors and that the toilets had been sullied. It further seems as if older boys smoked in the toilets.

### **5.3.1 Conclusion**

The key findings of the research was chronologically presented to answer the main research question and the research sub-questions. The next section deals with the limitations and strengths of the study.

## **5.4 Limitations and strengths of the study**

### **5.4.1 Limitations**

The study had limitations which do not in any way diminish its significance but serves as parameters for future studies on the same topic:

- The research focused on the micro-level of education (one primary school) and did not include the macro level, which includes departmental policies and other legislative frameworks on the impact of school culture on the functioning of the school. The findings and conclusions of this study relied solely on the information provided by the participants.
- Another limitation is that the findings is context-specific and can, therefore, not be generalized.

- Lastly, the learners' sample consisted of only one grade 7 class. Findings pertaining to other age groups might have differed from the findings of this study.

#### 5.4.2 Strengths

The study had the following strengths:

- The study focused on gaining an increased understanding of whether the impact of school culture played a significant role in the functioning of a township primary school.
- A second strength lies in the literature and conceptual framework that informed the research question. Critical theory and the two models of school culture were used as a theoretical lens. The literature on the different stakeholders were discussed, interpreted and used to obtain a clearer picture of the research. Findings were linked to the literature throughout the dissertation.
- This case study contributed to the body of knowledge on school culture.
- As I previously taught at the sampled school, but since 2012 had taken up a position at the Department of Education, I literally changed from an *insider* to an *outsider* research position, which benefited the study in terms of objectivity.

#### 5.5 Aspects for future research

The study focused only on the perspectives of stakeholders in one sampled school. The following are suggested for further research:

- Further research is recommended to investigate deeper into the school culture, not only in one primary school in Gauteng Province but also across all provinces in South Africa. More schools could be included, depending on the scope and coverage of the research question.

- The inclusion of more stakeholders, such as the Education department, when investigating school culture, is recommended. Such stakeholders could be consulted with regard to school culture. Research could also be conducted in urban schools, farm schools and rural schools in order to understand the complexity of this problem in South Africa. Comparative studies in this regard seem to be a natural outflow from this research.

## 5.6 Recommendations

Based on the study, I recommend that:

- The Department of Education should consider training for principals and teachers on positive school culture. In the teacher training curriculum there should be a module on school culture that prepare student teachers for the possible scenario of a negative school culture.
- The Department of Education should also conduct teacher training to enhance the delivery of the curriculum. This could be done through workshops, in-service training and other related services to support the effective implementation of the school curriculum. The school should also consider training parents about the curriculum offered in the school so that the parents will be able to assist learners with homework and feel involved in the education of their children.
- There should be a forum where principals of different schools can share their experiences and learn from one another.
- Schools should identify learners with learning barriers and where necessary consult with the district inclusion team to assess learners. This will assist in the correct placement of learners.
- The principal should organise workshops or motivational talks for parents and teachers on the issue of diversity so that ignorance in this regard can be curbed .

## 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a synopsis of the content of the different chapters and of the findings of this research by answering the research questions that directed the study. The study probed into the perceptions and beliefs of the four main stakeholders (the principal, teachers, learners and parents) in a township primary school in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The findings emerged through analysing relevant interviews with these stakeholders as well as expressions of learners' perspectives through their artwork. Through these encounters, I investigated the research problem presented in the first chapter, which pertains to many South African schools characterised by irregular school attendance by learners and teachers; poor performing schools; low morale; general demotivation; conflicts and violence around the school. The learners seem to be the victims in the scenario of this particular school, while the other stakeholders blame each other and in doing so, add to the negative school culture, rather than trying to improve the school culture. This chapter has completed the full circle by returning to the three sub-questions and answering them with the findings of the study. Furthermore, the strong points, limitations and recommendations of the study were discussed. It is my hope that this research will enrich our understanding of these problems in (especially) township schools in South Africa.

## REFERENCES

---

- Altschul, I. 2011. Parental Involvement and the Academic Achievement of Mexican American Youths: What Kinds of Involvement in Youths' Education Matter Most?. *Social Work Research*, 35(3):159–170.
- Anderson, K. 2012. Climate change going beyond dangerous –brutal numbers and tenous shape. *Development dialogue*, (3): 16-40.
- Avolio, B.J. & Baas B.M. 1995. Individual consideration viewed at multiple levels of analysis: A multi level framework for examining the diffusion of transformational leadership. *The leadership quarterly*, 6(2): 199-218.
- Banda, F. 2003. A survey of literacy practices in black and coloured community in SA: Towards pedagogy of multiliteracies, *Language, culture and curriculum*, 16(2):106 -129.
- Barker, C.D. & Johnson, G. 1998. Interview talk as a professional practice. *Language and Education*,12(2): 29-42.
- Barth, R. 2002. The culture builder. *Educational leadership*: 6–11.
- Belenardo, S J. 2001. "Practices and conditions that lead to a sense of community in middle schools." *Nassp Bulletin*, 85 6(27): 33-45.
- Blasé, J. & Kirby, P.C. 1993. *Bringing the best in teacher. What effective principals do?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Bohman, J. 2005. *Critical theory*. Stanford: Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy, Stanford.
- Boudah, D.J. 2011. *Conducting educational research: guide to completing a major project*. Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.
- Boyd, L. 2012. *5 myths about student discipline*. *Educational leadership*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Brandon,R.R., Higgins, K., Pierce,T. & Sileo,N. 2010. An exploration of the alienation experienced by African, American parents from their children' educational environment in South African schools. *Cambridge Journal of Education*: 283–300.

Brown, B.B. & Bakken, J.P. 2011. Parenting and peer relationships: Reinvigorating research on family-peer linkages in adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 2(1): 153–165.

Bryman, A. 2004. *Social research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Oxford University Press: New York.

Bulach, C., Boothe, D., & Pickett, W. 2006. Analyzing the leadership behavior of school principals. *Connexions module: m13813*.

Burn, K. 2007. Professional knowledge and identity in a contested discipline: challenges for student teachers and teacher educators. *Oxford Review of Education*, 3(3): 445-467.

Bushnell, D.S. 2003. Input, Process, Output: A model for evaluating training. *Training and Development Journal*, 44(3): 41-43

Carrim, N. 1999. School effectiveness in South Africa. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 12 (1): 59-83.

Cavanaugh, R.F. & Deller, G.B. 1997. Towards a model of school culture. *American Educational Research*: 1-20. Chicago.

Chisholm, L. & Vally, S. 1996 . *Report of the committee on the culture of teaching and learning*. Pretoria: Gauteng Ministry of Education.

Christie, P. & Potterton, M. 1997. *School development in South Africa*. A Research Project to Investigate Strategic Intervention for Quality Improvement in South African Schools: Final Report. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand press.

Christie, P.1998. School as (dis)organisations: the breakdown of the culture of learning and teaching succeeded against the odds. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 28(3): 283–300.

Cohen, L., Manion, L & Morrison, K. 2005. *Research methods in education* (5<sup>th</sup> edition). London: Routledge.

Conner, J.O. 2009. Student engagement in an independent research project. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 21(1).

Conroy, M.A., Sutherland, K.S., Snyder, A., Al-Hendani, M & Vo, A. 2009. Creating a positive classroom atmosphere. Teachers' use of effective praise and feedback. *Beyond behaviour* 18 (2)

Coyle, H.E. 2005. "School culture benchmarks: Bridges and barriers to successful bullying prevention program implementation." *Journal of school violence* 7 (2): 105-122

Creemer, P.M.B. & Reezigt J.G. 2005. Linking school effectiveness and school improvement. The background and outline of the project. *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 16(2): 309-371.

Cressy, E.H. 2011. The correlated program for Christian higher education in China. *International Review Mission*, 22(2): 240-250

Creswell, J.W. 2005. *Educational research*. New York: Pearson.

Creswell, J.W. 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. 2008. *Educational research planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Lincoln: Pearson.

Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research Design Qualitative and Quantitative Mixed Methods Approaches*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed), Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.

Daniels, E. & Steres, M. 2011. Examining the effect of a school-wide reading cultures on the engagement of Middle school students. *Association for Middle level education*, 35(2): 1-13

Daniels, E. 2010. Creating motivating learning environment. *English Journal*, 100 (1): 25-29.

De Fur, S. 2012. Parents as collaborators. Building partnerships with school and community based providers. *Teaching exceptional children*, 44( 3): 58-67.

Deal, T.E. & Peterson, K.D. 1999. *Shaping school culture. The heart of leadership*. San Frascisco, CA: Josey Bass.

Denison, D.R. 1996. What is the difference between organisational culture and organisational climate? A narrative s' point of view on a decade of paradigms war. *Academy of management review*, 21(3); 619-654

Denzil, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., (eds). 2005. *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.

Derosier, M.E. & Newcity, J. 2005. Students' perceptions of the school climate. Implications for school safety.*Journal of school violence*, 4(3): 3-20

Doughlas, J.D. 1976. *Investigative Social Research*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Edmonds, R. 1979. Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational leadership*, 37(1): 15-24.

Education Labour Relations Council. 1998. Duties and responsibilities (school and office based). Pretoria: Education Labour Relation Council.

Engels, N. Aelterman, A., Van Petegem, K. & Schepen, A. 2004. Factors which influence the well-being of pupils in Flemish secondary schools. *Educational Studies*, 30 (2): 127-143.

- Engels, N., Hotton, G., De Vos, G., Bouckenooghe, D., & Aelterman, A. 2008. Principals in schools with a positive school culture. *Educational Studies* 34(3): 159-174.
- Epstein, J.L. & Sanders, M.G. 2006. Prospects for change: *Preparing educators for school, family and community partnership*: 81–120.
- Epstein, J.L. 2005. Results of the partnership schools-CSR model for student achievement over three years. *Elementary School Journal*:151–170.
- Fan, W., & Williams, C. M. 2009. The effects of parental involvement on students' academic self-efficacy, engagement and intrinsic motivation. *Educational Psychology* 30(1): 53-74.
- Fan, X. 2001. Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modelling analysis. *Journal of experimental education*, (7): 27–61.
- Farrell, A.F., & Collier, M.A. 2010. School personnel's perceptions of family-school communication: a qualitative study. *Improving Schools*, 13(1): 4-20.
- Fataar, A. & Patterson, A. 1998. *Teachers, moral agency and the reconstruction of schooling in South Africa*; Unpublished paper delivered at the World Conference of Comparative Education Societies, University of Cape Town.
- Fleisch, B. & Christie, P. 2004. Structural change, *Leadership and School Effectiveness/ Improvement Perspective from South Africa* 24(1): 95-112.
- Flores, M. 2004. *Addiction as an attachment disorder*. Rowman & Littlefield publisher Inc. Oxford
- Forsey, M. 2010. Teacher and the re-production of middle-class culture in Australian schools. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*: 67–81.

Freiberg, H.J. 1998. Measuring school climate: Let me count the ways. *Realising a positive school climate*, 56(1): 22-26.

Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. 1992. *What's Worth Fighting for in Your School? Working Together for Improvement*. Beckenham: Open University Press.

Fullan, M. 1997. The complexity of the change process. In M. Fullan (Ed), *The challenge of school change*. Arington Heights, IL: Skylight Training and Publishing.

Fullan, M. 2002. The role of leadership in the promotion of knowledge management in school. *Teachers and Teaching*, 6(7): 409–419.

Furlong, M.J., Greif, J.L., Bates, M.P., Whipple, A.D. & Jimenez, T.C. 2005. Development of the California school climate and safety survey-short form. *Psychology in the schools*, 42(2): 137–150.

Gauntlett, D. 2007. *Creative explorations: New approaches to identities and audiences*. London. United Kingdom: Routledge.

Gay, L.R., Mills, G.E., & Airasian, P.W. 2009. *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson.

Gibb, A. 1978. *Dynamics of leadership. United ministries in higher education*. UMHE publications.

Gilmour, J.D. 2001. Intention or in tension? Recent education reforms in South Africa. *International Journal of Education Development* 1(9): 5–9.

Gonder, P. & Hymes, D.L. 1994. *Improving school climate & culture*. American Association of school Administrators

Gonzalez-De Haas, A., Willem, P. & Holbein, F. 2005. Examining the relationship between parental involvement and student motivation. *Educational Psychology Review*, 17(1): 99–123.

Gray, D.E. 2009. *Doing research in the real world* (2<sup>nd</sup>ed). Sage: California.

Griffith, J. 1999. The school leadership/school climate relation: Identification of school configurations associated with change in principals. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(2): 267-291.

Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (2): 163-194.

Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage

Hall, S. 1997. *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage

Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. 2010. Leadership for learning: Does collaborative leadership make a difference in school improvement? *Educational management administration & leadership*, 3 (8): 654-684.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. 1995. *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.

Hammond, L.D. 1989. *Accountability for professional practice,’ in Teachers College Record*. New York: Teachers College: Columbia University.

Harber, C. 2001. Schooling and violence in South Africa: creating a safer school. *Intercultural Education*, 12(3): 261-271.

Hargreaves, A. 1994. *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern age*. London: Casswell.

Hargreaves, A. 1997. *Rethinking Educational Change with Heart and Mind*. ASCD Yearbook.

Hart, R.A. 1992. *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship.*

Florence, Italy.

Hayes, C.B., Ryan, A., & Zseller, E.B. 1994. The middle school child's perceptions of caring teachers. *American Journal of education*, 103 (11):1-19.

Hill, N., Castellino, D., Lansford, J., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K., Bates, J. & Pettit G. 2004. *Child development*: 1491–1509.

Huberman, A.M. & Miles, M.B. 1994. 'Data management and analysis methods'. In N.K. Denzin & Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of qualitative research..* Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.Inc.

Huberman, A.M. & Miles, M.B. 1994. *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA Sage

Humphrey, M. & Brown, A.D. 2002. Organisational identity and place. A discursive exploration of hegemony and resistance. *Journal of management studies*, 43(2): 231-257

Johnson, B., Stevens, J. & Zvoch, K. 2007. Teachers' perceptions of school climate: A validity study of scores from the revised school level environment questionnaire. *Educational and psychological measurement*, (6)7: 833–844.

Johnson, S., Monk, M. & Hodges, M. 2000. Teacher development and change in South Africa: a critique of the appropriateness of transfer of northern/western practice. *A Journal of Comparative and International Education*: 179–192.

Jones, S. 1985. 'Depth interviewing,' in R Walker (eds) *Applied Qualitative Research*. Aldershot: Gower.

Juvonen, J., Nishina, A. & Graham, S. 2000. Peer Harassment, Psychological Adjustment, and School Functioning in early Adolescence. *Journal of Education Psychology*, 9 (2): 2 -26.

- Keiser, K.A. & Schutte, L.E. 2009. Seeking the sense of community: a comparison of two elementary schools' ethical climates. *The school community Journal*, 9 (2): 45–58.
- Kitchenham, A.D. 2009. School culture, teachers, and technology transformation. *Canadian journal of learning and technology* 1(3): 1-16.
- Kohl, H. 1986. *On Becoming a Teacher*. London: Methuen.
- Kruger, A. & van Schalkwyk M. 1999. *Classroom management*. South Africa: Kalahari.
- Lance, A. 2010. A case study of two schools identifying core values conducive to the building of a positive school culture. *Management in Education*, 2 (4): 18-36.
- LaRocque, M., Kleiman, L. & Darling, S.M. 2011. Parental involvement: The missing link in school achievement. *Preventing School Failure*, 3 (5): 339-369.
- Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D & Mc Elheron, H. 2006. *The development and testing of a school improvement model*: 441–424.
- Lichtman, M. 2010. *Qualitative Research in Education. A users' guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Literat, I.A. 2013. A pencil for your thoughts: Participatory drawingsas a visual research methods with children and youth. *International Journal of qualitative methods*, (2): 84-98.
- Lloyd-Smith, L. & Baron, M. 2010. Beyond conferences. Attitudes of high school administrators towards parental involvement in one small Midwestern state. *The school community Journal*, 20 (2): 23 -44.

Macneil, A.J., Prater, D.L. & Busch, S. 2009. The effect of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International journal of leadership in education*: 73–84.

Maeroff, G.I. 1988. *The empowerment of teachers, overcoming the crisis of confidence*. Teachers college press. New York.

Maja, B. 1995. *Future trapped in the past: Case Study of a Soweto School*, Johannesburg: National Business Initiative.

Marchant, M. & Anderson, D. 2012. *Improving Social and Academic Outcome for all learners through the use of teacher praise. The use of teacher praise*. United Kingdom: Brigham Young University.

Maree, K. & Van der Westhuizen, C. 2009. *Head start in designing research proposals in the social sciences*. Juta and Company Ltd.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. 1995. *Designing qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Martins, J. 1992. *Culture in Organisation: Three perspective*. New York: Oxford University.

Mayer, R.R. 2002. *The promise of educational psychology teaching for meaningful learning*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Mc Clure, L., Yonezawa, S. & Jones, M. 2010. Can school structures improve teacher-student relationship? The relationship between advisory programs, personalisation and learners' academic achievement. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* (18): 17.

Mc Millan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. 2001. *Research in education. A conceptual introduction* (5<sup>th</sup> ed). New York: Addison-Wesley.

Mc Millian, H.M. & Schumacher, S. 2010. *Research in Education. Evidence-Based Inquiry*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed). New Jersey: Pearson Inc.

Mc Naughton, D. & Vostal, B.R. 2010. Using active listening to improve collaboration with parents. The LAFF don't CRY strategy. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 45(4): 251-256.

McGuigan, L. & Hoy, K. 2006. Principal leadership: Creating a culture of academic optimism to improve achievement for all students. *Leadership and policy in schools*: 203–229.

Md Nor, S. & Roslan, S. 2009. Turning around at-risks schools: what effective principals do. *The international journal on school disaffection*: 1–9.

Merriam, S. 2002. *Qualitative research in education* (1<sup>st</sup> edition). Jossey Bass: San Francisco.

Miller, M.A. & Wiener, W.K. 2003. Curriculum Development in a Juvenile Correctional Lab School: A work in process. *Journal of correctional education* 46: 63–78.

Mok, M. & Flynn, M. 1998. Effect of Catholic school culture on students achievement in the higher school certificate examination. A multi-level path analysis. *Education psychology*: 409-432.

Morewood, G.D. & Bond, C. 2012. Understanding parental confidence in an inclusive high school: a pilot survey. *British Journal of learning support* 27(2):5

Morrow, W. 1994. A Culture of Teaching, in F. Sonn, (Ed.). *DSA in Depth. Reconstructing Education*. Cape Town: DSA.

Nekhwevha , F. 1999. No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come: culture and educational transformation in post-colonial Namibia and post-apartheid South Africa. *International Review of Education*: 491–506.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2007a. Introducing qualitative research. In K. Maree, *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2007b. Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In K. Maree, *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2007c. Analysing Qualitative data. In K. Maree, *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Patton, M.Q. 1990. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Poulin, F., Nadeau, K. & Scaramella, L.V. 2012. The Role of Parents in Young Adolescents' Competence With Peers: An Observational Study of Advice Giving and Intrusiveness. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 58(4): 437-462.

Press, M.J. 2002. *Organisational Culture: Mapping Terrain*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Price, H.E. 2012. Principal–Teacher Interactions How Affective Relationships Shape Principal and Teacher Attitudes. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 4(8): 39-85.

Punch, K.F. 2009. *Introduction to research methods in Education*. California: Sage Publication

Recepoglu, E. 2013. The Significance of Assumptions Underlying School Culture in the Process of Change. *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology* 4(2): 43-48

Reglin, G., Cameron, H. & Losike- Sedimo, N. 2010. *Effect of a parent support reading intervention on seventh grade at risk learners' reading comprehension scores. Effect of parenting and reading improvement*, Project Innovation, Inc.

Rhodes, J.E., Camic, P.M., Milbur, M. & Lowe S.R. 2009. Improving middle school climate through teacher centered change. *Journal of Community Psychology*: 711–724.

Robbins, S.P. 1989. *Organisation theory: Structure, design and application*. London: Printice –Hall, Inc.

Rossouw, J.P. 2003. Learner discipline in South African public school. *Qualitative study koers – bulletin for christian scholarship*, 4(68): 413-436

Saaed, M. 2003. Assessing quality of learners learning. *Journal of Educational Research*, vol 6 (1-2).

Sagnak, M. 2010. The Relationship between Transformational School Leadership and Ethical Climate. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, (1): 1135-1152.

Salfi, N.S. & Saeed, M. 2007. Relationship among school size, school culture and learners' achievement at secondary level in Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 2 (1): 7–19.

Sarason, S.B. 1995. *Parental Involvement and the Political Principle: Why the Existing Governance Structure of Schools Should Be Abolished*. Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104.

Schofield, J.W. 1993. *Increasing the generalizability of qualitative research. In M. Hammersley (ed.) Social Research: Philosophy, Politics and Practice*. London : UK:Sage Publications in association with the open university press.

South Africa – School Register of Needs Survey. 2000. Cape Town: Human Science Research Council.

Sim, S. & Van Loon, B. 2001. *Introducing critical theory*. Cambrigde.

Singhal, A. & Rattine-Flaherty, E. 2006. Pencils and Photos as Tools of Communicative Research and Praxis Analyzing Minga Perú's Quest for Social Justice in the Amazon. *International Communication Gazette* 6 (8): 313-330.

Sirin, S.R. & Rogers-Sirin, L. 2005. Components of school engagement among African American adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science*, (9): 5-13.

Sterret, W. 2011. *Perspective on teacher leadership. Their roles, influence and impact*. Routledge: Kappa Delta Pl.

Stöcklin, S. 2010. The initial stage of a school's capacity building. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, (38): 443-453.

Stoll, L. & Fink, D. 1996. *Changing our schools: Linking school effectiveness and school improvement*. Open University Press.

Supovitz, J., Sirinides, P. & May, H. 2008. How principals and peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*: 31–56.

Swanson, R. A., & Holton, E.F. (Eds.). 1997. *Human resource development research handbook: Linking research and practice*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S. & Higgins –D' Alessandro A. 2013. A review of school climate research. *Review of Educational Research*, (20): 20-40.

Van den Heever, R. 1994. 'Teachers want what learners need,' in F. Sonn. (Ed). *DSA in Depth. Reconstructing Education*. Cape Town: DSA.

Van der Westhuizen, P.C., Oosthuizen, I. & Wolhuter, C.C. 2008. The relationship between an effective organisational culture and student discipline in a boarding school. *Education and Urban Society*, (4): 205-224.

Van der Westhuizen, P.C., Masoge, M.J., Swanepoel, L.H. & Coetzee, L.O. 2005. *Organisational culture and academic achievement in Secondary school, Education and Urban Society*. North West University, Potchefstroom Campus.

Van Houtte, M. 2005. Climate or culture? A plea for conceptual clarity in school effectiveness research. *School effectiveness and school improvement* (6): 71-89.

Vaughn, S.R., Schumm, J.S., and Sinagub, J.M. 1996. *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Sage Publications.

Wigfield, A. & Eccles, J.S. 2002. *Development of Achievement, Motivation. Handbook of a child psychology. (6th Ed). Social, emotional and development*. New York: N.J. Wiley.

Yin, R.K. 2003. *Case study research: design and methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.

Zollers, N., Ramathn A. & Yu, M. 1999. The relationship between school culture and inclusion: how an inclusive culture supports inclusive education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*: 157–174.

## Appendix B: Letter of informed consent: educators and principal

Department of Humanities Education

Faculty of Education, Groenkloof Campus, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002

Republic of South Africa

Tel: +27 12 420 5639 Fax: +27 12 420 5637

---

30 October 2012

Dear participants (educators and principal)

### **LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE EXISTING CULTURE IN A TOWNSHIP PRIMARY SCHOOL**

You are invited to participate in a research project on **the school culture in a township primary school**. The aim of my study is to gain an understanding of the relationship between school culture and its functioning in a South African primary school.

The main question driving this research is:

**How does school culture impact the functioning of a township primary school?**

The following sub questions will further guide the study:

- How does the principal's perception of school culture influence the functioning of the school?
- How does parents' involvement impact school culture?
- How do learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on school culture influence their behaviour?
- How do teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on school culture influence the functioning of the school?

As a participant, you are requested to take part in an open-ended interview of approximately 45 minutes after the contact time with the learners. To ensure accuracy of responses, the interview will be recorded using an audio recorder. The researcher will conduct the interviews with individual teachers and the principal and will comprise questions that deal with your views regarding the culture that exists in a township primary school. The interviews will then be transcribed and participants who wish to view the transcripts before they are included in the study are welcome to do so. It might also be necessary for a **follow-up interview** to clarify or expand on certain aspects that may be identified by the researcher.

Participation is entirely **voluntary** and no one will be coerced or manipulated in any way to participate or provide certain information. You may at any time decide to withdraw if you no longer wish to be part of the study and your wishes will be respected. The information provided by you will then also be withdrawn from the study.

All information gathered during the interviews and audio recordings will be kept in the strictest confidence and will only be used for the purposes of the research. You will not be required to provide personal details and you will remain **anonymous** as you will be referred to using a pseudonym or a number.

The findings of this study will be presented in a master's dissertation, articles and conference presentations. The dissertation will, therefore, become public domain for scrutiny by examiners and other academics. However, I am bound by rules of integrity and ethical conduct as prescribed by the University of Pretoria and promise to abide by those rules. I will thus use the data collected for the purposes of research only.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the accompanying letter as a declaration of your consent indicating that you willingly participate in this project and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Participation in this phase of the project does not obligate you to participate in follow-up individual interviews, however, should you decide to participate in follow-up interviews, your participation is still voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. You will also have the opportunity to view the findings prior to publication and be able to provide advice on the accuracy of the information.

Yours sincerely

M K Lebesa  
Master's student  
Tel: 011 746 8164  
Cell: 0827671340

Dr A Engelbrecht (Supervisor)



**Letter of informed consent**

I, ..... have read the information contained in the *Invitation to participate* and would like to voluntarily participate in this research study. I am aware of what is expected of me and that I have the right to withdraw at any time should I wish to do so without having to provide a reason.

By signing this form, I give consent to the audio recording of the interview that I will partake in. I acknowledge that I am participating of my own free will and have not in any way been forced, manipulated or coerced into taking part.

.....  
Signed: participant

.....  
Date

## Appendix C: Letter of consent: parents

Department of Humanities Education  
Faculty of Education, Groenkloof Campus, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002  
Republic of South Africa  
Tel: +27 12 420 5639 Fax: +27 12 420 5637

.....  
30 October 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian/Caregiver

### **LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE EXISTING CULTURE IN A TOWNSHIP PRIMARY SCHOOL**

I am conducting research on **exploring the school culture in a township primary school**. The aim of my study is to gain an understanding of the relationship between school culture and its functioning in a South African township primary school.

The main question driving this research is:

**How does school culture impact on the functioning of a township primary school?**

The following sub questions will further guide the study:

- How does the principal's perception of school culture influence the functioning of the school?
- How does parents' involvement impact school culture?
- How do learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on school culture influence their behaviour?
- How do teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on school culture influence the functioning of the school?

I am requesting you to participate in a focus group discussion that will be audio recorded.

The discussion will include your views regarding the culture that exists in your child's school. Participation is entirely **voluntary** and no one will be coerced or manipulated in any way to participate or provide certain information. A participant may at any time decide to withdraw if he/she feels they no longer wish to be part of the study.

All information gathered during the focus group discussion will be kept in the strictest confidence and will only be used for the purposes of the research. Participants are not



required to provide their names or contact details and will remain **anonymous** throughout the study by choosing a pseudonym.

The findings of this study will be presented in a master's dissertation, articles and conference presentations. The dissertation will, therefore, become public domain for scrutiny by examiners and other academics. However, I am bound by rules of integrity and ethical conduct as prescribed by the University of Pretoria and promise to abide by those rules. I will thus use the information for the purposes of this study only.

Yours sincerely

M K Lebesa  
Master's student  
Tel: 011 746 8164  
Cell: 0827671340

Dr A Engelbrecht (Supervisor)

### **Letter of informed consent**

I, ..... have read the information contained in the *Invitation to Participate* and would like to voluntarily participate in this research study. I am aware of what is expected of me and that I have the right to withdraw at any time should I wish to do so without having to provide a reason.

By signing this form, I give consent to the audio recording of the interview that I will partake in. I acknowledge that I am participating of my own free will and have not in any way been forced, manipulated or coerced into taking part.

.....  
Signed: Parent/Guardian/Caretaker

.....  
Date

## Appendix D: Letter of consent: parents

Department of Humanities Education  
Faculty of Education, Groenkloof Campus, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002  
Republic of South Africa  
Tel: +27 12 420 5639 Fax: +27 12 420 5637

---

30 October 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian/Caregiver

### **LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE EXISTING CULTURE IN A TOWNSHIP PRIMARY SCHOOL**

I am conducting research on **the school culture in a township primary school**. The aim of my study is to gain an understanding of the relationship between school culture and its functioning in a South African township primary school.

The main question driving this research is:

**How does school culture impact on the functioning of a township primary school?**

The following sub questions will further guide the study:

- How does the principal's perception of school culture influence the functioning of the school?
- How does parents' involvement impact school culture?
- How do learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on school culture influence their behaviour?
- How do teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on school culture influence the functioning of the school?

I am requesting you to allow your child to draw anything that makes him/her happy and sad about the school. As I am not professionally trained to interpret children's pictures, I will only use their pictures as an added instrument for the purpose of corroboration and credibility of data. No judgement will be made from the picture, but it will only be used to get a general sense of the culture that exists in a school. This will be done outside of contact time between the teacher and the child.

I will also be observing the children in class during teaching and learning to see their interaction with their teacher. I will study **facial expressions and gestures, behaviours as well as verbal responses** as the children relate to the teacher and learning takes place in

the classroom. These observations and recordings will be done in a non-disruptive way in order not to interfere with classroom practice.

Participation is entirely **voluntary** and no one will be coerced or manipulated in any way to participate or provide certain information. A participant may at any time decide to withdraw if they no longer wish to be part of the study and their wishes will be respected. The information provided by the child up to that point will then also be withdrawn from the study.

All information gathered during observations and from the drawings will be kept in the strictest confidence and will only be used for the purposes of the research. Participants are not required to provide their names or contact details and will remain **anonymous** throughout the study as pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants. Permission will be requested from you and your child.

The findings of this study will be presented in a master's dissertation, articles and conference presentations. The dissertation will, therefore, become public domain for scrutiny by examiners and other academics. However, I am bound by rules of integrity and ethical conduct as prescribed by the University of Pretoria and promise to abide by those rules. I will thus use the information for the purposes of this study only.

If you are willing to allow your child to be present in class during the observation and to draw, please sign the accompanying letter as a declaration of your consent and that you allow your child to be present as part of this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw your child from the research project at any time.

Yours sincerely

M K Lebesa  
Master's student  
Tel: 011 746 8164  
Cell: 0827671340

Dr A Engelbrecht (Supervisor)

### **Letter of informed consent**

I, ..... have read the information contained in the *Invitation to Participate* and give permission for my child to participate in this research study. I am aware of what is expected of him/her and that I, or my child, have the right to withdraw at any time should we wish to do so, without having to provide a reason.

.....  
Signed: Parent/Guardian/Caretaker

.....  
Date

Name: .....

## Appendix E: Letter of assent: learners

Department of Humanities Education  
Faculty of Education, Groenkloof Campus, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002  
Republic of South Africa  
Tel: +27 12 420 5639 Fax: +27 12 420 5637

---

30 October 2012

Dear Learner

### **LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE EXISTING CULTURE IN A TOWNSHIP PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Sometimes when we want to find out something, we ask people for information to help us explain what we need to know. We then do what is called a project. I would like you to take part in this project so that you can help me find out what I need to know.

Let me tell you about the project first. This project will give me the chance to find out what kinds of behaviour happen in schools and what the possible reasons for them are. To help me do this I need to observe you when your teacher is presenting a lesson and I will also ask you to draw things that make you happy and those that make you sad in your school.

I would like to ask you to be part of this project. The project has been explained to your parents/guardians/caregivers and they have already agreed that you may be part of this project if you want to. If you don't want to, you don't have to. You can talk to them or your teacher or any other adult you trust first before you decide if you want to take part or not.

This is what will happen: I will ask you to draw anything that makes you happy and everything that makes you sad in the school in order to get a general idea about what you feel about your school. I will also observe your behaviour when your educator is teaching you. If you wish to, you may choose a false name or pseudonym and I promise not to tell anyone your real name. You can also decide to let me use your real name if you want to. Just tell me.

If you do decide to take part, all of your drawings will be kept private. No one, not even someone in your family or any of your teachers will see your drawings.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

You can ask any questions about this project at any time. If you agree to take part and you have questions later that you didn't think of now, you can phone me at 082 767 1340 or Dr Engelbrecht at 012 420 5629, or you can ask me when I visit your school next time. No one will be upset or angry if you don't want to do this. If you don't want to be in this project you just have to tell me. You can say yes or no and if you change your mind later you can quit at any time. It's up to you.

Yours sincerely

M K Lebesa  
Master's student  
Tel: 011 746 8164  
Cell: 0827671340

Dr A Engelbrecht (Supervisor)



**Letter of informed assent**

By writing your name here it means that you agree to take part in this project and that you know what will happen during the project. You also agree that I will do observations during the project and use your drawings for discussions as well as reports that I write about the project. If you decide to quit the project, all you have to do is tell me<sup>1</sup>.

Learner's signature: ..... Date: .....

Learner's name: .....

Name of parent/guardian/caregiver: .....

## Appendix A: Permission: access to schools

Department of Humanities Education  
Faculty of Education, Groenkloof Campus, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002  
Republic of South Africa  
Tel: +27 12 420 5639 Fax: +27 12 420 5637

---

30 October 2012

Dear Principal and SGB

### ACCESS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

Thank you for allowing me access to your school to conduct research on the culture that exists within the school.

As stated in our informal meeting, the learners and parents in the classes involved have all received letters of information and letters of consent/assent. As soon as all these signed letters have been received, I will start with the research.

Please be assured of my ethical conduct at all times. If you require further information, please contact me or my supervisor.

Yours sincerely

M K Lebesa  
Master's student  
Tel: 011 746 8164  
Cell: 0827671340

Dr A Engelbrecht (Supervisor)

## Appendix G: Interview schedule for educators

### 1. Experiences within the school

- What are your experiences based on the culture that exists in the school?
- Have stakeholders of the school complained about the culture that exists within the school?
- Do you experience behavioural problems of learners during teaching and learning? How do they behave?
- What disciplinary measures do you apply when learners do something wrong?
- Does a culture of effective teaching exist in the school?

### 2. Expectation in terms of educators in the school

- What are your current and future expectations as a teacher in school?
- Do you work as a team with other educators?
- Do you communicate with learners' parents? How and how often?
- How well do your learners perform in their school work?
- What difficulties do you experience in terms of supporting your learners?

### 3. Curriculum development

- Do you have knowledge of the curriculum that is delivered to learners?
- Is the curriculum content adequate for the needs of the school?
- Have you identified any gaps or limitations in the curriculum?
- Do you attend workshops and in-service training on curriculum matters? How often do you attend?
- What limitations have you encountered in your efforts to implement the curriculum?
- What processes do you use to ensure alignment of the curriculum to the needs of the school?
- Do you prepare lessons individually or as part of a team? Why?
- How often do teachers at your school support one another on curriculum issues?
- Does the principal play a part in planning of the curriculum and assessment of the school?

## Appendix F: Interview schedule for the principal

### 1. Management and leadership

- How do you manage your school?
- What leadership qualities do you apply in your school and how?
- How effective is the school management team and what is their duty?
- What development opportunities does your school organise in learners' academic education?
- What support mechanisms and strategies does your school have in place to sustain an effective school climate?

### 2. Parental involvement

- Do parents contribute to the education of their children?
- Which part of children's education do you think should be the sole responsibility of parents and why?
- What mechanisms and options do you use to communicate with parents for the benefit of the school?
- What obstacles do you experience in promoting parental involvement in supporting learners' academic learning?
- What do you think are the causes of those obstacles?
- How do you overcome those obstacles?

### 3. Educator involvement

- What role do educators play in the education of learners and how?
- How do you support educators in the delivery of the curriculum?
- Is there any team work that you promote among educators and how do you promote this?
- How do you involve all organisational structures in the activities of the school?

### 4. Are there any other comments that you would like to share with me in relation to educators' involvement in learners' academic education?

## Appendix H: Focus group interview protocol (parents of selected grade 7 class)

**Interviewer:** You are all welcome to this focus group discussion session. I would like to thank you for participating in this research. Questions will be asked and I will require responses from all of you, one after the other on your and your children's experiences regarding the culture that exists in the school.

### Question 1: Experiences within the school

- What are your experiences regarding the culture that exists in the school?
- What about the school does your child or children complain about?
- Why are your children attending this school?
- Would you have preferred them to attend a different school? If, so, why?

### Question 2: Expectation in terms of schooling

- What are your present and future expectations for your children in this school?
- Do you assist your children with their school work? If yes, why? And if no, why not?
- Do you advise your children to behave well at school? Why?
- How do your children perform at school?
- Do you communicate with the educators regarding the progress of your child?
- If you are a working parent, how do you schedule your time to assist your child?

### Question 3: Language issues

- Which language do you speak at home and why?
- Is your home language taught at your child's school?
- Do your children experience difficulty in speaking English at home and at school?
- How do you assist your children with the language of instruction?
- What else would you like to ask or say that we have not discussed that you think will help me understand the education of your children?



## Appendix I: Classroom observation schedule

<b>Date:</b>								
<b>Subject:</b>								
<b>Number of learners present:</b>		<b>Number:</b>	<b>Boys:</b>	<b>Girls:</b>				
<b>Number of learners absent:</b>		<b>Number:</b>	<b>Boys:</b>	<b>Girls:</b>				
<b>Time of day:</b>	<b>First period</b>	<b>Before break</b>	<b>After break</b>					
<b>Time:</b>								
<b>Period number:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Time</b>	<b>Observation description</b>				<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Learners</b>		
					Talks	Listens		
					Asks leaners questions	Thinks		
					Waits	Answers teacher's questions		
					Answers own questions	Listens		
					Demonstrates	Observes		
					Asks any question	Responds		
					Writes on the chalkboard	Talks to others		
					Dictates	Copies from the chalkboard		
					Marks exercise books	Makes noise		
					Not in classroom	Plays around		
	Disciplines learners	Responds						

## Appendix J: Guidelines for learners' drawings

### Provision of materials

- Drawing books
- Pencils
- Erasers

### Instructions for drawings

- Make use of the material provided to you
- Your drawings must be clear
- Draw neatly
- Time allocated for you to draw is 30 minutes
- Draw anything that makes you happy in your school
- Draw anything that makes you sad in your school