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Faculty of Education

Supporting parents' needs as educational partners to enhance children's classroom learning

by

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Supervisor: Dr Roy Venketsamy

Declaration

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

....
Denise Miller

13 December 2021

Ethical Clearance Certificate

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"The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research."

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Date: 13 December 2021

Dedication

The researcher's mother and son

I dedicate this research to my mother Christina Miller and my son Christiaan Zukho Miller who were my inspiration for this study. I also dedicate it to the many parents, like myself, who desperately want to support their children's learning but don't know how to.

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To have achieved this milestone in my life, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

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Abstract

Parents have an important role in supporting their children's learning and development. This support is even more crucial and significant when their children enter mainstream schooling. Hoglund, Jones, Brown, and Aber (2015) highlight that parental support to young learners includes several elements. This support includes helping their child with homework, school projects, working in collaboration with the teachers, participating in school events and school governance. Hoglund *et al.,* (2015) agree that parental involvement in schooling is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to the engagement of significant caregivers in the education of their children at home. There is an assumption that most parents are fully aware of how to support their children's learning at home. The focus of this study was to explore the key responsibilities of parents in supporting their children and how they collaborate in partnership with schools to ensure quality support for their children.

This study utilised the conceptual works of Epstein's theory of parental involvement in school and Baumrind's parenting style to promote a relationship of mutual trust, respect and engagement. The focus was to understand and elucidate the support parents need to be partners in their children's education. Two assumptions were made for the application of both frameworks. Firstly, it was assumed that if parents are aware of their own parenting style, they can address some of the challenges they experience in supporting learning activities at home. They can do this by adjusting their own parenting style. Secondly, it was assumed that if parents know how to acquire the necessary skills, they will be able to support their children's learning in partnership with the school. Both frameworks are highly recognised in the field of parenting and home-school partnerships and have been widely applied. This study elucidated their contributions and unpacked what parents need to be partners in the home-school partnership. It pointed to strategies which can be employed by schools to enable parental participation in such home-school partnerships. Both contexts were recognised as important elements to support children's learning success. Therefore, in exploring the primary question of this study, as indicated below, one had to understand which parenting style or styles would enable parents' ability to support their children's learning activities.

Primary question: What support do parents require to form partnerships with schools to support their young learners?

The secondary questions were:

- How can parents and schools work collaboratively to support young learners in order to enhance their academic achievements?
- What support do parents require in their parenting styles to support learners in school?

The fieldwork was done through administering questionnaires targeting parents of children from grades R to grade 2. The questionnaire elicited the real needs and recommendations from parents that can inform different capacity-building strategies.

The learning and insights from this study will be shared as recommendations with the necessary institutions such as schools, institutions of higher learning and the Department of Basic Education. This will be done to highlight what institutional support parents need and the kinds of capacity-building programmes that could help parents to become partners in education. It could also contribute towards developing guidance for practical support activities for all parents who enrol their young children in schools.

Key Terms

Parenting styles, authoritative-, permissive-, authoritarian parenting home-school partnerships, parenting, communication, learning at home

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Name
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Statement Policy
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
DPME	Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
FHH	Female-Headed Households
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
SEIAS	Socio Economic Impact Assessment System
SGB	School Governing Body
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1   INTRODUCTION

It is a widely recognised perspective that parents have an important role in supporting their children's learning and development. Adhering to the advice from one of its greatest leaders, Nelson Mandela, the South African government has taken several policy initiatives to support parents in fulfilling their parental support role towards their children (Gustafsson, 2018; Walton, 2011). However, the question is whether these policy initiatives are manifesting their intention of sustainable, institutionalised practices.

A key role of parents is the support they give their children once they enter the formal schooling system. The Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa 2021, (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2021) recognises the importance of parental role in education and makes an emphatic statement in this regard. The White Paper states that "family is indispensable for education". Several researchers espoused that when parents are actively and positively involved in the lives of their children, particularly educational activities, it will be rewarded by learners achieving higher educational results (Peterson, 2009). Castro, Expósito-Casas, López-Martín, Lizasoain, Navarro-Asencio *et al.,* (2015) recognised that active parental participation in the education of young learners has the possibility to have a broader impact on the living conditions of the child and their families.

In 2016, the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), published extensive guidelines. These guidelines acknowledge the key role of parents in the education of young learners. It provides methods and strategies on how parents can extend this role in collaboration with the school, claiming that parents are the most important partner in a child's education. Successful parental involvement in the child's education means active, ongoing participation of a parent in the education of his or her child." (NECT, 2016: 7).

A concern was raised by a Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) media publication that many South African children between the ages of 0–6, "were growing up in home environments that did not provide for communication or play to stimulate learning" (Stats SA, 2018: 1). This publication was part of the Education Series Volume iv, Early Childhood Development in South Africa. Given this concern, the South African Early Childhood review 2017 articulated the 'essential components' of Early Childhood Development (ECD). According to Hall, Sambu, Berry, Giese and Almeleh (2017), for the optimal development of young children, they require health services, nutrition, primary caregiving and adequate social services. These components are highlighted in Figure 1:

The components of the essential package are:

Maternal and child health services	Nutritional support	Support for primary caregivers	Social services	Stimulation for early learning
Including antenatal care, PMTCT, physical & mental health screening, psychosocial support and immunisation	For pregnant women, mothers and children	Including parenting skills and psychosocial support	Including birth registration, access to social grants, responsive child protection services and psychosocial support	Including access to quality, age-appropriate early learning programmes

Figure 1 Components for young children's' development (Hall et al., 2017)

Two of the key components of ECD are important for this study. In Figure 1., the third component, support for primary caregivers, recognises that children between 0-6 need to have access to caregivers, who have the necessary parenting skills to support their children's psychosocial and basic needs. According to the *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy* the government recognises that "parents bear the primary responsibility for promoting children's development and well-being" (Department of Social Development [DSD], 2015: 22).

Given the above expectation regarding the parental role, it is crucial for parents to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to supporting young learners as they are entering formal school. According to Erikson's (1980) Psychosocial Stage 4: Industry vs. Inferiority, children's development between the ages of five and eleven, is dependent on social interaction. They develop a sense of achievement and are beginning to

recognise and expand their abilities. During this stage, that they are entering formal schooling, the encouragement of parents to assist young learners to develop a conviction of their abilities and skills is important (Erikson, 1980). Learners who receive this positive encouragement from their parents and teachers, develop a conviction of their competence. The unfortunate result for learners who do not receive the encouragement from their parents often doubt their abilities to be successful. A successful balance of parental and teacher support at this stage of psychosocial development of the learner leads to competence. They become resilient with a belief in their abilities to handle the tasks set before them (Erikson, 1980).

The *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy* (2015) further stipulates that the "Government's role is to provide support, capacity development, counselling resources to parents or, primary caregivers to strengthen the nurturing parent-/ caregiver-child relationships" (RSA, 2015: 25). It pertinently points towards government's role through the designated departments. Government is responsible to implement "a number of strategies, including community support groups, parent enrichment programmes, regular clinic visits, media and home visits, or a combination of these" (RSA, 2015: 25). Furthermore, the fifth component as depicted in Figure 1., emphasises the importance for children to access learning programmes. These learning programmes in South Africa are often only accessed by entering the formal schooling system. The formal schooling system includes playschools and preschools. A primary consideration for the educational changes in South Africa is to make schooling more accessible to all children under the age of 18 years (RSA, 2015).

The *Education White Paper 5, Early Childhood Education, Meeting the challenge of early childhood development,* (Department of Education [DoE] (2001), recognised that most parents are trying their utmost to provide for their children, however, approximately "40% of young children in South Africa grow up in conditions of abject poverty and neglect" (DoE, 2001: 5). As a result of these living conditions, many children experience low birthweight and stunted growth. These factors are a direct correlation to young learners struggling to adjust to the school environment, resulting in grade repetition and often

leading to school drop-out. These factors make it essential for the department of education to have "an action plan to address the early learning opportunities of all learners, especially those living in poverty" (DoE2001: 5).

An important intervention for the post-1994 government was to redress the inherited inequalities and to ensure access to schooling. Major social and educational reform were required. Since 1994, the South African government attained several achievements such as "the creation of a single national department of education out of 19 racially, ethnically, and regionally divided departments of education. In this context, it was important to establish a non-discriminatory school condition without barriers to access, especially based on race or religion (Badat & Sayad, 2014; Tikly, 2011). Despite various policy interventions, South Africa is still struggling with equal access to schooling and getting parents involved in schools (Munje & Mncube, 2018; Mncube & Mafora, 2013; Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019).

The *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy* (2015) is supportive of the endeavour by the government to provide equal access to schooling and to involve parents in supporting young learners in school. According to the RSA (2015), ECD centres are defined as environments that provides programmes for the development of young children from birth to the years before formal school. The main focus of these programmes is to ensure that young children are school ready in that they are socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively developed to engage in formal learning. Davids, Samuels, September, Moeng *et al,* (2015), state that the primary consideration of these interventions is to enable the schooling system to have a learner-centred focus. There is a concern about learners' access to learning and development. The custodian of the *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy* is the Department of Social Development. The involvement responsibility and ownership of the Department of Health [DoH] and the DBE are equal in the drafting, developing, and implementing the policy.

The South African School Act No. 84 of 1996, as amended by Act 15 of 2011, focuses on the provision of quality education that will redress past injustices. It further aims to provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners, laying a strong foundation for the development of every individual's talents and capabilities. Furthermore, the Act aims to advance democratic transformation of society, combat poverty, racism and sexism and other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, (RSA , 1996: 1).

It is important to note that the National Development Plan (NDP) (2012), focuses much attention and giving recognition to early childhood education Chapter 9 of the NDP is dedicated to Education, Training, and Innovation. The NDP (2012) requires the following: "Make early childhood development a top priority among the measures to improve the quality of education and long-term prospects of future generations. Dedicated resources should be channelled towards ensuring that all children are well cared for from an early age and receive appropriate emotional, cognitive and physical development stimulation" (National Planning Commission 2013: 12). The above legislative documents provide for parental involvement in supporting young learners in school. The motivation is that it will institutionalise democratic principles in the schooling system. Understanding the home context of young learners and having some impression of the ability of parents to support or not support young learners will give teachers insight as to how important it is to interact with the individual learner and the parents (Gustafsson, 2018)

1.2   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale of the study was motivated by my own experiences. Parents are often called to school and asked why they are not supporting their children at home. The issue is mostly around discipline, attitude of young learners in schools, as well as the child's inability to keep up with the work pace in the class. When I was faced with the same scenario at my son's school, during my meeting with the teacher and the principal, all I could say is 'yes, I will support my child'. Most parents, just like myself, often leave the school not knowing how to support their children. Apart from the disciplinary parental actions at home, parents, similar to me, do not feel adequately equipped to provide

support to our children in school. Parents often struggle with questions such as: What does support actually mean and entail? How do I support my child to acquire the basic life skills to cope with the demands in school? These were questions that often plagued my mind and sometimes as a parent the researcher felt incapable of helping her own child.

I had been ignorant that there were policy documents and guidelines which stipulate the role of the state, and by implication, the school or the district office to enable me as the parent to support my child as a young learner. I assume that this is the experience of many parents. Le Mottee (2016a) observes that little has been done to contribute to parental development, notwithstanding the fact that parental capacity building is a key element towards transforming the ECD sector and by implication the Early Childhood Education (ECE). This argument is supported by Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004a); Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004b); Le Mottee (2016b) and Walton (2011) that parents must be provided with the necessary knowledge and skills if they are to support their children's learning activities at home. This support is crucial seeing that there is evidence that parental involvement tends to decrease when children enter formal schools, (Murray, Laura McFarland-Piazza, & Harrison, 2015). This study therefore investigated what parents need, to enhance their competence to support young learners in the home-school partnership. The significance of this study is that it will empower and capacitate parents with fundamental skills to support their children at home.

1.2.1 Aim

The DBE in collaboration with the NECT, published guidelines indicating the support parents should give learners who are entering school. The aim of the study was to determine:

- What help or support parents require from schools or district offices to support and participate in the home-school partnerships.
- Whether there is any implementation of the policy document that sets out the guidelines for parental support.

1.2.2   Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- Discover how parents and schools can work collaboratively to support young learners with their learning activities.

- Enquire whether parents are exposed to opportunities to learn how to support their children in acquiring the basic life skills and values that the children will need to conform to the world of schooling.

- Understand what support parents require to support their children in their development of necessary skills and values.

- Find out if their parenting styles affect the way they show and give support to their young children.

1.3   PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research was to contribute to the discourse of policy implementation. The focus was on what parents need to meaningfully contribute to the success of their child's academic achievements during the ECD phase. The findings of the research will be shared with schools and district offices, making recommendations on the feasible interventions to capacitate parents to be partners in home-school partnerships. Schools assume that parents are aware of the life skills young learners need to cope in school; and more importantly it is assumed that parents know how to support their children in acquiring these life skills from their own competence in the above areas (Sonnenschein, Stites, & Dowling, 2021).

Children attending preschools are almost guaranteed to receive adequate and appropriate attention to their cognitive development, speech and language, and fine and gross motor skills development. Current training programmes equip early childhood educators with the necessary skills to address these needs. Yet, the importance of the working relationship between the school and parents remains of utmost importance to ensure that children achieve their optimum personal and academic development. Vassallo cited in Singh, Mbokodi & Msila (2004: 303), contends that "parental involvement in a child's education is a strong predictor of learner achievement: typically, the more

involved the parent, the better off the child." This argument is supported by Epstein and Salinas (2004) and Epstein (2018) as she sets out the six different types of parental involvement, which is discussed in detail in chapter three of this study.

1.3.1 Possible contributions of the study

This study supported the argument that parents, and teachers need to work together in supporting the social and emotional development of learners during their early childhood years (Lara, 2019; Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu & Yuan, 2016).

The DBE developed an elaborate set of guidelines to guide parental involvement as prescribed in the *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy* (2015), and the South African Schools' Act of 1996. The contribution of the study is towards policy implementation. It aimed to highlight capacity building needs of parents in supporting their children in academic achievement through mutually supportive home-school partnerships. This intention is set out in the *Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools* (National Education Collaboration Trust, 2016). Yet, there is very little evidence in South African schools of enablement of parents to be involved in their child's learning (Mncube & Mafora, 2013, Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019). The learning and insights from this study will be shared as recommendations with institutions, such as schools, institutions of higher learning, and the DBE. It could highlight the needs of parents with regards to institutional support required to help them build their capacity and ability to support their children's psychosocial developmental needs.

The recommendations are applicable to all parents, whether they agreed to enrol their children in mainstream preschools or special needs school (Walton, 2011; Storbeck & Moodley, 2011). In addition, policy makers can use the findings of this study to determine what could be done in the system. Such programmes can be done in collaboration with parents, schools, institutions of higher learning, and the DBE to ensure that there is systemic support for parents requiring the necessary skills.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The section below presents the primary and secondary research questions.

1.4.1 Primary research question

The primary research question is:

- What support do parents require to form partnerships with educational stakeholders to support their young learners?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

The secondary research questions are:

- How can parents and schools work collaboratively to support young learners with their academic achievements?
- What support do parents require in their parenting styles to support learners in school?

1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

This section sets out the key concepts that will be used throughout this study. It describes the meaning the researcher assigned to each of the concepts to create clarity throughout the study.

1.5.1 Policy implementation

According to Cairney (2019) there is no agreed definition of what policy means. However public policy is essentially "the overall framework within which government actions are undertaken to achieve public goals". The theme of 'action' prevails in the definition of public policy as Cairney (2019: 285) states, it is the "sum total of government action from signals of intent to final outcomes". A public policy indicates what must be done or not done about a specific public aspect. Public policy determines what institutional arrangements are needed for implementation and who will be held accountable for implementation.

In this study, 'policy' refers to documents as published by the South African government guiding the responsibility, intentions, and work on parental involvement in schools to support young learners. The study particularly focused on the following policy documents:

The White Paper on Families in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2012); National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (RSA , 2015); School-Parent-Community Engagement Framework (National Education Collaboration Trust, 2016), and the Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools (NECT, 2016).

1.5.2   Parent

A parent is a caregiver of the child in their own species. In humans, a parent is the caretaker of a child (where "child" refers to offspring, not necessarily age). Parents are recognised as lawful persons who are responsible for the care, welfare and safety of their young children. For the purpose of this study, parents will refer to those parents who have young school going children registered in schools in South Africa. The South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 (RSA , 2005: 24) provides the following explanations with regards to who qualifies to be regarded as parents in South Africa:

> 'parent', in relation to a child, includes the adoptive parent of a child, but excludes:
> (a) the biological father of a child conceived through the rape of or incest with the child's mother; (b) any person who is biologically related to a child by reason only of being a gamete donor for purposes of artificial fertilisation; and (c) a parent whose parental responsibilities and rights in respect of a child has been terminated

As per the Children's Act, (RSA , Children's Act 38, 2005: 19), the study recognised care givers as:

> 'care-giver' means any person other than a parent or guardian, who factually cares for a child and includes— (a) a foster parent; (b) a person who cares for a child with the implied or express consent of a parent or guardian of the child; (c) a person who cares for a child whilst the child is in temporary safe care; (d) the person at the head of a child and youth care centre where a child has been placed; (e) the person at the head of a shelter; (f) a child and youth care worker who cares for a child who is without appropriate family care in the community; and (g) the child at the head of a child-headed household;

Additionally, to the above explanations, the concept 'parent' has also been set out in the South African Schools Act No. 84 (SASA), (RSA , 1996: 4) as amended, the concept parent is set out as;

> (a) The biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a learner;
> (b) The person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or

(c) The person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) towards the learner's education at school.

In relation to the focus of this study and its intention to be inclusive, parents for this study included any person that has been assigned legally, biologically or otherwise to take care of a child.

1.5.3　Support

Support, for this study, focused on the ability of parents to help their children master the required life skills indicated below. DBE and NECT (2016) published a set of guidelines on how parents could become involved in supporting their children at school. It is key to note that in that publication, the DBE also indicated some parental practices at home, which could be to their advantage in supporting children acquire life skills. The publication defines support in multiple contexts, such as, the home and the school.

According to the guideline "parents can support their children's learning at home and throughout the school year as follows: teach their children discipline and routine; develop a partnership with their children's teacher, staff, and the school; understand their children's academic demands; get involved with their children's school; and develop a positive relationship with their children" (DBE and NECT, 2016: 7).

Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017: 137) describe parental support using six factors and six models: "parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community"; and six models: "protective model, expert model, transmission model, curriculum-enrichment model, consumer model, and partnership model of parental involvement". This approach is appreciated as it defines roles and activities for parents who want to support their children.

Hoglund *et al.* (2015: 517) agree that for parents to support their children in school, they have to realise the multiple dimensions it has, and that it involves the "engagement of significant caregivers into the education of their children". Parental support is inclusive of

activities such as supporting their children with homework and interacting with the children's teacher.

1.5.4 Learner

According to the South African Schools Act No. 84 (RSA , 1996: 4,ix) a learner *"means any person receiving education or obliged to receive"*. A learner, given the focus of the study, is a young person between the ages of five and seven who have been enrolled to attend grade R or grade one in South African schools. Bruner (1985) grappled with the notion of how to define a learner. These initial initiatives concluded that there is not a "completely naturalistic way of resolving the question about what model of the learner" (Bruner, 1985: 5) needs to be at the centre of a learning. The notion of a learner is often constructed in the context of learning. In this study, learners are also referenced as young learners. This is to indicate that the study focused on parents with young children attending grades R to grade two. These children (Follari, 2015) are typically between six and eight years, with quantum leaps in their language development, physical growth and coordination, and entering into peer relationships and socialising.

1.5.5 Partner

According to Little (2012), partnership between the school and families can have a whole range of benefits such as:

- the augmentation of the curriculum with complementary content from the home environment such as using family photos to teach reading;
- parents can be supported on how to reinforce concepts which are taught at school;
- communication between the parents and teachers can bring the talents of the learner to the fore and the teacher can use this during the classroom learning activities; and
- teachers can access resources from parents to support continuous learning after the formal classroom activities.

1.5.6 Life skills

According to the DBE (2011) in its National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Life skills as a subject is concerned with the "holistic development of learners. It is concerned with the social, personal, intellectual, emotional, and physical growth of

learners, and with the way in which these are integrated" (DBE, 2011: 8). Therefore, it concentrates on acquiring knowledge, values, and the ability of the child to execute certain activities by focusing learning on "Beginning knowledge, Personal and Social Well-being, Creative Arts and Physical Education" (DBE, 2011: 8). Life skills as set out by the DBE (2011) is supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020: 41) that defines life skills as follows, "Psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life." Furthermore, the organisation identified different skills, which could be included in a life skills programme to support an individual person.

In this study, life skills refer to the ability of a child or individual to think through daily life challenges and tasks, by using creative thinking to solve problems, communicate decisions and cope with emotions.

1.5.7   School

A school is an educational environment whereby young children are enrolled to receive formal education. Schools, in South Africa are either public or independent that accommodate learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. Most South African Public Schools enrol learners from Grade R -12. The South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 views schools as essentially institutions or agencies of education. The National Education Policy Act No 27 of 1996 (RSA , 1996), sees schools as being classified into pre-primary, primary, or secondary school under the management of the Department of Basic Education. For this study this definition is appropriate as it focuses on the primary schools in South Africa, with the focus on the early grades.

1.5.8   Home-school partnership

The National Integrated Plan, (DBE, DSD, DOH and UNICEF, 2005), uses the term family based ECD programmes, emphasising ECD within the community and the provision of support and funding for such programmes. Epstein (2018) and Chen and Gregory (2011) favour the community-school partnership, focusing on the school assisting all families to

create home environments that are conducive to learning and the optimal development of children.

These arguments are problematised by Sedibe (2012), and the possibility and nature of parental involvement in South African schools. For this study, the term home-school partnership is used as it symbolises a breakthrough, away from the distraction of the 'ideal' family. Children are and can be supported by anyone in the community that takes an interest in the child's development and academic and socio-economic development.

1.6   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although there are numerous conversations, academic writing and formal inputs from the DBE regarding parental support in schools, parents still struggle to understand how to actively participate in supporting their children to be successful at school. Epstein's (1995) influential work on parental involvement in supporting their children's academic and social development and achievement in school underpins this study. I agree that it is important for parents to become involved in school and therefore attention needs to be given to how parents and the school can become partners to support learners. Epstein (1995) and Epstein and Salinas (2004) present six types of concrete activities on how parents can become partners with the school. They further advocate that the school, by way of the educators and leadership need to initiate this partnership between the school and the home. These six types of parental involvement are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Epstein's six types of parental involvement in schools

Type	Description
1. Parenting	This factor requires the support for families in their home context. It could involve providing families with parental education, health, nutrition as well as support at points where the children must transition through the different school levels. For South Africa this means from grade R, primary school to secondary school.
2. Communicating	The communication between home and school should be by design and not ad hoc. Therefore, Epstein recommends that communication could include annual conferences between the parent and the school, language translators to ensure that the messaging is understood between the school and the parents and regular notices from the

Type	Description
	school, such as memos, newsletters, and phone calls amongst others.
3. Volunteering	The school should try to determine the competence of parents and how this can be used in school. Parents can then be recruited and organised to help and support in the school. Again, this could be done through a formally organised programme.
4. Learning at home	This factor requires the schools to give families ideas about how they can help their children with homework and other activities related to the curriculum. It could also include aspects regarding homework policies and the skills which learners require to master certain learning areas.
5. Decision-making	Involving parents in the school decision making such as the Parent Teacher Association and getting parents to take leadership roles in the school. It can also include getting involved in the district level advisory committees and councils.
6. Collaborating	This type of involvement includes the school coordinating resources and service from the community and provide these to the community. This essentially means that the school gathers information regarding health services, cultural and recreational, social support programmes, and activities linked to learning skills and talents and then making sure that this information is distributed throughout the school community so that parents are aware of these and make use of it.

Adapted from Epstein (1995, 2018)

Although all six types are important, for the purpose of this study, the focus is on 'parenting'. Therefore, this study will focus particularly on the following three types: parenting, communication, and learning at home, to determine how the system enables parents to become involved in the school. There is continuous focus on the remaining three types in the South African schooling although it may not be perfect (Davids, 2020; Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018). The DBE and the Social Development system in South Africa, legislated and continuously monitors the implementation of communication, decision-making and collaboration with the community.

Epstein and Salinas (2004) argue for the active development of a 'school learning community'. A school learning community includes educators, students, parents, and community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). The school learning community is focused on the development of learning opportunities for the learners in order for them to achieve their best possible academic and personal goals.

In most of the schools, one sees the manifestation of communication from schools with parents through newsletters, open days, parent-teacher meetings, and more recently the application of social media, such as WhatsApp groups. Schools in South Africa employ additional support through funds raised by the Parent Teacher Associations or the School Governing Body (Selolo, 2018). Parents are also recruited to perform certain functions at the school by the above-mentioned structures. The School Governing Bodies in South African schools exercise great authority in schools. The National Education Policy Act (1996) and the South African Schools Act (1996) provide conditions that encourage parents to exercise their authority in the school's decision making and motivating the collaboration between the school and the community. Epstein and Salinas (2004) argue that this could be identified as a 'professional learning community'. Since "a professional learning community emphasises the teamwork of principals, teachers, and staff to identify school goals, improve curriculum and instruction, reduce teachers' isolation, assess student progress, and increase the effectiveness of school programs" (Epstein & Salinas, 2004: 12).

This study is concerned with the 'learning school community'. The argument for this study is that the schooling system in South Africa has not yet mastered how to support parents with parenting skills to support learning, communication with parents regarding learning, and enabling parents to implement learning at home. In preparation for this study, it became obvious that for parents to engage with the recommendations as set out by Epstein and others (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Caño, Cape, Cardosa, Milot, Pitogo *et al.,* 2016), attention has to be given to parenting styles. To address this element, the research turned to Baumrind's model on parenting styles.

Baumrind advocates for an understanding of the different parenting styles and its effects on children's development (Baumrind, 2013; Baumrind, 1972; Baumrind, 1997). Baumrind, a prolific researcher and writer of this topic, argues for three distinct styles of parenting namely authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Baumrind based her typology on interviews and observations with families and children, as well as the longitudinal studies on children both from 1964 to 1968 (Baumrind, 1994;).

Her research focused on the behaviour of parents and how it could be linked to the child's behaviour and attitudes. It must be noted that her study was done with Caucasian families. Baumrind (1994) made an analysis on the patterns of parental styles of African American families 'viewed by white norms' (Baumrind, 1994: 1). The analysis brought different findings, and authoritarian parenting styles manifested different behaviour, especially in girls. In chapter three of this study, a critique of Baumrind's parenting style findings in relation to different cultures is offered (Chen & Gregory, 2011; Moore & Lewis, 2012; Johnson, 2015). Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded on the three-category typology as espoused by Baumrind and added the uninvolved parenting style
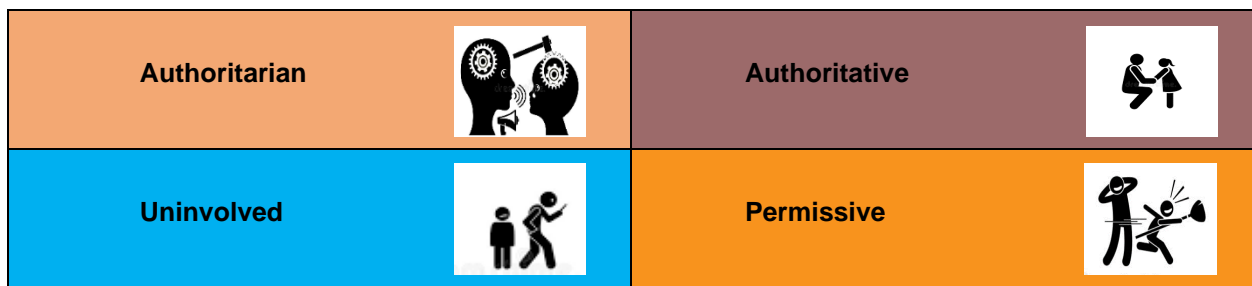
Figure 2 Parenting styles
Adapted from: https://www.dreamstime.com/illustration/authoritarian-parenting.html, accessed 19 June 2021

Baumrind (1994); provides the following systematic categorisation of parenting styles and their effect on children as follows:

Table 2 Parenting styles and the effect on children

Parenting	Styles	Characteristics
Authoritarian	Directive but not intrusive Directive and intrusive	Highly demanding Demands obedience Don't provide explanation Structured environment Clearly stated rules

Parenting	Styles	Characteristics
Authoritative	Assertive but not intrusive Not restrictive	Demanding and responsive Monitor Impart clear standards Supportive rather than punitive Want assertive behaviour Socially responsible Self-regulated and cooperative
Indulgent	Permissive Non-directive	More responsive than demanding Lenient Do not require mature behaviour Avoid confrontation Allow considerable self-regulations
Uninvolved	Neglectful	Low responsiveness Little demandingness

Adapted from Baumrind 1994

1.7   RESEARCH DESIGN

1.7.1   Phenomenological assumptions

The qualitative interpretivist paradigm was the most appropriate method to conduct this study. The researcher as a single parent experienced the challenges of supporting her child with learning activities. She therefore immersed herself in the phenomenon of requiring parental support. The qualitative interpretive paradigm allowed the research to acknowledge the multiple realities, that were shared by the participants of the same phenomenon. According to DeForge and Shaw (2012) qualitative researchers also operated under different ontological assumptions about the world.

As supported by Goertz and Mahoney (2012), often these assumptions are implicit with different understandings of reality linked to specific experiences. There are also different considerations of what knowledge is and how to gain knowledge. It is important to understand that one's assumptions are based on their own perceptions and therefore there is not a singular reality for all (Crotty, cited in Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) identified several assumptions: firstly, human beings make meaning of the world in which they live; secondly, they do this founded on their 'historical and social' perspectives; and thirdly, meaning is dependent on social interaction amongst humans. According to

Creswell (2014) assumptions can be made about the micro-processes to determine broader structural questions about a phenomenon and argues that phenomenology is qualitative research that assists researchers to make meaning of the lived experiences of individuals. It is about making meaning of the phenomenon as described by those with the lived experience.

Through the use of open-ended questions, the participants were given an opportunity to share their views and lived experiences of how they managed to support their learners academically. This study aimed to gain an in depth understanding of the context in which the participants interact and communicate with the schools. The data collected through the responses of the participants was interpreted and analysed, which is presented in chapters five and six.

I went through the processes of determining how I, as a parent, need to be enabled to support my son to be better socialised into the organisational and learning demands of the school. I assumed that many parents who have to support their children to assimilate into a schooling environment also find it a very complex and disconcerting experience. In qualitative research, the researcher is often immersed in the context of the study. In this instance, the researcher was motivated because of her own lived experiences and wanting a broader understanding of the phenomenon (Gubbins & Otero, 2020; Porumbu & Necşoi, 2013; Pérez, 2006; Pensoneau-Conway & Toyosaki, 2011). Due to my lived experiences, I as the researcher was immersed in the research and I am using this study to also reflect on my own experiences.

This positioning of the researcher is described by Maree (2016) the qualitative researcher is a reflexive practitioner, aware of his or her own political and cultural perspectives, yet willing to engage in self-questioning and self-understanding. I further assumed that this process could have been less anxious if I had some knowledge and skills, which enabled me to deal with learner support. Ideally, such knowledge is to be articulated on aspects such as, non-discriminatory practices and attention to individual child development. These assumptions need to be made explicit should there be any support planned and

implemented for parents (Epstein, Sanders & Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2002).

Another aspect of this study was to ascertain how policy implementation can enable parents to support young learners with life skills in school. According to Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004: 303), "Parental role in education is crucial in ensuring the success of the learners". This study also recognised that the success of parental involvement is affected by individual interactions, the social, economic and historical context and background of the participants.

It was important to use open-ended prompting questions to help participants to create their lived experiences. These experiences presented by the participants needed to be analysed to establish if there were any discernible practices which could be replicated to enhance the capacity of parents to support young learners in school. The research methodology chosen for this study provided the opportunity for the researcher to create meanings from the various lived experiences of the participants. These experiences enhanced this study in the findings section. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity to analyse the data inductively from which key factors could be composed, recognising the complexity presented through the diversity of the individual experiences (Creswell, 2014).

1.7.2   Research methodology

The research methodology was determined by the nature of the phenomenon that was investigated. Parents expressed a variety of realities; therefore, the qualitative research method was most appropriate for this study. A narrative research methodology was employed since human beings are story tellers. This study capitalised on the narratives (stories) the participants shared. Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013) stated that researchers have the impression that with narrative research, one can discover different tiers or levels of comprehending people's meaning making of their own experiences. These layers may all have different meaning and may be contradictory to one another. Furthermore, it enables the researcher to know "who produces them, and by what means, the mechanisms by which they are consumed, how narratives are silenced, contested or

accepted" (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013: 2). The intention was to elicit the lived experiences from different parents of how and by whom they are being supported in the home-school partnership. The collection and analysis of the experiences and stories as told by the parents are both the phenomenon and the method (Creswell, 2014).

The open-ended prompting questions helped participants to create their narratives, thus providing the researcher the opportunity to succinctly read each individual response during the transcription and coding process. The concerted decision to adopt this particular research methodology assisted with making meaning from the various lived experiences of the participants. In the analysis of the data, trends were identified, which considered the nuanced stories of the participants based on the diversity of their individual experiences (Creswell, 2014).

The social constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2014) allowed the researcher to explore multi-layered interpretations of the parents' experiences that were of interest and relevance to the research study. It assisted in understanding how parents make meaning of their experiences, particularly in supporting their children with development of life skills, in pursuit of their assimilation into the organisational and cultural demands of the school. The research aimed at interpreting the parents' experiences and creating knowledge from these to share with others (Höijer, 2008). This knowledge can then be advocated to the DBE and other relevant stakeholders on how to practically support parents to support their children's success in learning and development.

According to Yang (2011) the basic tenet of 'constructivism' is that knowledge is a 'constructed reality' whereby we imposed meaning upon the actual world in ways that seem familiar and 'understandable' in ways that 'fit' what we understand already". The open-ended, semi-structured interviews enabled the creation of knowledge from the lived experiences of the participants, namely the parents of the study. This meant the different experiences of how parents support their children are told by parents, and in telling their experiences, they created their own stories.

Essentially, it focused on creating knowledge which can be used by other parents to support their children in developing life skills to enable their learning and development in school. The constructivism view assisted in respecting the multiple layers of the knowledge. Yang (2011) argues that "the constructivist view has altered the previously unshakable acceptance of the positivistic world view. It has also been the cornerstone for qualitative research of which narrative inquiry is a part" (Yang, 2011: 207). My concern was with the experiences of parents and not a search for the truth. It is about making meaning and the creation of knowledge; "a storied construction of reality has less to do with facts and more to do with meaning" (Yang, 2011: 209). The researcher stated that "even in identifying trends in the experiences of parents it became important to acknowledge and to 'remain open' for particularities across individuals".

1.7.3   Data collection

The targeted audience were parents with children in the foundation phase (grades R-2). The intention was to provide parents with an opportunity to identify and determine what skills they require to support their children with learning activities at home. The research aimed to investigate whether parents experience themselves as recognised partners in their children's learning (Caño *et al.*, 2016; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Data was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed using the Google forms platform. This gave access to the participants in this study and encouraged parents to write their experiences. Participants could respond to close and open-ended questions relaying their experiences. This meant that participants could decide how they wanted to respond and the length of their responses. The narrative methodology is not only through the spoken word but through different media, including writing (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). It was then possible to read their responses and elicit trends which responded to the research question. As explained by McAlpine (2016) the narrative approach provides for the stories of the different participants to be acknowledged, valued, and presented. Therefore, there may be multiple ways of understanding a phenomenon. This makes for a more rich and varied way of understanding individually and collectively.

1.7.4   Data analysis

The data was analysed using phenomenological analysis processes. These processes helped with making meaning of the lived experiences of the participants. It also enabled engagement with data as presented by participants who shared their lived experiences (Larkin, Shaw & Flowers, 2019; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). By applying these processes, it enabled the deduction of parents' experiences regarding supporting their children with learning activities and the outcomes thereof. The analysis of the data was guided by the process as set out by Nieuwenhuis (2016) and McMillan and Schumacher (2014). The following phases were implemented in the data analysis process:

- All participants were formally invited to participate in this study. The purpose of the study was explained to each of the participants.
- To ensure reliability of the data, all interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The recordings assisted in transcribing the data correctly. The researcher listened to the recordings several times before beginning the transcription process – this was to ensure that the recordings were transcribed correctly and not subjectively.
- The researcher spent several hours reading through each of the responses to become familiar with the issues raised by the parents before the coding started.
- Data interpretations - to determine and deduce the key parental development aspects which can be replicated in a parental development programme.

The researcher was also constantly aware of her central role in this inquiry, as she was, and still is immersed in the experiences of the participants.

According to McAlpine (2016), a common practice is for instance, for collaborative documents such as letters, diaries, logs amongst others, to be included as part of the text. It is important to note the plausibility the enquiry draws from making meaning of the whole story and not only highlighting parts of it into themes and sub-themes. The intention is not to tell a story based on cause and effect only, but to draw out the factors, creating the comprehensive picture from these stories

The validity and the reliability of the research study is determined by how accurately the experiences of the participants were captured. According to Creswell (2014), validity in qualitative research is about how accurate the research findings were from the researcher, participant, or readers perspective. The method used to determine validity in this study was triangulation. The researcher should triangulate the different responses of the parents with one another. Furthermore, it was important that the researcher be open regarding her own experience with the phenomenon of supporting her child in school. This was to create openness and trust, ensure that the transcripts honestly and correctly reflect the participants' experiences, determine the categorisation, remain truthful to these, and record discrepant information should it present itself (Creswell, 2014).

1.7.5 Units of analysis and research site

The participants of the study included the parents of children attending formal school - grades R to grade two. The interest was in the experiences of the individual parent who must support the child with schoolwork and create a safe home environment. The unit of analysis was selected using purposive sampling. The unit of analysis was specified by looking at a purposefully selected sample of parents who had children in grade R or in the foundation phase in school. The reason for selecting this unit of analysis was that the experiences of parents of foundation phase learners were relatively recent.

1.8 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Given the nature of this inquiry, the role of the researcher is central. The motivation of the study was born from the challenges I had when my son's behaviour and his erratic academic achievements compelled the teacher to call me for a parent-teacher meeting. The result of these meetings was always a stern request from the teacher for me to support my child. This experience brought multiple emotions within me, which first made me feel paralysed as I did not exactly have the answers in terms of the path of action which I could take. Secondly, it made me feel that there was an unfair expectation on me to support my child with schoolwork. It was as if when teachers experience challenges with learners in the classroom the first 'port of call' is the parent.

The assumption was that many other parents shared similar experiences regarding supporting their child in school. This role for the researcher was quite acceptable in this inquiry. Creswell (2014: 177) stated this introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the qualitative research process. According to Simon (2011) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the researcher is regarded as an instrument of data collection and the mediator of the data. With these concerns in mind, the inquirers explicitly and reflexively identified their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socio-economic status that may shape their interpretations formed during a study.

1.9   QUALITY CRITERIA

According to Yang (2011), the criteria still hold true in that the quality can be assessed whether it finds resonance, rhetoric, empowerment, and applicability rather than generalisability. Therefore, for this study the initial criteria of 'apparency and plausibility' sufficed. It was important for me to keep interpretations of the experiences open, to explore and not to force a specific answer and trend from these.

Di Fabio and Maree (2012) recognise that trustworthiness can be identified by the following characteristics: data collection methods; the organisation of the data; and the way data is classified. Trustworthiness of the research is further identified by its dependability, credibility, transferability, and conformability. To this end, Di Fabio and Maree (2012: 140) provides the following explanations of the above concepts:

- *Dependability* refers to whether there is consistency and stability in the research methods throughout the duration of the research time. Therefore, the researcher must ensure that the questions are relevant to the research intention, and attention given to the quality of the transcription and documentation of the data.
- The *credibility* of the data point to whether any significant results could be deduced from the data. It addresses issues regarding what measures the researcher had taken to ensure that there is no bias or unfairness during the analysis of the data and that the authenticity of the data and process is safeguarded.

- *Transferability* is an important aspect in social research as it is about what positive change can result from the research. It is important then to be ensured that the research is of such quality that is applicable in other contexts and that results could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and people.
- *Conformability* refers to the degree the results could be supported and verified by others. Qualitative researchers assume that each research study has its unique perspective and lens through which the phenomenon is viewed. It is a possibility to conduct a data audit to show that there is conformability. Such an audit will examine the data collection and analysis procedures and determine the potential for bias or distortion.

1.10   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research was conducted with the necessary ethical considerations. Therefore, I obtained informed consent from all prospective participants to make public some of their narratives in their own words and as inferred by me. I maintained the confidentiality of participants and requested for voluntary participation in the study. Furthermore, I also had to ensure that participants were fully informed of the purpose of the research as well as being explicit on any partiality, if any, from my side. It was also important to ensure that the interviews were done at the convenience of the prospective participants. The proposal for this study was subjected to the University of Pretoria's Ethics committee.

1.11   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The inquiry was through a questionnaire. The limitation of this method is recognised as participants were dependent on questions and how they were framed, to prompt their responses. The generalisability of the trends throughout the different responses were observed in the analysis of the responses (Simon & Goes, 2013; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). I focused on the content and meaning of the narratives. This in itself created a limitation in the analysis of this research study. I was aware that the meaning making process was continuous throughout as I interacted with the theories and responses of the participants (Manning & Kunkel, 2014). This acknowledged that doing qualitative research will only present a snapshot of the reality at the time. As indicated by Manning & Kunkel

(2014: 435), "meaning is always in flux and continuously changing as people interact and exchange ideas." Research eventually was a 'co-construction' of meaning by both the researcher and participants.

1.12   SUMMARY

This chapter articulated the intention of the research and how it is informed by a qualitative research paradigm. It sets the choice of theoretical framework and data collection method. This was done against the formulated research questions and key concepts that were applied throughout this study.

1.13   OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

This chapter provides an overview of the enquiry which is inclusive of the purpose of the research, research approach and methodology. It also provides some explanation of the research process which was followed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides succinct explanations and analysis of the existing literature on the phenomenon of parenting styles and home–school relationships

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides detail on the theoretical framework underpinning this research study. The research study applied the work of Epstein and Salinas (2004) focusing on the partnership between the school and the family, as well as Baumrind's four styles of parenting, and how parents' awareness of these can assist them in supporting their children in educational activities.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter provides more detail on how the data collection methodology fits into the narrative research framework and qualitative research approach. It establishes the correlation between the data collection strategy and that of the purpose of the enquiry.

Chapter 5: Analysis and results

This chapter presents an analysis of the data. It focuses on the emerging factors, indicating their interdependence, as experienced by parents and what it was that could be learnt from these.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions which could be gleaned from the data. It discusses the possible contribution to knowledge generation, the recommendations from this, as well as the limitation that it presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one provided an overview of the research study and set out the purpose and key questions for the study. This chapter explores the literature regarding the guidance parents need to support their children with learning activities. In my opinion, the working relationship or partnership between the school and parents is imperative in supporting children to achieve their optimal potential. This is clearly articulated in the Bill of Rights Section 28 and 29 pertaining to children's rights to education. The Bill further stipulates that the state should ensure the these rights of children are implemented (Constitution, 1996). This chapter focuses on four key areas of literature, highlighting the views and impressions of other researchers and practitioners in relation to the research questions. To answer the research questions as set out in Chapter one, I wanted to expand my own understanding on; the school as social construct, parent-school partnership experiences, the involvement of parents in the education of their children, and the role of government supporting parents in South Africa to get involved in their children's learning. These broad areas were then used to determine the questionnaire and interview questions for the participants.

2.2 SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

The notion of the school as a social construct is an important element in this study. It assists in locating the core argument of how parents can be empowered to participate in the education of their children. Social construction is defined as: "A concept or perception of something based on the collective views developed and maintained within a society or social group, a social phenomenon or convention originating within and cultivated by society or a particular social group, as opposed to existing inherently or naturally". (Oxford Living Dictionary, 2017). The social construction affects varied facets of our lives, as society had been and is still shaped by different imperatives, and thus the social construction of the target population framework can be used to describe how policy affects the lives of the people. Vygotski (1929) states that social construction in relation to the school, is being shaped by legislative, political, and social agendas through different

policy developments. Children's learning is shaped by these and all who interact with them in the learning process. In this regard, education offered by formalised schooling is constructed on a conviction that, through education one can obtain a level of success in life.

Through this attainment and with a higher level of education, individuals can access better jobs and be remunerated appropriately. Orozco (2015) agrees that education, when socially constructed through different democratic policy interventions, creates a competitive world where there is a separation of social status. This is a particular question when one views the impact of policy, which arguably has to advance all and address issues of social justice. However, seemingly it tends to benefit those groups who have more, as opposed to groups in society who have less. This sentiment is expanded by Vally (2018:10) that the "quality of learning and teaching, social justice, democracy and human rights are compromised for many of South Africa's citizens" Badat and Sayed (2014) argue that key strategies are required to address the systemic crises of inequality in South African schools.

According to Rogers (2017) and Subedi (2014), there has to be a distinction between the school as the insular, individualised institution; and the school as a community that embraces its transformational role, and therefore parents and other stakeholders as partners. Rogers (2017) agrees that the school is a social construct that promotes learning and participation of stakeholders. As debated by Rogers (2017), to achieve this, the school has to be differently organised, dismantling separation and nurturing cooperation beyond the wall of the classroom and the physical boundaries of the school. Through this thinking, parents can fulfil their critical role in supporting their children with learning activities.

There is consensus (Baumrind, Larzelere & Owens, 2010; Epstein, 1986; Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas *et al.*, 2018) that parents are the first 'educator and mentor' of their children. For this reason, it will be important to enable and empower parents to support their children to enter formal schooling and straddle the culture of

acquiring knowledge and skills in school in comparison to the learning at home. Empowering parents with the capability to support learners will be particularly important if Rogers' argument is followed, that the school, in its current format, is constructed to offer a curriculum 'as a one-size fits all intervention' (Rogers, 2017).

It is argued that educators create inclusivity and opportunities for learners to expand their academic knowledge and their skills in safe classrooms. Teachers try to establish a connection with the individual children's values, norms and behaviours with that of themselves. These values and norms are relatively established through parental intervention by the time the child enters school (Baumrind, Larzelere & Owens, 2010; Epstein, 1987). It can be argued that parents play a crucial supportive role in the education of their children and therefore it is imperative that they are enabled, empowered and capacitated to improve the quality of support to their children.

Vincent (2013) argues that this enablement is through constructing the roles of parents, their awareness of efficacy and being invited to become involved. This model of parental involvement is premised on the supposition of what parents believe they can and should do in supporting their children's education. This involves parents' ability to communicate with educators, to support educators and to improve teaching and learning. In the study, Vincent (2013) found that respectful, collaborative and participatory support from both parents and educators in the formal educational process is required to support learning and building a nurturing and inclusive environment for families in the school.

2.3 HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

The researcher is convinced that to understand the required capabilities of parents to support their young children, one has to investigate the phenomenon of how parents can render the support to young learners and thus, what their role would be in the partnership. For any parent it is quite a daunting task to live up to these expectations by schools. According to Vincent (2013), this can be especially daunting as there are often so many physical signs creating a distinction between school and home.

Typical signs that parents could come across at schools are shown in Figure 3 below:

Staff Only

Parents must register at the office

No parents beyond this point

Figure 3 Typical signs found at schools

According to Coleman (2018), there is no standard practice of enabling parents or teachers on how this partnership should or could work in practice. This working relationship, which I would like to articulate as a partnership between the home and school, is nuanced and complex more so than what one initially anticipated it to be. Rodriguez, Blatz and Elbaum (2014) agree that the home situation of parents are diverse and standard strategies may not be suitable for all parents.

Coleman (2018); Mendez (2010) and Robinson and Volpe (2015) found that many parents of school-going children, especially during early childhood education, are either in fulltime employment or unemployed. Therefore, these parents are within the ambit of the group of parents that can easily be marginalised. The reasons for exclusion of this group of parents in the home-school partnership may be for different reasons. As these reasons could be impacted by factors such as time or language barriers. In order to begin to understand how the state can support the enablement of parents in participating in the home-school partnership, it will be imperative to unpack the different and sometimes diverse definition of the home-school partnership.

Antony-Newman (2019a) recognises that the phenomenon of parental involvement in the education of their children are generally viewed from different perspectives. These perspectives are identified as involvement for achievement, involvement as capital, and involvement for equity with the involvement for achievement perspective as the dominant approach (Antony-Newman, 2019b). Parental involvement to support academic achievement was my dominant motivation for doing this study on parental involvement. The researcher also recognised that other psychosocial needs such as self-esteem,

belonging and feeling cared for, for parental involvement have been identified. It appears that such needs are downplayed even in government policies. This argument is supported by Stitt and Brooks (2014) who state that in the current era of accountability, educational reform policy and curricula are tailored more than ever to the growth and development of a student as measured only through improvement of standardised test scores.

Antony-Newman's (2019a) argument for parental involvement as capital, draws on the original research of Bourdieu (1986). He argued that cultural capital already distinguishes between the opportunities, as well as the nature of the opportunities by parents to be involved in the schooling of their children. Hill (2017) agrees that education systems are organised according to social classes within a society that has an impact on educational achievement. The researcher agrees that parents, with more cultural capital in capitalist societies, such as in South Africa, are very involved in the school. They influence the dominant practices in the school as these very often mirror their own values.

On the other hand, the cultural capital of poor parents is often devalued as these are not viewed as desirable by the dominant group in the school. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) as well as Vincent (2013) recognise that this differentiation on how parents are viewed by the school has a direct impact on the partnership and relationship between the school and parents. Differences based on social class permeate the culture of parenting in profound ways, affecting the behaviour of parents at home, in school, and in the community, according to Antony-Newman (2019a). The researcher is of the opinion that if it is expected of parents to be involved in the education of their children, then their agency should be recognised. This should not be dependent on the social and economic standing of parents in the school community. In this instance I use agency to describe the choice individual parents make to participate in the home-school partnership and their ability to challenge the dominant status quo. It is also about the right of parents to demand equity in the partnership with the school and how the school engages with parents regarding participating in school events, supporting their children with learning activities, fundraising and fulfilling school governance roles, amongst others (Johnson & Dempster, 2014; Vincent, 2013).

Doucet (2011) identifies that parental involvement is a component of a ritual system, symbolising a particular construction. It can be argued that parental involvement is orchestrated in such a manner that parents have to subscribe to the dominant model prevailing in the school culture. DeMatthews, Edwards Jr and Rincones (2016); Ishimaru, Lott, Fajardo and Salvador (2014) and Jones (2013) state that this often happens in a context where there are already evident inequalities amongst children in terms of them being linguistically, culturally and socio-economically diverse.

Doucet (2011) further problematises the term parental involvement, arguing that it is rather a limited way of defining the home-school partnership and puts forward an alternative definition which could be regarded as more inclusive. In this regard, the terms such as family involvement, home-school relations or partnerships are offered as alternatives. Mendez (2010) explicates that it brings a consciousness of the importance of the use of inclusive language in supporting parents to become involved, as it acknowledges diversity in family forms and in who takes responsibility for child-rearing Doucet (2011) and LaRocque (2013) state that parent involvement narrowly constructs who engages specifically with children's education and schooling. Similarly, according to Fitriah, Sumintono, Subekti, and Hassan (2013), the parental participation concept has become widely used in academic writing to the point that it is being regarded as the ultimate solution to many complex development challenges. Yet, it is important that the issue of power in this relationship is acknowledged and understood (Jones, 2013). The uneven balance of power in this home-school partnership makes it challenging or even impossible for parents to participate (Murray, McFarland-Piazza & Harrison, 2015). The researcher concurs, as the educators and the management team representing the school carries the formal authority, supported by government and legislation and tend to engage from that position of authority with parents.

Taylor (2015) argues that parents enter these partnerships knowing that their children's behaviour may not subscribe to the school's code of conduct; thus making them feel uncertain of their role and responsibilities in this partnership. The researcher concurs that this power relationship is often demonstrated when parents are invited to the school to

discuss issues related to their children and especially when the discussion is focused on the child's behaviour. As argued by Santana, Rothstein and Bain (2016), in a relationship between a layperson and professional person the power of the questions usually resides in the hands of the professional.

Gubbins and Otero (2020) expand on the above argument that the interaction of parents and children at home have a noteworthy impact on how parents interact with the school and the performance of learners at school especially during the first five years of schooling. According to Gubbins and Otero (2020), they refer to the interaction between the home and the school as parental engagement. According to the authors, this difference between these two concepts is that 'Parental Engagement' is about the demands determined by the school on parents, whereas 'Parental Involvement' is the willingness and commitment by parents to be responsive to these identified support needs once it has been negotiated between the school and the parents.

For the purpose of this study both of these were important as in my experience the 'Parental Engagement' is usually articulated to parents during schools' open days and parent orientation sessions at the commencement of each school year. With this knowledge and expectations from the schools, Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Hayes, O'Toole, and Halpenny (2017) confirm that parents begin to support their children's learning needs at home through their own commitment, to work in partnership with the school. The parental involvement at home is often based on what parents deem to be necessary, as well as the parents' abilities to provide this support (Coleman, 2018; Goodman & Goodman, 2013). These abilities of parents manifest itself from an academic support ability or financial ability to buy-in academic support. Parents want to have a sense that their involvement is meaningful and that they contribute to the academic achievement of their children (Georgis, Gokiert, Ford & Ali, 2014; Susperreguy, Di Lonardo Burr, Xu, Douglas & LeFevre, 2020). To this end, Gubbins and Otero (2020) argue that parental involvement in the schooling process of their children can be clarified by studying three perceived determinants of how parents will become involved, namely:

- Parents' perception of the academic abilities of their children which influences their expectations that their children have the potential for academic achievement.
- Parents think that they could effectively support their children's academic achievement on their own without major engagement from the school.
- Use of readily available resources to support their children so that the children can meet their expectations.

School and family or parental partnership is clearly a complex relationship. Lemmer, (2013;) agrees that this relationship needs careful management by the school management team to ensure that such a programme is inclusive. The intention of such a programme is for all parents in the school to become optimally involved. I concur that parental involvement programmes should ideally translate into a home-school relationship where parents and educators are equal partners, with each operating within their own respective means and abilities.

2.4   INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

2.4.1   International Perspective

According to research by Antony-Newman (2019a), parents' involvement in the education of their children found that there is uneven distribution in terms of class, race and gender. He further stated that there is structural inequality in governmental policies that affect family practices legitimising some and pathologising others, and thus having a significant consequence for children's education. Heckman (2011), and Antony-Newman (2019 b) concur that government policies are problematic as some can even be contradictory towards parental involvement. If these policies accommodate and recognise parents, then schools will make a more concerted effort to get parents involved in supporting their children.

The concept of parental involvement in education, according to Hindle, Hynds, Averill, Meyer and Faircloth (2017) has to go beyond academic support. Antony-Newman (2019a) states that schools often neglect the cultural and lived experiences of parents when partnering together to support children. He states that it is pertinent to take into

consideration the social, cultural and economic factors of parents. These factors impact on the kind of support parents provide for their children. According to the researcher in some cultures there is limited parental support while in others there are extreme levels of support.

Johnson and Dempster (2014) and Johnson (2015) found that parental involvement in the schools very often happens on the terms, conditions and rules set by the school. When parents are not aware of these terms, the conditions and rules then seem to be a conflict of interest and involvement between the parent and the school. Doucet (2011) argues that when there is a conflict of interest between the school and parents, parents are seen to be critical of how the school is managed. According to my personal experience, I had faced such a situation whereby it was implied that I was a difficult parent. Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) state that school principals should make concerted efforts to get parents involved in the education of their children. In this way parents become partners in education and schooling. To encourage parents to become fully involved in the school Epstein (1986), Epstein and Salinas (2004) and Epstein and Van Voorhis (2002) agree that schools should plan and invite parents to information-sharing sessions sharing with them methods on how to support classroom activities. Schools can also make use of newsletters and other social platforms to involve parents in their activities (Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010).

According to my personal experience, there is no space for parents to question activities and processes in the school without being challenged in a way which makes parents feel as if it is not the right thing to do. In this extensive meta-synthesis study involving research studies on this phenomenon in countries on the continents such as North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, Antony-Newman (2019b) highlights the impact of 'lack of proficiency in the dominant language in the school'. Doucet (2011) concurs that language is a debilitating barrier to many parents. Often in communities, parents may not be confident to speak to teachers and principals who they regard as highly educated. Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2016) and Antony-Newman (2019b) agree that the language barrier is an impeding factor to parental involvement and 'makes the home-school

communication less frequent and comprehensive', yet this can change when there are similarities in the ethnolinguistics of parents and teachers.

Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) found that in Australian public schools, through policy changes, school principals are held responsible for ensuring that parents are enabled to support young learners. This policy change coincided with a movement by the Australia Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations towards increasing school autonomy and thus bringing about significant changes in the roles of the principal. The aim of the policy change intends to focus on the principal being accountable and central to the school becoming a successful, flexible, learning organisation. The notion of parent support to participate in partnership with the school is governed by *The Family School Partnerships Framework – A Guide for Schools and Families.* This guide was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations to focus on the involvement of parents in the learning activities of their children (DEEWR, 2008). According to Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) the guide is assisting school principals with the required guidance to ensure that parents are enabled and capacitated to participate in school activities. In South Africa, the South African Schools Act also encourages principals and schools to engage parents to become active participants in the activities of the schools (RSA, 1996). Parents are encouraged to do voluntary service in the school and to support the principal and educators to fulfil their professional tasks.

Ellis, Lock and Lummis's (2015) study on parental involvement in Australian schools using the categorisation system, found that parents and teachers understand different perspectives of what they regard as 'collaborative and non-collaborative practices'. The identification of these practices is based on the different actions as depicted in Table 3:

Table 3 Australian categorisation of parental involvement (Ellis, Lock & Lummis, 2015)

Categories	Action/Behaviour
Collaborative Practices which include positive actions	Approachability, honesty, listening, relationship, sharing information, support, resources and working together

Non-Collaborative Practices which include actions that may be less satisfactory	Emotive behaviour, lack of information, lack of support and inapproachability

In the engagement relationships between teachers and parents, either parties can view these engagements as satisfactory or less satisfactory. The categories and actions in Table 3 provide the respective parties (teachers and parents) with the language to articulate the engagements, which may or may not be helpful. It could also help to further understand what can be done to improve the parent-teacher relationship to support the learner. Ellis, Lock and Lummis (2015) illustrate that in terms of working together, parents aimed to build a more personal relationship with the teachers, whereas the teachers wanted to engage in a more professional relationship. In a study of parental involvement in Chile; Lara and Saracostti (2019) use five areas to measure parental involvement and three categories to indicate the level of parental involvement. Adapting the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler scale to the Chilean context, the researchers measured parental involvement with the children's learning using five areas as shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4 Five focus areas of parental involvement in Chile (Lara & Saracostti, 2019)

Category	Areas of parental involvement
Home involvement	In this instance someone in the family gets involved in the child's school activities at home and supports the child in varied activities be it reading support, studying or project work.
School involvement	The parent attends parent teacher association meetings or annual general meetings hosted by the school
Child's invitation	The parent is approached by the child and requests support be it on the request by the teacher or motivated by the child's need to be supported in a school activity.
Teacher's invitation	The parent is approached by the child's teacher to either participate in some activity at school or to have a conversation with the child about her/his day at school.
General school invitation	This is for more general activities in the school, which may include participation in fundraising or sporting activities.

Lara and Saracostti (2019: 4) further categorised parental involvement into high, medium and low. Their findings on parental involvement have shown a positive impact in Chile. They refer this impact to 'evaluation of learning outcomes'. The more parents were involved with the school, as well as the parents' educational level, the higher the level of

positivity in the child's self-esteem and learning (Perez-Fuentes, Molero Jurado, Gázquez Linares, Oropesa Ruiz, Simón Márquez *et al.,* 2019).

2.4.2 South African Perspective

There has been a keen interest in parental involvement in school in post-1994 South Africa, and key legislation was introduced to give effect to parental involvement in schools (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004a; Msila, 2012). In this section, the researcher would like to expand on what the literature presents on the current status regarding parental involvement in South African schools.

2.4.3 Policy overview

The promulgation of the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), which had been effective since 1997, gave parents the legal responsibility to be actively involved in the education of their children. SASA provided for the establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs) in public schools. This legal provision mandated the involvement of parents in the academic progress of their children as well as school governance. SASA Section 20(1) articulates the importance of the role of parents in the promotion of quality education for all learners at the school. This essentially highlights the governing body's responsibility towards the promotion of quality education through collaboration with parents. The researcher agrees that the intention of the establishment of SGBs was to give parents greater control in shaping the transformation of the schooling system in South Africa. Parental involvement could then include both policy and governance decision making for the planning and enablement of parents to participate in their children's learning process.

Furthermore, the *White Paper 5, Early Childhood Education: Meeting the challenge of early childhood development in South Africa* (DoE, 2001) defines early childhood development (ECD) as comprehensive systems wide approach to have active participation by parents, preschool teachers and any other care givers in the development of the child. DBE and the Department of Social Development (DSD) have been tasked to play their respective roles in supporting parents and or guardians to support learners in

school (RSA, 2015). The *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy* (RSA, 2015) stipulates that parents have to be equipped with skills through the 'Outreach ECD programme'. According to the policy (RSA, 2015) the DBE is responsible for the integration of parents in the school curriculum. In 2016, the DBE in collaboration with the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) published the Practical Guideline: *How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools* (NECT, 2016). This guideline recognises parents to be the primary teachers of their children; and they (parents) are responsible to shape their children's behaviour, discipline and habits also ensuring that children feel supported both at home and at school and to have learning environments where they can grow and develop to their full potential (NECT, 2016). Two themes emerged with regard to parental involvement in South African schools. Firstly, parents, through the SASA (RSA, 1996), mainly became involved in the governance of schools. Secondly, the majority of South African parents experience social challenges, which create barriers to parental involvement in the education of their children. These challenges relate to safety, language and recognition of the value of parents by the educators (Msila, 2012; Munje & Mncube, 2018). In the next section I will expand on these two key themes.

2.4.4 Parental involvement through school governing bodies

Although the SASA (RSA, 1996) promotes parental involvement, this statement is broad and vague. Michael, Wolhuter and van Wyk (2012), in their study of parental involvement in South Africa, in a school district in KwaZulu Natal, found that some schools had no formal policy to direct parental involvement in the education of their children. Furthermore, they argued that there were no formal allowances made by educators for the involvement of parents, especially parents from different socio-economic circumstances (Luxomo & McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Taylor (2015) recognises that there is a power imbalance between the school senior management and parents. I agree that in the home-school partnership, parents are regarded as the partners who are responsible to ensure that they fulfil their financial obligation towards the school for the provision of education for their children (Dass & Rinquest, 2017). Principals must begin to see their role in changing the school culture through a deliberate process where they can work in teams

with parents towards improved learner outcomes (Michael, Wolhuter & van Wyk, 2012). These principals, according to Hartell, Dippenaar, Moen and Dladla (2016), must implement the policy on school governance as mandated by the Department of Education and work in partnership so that learners can access their right to education. The researcher believes that some parents on the school governing bodies want to make sure that the teaching reflects the socio-economic values of the communities, and that the teaching and learning is relevant to the lifeworld of the child. The researcher argues that this is a crucial intention and supported by the DBE policy frameworks, however, without clear directions from the principal and the school management team on how to realise this, it remains an empty possibility in South African schools.

To further substantiate the lack of collaboration between parents and school, a study by Singh and Mbokodi (2011) in schools in the Eastern Cape, found that there was no real working relationship between the SGB, parents and teachers. According to the parental respondents in the study, their role and interests in the education of their children are often undermined by the teachers. Findings from this study revealed that teachers informed the SGB chair that they did not sign a contract with the chair and therefore are not responsible to the SGB. Furthermore, teachers argued that the SGB is responsible for the governance of the school and not the management of the curriculum. Issues of this nature hamper any form of partnership or relationship between the school and the parent community, as educational leadership is a relational practice (Ogina, 2017 and Davids & Waghid, 2019).

The notion of the power relationship between parents and the school as identified earlier in this chapter in the work of Santana, Rothstein and Bain (2016) as well as Fitriah, Sumintono, Subekti and Hassan (2013), is echoed in the study by Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) in the Vhembe district. It demonstrated and confirmed these unequal power relations. The study also illustrated, through the comments by the teachers, the inability of the school to support parents to fulfil their respective supportive role in the school. According to Segoe and Bisschoff (2019), the impression is that parents do not have the confidence to participate in the schools' activities citing various reasons such as, they do

not express their opinions in meetings, they are not interested in the school, limited literacy levels and lack of training amongst others. This resulted in limited participation of parents in the meetings, which is an indication of the parents' dependency on the principal, who then takes the opportunities to unduly influence the SGB. The researcher is of the opinion that this notion of unequal power relations between the school and parents are further exacerbated by the evident lack of the school to enable parents to participate in the curriculum of the school and the inability of the educators to see this as their role. This is evident in the finding that some teachers interviewed felt strongly that parents' roles on the SGB should be reduced even more and that teachers as 'qualified professionals who understand the dynamics of learners should not be placed in a position where they could be outvoted by parents in the decision-making processes (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019: 172).

2.4.5   Barriers to parental involvement in South African schools

A more concerning trend in the findings in the research on parental involvement in South African schools is the seeming lack of interest. This is further compounded with other barriers which limit or prevent parental involvement in the education of their learners. Singh and Mbokodi (2011) found that parents are not ignorant of their roles and responsibilities in their children's education and want to become involved. Due to various mitigating factors, parents' involvement in their children's education is limited. Magwa, and Mugari (2017) and Ntekane (2018) cited several key factors for non-parental involvement. Examples of these factors were the non-functioning of elected school governing bodies, literacy levels of the parents, limited communication between the school and parents, lack of meeting attendance, lack of teacher support and levels of financial income.

According to my reading of the literature, the integrated nature of the identified barriers is evident. Given parents' perceived lack of literacy to engage with the school, this has an implication in the manner in which they engage with educators on aspects of learning content and methodology. Furthermore, their educational level and communication skills

are also barriers to parents serving on the school governing body. According to Singh and Mbokodi (2011), parents are often 'left in the dark' regarding issues on curriculum and other educational matters. Principals often manage these meetings and inform parents that they will explain the issues after the meetings. In their study, Singh and Mbokodi (2011) cite several reasons for parents' reluctance to attend parent-teacher meetings. They identified the following: parents are fearful of being embarrassed for not being up to date with curriculum matters; issues of school fees; being undermined by teachers in that they are spoken to as if they are children; or that the school will use the opportunity to address any disciplinary issues regarding their children (Singh and Mbokodi, 2011).

On the other hand, it is also evident that the principal and teachers at the school lack the ability to enable parents to participate in the education of the learners as well the governance aspects of the school. Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) and Magwa and Mugari (2017) highlight similar attitudes from principals and teachers not regarding parents as equals, and therefore create limitations on parental involvement. Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) described similar findings in their study. They categorised their findings into the involvement of parents in the school governing body, the impact of school and community resources on parental involvement, influence of parent-teacher relationships on parental involvement, and the communication between the school and parents (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019). One of the key elements of parental involvement is how parents mobilise community resources to support the school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). The research notes the absence of the community resources and thus the inability of parents to offer this support to the school. This also has an impact on how the school views parents contributing towards the home-school partnership (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019).

According to Sapungan, and Sapungan (2014) there is a different understanding between the school and parents as to what exactly parental involvement entails. According to the parents, their responsibility is to keep their children safe and to make sure that they are punctual for school attendance (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019). Sapungan, and Sapungan

(2014) highlight several constructs for parental involvement amongst which is the invitation from the school to become involved.

This invitation is from teachers inviting parents to the school to discuss issues in relation to their child's performance. As found by Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) and Nelson (2019), there is often no response from parents to this invitation. This perceived lack of interest by parents with regard to the performance of their children clearly shaped the perception of the parents by teachers, and to this extent, the propensity of teachers towards parents and their children. I was very reluctant to disturb any form of relationship I managed to form with the teachers as I was always suspicious as to how it will impact on the teacher's relationship with my son. Michael, Wolhuter and van Wyk (2012)observed that there were generally low levels of meaningful contact of the schools with parents.

According to Nelson (2019) and Conus and Fahrni, (2019), there are several structural barriers that prevent parents from being involved at the level which they would like to be. These barriers, as was the case in my experience, is the availability and suitability of time. It is also influenced by the way school leadership and teachers perceive parental involvement through a sustained home-school partnership (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). Munje and Mncube (2018) in their research in Metro South Education District in Cape Town, found that the family circumstances often negate parental involvement. Children reside with their grandparents or extended family members. Stats SA (2019) reported 21,3% of South African children 17 and younger, live with extended family members .In their study, Munje and Mncube (2018) found that most biological parents are working away from their domicile, thus leaving their children with grandparents in rural areas and townships. Most grandparents find it very difficult to meaningfully become involved in the education of the grandchildren in their custody.

Furthermore, Okeke (2014) states that the kind of job opportunities the primary caregivers or breadwinner occupied, prevented parents from becoming involved in the school activities. The long working hours during the week and being away from their homes, further inhibit parents from attending meetings, visiting schools and engaging with

teachers (Naidoo, Mncube, & Potokri 2015). Okeke (2014) cites poverty and the fear of being made academically inferior, as other factors that influence the manner in which parents become involved in schools. Financial circumstances do not allow most parents to be able to pay exorbitant school fees, and due to feelings of embarrassment, parents do not attend or engage with the schools (Munje & Mncube 2018). I believe that the findings of the above-mentioned studies are particularly important for this research as there is broad consensus in the research about the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children. A critical question for this study was how parents can be realistically enabled and supported to become collaboratively involved in the education of their children, and partner with the schools. This question recognised the adverse social conditions of a larger number of South African parents. Furthermore, the question arises of who must take the initiative and responsibility for the support to parents in order for them to become a partner in the school community. In answering these questions, any recommendation regarding the functioning of home-school partnerships have to consider the limitations imposed on the parents' participation due to various socio-economic factors.

In referencing the South African studies, one of the key trends I observed was that little to nothing is being done to support parents to become involved in supporting their children in their education. The work of Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004b) as well as Magwa and Mugari (2017) recognised that parents need help to be able to participate fully in a partnership between the school and home. According to their study even parents without these challenges, still need help to know how to be productively involved in their children's education at each grade level. Notably, in the study by Singh and Mbokodi (2011), principals, teachers and parents cited the lack of training by the Department of Basic Education to support the respective parties to develop and actively participate in home-school partnerships. It is noteworthy that only in five, out of the ten schools participating in this study, the principals and school governing body members received training which they also regarded as inadequate. According to the teachers in the study, they did not receive any in-service training nor any training during their tertiary teacher-training

programmes, on how to work with parents as partners in supporting learners (Singh & Mbokodi, 2011).

In their study, Munje and Mncube (2018) highlight the negative perceptions teachers have of parents. These views about parents' impact on them becoming involved or collaborating with the schools and teachers. Furthermore, according to Ellis, Lock and Lummis (2015) teachers have not received any formal training on how to encourage parental involvement in education and supporting their children. Tekin (2011) agrees that the relevant and appropriate structures need to be established and set up to manage and sustain these partnerships. These researchers support the argument made by Epstein (2018) that educators have to be empowered with knowledge and practices to create and implement family, school and community partnerships. I agree that these enablement efforts can be supported and strengthened by continuous training for educators and parents. Schools can create processes and structures that can support the sustainable development and implementation of home-school relations to advance the children's academic achievements (Munje & Mncube, 2018; Ellis, Lock & Lummis, 2015).

2.5 THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORTING PARENTS

Post the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, there had been consistent efforts made by the South African government to radically transform the entire education system in South Africa (Badat & Sayed, 2014). These reforms needed to address the fundamental issues such as institutionalising anti-discriminatory and equity practices in the provision of education to all South Africans.

In examining the role of government in supporting parents, this research study positioned such an examination within the social justice paradigm. The motivation is that government has to ensure that all parents have a fair and equitable chance to support their children (Badat & Sayed, 2014). Davis and Harrison (2013) argue that social justice can be defined as the equitable processes and outcomes that are the consequence of the efforts of government to close the gap of what is advocated in the social contract with society, and how such government programmes can be implemented. In other words, as defined by

Davis and Harris (2013) full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs; thus, social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. The researcher agrees that attaining social justice in a parental support programme would mean that the programme by the school needs to consider the demography of all parents. Such programmes, in my opinion, should consider including single-parent households, child-headed households, working hours and socio-economic conditions.

As argued by Epstein and Sheldon (2002), to ensure that parental support is inclusive, participatory and affirming the agency of all parents of the school community, parent support programmes should address the barriers for parental participation. Badat and Sayed (2014) argue strongly that equity in the schooling system cannot be obtained by only addressing issues regarding fair treatment and providing opportunities. They further argue that in order to establish an effective parental involvement system, parents must be treated fairly, professionally and given an opportunity to participate in school activities. The researcher believes that in order to create a more social justice impetus in parent-school partnerships, government interventions have to address and eliminate historical and structural inequality so that all parents can collaborate with schools and teachers for the benefit of their children.

Badat and Sayed (2014) argue that government policies and guidance should accommodate the nuances of school communities. Government programmes cannot be based on the principle of sameness and uniformity' as formal equality has to be distinguished from equity. Badat and Sayed (2014) state that school and parental relationships, shaped by co-creation with the school management team, can be built on 'fairness and just treatment' based on the unique and in-depth understand of the community the school serves. The White Paper on Families in South Africa, Department of Social Development (DSD) (2012), acknowledges the importance of family, essentially the parent, in supporting learners in school. The White Paper argues that it is important

for families to be stable, instil good morals and healthy family relations, which could support parents to be meaningfully involved in the education of their children (DSD, 2012).

The argument in the above-mentioned document draws on Fehrmann, Keith and Reimers (1987) who argue that when parents and other familial caregivers are involved in children's education in meaningful ways, there is a positive influence on academic performance; students whose families are actively involved are more likely to achieve higher grades, to have better school attendance, to be better motivated, and are less likely to be cited for disciplinary action (DSD, 2012). The White Paper comprehensively articulates the nuances and diverse make-up of the family as a unit in South Africa (DSD, 2012). Given the socio-economic and health services and conditions of South Africa, it is noteworthy for this study to be cognisant that 40% of families are single-parent households, which can be headed by a sibling and/or by women DSD (2012). The researcher believes that if this is the situation in South Africa, then it can be argued that parental involvement has to be carefully considered by schools. Any recommendations emanating from this study should be able to convey to the DBE that parental involvement is an inclusive practice, and its practical implementation allows for maximum involvement of all parents. As with arguments espoused by Antony-Newman (2019 a), Doucet (2011) and Segoe and Bisschoff (2019), the involvement of parents from single-headed households can be challenging. The impact of family poverty, particularly on female-headed households (FHHs) are disadvantaging especially with regard to access to important socio-economic resources (DSD, 2012). These resources and services include access to credit, education and health care, amongst others. Parental involvement in school, when well-planned and implemented, can have a positive influence on children. Perrino, González-Soldevilla, Pantin and Szapocznik (2000), as cited in the White Paper (DSD, 2012), acknowledges that parents, other adult family members and teachers have considerable influence on children. If there is a culture of mutual respect and support in the home, these adults can be role models for the children in their care. This can manifest through skills building, limit setting or discipline, and general healthy and competent behaviour (DSD, 2012).

A study on Early Childhood Education was commissioned by the DBE and DSD to explore the education and support of children in early childhood education centres. Erasmus (2015) highlighted some key findings on the education and parental support to young learners. The report confirmed the importance of early childhood development for supporting children to later achieve better in formal school. This foundation will provide for 'improved levels of employment' later in the lives of these individual children. Furthermore, the report noted that the programme of action has not planned or implemented any support programmes focusing on parents (Erasmus, 2015). In its recommendation, the report emphasised the importance of a plan of action that needs to "launch well-designed, high-profile, parent support programmes through media campaigns, community activities and services that acknowledge and reinforce the importance of positive parenting for young children" (Erasmus, 2015: 8). Such a carefully designed plan of action is important given the trends of the findings in the report by Erasmus (2015) and the multitude of barriers for parents to become involved in the school activities. The researcher agrees that there should be guidelines, policies and protocols in place to support parents in participating in home-school partnerships. I believe that with the relevant advocacy programmes for parents to become involved in their children's educations, targeting all stakeholders such as parents, educators and school leadership, the practice of schools being the only role-player in the children's education can be changed.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Early Childhood Development, together with the National Inter-departmental Committee for Early Childhood Development, published the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, approved by the South African Cabinet (RSA , 2015). This policy's programmes support children from conception to the year before children enter formal school, and/or until the year the child turns seven in the case of children with developmental challenges or living with disabilities (RSA , 2015). It is noted that the policy makes provision for government's comprehensive support to parents regarding supporting their children's early learning. The policy (RSA, 2015) clearly articulates the four components of the parental support programme which will be:

- capacity building in relation to their children's health, safety and development;

- information sharing with regard to the necessary national paperwork required;
- positive parenting for the safety and protection of their children; and
- supporting parents with children with development challenges and living with disabilities.

Furthermore, the policy document clearly states that there needs to be funding provision made for these programmes which includes the training of the early childhood development service providers in supporting the parental capacity development programmes (RSA , 2015). In 2016, the Department of Basic Education in collaboration with the National Collaboration Trust, published a Practical Guideline: *How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools.* (DBE & NECT, 2016). The guide recognises the important role parents have in supporting their children's development, particularly in school, and wants the content of the booklet to 'empower parents with information to enable them to become more involved in their children's education and develop 'learning communities' (DBE & NECT, 2016). On the whole, the guide aimed to address general concerns and posed the following questions:

- How is my child doing at school?
- How can I make sure that my child is successful at school?
- How can I make sure that my child improves?
- What can I do to make sure that my child has a positive experience at school?
- How can I support my child and encourage them through difficult times?

The document articulates a set of guidelines that could constitute successful parental involvement in school. Figure 4 illustrates the proposed actions parents could follow.

Figure 4 Proposed guidelines for parental involvement in school.
Adapted from: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools. (DBE & NECT, 2016)

Furthermore, the guideline also indicates what kind of support parents have to provide their children at home to support their learning. It informs parents that they have to take the responsibility to provide the child with a routine for studying, which is inclusive of time and space, as well the supervision of the homework. Although there is a recognition that not all parents may have the recommended quiet space for studying, the guide makes some attempt to recommend alternatives to parents. Similarly, the guide also recognises that some parents may not have the ability to support their children in homework supervision and therefore refers to the school becoming involved in setting up homework clubs or study groups. It guides parents through the proper authority and thus communication channels at the school. My overall impression of the intention of the guide is to provide parents with positive suggestions on how they can and should support their children through a school year. I believe that although it attempts to recognise the diversity amongst parents and school communities, it does not really penetrate the systemic and structural challenges to establish equity in the home-school relationship and it still favours the implicit dominant culture of standardised school and parental relationships.

2.6 SUPPORT FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT TO SUPPORT LEARNERS IN EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Given the above comprehensive policy development focusing on children's well-being and their development, the following questions are critical: Firstly, is there real innovative implementation based on the policy guidelines? Secondly, is there any tangible impact towards supporting children's holistic development? In the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) report, it is argued that the South African government employed several fiscal reforms to ensure that the gap between rich and poor schools were addressed. The purpose was to improve the quality of education in all schools and to ultimately achieve equity in the South African education system (Badat & Sayed, 2014). The researcher believes that there has been progress in the areas of school financing and resources, the curriculum, school governance, school management and educator support and development, however, little has happened in relation to government support to parents' enablement to support young learners in school. I want to argue that the implementation guideline with regard to enabling parents, as set out in the respective policies, should form part of these ongoing reform endeavours by government.

Ten years later, Le Mottee (2016 b) in her paper, *Transforming the ECD sector: A National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development*, observes that parental capacity building is a key element towards transforming the ECD sector. She argues that little has been done to contribute to parental development to support this sector in education. Le Mottee (2016b:3:) further asserts that "Parenting support and capacity development: Families living in poverty and under circumstances that potentially undermine their capacity to parent effectively would benefit from parent support programmes." There is also a lack of data that can provide evidence of the reach and the quality of government provided ECD programmes as most of these, albeit insufficient, are still provided by the by the non-profit sector need (Le Mottee, 2016b) and Erasmus, 2015). I agree that the above-mentioned policy, which espouses a rights-based approach to ECD, has the potential to shift the attitudes of schools and parents regarding their responsibility to form home-school partnerships. The researcher is of the opinion that it will require commitment from parents and schools to the development of programmes which will support parents

to ensure their children are supported in their learning activities. In Chapter 6 the policy recognises the role of parents and their need for government to implement parental support programmes. It argues for an augmented programme of parenting support, including the preparation of pregnant women and partners, and of mothers of young children to enable them to optimise their young children's development across all domains. There is special focus in the areas of child safety, the provision of positive parenting practices, food and nutrition, and early learning (DSD, 2015).

The researcher believes that government's initiative to support parents through the social grant system will ensure that parents have the finances to assist in their child's development by contributing to food security and nutrition amongst others. This grant is provided to over 16 million families on a monthly basis so that they can access basic health care and pre- and post-natal care. The policy mandates that all parents receive this grant until the child enters formal schools. The researcher is of the opinion that service, such as support for parents of school-going children to support their children's learning is non-existent or limited to the training of school governing body members. According to Patel, Hochfeld and Englert (2018), government policy fails to address the social conservatism in the manner it views and constructs family policy. I agree that government still regards the concept of families too narrow. It has a perception that the family system has the responsibility and capability to fix the social challenges, and in so doing overlooks some of the structural and systemic barriers preventing parental involvement in the education of learners. It can cause limitations in the interventions available for family support. It is important to note the work of Rabe (2017a) and Rabe (2017b) who argue that although there has been progress in policy development in South Africa, a conservative narrative has been retained. The researcher agrees that in the instance of home-school partnership, the state is currently not fulfilling its policy obligation by institutionalising the initiation of the home-school partnership by school leadership or teachers. Currently schools are also not obliged to engage parents on any capacity development processes. The researcher further agrees that government is shifting its responsibility to the family, with government only stepping in when there is a crisis, such as the child may need to be referred for behavioural or physiological challenges.

Epstein and Salinas (2004) maintained that for learners to be supported by their parents in school, a 'school-learning community' is required. A school-learning community is inclusive of educators, students, parents, and community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities. (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). They define a school-learning community distinctly different to that of a 'professional learning community'. According to Epstein and Salinas (2004) the professional learning community emphasises the teamwork of principals, teachers, and staff to identify school goals, improve curriculum and instruction, reduce teachers' isolation, assess student progress, and increase the effectiveness of school programs (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

The concept of the school-learning community is applicable to the intention of this study as the focus is on how parents, when enabled, can collaborate with the different role players in the school. In my opinion, a key aspect of the school-learning community partnership is that it involves consciously constructed activities to ensure that different role-players have the capability to fulfil that respective function or role. Epstein and Salinas (2004) and Henderson and Mapp (2002) further contend that the school-learning community has to be an organised programme, which is linked to the goals of the school. It further needs to have the ability or characteristics in its implementation to strengthen the family support in the school and thus improve learners' success and achievements (Epstein, Van Voorhis & Salinas, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

This study will apply this concept of the School Learning Community during its investigation regarding the phenomenon of support to parents, to support their learners in school. Hoglund, Jones, Brown and Aber (2015) identified that there are several elements to be considered with involving parents to support their children at school. Their finding is that; parent involvement in schooling is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to the engagement of significant caregivers in the education of their children at home, such as helping their child with homework, and at school, such as communicating with their child's teacher and supporting their child in school (Hoglund, Jones, Brown & Aber 2015). Hoglund, Jones, Brown, and Aber's (2015) research are of interest to this study as

it investigated the nature of parental involvement and the effect it had on the child's propensity to adjust to the school programme. To this end the researchers used three models to characterise the involvement of the parents as depicted in Figure 5.

Parent socialisation model	Transactional model	Child Adjustment model
•Assessing parental involvement in the school related activites	•The relationship between parental involvement in the school and how the child adjusts is a bi-directional process •This process develops over time.	•Assessing the child's abiltiy to adjust to the school and therefore create indicators to the parents on how they can get involved in school related activities

Figure 5 The application of conceptual models to demonstrate directional association of parental involvement in schooling and child adjustment
Adapted from Hoglund, Jones, Brown and Aber (2015)

In these models, three instances of parental involvement were assessed, determining the connection between them. The instances identified as: homework assistance, home-school conferencing and school-based support. These were then assessed against three domains of child adjustment: academic and social competence, and aggressive behaviours (Hoglund, Jones, Brown, & Aber,2015). The study conducted with 'racial ethnic' parents, found that parents tend to get involved in supporting their children when children manifest issues relating to academic and social competence and/or demonstrate aggressive behaviour. These findings were made by assessing a diverse sample of families' "directional associations between parents' involvement in school-related activities and children's academic and social-emotional adjustment" (Hoglund, Jones, Brown & Aber 2015: 518).

2.7   SUMMARY

The key question is beyond the policy. It is really whether there is commitment by the schools and parents to contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools, and how this can be done through sustained home-school partnerships. It is also about whether the state has an implementation strategy indicating where the capacity development for parents will happen, who will take responsibility and what the support will entail in terms of programme themes, how often and who will participate, amongst others. The question is also whether the state, in its support for parents, are committed to address the systemic and structural barriers which prevent parents from taking part in their children's education in an equitable manner.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter two, the literature review highlighted the possibilities and challenges regarding home-school partnerships in the South African schooling context. Researchers agree that home-school partnerships are important for several reasons (Chen, Anderson & Watkins, 2016; Tan, Lyu & Peng, 2019). The researcher concurs that home-school partnerships have the potential to create a continuum between the two different worlds children live in by the time they go to school. A home-school partnership can create the necessary social and academic support the child needs to achieve the best possible personal growth and academic success. The researcher is of the opinion that the home-school partnership supports the improvement of the institutional arrangements by the school to strengthen parent collaboration. It is believe that this can be done with parental and broader community engagement through the school governing body (SGB) structure and sub-structures. The researcher agrees with Sedibe (2012) on the importance of home-school partnerships to support the learning achievement of young learners. This is extensively recognised in the South African schooling system and it is continuously advocated via various platforms and media.

This chapter examines the conceptual frameworks that underpins the study; exploring the support parents need to participate in these home-school partnerships. The focus is on the home-school partnership in relation to parents supporting their children's learning activities at home. This study draws on the conceptual works of Epstein's (1987) theory of parental involvement in schools and Baumrind's (1994) parenting styles to promote a relationship of mutual trust, respect and engagement. The focus is to understand and elucidate the support parents need, to be partners in their children's education. Below follows a brief summary of Baumrind and Epstein, and why their theories of parenting and parental involvement in the learning of children, support this study.

Diana Baumrind is a renowned developmental psychologist who is known for her research on parenting styles as well as ethics in psychological research. Her parenting style theory distinguishes three styles of parenting, categorised according to the characteristics and typical actions by which each parenting style can be identified. Baumrind (1994) explained authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles based on two factors. Parental actions were identified in relation to how responsive parents are to the needs of their children, as well as the demands or responsibility they place on their children (Cherry, 2016). Baumrind became a very influential contributor to the discourse on parenting as her research with parents focused on *how* parents interact with and discipline their children. Her theory resonated with the purpose of this research study, as the approaches and style of parenting have a profound impact on children's behaviour and their propensity towards, in this instance, learning.

Joyce Epstein, as a research professor of education and sociology, is influential on school, family and community partnerships. Epstein's (1987) theory of school, family and community partnership explicate six types of involvement namely; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning, decision-making and collaborating with community. Epstein (2019) focuses on the leadership at the district school level, as well as teachers to initiate this partnership. The impact thereof on the performance of the child, resonates with the purpose of this study. Furthermore, her interest to expound the research, policy and practice interrelatedness is an important phenomenon to explore in contributing towards the success of learners in South African schools.

I made two assumptions for the application of Epstein's (1987) and Baumrind's (2013) theoretical frameworks. Firstly, it is assumed that if parents are aware of their own parenting style, they can address some of the challenges they experience in supporting learning activities at home. They can do this by adjusting their own parenting style. To illustrate this assumption, a video clip from the televised programme *Supernanny,* shows a father supporting his son with homework. In the video, Supernanny made the father aware of the effect that his parenting style has on his son (Supernanny, 2020).

Secondly, it is assumed that if parents know how to acquire the necessary skills, they will be able to support their children's learning. Both frameworks are highly recognised in the field of parenting and home-school partnerships and have been widely applied nationally and internationally. This study draws on these theorist's contributions to identify the kinds of support parents need, to be partners in the home-school partnership.

3.2   PARENTING THEORY

As the researcher indicated above in the home-school partnership, both contexts are recognised as important elements to support children's learning success. Therefore, when the researcher explored the primary question of this study as set out below, the researcher also wanted to understand which parenting style or styles, in the South African context, will enable parents' ability to support their children's learning activities. For this reason, the researcher designed the research instruments with the view of eliciting responses to the parenting styles participants in the sample favoured, and the impact it has on their children's learning achievements. Their responses are reflected in Chapter five of this study. In Chapter one - the rationale for the study, the researcher related her own experience of how tension between parent and child can escalate into real conflict whilst doing learning support at home, especially when doing homework. the researcher therefore made the assumption, as also indicated in the video clip, that if parents are more conscious of their own parenting style, they can use mitigating behaviour for such tension not to escalate to a conflict situation with the child. With this in mind, the primary research question for this study was; *What support do parents require to form partnerships with educational stakeholders in supporting the education of young learners*?

A study focusing on the support parents need to participate in the home-school partnership must explore the notion of parenting and particularly parenting styles. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) argue that even though parents may not always have a working relationship with the school, they are still interested in their children's learning. It is

identifying and understanding the relationship between parenting styles and the support parents may need, to be partners in the home-school partnership. As Goodall and Montgomery (2014) and Ismail, Kauthar and Ismail (2016) state, parenting styles and parental attitudes support a home culture that has a certain orientation towards education.

3.3   EXPLANATION OF PARENTING STYLES

Parenting style is defined as the different propensity and display of behaviours by parents towards their children. These are inclusive of the values and parenting actions that create the contexts in which children develop into adulthood (Baumrind, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 2017). Parenting styles are characterised by parents' interaction with their children in different settings and situations. Parenting styles, as referenced in this study, is to demonstrate the variety of emotional and social spaces created by parents and the effect it has on the quality of parent-child relationships. The researcher used these definitions to develop the different categories and the questions related to each category in research instruments. In the instruments, the researcher developed a blend of questions focusing on feelings, communication, support actions and how parents create opportunities for their children.

3.4   BAUMRIND'S PARENTING STYLE

Parental behaviour towards children impacts on the manner in which children behave and eventually conduct themselves as adults (Baumrind's, 1994). This seminal work on parenting styles can be employed in advocating with parents for their involvement in the home-school partnership. As seen in the video (Supernanny, 2020), parenting style has an impact on the interaction between the child and parent especially during homework. This study drew on the theory of how parents behave by observing multiple dimensions (Baumrind, 1994, Power, 2013). The researcher agrees with the argument that it can assist parents if they are aware of how their parenting style can help or hinder supporting their children with home learning activities. Baumrind, according to Checa and Abundis-Gutierrez (2018), and Venketsamy (1997) advocated three evident parenting styles and the impact it has on children's behaviour and achievement with learning.

The three parenting styles are illustrated in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 Three parenting styles

Adapted from: https://www.dreamstime.com/illustration/authoritarian-parenting.html, accessed 19June 2021

These parenting styles are evident in the way parents communicate, nurture, encourage and discipline their young children (Cherry, 2015; Venketsamy, 1997). In these instances, Baumrind (1991) used these parenting styles to define the 'normal variations' of how parents control and socialise their children. This typology of parenting styles does not reference abusive or neglectful parenting (Baumrind, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2013).

Dewar (2018) expanded on Baumrind's parental typology, recognising the details of the two elements at play in parenting. This essentially means parental responsiveness is "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" (Baumrind, 1991: 62). On the other hand, parental demandingness is the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys (Baumrind, 1991). By defining the levels of responsiveness and demandingness, the three parental typologies are categorised into four parenting styles: indulgent, authoritative, authoritarian and uninvolved. The added style are parents that are uninvolved and or parents that are too permissive towards their children. This study focused on the first three, authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles. Table 5 illustrates the parenting styles and characteristics.

Table 5 Parenting styles and characteristics

Parenting	Styles	Characteristics
Authoritarian	Directive but not intrusive Directive and intrusive	• Highly demanding • Demands obedience • Don't provide explanation • Structured environment • Clearly stated rules
Authoritative	Assertive but not intrusive Not restrictive	• Demanding and responsive • Monitor • Impart clear standards • Supportive rather than punitive • Want assertive behaviour • Socially responsible • Self-regulated and cooperative
Indulgent	Permissive Non-directive	• More responsive than demanding • Lenient • Do not require mature behaviour • Avoid confrontation • Allow considerable self-regulations •
Uninvolved	Neglectful	• Low responsiveness • Little demandingness

Adapted from Baumrind (1994).

This study explored parenting styles by asking parents questions related to their parenting styles as articulated by Baumrind. The assumption is that parents have to be conscious of their parenting styles if they want to actively participate in supporting their children's learning.

3.4.1   Authoritarian parenting style

Baumrind defines authoritarian parents as: "They are obedience- and status-oriented and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation" Baumrind (1991: 62). According to Cherry (2015), supported by (Darling & Steinberg, 2017), parents who favour conformity and obedience from their children tend to use an authoritarian style. Authoritarian parents find it unacceptable for their children to not comply with what, and how, they want things to be done. Disobedience by their children will result in punishment. Rauf and Ahmed (2017) state that children who were raised by authoritarian parents tend to display

behavioural problems and tend to have a lower self-esteem. They are challenged when engaging in relationships either with their peers or adults. They show high levels of aggression but are also very reserved, too timid to readily offer spontaneity in their action. Farrell (2015) and Olowodunoye and Titus (2011) contend that the children with authoritarian parents are very resentful, even though, on the outside it might seem that they readily settle with the wishes of their parents. Children in these parent-child relationships are continuously reliant and dependent on affirmation from the authority figure in the relationship.

In this study I was also interested in finding the effect that the authoritarian parenting style may have on the parental learning support role at home. Farrell (2015) states that parents' authoritarian behaviour dampens children's natural creativity and problem solving. This stifles children's development of their intellectual abilities to the fullest. Parents who are domineering and controlling toward their children, leave very little space for their children to take initiative and responsibility. Children respond with defiance, negativity, aggression and rebelliousness to this behaviour by their parents. It seems that this behaviour has an impact on children's psychosocial spheres and therefore, impact on their ability to participate in their own learning. It also has an impact on the way parents offer support to their children during, for example homework sessions. "It has been revealed that parents who monitor their children's homework in authoritarian style, inhibit the children's performance in academics and in school" (Rauf & Ahmed, 2017: 5).

Children very often prefer not to be assisted by their authoritarian parents. They do not feel free to make mistakes during the learning process as authoritarian parents tend to control and correct their behaviour, even with punishment (Rauf & Ahmed, 2017). They do not demonstrate patience with a child struggling with a learning activity and conduct such support with authority. Often the child is conflicted between the parent's instruction and expectation for obedience, and that of the teacher. Authoritarian parents demonstrate very little, if any, warmth and sometimes even a withdrawal of affection in the parent-child relationship. This may cause low self-esteem, moodiness and anxiety, especially around social comparisons. The researcher is of the opinion that parents are often not even

aware that in their anxiousness to support their children, their behaviour is detrimental rather than supportive. In my own lived experience, my son did not want me to assist him as he said: "I don't like it when you talk loud at me." I was completely oblivious to the fact that I would often raise my voice, filled with my own anxiety, when I supported him with sounding his words.

3.4.2   Authoritative parenting style

According to Baumrind (1991: 62), authoritative parenting means to be "assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive". Furthermore, children are being disciplined in a supportive rather than a punitive manner. This results in children who can self-regulate and are socially responsible. A characteristic of authoritative parenting is that parents still assertively express their opinion on the expected behaviour by their children. Authoritative parenting style similar to authoritarian parenting entailed clear and firm direction to children. I observed that the key difference, in comparison to the authoritarian parents, is that children do have agency in this parent-child relationship. Parents will explain why they have the expectation and children can reason with their parents offering their opinion on the expressed expectation.

Baumrind (1991), supported by Carlo, Mestre, Samper, Tur and Armenta (2010) states that an authoritative parenting style imbues warmth in the parent-child relationship. It is signified by tactile demonstration of affection such as hugging, holding and cuddling. This parenting style has an impact on how children will socially adjust as adults (Malonda, Llorca, Mesurado, Samper & Mestre, 2019). I believe that children who grow up with parents displaying a higher level of democracy in the household, tend to display good self-esteem. They master the art of internalising ethical and moral standards and show significant results in their learning performance. It therefore may seem that they thrive in school and thus there is a good working relationship between the school and the parents. It seems like children growing up in authoritative households have a friendly and independent disposition and have a 'get up and go' propensity towards life. This impression I gained, seems to be supported by Checa and Abundis-Gutierrez (2018).

Seemingly, as I observed, there is a link between children's prosocial behaviour and ability to take on new ventures, and their parents' authoritative parenting style. This could be because they feel secure and know that it is fine to be self-sufficient and self-assertive and they demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with life, (Rauf & Ahmed, 2017; Lavrič, & Naterer, 2020).

I concur with the literature review by Malonda *et al.*, (2019) that parents who display authoritative parenting styles tend to be more understanding in the learning support role. Authoritative parenting can be relatively strict, controlling and demanding that children follow their guidance. According to Ismail, Kauthar and Ismail (2016), there is a relationship between the impact of parenting styles and learning achievement. The researcher is of the opinion that authoritative parenting influences psychosocial maturity of children, which in turn impacts on how well children learn. They will still set boundaries in terms of leisure and learning time, yet this is balanced with consistent communication. They will try to explain to the child why he or she is struggling with specific learning content. Lavric and Naterer (2020) are of the view that authoritative parents' interventions are rational and focused on the issue. They are also open for their children to explore alternative ways of learning. The authoritative parenting style instils a feeling of safety for the child, especially when they are challenged. This parenting style creates a space to do things differently and to tackle creative problem-solving (Farrell, 2015: 17). Therefore, parents create a space based on age-appropriate rules in the household, for children' to make plausible arguments for an alternative. Decisions can be changed on the validity of the argument without children having to manipulate their parents.

3.4.5   Permissive parenting style

Parents whose predominant parenting style is permissive tend to be lenient and do not like engaging in any confrontation. They "do not require mature behaviour, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation" (Baumrind, 1991: 62). Zeteroğlu and Başal (2018), expand by pointing out that some permissive parents tend to be conscientious and compassionate about the world around them although they are non-directive. My impression is that permissive parents tend to take a passive role in the

household. There are higher levels of freedom for children and parents to make individual and group decisions relating to participating in family activities and/or events (Venketsamy, 1997). Permissive parents do not have a sense that they are able to exert control. I believe that permissive parents have an overt tolerance for socialisation and undemanding parenting. The children do not really have any responsibilities, yet they expect to have the same rights as the adults in the household.

The researcher agrees that punishment is not to be used to control children, as permissive parents make few demands regarding children taking any responsibility, and children are allowed to regulate their own behaviours and activities. Parents do not have to assert authority to encourage children to change their behaviour (Ashiono, 2013). It is therefore my impression that permissive parents have a total acceptance of their children's impulses and any kinds of behaviours which they may demonstrate. The research indicates that "permissive parenting behaviour [is] characterised by a parent being indulgent, passive and without much control of his/her child's behaviour" (Ashiono, 2013: 9). They may try to use reason to intervene in their children's behaviour but are easily persuaded to back down as they would prefer to prevent conflict. A key feature of a permissive parenting style household is that family members tend to come and go at their own pace with very little intimate communication (Venketsamy, 1997; Ismail, Kauthar & Ismail, 2016). Often family members, including the children, will find their own social relationships outside of the family.

Permissive parents let their children know that they are available to support them during their learning activities (Farrell, 2015). They can be exceptionally nurturing and non-confrontational. Farrell (2015) and Venketsamy (1997) elucidate that permissive parents do not take the initiative such as determining learning time or creating conducive learning spaces. They are also not particularly overly concerned with their children's grades and create very little structure in the household in how children must spend their time and on which activities. It therefore seems that no preference is given to homework, for example, over learning activities, especially during school nights and exam time. Permissive parents may not be particularly interested in attending school functions. This may give

the impression that they are spontaneous and casual about everything, even to the point of being "benignly neglectful and inconsistent" (Venketsamy, 1997: 60). Given this tendency towards schooling, it can be deduced that the propensity of the permissive parents towards their child's school may have a negative impact on the home-school relationship. It is not that permissive parents are uncaring, in fact, they are very warm towards their child and they value self-expression and self-regulation (Baumrind, 1991). They often make a conscious decision regarding their parenting style and therefore can explain their motivation for limiting family rules. They also engage their children in decision-making.

3.4.   Uninvolved parenting style

There is a qualitative difference in responsiveness and demandingness in parents who lean towards uninvolved parenting (Baumrind, 1991). Whereas the permissive parenting style still has warmth and encouragement when requested by children, uninvolved parenting tends to demonstrate some negligence. This, however, is not yet at the level of abusiveness and is what can be regarded as the 'normal range' (Ismail, Kauthar & Ismail, 2016). I noted that the uninvolved parenting style is distinguished by its lack of communication and therefore low responsiveness. Parents also tend to demonstrate few demands and they are relatively detached from what is happening in the child's life (Cherry, 2015). It must be noted that the child's basic needs are fulfilled but with little or no warmth, as uninvolved parents provide limited emotional support to their children. Children tend to have a lack of self-control and a low self-esteem. It seems that children raised by uninvolved parents tend to have limited competence (Cherry, 2015).

3.5   EFFECTS OF PARENTING STYLES ON SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING

A significant aspect of this study was to explore where and how parents get any support regarding their understanding of their parenting style, which meaningfully contributes to how they support their children during learning activities. Baumrind's (2005) makes references to two parenting dimensions, namely responsiveness and demandingness. Responsiveness, according to Baumrind (2005) is the extent to which parents foster individuality and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's

requests; it includes warmth, autonomy support, and reasoned communication. Whereas demandingness is the claims parents make on children to become integrated into society by behaviour regulation, direct confrontation, and maturity demands (behavioural control) and supervision of children's activities (monitoring) (Baumrind, 2005). There seems to be a relation between the manner in which parents demonstrate responsiveness and demandingness, and the achievement of their children. My impression is that parents who predominantly exercise an authoritative parenting style often receive positive results in their children's learning. These parents are very supportive and maintain discipline consistently. These parents achieve success in communicating with their children; creating space for open conversations on any topic or issue and maintaining consistent discipline (Ashiono, 2013; Zeteroğlu & Başal, 2018). Ashiono (2013), Baumrind, Larzelere and Owens (2010) agree that authoritative parents demand high levels of maturity from their children through fostering two-way communication, taking time to explain their actions, decisions and behaviour, and encouraging independence. They provide a rationale for their children on why they can and should be doing well in various endeavours including learning.

3.6   HOME-SCHOOL SUPPORT

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, there is evidence that the chances for children's success with academic performance can be greatly enhanced if there is co-operation between the school and the parent (Epstein, 1986; 2018, 2019). Epstein's Model for parental involvement (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2002; Epstein, 2018) identifies the following six broad areas through which the home-school relationship can be strengthened.

Parenting. Engaging with parents to assist them with parenting skills as well as supporting parents to understand and create conducive learning spaces at home for children to achieve their goals. By doing this, schools will get a greater appreciation of backgrounds and cultures of the children.

Communication. Creating a bi-directional communication between the family and the school about school programmes and the children's progress.

Volunteering. Recruiting and orientating parents to volunteer for different school activities. It is also about enabling educators to work with volunteers supporting learners and the school.

Learning at home. Parents getting involved in their children's academic programme by supporting them with homework, goal setting and any other learning activities. Teachers preparing homework tasks so that parents can help children with learning activities at home.

Governance and development decision-making. Participation of parents in school governance, through the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and other committees such as the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) amongst others.

Governance and decision-making. Parents have to be involved in the decision-making and governance in the school. Their participation can be structured within the formal structures in the school. In order for parents to participate, the responsibility is on the school to break down the barriers for parents to participate in the decision-making and governance in an inclusive manner.

School and community collaboration. Soliciting collaboration between the school and the community for resources and services to support families and the school. The idea is to get business and other institutions on board for cultural, educational and economic support and programmes.

Table 6 sets out the respective roles of the school and parents in establishing and maintaining such collaborations.

Table 6 Roles of the school and parents in establishing and maintaining collaborations

Parental Involvement	How and what role will the parents and school typically play
1. **Parenting**	**Parents** Parents participate in activities which support them to understand their children's development. Learning how to set up conducive conditions for learning at home. **School** School engages in activities to understand the background and cultures of the individual and collective learner as a normative activity.
2. **Communicating**	**Parents** Participate in continuous communication with educators regarding the children's learning progress.

		School School creates a continuous two-way communication with parents on the progress of learners.
3.	**Volunteering**	**Parents** Parents take up the training, development and information sharing opportunities offered by the school. **School** Create spaces in the school for parents to become involved in school activities. Create and encourage parental involvement in training activities for parents to gain skills.
4.	**Learning at home**	**Parents** Ask for information on homework and how to assist learning at home. **School** Involve parents with the academic learning at home. Teachers design homework activities in such a way for parents to understand what support is needed and what to check for.
5.	**Governance and development decision making**	**Parents** Need to become involved in the decision-making process of the school such as governance, school improvement team committees, parent organisations and learning support development activities. **School** Create conducive spaces for parents to become part of the decision-making processes in the school such as governance, school improvement team committees, parent organisations and learning support development activities.
6.	**School and Community Collaboration**	**Parents** Being able to contribute to programmes in the school in support of the community. **School** The school sources and coordinates opportunities and resources to support the school.

Adapted: From *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (2nd edition), Joyce L. Epstein, M.G. Sanders, B.S. Simon, K.C. Salinas, N.R. Jansorn, and F.L. Voorhis, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2002.

All six of the parental involvement areas, as indicated in Table 6 are important. To remain focused on the aim of this study the researcher decided to focus on the following three elements namely; parenting, communication and learning at home in this research study. The researcher's choice was based on my interest to amplify understanding of how such collaboration will work, and the possible benefits thereof in South African schools. Partnerships have several benefits, yet the primary motivation is to improve the academic

achievements of learners and to give them greater possibilities of success in life (Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu & Yuan, 2016; O'Toole, Kiely & McGillicuddy, 2019). Whatever the character and qualities of such partnerships, the learner as a child is the centre and focus of the home-school partnership.

3.6.1 Parenting according to Epstein

A key assumption I made as a motivation to use both theorists, is that one's parenting style is a key element in the home-school partnership. This is evident in Baumrind's theory of parenting as illustrated in this chapter. Baumrind (1991) maintains that parents who demonstrate predominantly authoritative parenting practices tend to be more successful in supporting their children's learning. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2002) recognise the importance of parenting in supporting children's learning. Parenting in support of learning is recognised to be the provision of the stationery, creating conducive learning conditions at home, supporting with homework, taking an interest in the child's academic progress and interacting with the school in the interest of the child, amongst others. The researcher is of the opinion that most parents tend to focus on the provision of stationery and in most public schools, children are provided with writing books and textbooks. It is in supporting children with learning activities and homework which presents challenges for parents. The research is therefore concerned about the enablement of parents to participate in a home-school partnership. As stated by Núñez, Regueiro, Suárez, Piñeiro, Rodicio *et al.*, (2019), the quality of parental involvement has an impact on the educational outcome for the learner.

The enablement of parents is important, and the school can take the opportunity to offer a programme for parenting enablement. To this extent, Epstein (2018), and Epstein and Sheldon (2002) maintain that this can be done by providing parents with guidance of what conditions they can create at home to support learning. Interventions such as facilitating workshops as part of the parents' orientation sessions or using online communication platforms sharing parenting tips with parents could be used as parenting enabling opportunities. In my experiences, trust is important in these home-school relationships and therefore the school has to create inclusive spaces. Inclusive spaces must be

authentic. The researcher maintains that authenticity can be created with sincere and safe spaces for parents to share details about their backgrounds, culture and personalities, and talents of their own children. It is important to contextualise Epstein's recommendation of the school's support towards parenting. Such programmes for home-school partnerships should be inclusive and equal to ensure all parents can participate. In other words, the school has to be conscious that the dominant cultural norms in the school do not deny diverse home cultures but rather promotes inclusivity. It is about creating a continuum of learning between home and school (Goodall, 2018; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

Parenting in this instance is highlighted in relation to enabling and supporting children's learning, and not about corrective parenting measures. The concern is for parenting enablement interventions that create parental awareness and enable them to support learning, and ultimately impact positively on children's academic achievements (Caño *et al.*, 2016; Epstein, 1986; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Epstein and Becker (1982: 283) identify specific activities which parents can engage in with their children in supporting this learning. This can be done as regular parenting activities and may include:

- Reading;
- Checking and signing homework;
- Spelling words together;
- Playing games that involve counting, creating words, recognising colour or shape and space;
- Enquiring about what is happening in school and their participation in these activities;
- Asking the child about the school day;
- Visiting the library together; and
- Watching and discussing TV shows with the child.

3.6.2   Communication

In my experience, schools tend to send a plethora of communication to parents. This communication covers an assortment of activities in the school, especially meeting notices, fundraising notices, sporting events and the latest trend is the monthly general

newsletters (Sheldon, Epstein & Galindo, 2010). This kind of communication is general and does not connect or impact on the needs of the individual child and family (Epstein, 1987; Epstein *et al.*, 2018). Yet, typically in most schools, as indicated in my rationale for the study, schools tend to have only one parent-teacher meeting focusing on the child's learning progress. This meeting normally occurs after the first term or mid-year assessment. If the child has not demonstrated any concerning behaviour which warranted a communication from the school, then this meeting will be the only direct parent-teacher meeting in a year (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 2018).

According to Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004), two-way communication is a key element to enable parental involvement in the learning of children. The content and the manner of communication is equally important. Therefore, communication from the school has to include making parents aware of their children's achievement. This communication has to be purposeful and continuous. It can be advantageous for the learners' educational outcomes if these communication practices can connect parents with the school (Hayes, O'Toole & Halpenny, 2017; O'Toole, Kiely & McGillicuddy, 2019). The researcher concurs that learners can draw on the support from their parents and the skills of their teachers to help them with their learning. This can be facilitated by consistent communication between class teachers and parents by focusing on the progress and learning challenges of the child, which can be facilitated at the level of home-school partnerships.

The power relationship between the school and parents needs to be recognised. The communication practice should be two-way, acknowledging the role of the school and home in supporting the child's learning achievement and thus creating a partnership of mutual respect (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein *et al.*, 2018; O'Toole, Kiely & McGillicuddy , 2019; Okeke, 2014). This two-way communication can create a working relationship within the home-school partnership that is dynamic and reveals the factors of possibility involved in parental interaction with the school (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, cited in O'Toole, Kiely & McGillicuddy, 2019). Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak and Shogren (2011) identify that one of the key principals for the home-school partnership is trust. As such, the communication between the parent and teacher should be transparent, honest

and confidential, with mutual respect displayed by both parties. The communication between the teacher and parent is about enabling the exchange of knowledge and creating solutions focusing on creating conducive learning.

A key challenge is that parents may be intimidated by the language, the curriculum, and the staff; consequently, they avoid communication with the school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). I believe that these challenges can be addressed through open communication and formally structured channels for continuous use to share methods and contents that parents can use at home. Using these communication channels will go beyond communicating about behavioural challenges the child may present; instead, it should be to enable home assistance and home tutoring (Okeke, 2014; Povey, Campbell, Willis, Haynes, Western, Bennett & Pedde, 2016). This knowledge can enable parents to have more productive communication with their children regarding learning content and homework. In my story, the biggest challenge has been not understanding how to, and not knowing what is being taught in class. Communication channels have evolved which make schools much more accessible to parents. There are now different communication channels available to schools. Schools can communicate via hardcopy handouts to parents, zero rating websites, SMS messages, email, WhatsApp messages or telephone calls. This, if well managed to prevent negative activities, will enable even parents with long working hours to have contact with the school. The researcher believes there is the possibility that through these communication options, schools can communicate more frequently with the individual parents instead of only the formal communication of reports and once-off parent-teacher meetings. According to Epstein (1995, 2018), such communication can be intentionally used to build a caring relationship between the school and home. This value of caring by both institutions, home and school, can have a positive effect on the learning achievements of children.

3.6.3   Learning at home

The researcher recognises that to support learning at home is not easy, especially if you as a parent are ignorant of the content and methodology used by the class teacher. As indicated by Baumrind's (2013) theory on parenting styles, a dominance of the qualities

of authoritative parenting can be helpful. Learning at home means the ability of parents to support learning through learning activities, monitoring homework, setting goals and being able to have interesting discussions on different topics (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). The researcher is of the opinion that it cannot be assumed that parents instinctively know how to support learning at home. Therefore, parents have to be enabled to do this. Several researchers support Epstein's contention (Epstein, 2018; Epstein & Becker, 1982) of the need for the enablement of parents to get involved in the home-school partnership. Concerted activities focusing on the individual child's learning must be part of the enabling interventions.

The role of teachers in enabling parents to support learning at home is pivotal (Epstein & Becker, 1982; Epstein, 1986). Teachers need to help parents to understand the school curriculum, apart from the parenting. Parents have to be encouraged to interact with the school curriculum (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). The researcher believes that parents have to be provided with information on what children are doing in class and the different methods which the teacher is using to enable learning. In the researcher's opinion it can be confusing to children when parents do not use the same methodology to consolidate numeracy or literacy activities at home. It can lead to great stress for parents as they often use methods that they know from their own recollections of time spent in school. Information can include methods for different subject areas such as reading, mathematics and writing. This is equally true for methods on how to monitor homework, and what to monitor when the child is doing homework (Epstein, 1986; Epstein, 2010; Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education provided funding for enablement programmes and resource centres for parents (Epstein, 2010; Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). The content and focus of these programmes are decided by the parents. According to Epstein and Salinas (2004), Epstein *et al.*, (2018), Hamlin and Flessa (2018 and Epstein, Van Voorhis and Salinas (2001), it could focus on specific subject areas and involve:

- Parent-teacher meetings discussing how to support the learning at home.
- Parents attending specific support training workshops and getting information on how to support learning

- Homework assignments having specific and clear instructions that can be followed by parents to support their children.

These interventions have been tested and implemented by Epstein and team. In the video, *Dr Joyce Epstein on schools and families*, she explains how to start a programme at the school. (Connecticut Commission on Children (CtCmsnOnChildren), 2012)

<div style="border:1px solid #000; padding:1em; text-align:center;">

https://youtu.be/z1T_5qVy1gU

</div>

3.7 CRITICAL APPLICATION OF HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP INTERVENTIONS

Focusing on these specific elements of parental involvement, there have to be a consciousness of what the barriers are for parents to become involved. As stated by Johnson (2015), because these barriers sometimes manifest in the absence of parents in the traditional home-school partnership, it cannot be assumed as disinterest by parents in their children's learning. So, although the study draws on Epstein's model and guidelines for parental involvement, this is not uncritically applied. According to Chen and Gregory (2011), Johnson (2015) and Moore and Lewis (2012) it is problematic to only apply positivistic and ecological paradigms to parental involvement in the home-school partnership. In doing so, parents that experience barriers or challenges are often marginalised. It could also have the opposite effect, instead of bringing the school and the home together, it could widen this gap (Johnson, 2015).

Applying the positivistic and ecological lenses tend to ignore the diversity of opinions and lived experiences of the children and families who do not fit a specific reference frame (2011; Moore & Lewis, 2012). The positivistic paradigm considers 'knowledge as objective' (Johnson, 2015). These views are important to consider in establishing home-school partnerships in the South African context. The above critique is supported by the views of Fitriah, Sumintono, Subekti and Hassan (2013), Munje and Mncube (2018), Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) and Singh and Mbokodi (2011) which reflect on the barriers parents experience to participate in the home-school partnership. Amongst these is the inability of schools to create communication channels beyond the general school

communications. There is also the perception by teachers of parents' unwillingness and their inability based on levels of education and socio-economic situation. The reality is that although there are official guidelines from the Department of Basic Education on how schools can create home-school partnerships, this, like many good policies is not known by schools or parents.

3.8   SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher set out the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. The researcher drew on Epstein's (1987) theory of family involvement in schools and Baumrind's (2013) parenting style, to understand how a home-school partnership can work in South African schools. To keep this study focused, the researcher extracted the three elements of; parenting, communication and learning at home as the key elements to get attention to establishing a home-school partnership focusing on learner achievement. The researcher believes that if parents can be supported to become aware of their own parenting styles, they will be able to create conducive learning environments for their children at home. Although the expectation is for the school to initiate such partnerships, it also takes the willingness from parents to make it work. Home-school partnerships are complex, especially when working with culturally diverse families. In Chapter 4 the researcher articulates the paradigm, methodologies and data collection procedures that she found best support the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

A detailed review of the literature was presented in Chapter two and a discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning the study in Chapter three. The research methods, approaches and procedures which were followed in conducting this study are presented in this chapter. The research methods are explained, along with the sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures. In this chapter, the researcher presented a discussion of how the data was collected and analysed within the interpretive paradigm. This discussion includes methods used to ensure trustworthiness and an illustration of the ethical considerations of the research study

The aim of the research study was to investigate what support parents require to form a partnership with the school to support the education of their young learners. To do this, the research methodology assisted with making sense of the data by:

- Eliciting the experiences of parents.
- Enabling the analysis of the data in determining whether parents receive enabling support and if so, who provides the support.
- Determining whether these supportive interventions make a difference in the quality of support that parents give to young learners with homework, reading or numeracy sessions.
- Probing parents on whether there is a visible difference in the learners' learning progress when parental support is given from a more informed perspective.

The choice of research methodology was guided by the characteristics of the research topic, as well as the time available to do the research. The research methodology provided systematic guidance to an appropriate process to elicit parents' experiences in response to the primary research question as indicated in this chapter.

The experiences of the participants were categorised to formulate insights of what is currently the practice regarding home-school partnerships. The 'research lens' provided insights of the parents' need to participate in the education of their young learners through home-school partnerships. The research methodology therefore guided the approach and processes the researcher embarked on in carrying out the research project.

4.2   RESEARCH PARADIGM

A theoretical perspective may be integrated with the philosophical assumptions that construct a picture of the issues being examined, the people to be studied, and the changes that are needed (Creswell, 2014). A paradigm is defined as a set of belief systems based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. To gain a profound understanding of the concepts highlighted by Creswell (2014) the researcher described each concept below.

Basic beliefs

The basic beliefs represented the set of first principles the researcher holds and with which the world is viewed. These views were basically accepted as it presented itself without question as 'simply on truth' as the 'ultimate truthfulness' was not yet established. It is important that parents have some basic belief in their roles and responsibilities towards the schools. In turn, the school equally has the responsibility of believing in the participation of parents for the improvement of children's learning.

Ontological question

This is concerned with what is understood to be the 'nature of reality'. It asks the questions about "how things really are and how things really work". This view is supported by Goertz and Mahoney (2012). In this study, parents were eager to know and understand how schools function and what their responsibilities are towards the school. The researcher used the primary and secondary research question to assist in understanding the nature of the home-school partnership.

Epistemological question

It was necessary to understand the epistemological question. The social constructivist worldview allowed, with critical questioning, the exploration of multi-layered interpretations of the parents' experiences that were of interest to the research study

(Charmaz, 2017). It assisted with the development of an understanding of how parents made meaning of their experiences in the home-school relationship.

It was important to use research methods that involved the participants and determined the relationship between the researcher and the participants. This enabled authentic representations of parents' multiple experiences during the data collection phase of the research. The literature review highlighted a dominant finding regarding parental involvement in the learning of their children (Epstein, 1987). The participants in this study had the opportunity to identify and define their own experiences regarding their home-school partnership. In the social constructivist paradigm, researchers recognise that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation. They position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural and historical experiences, rather than to start with a theory (Creswell, 2014). The intention was to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings the participants had about the world, and their experiences from the questionnaires.

Nieuwenhuis (2016:) pointed out that the traditional linear and prescriptive guide, was no longer the most effective way of conducting qualitative research. He provides the following definition for a paradigm, "a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view" (Nieuwenhuis (2016:52). This research was conducted within a social constructivist paradigm. The intention was to:

- Discover more about how parents viewed the world of schooling.
- How they see their role in the home-school partnership.
- Their view of their role in supporting young learners.
- What the requirements are to be enabled to fulfil this support role.
- View their lived experiences in the interaction with the school.

In this study, the researcher focused on the information available to the parents, the communication by the school with the parents, and any enabling interventions by the school to support learning at home, particularly, whether there are any enabling features

in the home-school relationship. By focusing the questions on the above elements, in relation to the home-school partnerships, their "fundamental assumptions taken on faith, such as beliefs about the nature or reality (ontology), the relationship between knower and known (epistemology) and assumptions about methodologies" were exposed (Nieuwenhuis. 2016: 52). Participants were provided an opportunity to give meaning to their experiences by using methods which allowed them to narrate and relate to their stories.

This information was organised in a manner that provided insights into parents' requirement to participate in partnerships with the school. The social constructivism perspective enabled the comprehension of the phenomenon "through the meaning that people assign to them" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016: 61).The assumptions made through the social constructivist perspective, applied to this research study as set out in Table 7 below.

Table 7 Assumptions made through the social constructivist perspective

Assumptions	Application to this study
Human life can only be understood from within.	The focus of the study was to investigate the support parents need to enable them to be partners in supporting the education of young learners. The open-ended questionnaire encouraged parents to tell their stories regarding their experiences, feelings and processes they had in their interactions with school.
Social life is a distinctively human product.	The experiences of the parents were contextualised as the participants had been chosen based on their actual experiences with their young learners attending school.
The human mind is the purposive source or origin of meaning.	Through the literature study, document review and the questionnaire with parents, an opportunity was created to explore the phenomenon of what support parents need to support young learners with their education. This is a complex and nuanced challenge for parents. This provided a richer understanding of what challenges parents experienced when interacting with the school in fulfilling their partnership role with the school.

Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world.	The interaction with research participants directly allowed for an improved understanding of the elements that can support and enable parents to be partners in the education of young learners.
The social world does not 'exist' independently of human knowledge.	The researcher's own experience regarding home-school partnerships as well as the in-depth reading regarding this phenomenon, assisted with the design of the research questions as well as the research plan and choice of research methodologies.

Adapted from Nieuwenhuis (2016)

4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Since the focus of the research was about the support parents require to form partnerships in the education of young learners, the research applied the qualitative research approach. This approach enabled the researcher to focus on the occurrence of parents' interaction with the school and the recognition of their role in the partnership. Creswell (2014) agrees that qualitative research is *naturalistic* — it focuses on natural settings where interaction occurs; in other words, viewing social life in terms of processes that occur rather than in static terms. The researcher becomes a key instrument of data collection and data can be collected from multiple sources (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Simon, 2011).

4.3.1 Qualitative approach

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) identified nine characteristics for qualitative research that could be presented in a qualitative study. The assumption was that this could be used as an assessment gauge to determine the quality and authenticity of the chosen research methods and instruments during this study. These characteristics according to McMillan and Schumacher (2014) are as reflected in Table 8:

Table 8 Characteristics of qualitative research

Characteristics	Applicability to this study
Natural setting	This study was about home-school relationship experiences as it occurred.
Context sensitive	The questionnaires considered situational factors and even encouraged participants to tell their stories in this regard.

Direct data collection	The data was collected directly from the parents whose experiences were the main focus.
Rich narrative description	The combination of questions allowed for parents becoming quite insightful regarding their experiences, as it often was the first time they reflected on these experiences.
Process orientation	It was inevitable that participants reflected on why and how them being partners in such an interaction with the school, was influenced by situational factors.
Inductive data analysis	Given their parental stories, some similarities and differences in experiences were shared which could be used to determine categories, and thus some level of generalisation was possible.
Participant perspective	The parents told their own stories giving meaning to their own experiences, using their own language to describe the relationship with the school.
Emergent design	It was anticipated that this might happen, however it did not happen to the extent that it influenced the original aim and question of the study.
Complexity of understanding and explanation	This became quite evident early in the study. The experiences of parents, which were identified, were much more layered than initially anticipated.

Adapted from McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 345)

4.3.2   Key research objective

The objective for the study was to investigate and provide recommendations regarding the support parents require to be partners with the schools in the education of young learners. This question was considered against the public policy context, which places the responsibility on the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to ensure parents are supported, and to form a home-school partnership.

It was important to determine what the research objective was for the study as this guided the study to provide appropriate recommendations. The research methodology, such as

the sampling methods, the data collection strategy and analysis, were determined by the objectives and the questions to be answered. To this end, the researcher identified parents with young learners in grades R-2 attending public schools. The research concentrated on parents who had made attempts to collaborate with the school to support the learners' academic progress. In developing the questionnaire, the researcher took cognisance of the theoretical framework. Epstein's (1990) model and Baumrind's (2013) parenting styles guided the types of questions the researcher asked the parents.

The theoretical framework of Epstein (1990) articulates the six categories of parents becoming partners with schools to improve their children's education. These six categories include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating. Epstein's (1990) six types complement the work of Baumrind (2013), which sets out the following parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive/indulgent (Venketsamy, 1996). Their experiences, as related by the parents, were then assessed against the official guideline, *Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools* (NECT, 2016). It specifies what the school or the DBE should do to support and enable this parent-school relationship.

4.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2014) described the research design as a plan which the researcher drafted and followed during the research process. Flick (2013) agree that the research design shapes the researcher's thinking and planning processes. It is important that the researcher understands the three parts that make up the research plan during the design phase. These three parts are comprised of the researcher's own understanding of the world and it includes the researcher's 'philosophical worldview', the 'selected strategies for inquiry' and the selected 'research methods' (Creswell, 2014: 5; Chawla & Sodhi, 2011) as illustrated in Figure 7.
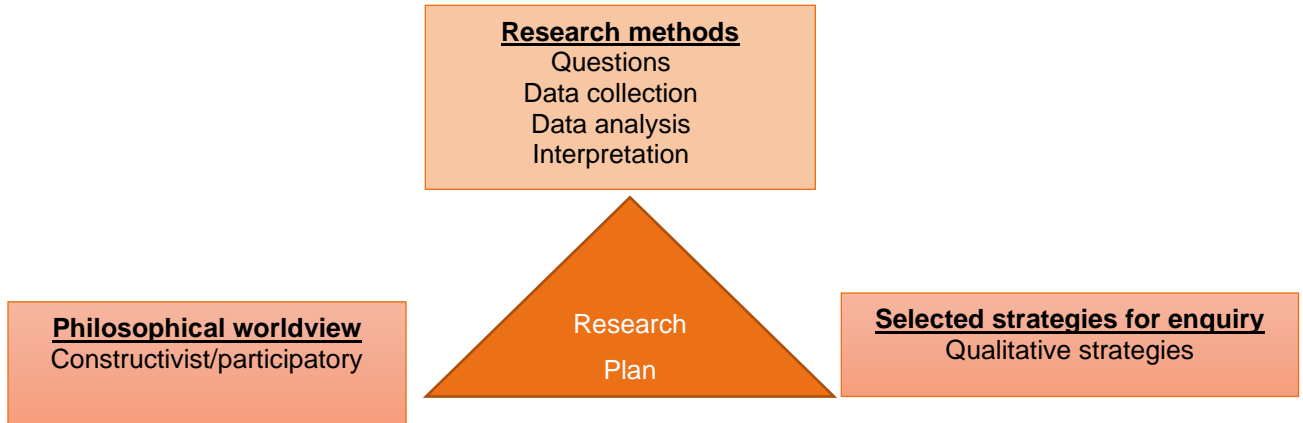
Figure 7 A Framework for Design-The Interconnection of Worldviews, Strategies of Inquiry, and Research Methods (Creswell, 2014; Chawla & Sodhi, 2011)

It was this triangular understanding that helped to navigate the processes of determining the research objective; the kind of inquiry strategies; and the methods, to ensure that the data collected could be formulated and presented as findings.

This study focused on the primary research question: *What support do parents require to form partnerships with educational stakeholders to support their young learners?* The research further wanted to determine whether schools applied the guidelines as set out in the policy; *Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools.* (National Education Collaboration Trust [NECT], (2016). The researcher was eager to explore if schools had developed interventions for home-school partnerships. Findings by Singh and Mbokodi (2011) and Munje and Mncube (2018) highlighted several challenges experienced by parents in forming meaningful and supportive home-school partnerships. Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) found that school's leaders often projected an image that they were the only stakeholders responsible for young children's education.

This research objective resonated with the 'social constructivist worldview' that is to gain an understanding of the phenomena from the perspectives of the participants of the study Creswell (2014). The researcher believes that the finding of this study will have a significant impact on both schools and parents. It will create an awareness and strengthen home-school partnerships. Parents, schools and district offices will deepen their

understanding of how to support parents to be partners in a home-school partnership. It will strengthen awareness of programmes available at schools so that parents can become involved in activities to support their children.

Epstein and Sheldon (2006) provide seven research principles to support the framing and research design for the home-school partnerships to support learners' academic success. For this study, the term home-school partnership will be used to accommodate the diverse individuals in the home situation that may support a child's learning. This expanded on the community-school partnerships as coined by Epstein and Sheldon (2006). It is for this reason that the study drew on some of the following principles, Table 9 in the research design:

Table 9 Principles for parents, community and school partnership research

Principles	Description
1. **Home-school partnership rather than parental involvement**	Defining parents and the school, working together is preferably recognised as a *partnership* rather than *parental involvement*. It recognises the 'overlapping theory of influence' (Epstein 2001). It acknowledges the multiple spheres of influences on children's education.
2. **Home-school partnership is multi-dimensional**	The principle is illustrated in the six types of elements in which the school can have purposeful partnerships. (Epstein 2001; Epstein et. al. 2018). These six elements were discussed in Chapter 3 of this study.
3. **Home-school partnerships are needed for classroom and school organisation**	School improvement policies should include the role and importance of home-school partnerships. Research studies into this phenomenon must investigate the actions taken by schools to implement such policy as part of the school programme.
4. **Home-school partnerships need multi-level leadership**	Sheldon and Epstein (2005) advocate for the leadership at a district, provincial and national level to support such partnerships. The role of each layer of leadership in support of the home-school partnership can be studied.
5. **Home-school partnership includes a focus on student learning and achievement**	Home-school partnerships, linked to learners' achievements, can have measurable outcomes on the learning and development of learners (Epstein & Sheldon 2006; Sheldon

	2003). The quality and success programmes can be measured in relation to several success indicators academically, socially, emotionally and physically.
6. **Home-school partnerships are based on equity**	It acknowledges and caters for the differences amongst students and their parents. Home-school programmes or interventions must promote equity and not use the difference to discriminate or be used to motivate for not implementing such programmes.
7. **Research Methods**	Epstein and Sheldon (2006) maintain that research methods used in researching the home-school partnership phenomenon could isolate aspects to measure the improvement of the partnership programme and any impact of these partnerships that can be associated with learners' achievements.

Adapted from Epstein and Sheldon (2006)

For this reason, Epstein's model as a theoretical framework was used in Chapter 3. The framework is designed in a multi-layered format of how parents can fulfil their partnership responsibilities. Figure 8 below illustrates the home-school partnership between parents and schools contributing to the academic success of their children.
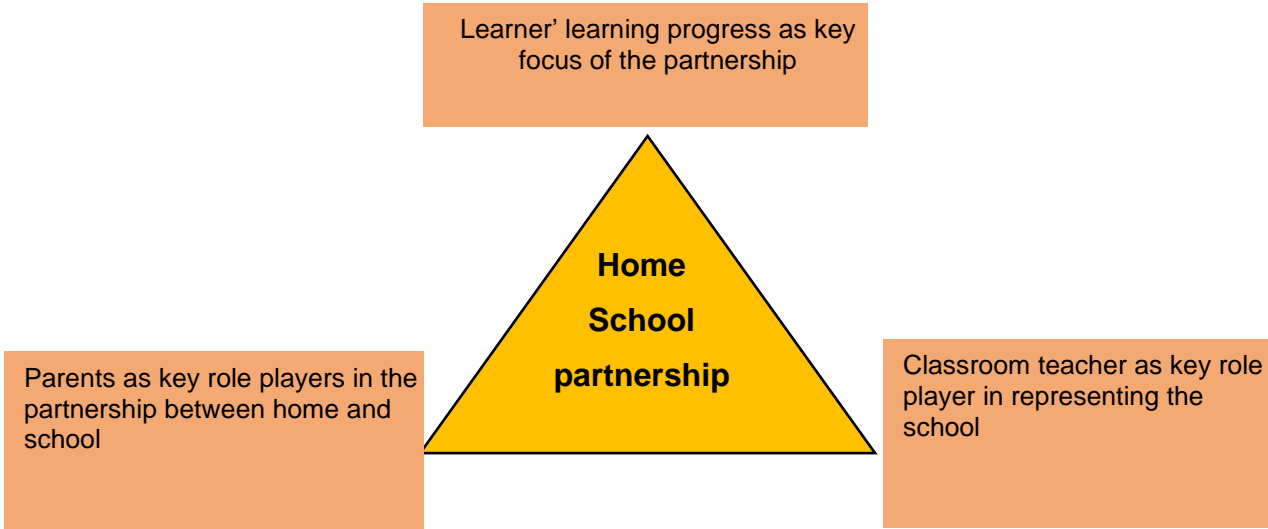
Figure 8 Home-school partnership contributing to academic success of children

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To successfully guide this study, the research questions were as follows:

4.5.1 Primary research question

- What support do parents require to form partnerships with educational stakeholders to support their young learners?

4.5.2 Secondary research question

- How can parents and schools work collaboratively to support young learners in order to enhance their academic achievements?
- What support do parents require in their parenting styles to support learners in school?

4.6 POPULATION

The research population is referred to as all the individuals that meet the inclusion criteria for the research and that can possibly participate in the study (Sutton & David, 2011). Similarly, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), the population in relation to a research study refers to all the suitable individuals from which a sample for the study can be identified. The population for this study were all parents who have children attending Grades R-2 in public schools. Table 10 presents the detailed biographical data of the parents who voluntarily participated in this study.

4.7 SAMPLING

Sampling is the process whereby a selected group from the population is identified to participate in the research study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The identified participants became the sample, and therefore the sources from whom data was collected, through the chosen research methodology (Flick, 2014). The identification of the sample population was important as it determined the quality of the responses to the questions and ultimately the authenticity and usability of the data (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The inclusion criteria for this study were parents with young learners in grades R-2 in a public school. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify and include the participants. All the participants had all children in grades R–2. This was done to firstly keep the research study manageable and secondly to accommodate the assumption that

it is advantageous for parents to be introduced earlier rather than later to the home-school partnership (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem *et al.,* 2020; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan *et al.,* 2015; Robinson, 2014). This also proved to accommodate the practical limitations for the research as the participants had limited time to dedicate to the study. Participants could only award limited time to participate in the study due to their respective personal commitments.

4.8   PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITE

The participants for this study were all parents who had children attending grades R-2 in public schools in the South Africa. The inclusion criteria for this study were parents with young learners in grades R-2 in a South African public school. Parents had to indicate that they tried to collaborate with the schools to support their young learners. Parents also had to have access to technology to complete the online questionnaire.

The data was collected using Google forms, which enabled the distribution of the questionnaire. Conducting the questionnaire online enabled participants to complete it in their own time. Participants could only award limited time to participate in the study due to their respective personal commitments. Parents who did not have children in grades R-2 were excluded from participating in this study.

4.9   THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

It was important to be honest with participants regarding the personal interest of the researcher in this study. My interest was firstly as a parent, wanting to determine whether this phenomenon is shared by other parents. Secondly, it was about understanding their experiences in supporting their children with learning activities. Thirdly, it was about whether they were aware of the government policy providing guidelines on how to enable parents to support learners with academic activities.

According to (Råheim, Magnussen, Sekse, Lunde, Jacobsen *et al.*, 2016; Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheraghi, 2014), the role of the researcher is debatable, and the clarification of interest and role is significant in building rapport

between the research and the participants. These debates centre around the researcher being an insider versus an outsider; the role of power of the researcher in terms of determining the rules of the research study; as well as the perception of the researcher as the one with knowledge. There is also the question whether the researcher's own values and opinion on the phenomenon are visible in the analysis and findings of the research (Galdas, 2017). According to Galdas (2017: 2), such a question is 'fallacious', as with qualitative research the researcher is an integral part of the research and that there is no desire by the researcher to be separated from the findings and the final product of the research. It is rather more important for the researcher to be open and honest about the interests, intention, and gain to be had from the research (Sanjari *et al.,* 2014).

Collins and Cooper (2014) contend that the reflexivity of the researcher guides the development and influences the quality of the research instruments. Through the openness of the researcher, the participants have a better understanding of the intention of the study. This argument is expanded by Collins and Cooper (2014) that with reflexive practice the researcher is consciously working on understanding phenomena as well as being mindful of the research process itself.

4.10   RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The online questionnaire was the main data collection instrument. The questions and the structure of the questionnaire were designed in a non-intrusive way (Maree, 2016). The design of the questionnaire is underpinned by the principles of simplicity, clarity, and positive phrasing of the questions (McLafferty, 2016). The questions focused on eliciting responses to the research questions. Given these principles, the researcher kept the questions simple with each question focusing on one specific aspect. Additionally, attention was also given to keeping the wording neutral so as not to influence or pre-empt the participants' responses. The researcher designed the questions focusing on the parenting style, to provide multiple options to prevent any perceptions of judgment of their preferred or dominant parenting style (Maree 2016; Creswell, 2014). This was done in cognisance of the fact that parenting styles can be a sensitive aspect.

4.10.1   Questionnaires

Data was collected through an online questionnaire developed by the researcher [Annexure A]. Venketsamy and Hu (2021) state that online questionnaires are an appropriate means of collecting data during the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid contact with participants and to prevent the spread of the virus. Furthermore, the researcher was of the opinion that most parents have access to technology to complete their questionnaires. Dewaele (2018) confirms that with the rapid increase in technology, almost every home in most urban communities have access to technology. This study was conducted in an urban setting, and the researcher concurred that all parents had access to technology. As indicated by Maree (2016) the researcher needs to pay attention to the clarity and suitability of the research questions. To ensure that the questions were clearly articulated and easily understood, the researcher together with the study leader gave each question careful thought in the design and suitability. For this reason, the researcher shared the questionnaire with three parents to test the clarity of the questions. This evaluation of the questions is depended on the kind and nature of the subject under investigation(de Jong, Dorer, Lee, Yan, & Villar, 2018).

The researcher developed the questions so that it became a tool through which parents could share their experiences. According to Maree (2016) recounting narratives of experiences has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience. The questionnaire was used as a tool for parents to narrate their personal stories, how they support their young children with learning activities and their relationship with the school. It is critical for each question to be clear and precise. Each question had to focus on a particular aspect of parents' experiences (McLafferty, 2016). The motivation for the questionnaire was to get parents to communicate their lived experiences regarding home-school partnerships as articulated in the qualitative research approach. Essentially, through carefully selected and designed questions participants were guided to share their lived experiences. McGuirk & O'Neill (2016) state that questionnaires can be used to collect data of people's experiences, their behaviours and social interactions. According to McGuirk and O'Neill (2016) and Dewaele (2018), the use of questionnaires has evolved beyond simple standardised, formally structured questions.

It is used in qualitative research to investigate complex social realities such as social identity, quality of life, and community and social networks. This evolution in the application of questionnaires made it an appropriate instrument to collect the data required in this research study.

Although questionnaires are relatively widely used in academic research, it is not an easier option to collect data (Dewaele, 2018). The design of a questionnaire requires much effort and thought in order to collect data that responds to the research questions. The questionnaire must take cognisance of who the participants are and their educational and literacy levels. The design of the questions and the layout of the questionnaire must appeal to the participants to get an adequate response rate (McLafferty, 2016; Rowley, 2014). The introduction and the way questions are structured should not give the impression that particular options or expressions are valued over any other (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017).

Questionnaires are designed in such a way that participants can communicate their own experiences. Questionnaires have thus evolved "from a fact positivistic collectivism toward an interpretive individualism", (Klein cited in Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017). This evolution made questionnaires appropriate for the use of collecting information on attitudes and opinions about complex behavioural aspects or social interactions. A research study can benefit from questionnaires in which each question focuses on one aspect of a topic and it must be free of jargon. McLafferty (2016) believes that appropriately conceptualised questions make it easy for participants to engage and respond appropriately since the researcher is not present to explain any ambiguities. In the design of the questionnaire, the researcher applied the principles of simple and clear questions. The questions were divided into clearly demarcated sections and each question dealt with only one aspect.

4.10.2   Characteristics of a good questionnaire

Questionnaires have several advantages. Questionnaires are practical and are not expensive to produce and distribute. It is therefore a cost-effective research tool (McGuirk

& O'Neill, 2016; Sue & Ritter, 2012). The data collection for this research study was done during 2020 and 2021 amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. The use of the questionnaire ensured access and inclusivity for the target audience. The researcher was of the opinion that this form of data collection was appropriate because it did not require close contact between the researcher and the participants. The researcher observed the national protocols for COVID-19 safety. Each participant had to complete the online questionnaire, since online technology used the least amount of mobile data. Throughout the construction of the questionnaire the researcher had to consider the characteristics of a good questionnaire in order to meet the requirements necessary for the research instrument to be reliable. The characteristics of a good questionnaire that were considered by the researcher according to Krosnick (2018), Krueger (2020) are the following:

- It has to deal with a significant topic, one the participant will recognise as important enough to warrant spending his or her time on. The significance should be clearly and carefully stated on the questionnaire and on the accompanying letter.
- It must seek only that information which cannot be obtained from other sources.
- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to get the essential data. Long questionnaires frequently find their way into the wastepaper basket.
- Questionnaires should be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly duplicated or printed.
- Directions for a good questionnaire must be clear and complete, and important terms clearly defined.
- Each question has to deal with a single concept and should be worded as simple and straightforward as possible.
- Different categories should provide an opportunity for easy, accurate and unambiguous responses.
- Objectively formulated questions with no leading suggestions should render the desired responses. Leading questions are just as inappropriate in a questionnaire as they are in a court of law.
- Questions should be presented in a proper psychological order, preceding from general to more specific and sensitive responses. An orderly grouping helps

participants to organise their own thinking so that their answers are logical and objective. It is preferable to present questions that create a favourable attitude before proceeding to those that are more intimate or delicate in nature. Annoying and/or embarrassing questions should be avoided if possible.

4.10.3   Advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire

Data can be gathered by means of a structured questionnaire inter alia the following ways: a written questionnaire that is mailed, delivered or handed out personally; personal interviews and telephone interviews (Patten, 2016). Each mode has specific advantages and disadvantages which the researcher needs to evaluate for their suitability to the research questionnaire, the specific target population being studied, as well as relative cost. As the researcher, I used the written questionnaire as a research instrument taking into consideration certain advantages (Menon, 2018; Patten, 2016).

Advantages of the written questionnaire
- Affordability is the primary advantage of written questionnaires because it is the least expensive means of data gathering.
- Written questionnaires preclude possible interviewer bias. The way the interviewer asks questions and even the interviewer's general appearance or interaction may influence participant's answers. Such biases can be completely eliminated with a written questionnaire.
- A questionnaire permits anonymity. If it is arranged in such a way that responses were given anonymously, this would increase the researcher's chances of receiving responses which genuinely represent a person's beliefs, feelings, opinions or perceptions.
- They permit a participant a sufficient amount of time to consider answers before responding.
- Questionnaires can be given to many people simultaneously, that is to say, that a large sample of the target population can be reached.

- They provide greater uniformity across measurement situations than do interviews. Each person responds to exactly the same questions because standard instructions are given to the participants.

- Generally, the data provided by questionnaires can be more easily analysed and interpreted than the data obtained from verbal responses.

- Using a questionnaire solves the problem of non-contact when the participant is not at home 'when the interviewer calls'. When the target population to be covered is widely and thinly spread, the mail questionnaire is the only possible method of approach.

- Through the use of the questionnaire approach, the problems related to interviews may be avoided. Interview 'errors' may seriously undermine the reliability and validity of survey results.

- Participants may answer questions of a personal or embarrassing nature more willingly and frankly on a paper questionnaire than in a face-to-face situation with an interviewer who may be a complete stranger. In some cases, it may happen that participants report less than expected and make more critical comments in a mail questionnaire.

- Questions requiring considered answers rather than immediate answers could enable participants to consult documents in the case of the mail questionnaire approach.

- Participants can complete questionnaires in their own time and in a more relaxed atmosphere.

- Questionnaire design is relatively easy if the set guidelines are followed.

- The administering of questionnaires, the coding, analysis and interpretation of data can be done without any special training.

- Data obtained from questionnaires can be compared and inferences made.

- Questionnaires can elicit information which cannot be obtained from other sources. This renders empirical research possible in different educational disciplines.

Disadvantages of the questionnaire

The researcher is also aware of the fact that the written questionnaire has important disadvantages. According to Venketsamy (2000) and Maree 2016 the disadvantages of the questionnaire are inter alia the following:

- Questionnaires do not provide the flexibility of interviews.

- In an interview an idea or comment can be explored. This makes it possible to gauge how people are interpreting the question. If questions asked are interpreted differently by participants, the validity of the information obtained is jeopardised.

- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.

- Questions can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions.

- The mail questionnaire does not make provision for obtaining the views of more than one person at a time. It requires uninfluenced views of one person only.

- Answers to mail questionnaires must be seen as final. Rechecking of responses cannot be done. There is no chance of investigating beyond the given answer for a clarification of ambiguous answers. If participants are unwilling to answer certain questions, nothing can be done because the mail questionnaire is essentially flexible.

- In a mail questionnaire the participant examines all the questions at the same time before answering them and the answers to the different questions can therefore not be treated as 'independent'.

- Researcher is unable to control the context of question answering, and specifically, the presence of other people. Participants may ask friends or family members to examine the questionnaire or comment on their answers, causing bias if the participant's own private opinions are desired.

- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that the participants may have. Participants might answer questions incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misinterpretation.

4.10.4   Interviews

I found it prudent to conduct unstructured interviews to triangulate the participants' responses to the questionnaire. I favoured using unstructured interviews as I was not interested in testing a hypothesis or to assess a particular phenomenon to make a judgment whether it was right or wrong. The aim of this study was to understand different parents' experiences and to ascertain if, and how, parents and schools create partnerships to support children's learning. Interviews come in different forms and can be

structured, semi-structured and unstructured (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Roulstan and Choi (2018) state that the unstructured interview allows for the in-depth exploration of crucial information regarding the participants' personal experiences. Therefore, although unstructured, it still required preparation of the interview protocols. Noon (2018) describes the phenomenological interview as a manner of getting rich information whilst participants narrate their personal lived experiences. This information will be used as the raw data for the research study. The researcher is of the opinion that it would have been difficult to get this data from just observations or documents. This was the most authentic data collection technique to employ.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom. Although the interviews were unstructured, as a researcher I needed to do the necessary preparation (Roulston & Choi, 2018). It became apparent during the interviews that allowing participants to tell their stories, prompted by the questions, provided the depth which could enhance the data. This method, creating a conversation to contextualise the interview and using prompting questions, prepared by me as the researcher, created a comfortable environment for the parents. A more open and in-depth discussion on the research topic ensued, as the questions allowed participants to provide their own authentic responses. This also enabled me to clarify their responses to the questionnaire (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). They related their own stories motivated by the questions. It seemed that parents were comfortable in sharing their experiences in response to the prepared prompting questions. I, as the researcher, had the opportunity to ask questions about how parents experienced the phenomenon and could listen to how the participants made meaning from their own experiences through their own storytelling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

4.10.5   Document Analysis

In this study, the researcher employed document analysis as part of the data collection triangulation process. Document analysis is different to literature reviews as it is the process whereby you review and analysed relevant documents to contribute to the data (Robson, 2011). In this instance, the researcher was interested in the children's work and

specifically the work they were helped with by their parents. The researcher collected this with the agreement of the parents and child. Document analysis meant that she had to go through the work which the families presented to gain information that is related to the research question.

As stated by Robson (2011), the data gathered from the documents relevant to a particular study need to be analysed and interpreted. The documents were also a reflection of what the participants told me in the questionnaire as well as the interviews. The documents analysis allowed for affirmation of the data gained though the questionnaire and interviews without any intervention from participants or the research to 'fit' the response to a question during the interview (Bowen, 2009). The researcher did not consider all the information from the children's books. These were the children's personal books which they were using for homework. It is with this understanding that the researcher reviewed the books and acknowledged it as rich enough sources to contribute to the data for this study. I recognised document analysis as a valuable contributor to the data collection, as it provided me with additional insights to the individuals and their lived experiences regarding the phenomena the researcher investigated. According to Maree (2016) document analysis does provide an opportunity to learn more about the population, sample and institution in relation to the focus of the research.

4.11   DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of the analysis process was to make meaning and nuanced sense of the information obtained from the different participants through a rigorous methodological approach (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). The researcher had to think about the analysis methodology prior to collecting the data. The method of analysis does impact on the quality and depth of the presentation of the data. The researcher deemed this preparation important as the data collection and analysis needed to be purposeful to the research topic and the researcher wanted the analytical themes to emerge as part of the preparation process (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedah, 2019). To this extent, the researcher applied the phenomenological analysis processes to analyse the experiences of the participants. This enabled the deduction from the data of what parents conveyed as their

enablement needs to participate as partners in the family-school partnership. In reading the responses to the questionnaires, the researcher was guided by primary and secondary research questions. It also helped to apply the following orientations to determine the themes and threads from the responses (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017):

- Similarities in the responses
- Incongruous or deviant responses
- Silences in the responses
- Reshaping of the questions in the responses

Klein cited in Eckerdal and Hagström (2017), recommends two analytical processes in gaining data from questionnaires. Firstly, is recognising how the participant used past and present in accounting a phenomenon in response to a question. This may be an indication of a paradigm shift or a possible contrast of an account of a phenomenon. Secondly is to read the whole response to the question as well as the entire response of a participant. By doing so, the researcher was able to detect the nuances in their stories that can be beneficial to the analysis of the data (Klein, as cited in Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017). The researcher was aware that the participants did not relay their experiences in a perfect chronological manner.

4.11.1   Preliminary exploratory analysis

The preliminary exploratory analysis started by explaining the purpose and the process which was followed, to the participants who were invited and agreed to be part of the study. This was particularly important as participants hailed from different contexts. As indicated 14 participants completed the questionnaire. Not all participants were gainfully employed. A more detailed account of profiles of the participants will be provided in Chapter 5. This initial exploratory analysis was helpful as it gave assurance that the appropriate target group of parents, as anticipated during the planning of the research, was accessed. Similar processes as set out by McMillan and Schumacher (2014), Creswell and Poth (2016), to do the preliminary exploration of the data were followed. These processes included the following:

- The online instrument collated the responses per question.

- Transcripts – the responses from the questionnaire were collated and read several times.

- Pertinent phrases and sentences per question were identified relating to the research topic.

- These phrases were further grouped into discernible patterns or themes in the responses.

- Read through these themes to formulate meaning.

4.11.2 Data coding and interpreting the data

I firstly read the data which was organised according to the questions. This was done in preparation of the coding or categorising process. During this process the researcher was conscious of her own lens through which the data was interpreted. This was also done with mindfulness not to look for one single story, and to recognise the richness in the different manners in which participants reflected their lived realities with the phenomenon. Firstly, the researcher followed the phenomenological approach. The purpose was to understand the participants' experiences in relations to them being required by the school to support their young learners' educational activities. The researcher acknowledged her own experiences regarding this phenomenon. As stated by Sutton and Austin (2015: 227), this "filter does not diminish the quality or significance of the analysis, since every researcher has his or her own filters". This principle was followed throughout this research study. Secondly, the researcher acknowledged that a social constructivist lens was used whilst organising the data. This was done by listening to how parents describe their own agency in terms of wanting to be fully recognised partners in the home-school partnership. As argued by Sutton and Austin (2015: 227) "Being aware of the standpoints you are taking in your own research is one of the foundations of qualitative work." The researcher did not want to be the narrator of the participants' experiences. It was rather important to present what the participants had experienced.

The following steps were followed to interpret the data. During the coding process the:

- Initial focus was on the frequently used terms and or concepts participants were using. These were used to organise the key concepts.

- Data was then interpreted and segmented through the elements of the theoretical lens of Epstein's (1990) types of parental involvement in school and Baumrind's (2013) parenting styles as discussed in Chapter 3. This process assisted in introducing order to the data.
- Responses were checked and completed with the descriptive language that the participants used in relating their experiences.
- Anomalies in their responses were identified, such as something which was maybe just experienced by one participant.

The circumstances described by the participants that gave grounds for this experience were also acknowledged. Creswell and Clarke (2017) suggest that the process described above helps the researcher to find connectedness and inter-connectedness amongst categories, and therefore gain understanding of how the individuals in the study experienced the home-school partnership phenomenon.

4.11.3   Presentation of findings

It was my goal to present plausible findings to be included in the dissertation towards obtaining an academic qualification. This in itself was a primary determinant as to how to present the 'meaning making' of participants in responding to the question; What support do parents require to be partners in the education of young learners?

According to Forsey (2012: 374), it was good to be conscious of the "creative tension of straddling positivism and interpretivism". This was particularly evident in the categorisation process. Using the said lenses as described above, I made the decision regarding the relevance of the information to the study. Given that the research was done from a phenomenological approach, it was important to frame it within the researcher's own experiences and that of the participants. The findings were presented in a narrative discussion, describing insights gained based on the data analysis. The findings are presented by relating it to the literature as per Chapter 2 of this study as well as reflecting on the meaning of the data by applying my theoretical lens of parental involvement types and parenting styles (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

4.12   TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher considered the elements of trustworthiness throughout the research process. I gave careful attention to data collection methods and analysis thereof. I considered how to ensure the rigour in this study, paying attention to its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as suggested by (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen *et al.,* 2014). The conscious choice of the research approach and data collection process facilitated the collective meaning making of the data (Maree, 2016). The research questionnaire was triangulated with the research interviews to further enhance the rigour in the study.

4.12.1   Credibility

Credibility refers to how truthful the data is. It also refers to how authentic the researcher interpreted and represented the responses from the participants (Cope, 2014; McLafferty, 2016). The researcher took care to ensure that participants' responses were accurately captured and presented (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen *et al.,* 2014). Furthermore, I also gave attention to the consistency in interpretation and understanding of the data and that ultimately it was about extrapolating meaning from the data. The authenticity of the data is based on whether the researcher can demonstrate a variation of realties in the interpretation and presentation of the data (Cope, 2014; Schreier, 2018; Tracy, 2019). Furthermore, according to Tracy (2019) the credibility in qualitative research can be established through triangulation and engaging with the participants with the data. I have done this through the interviews where the researcher could check my understanding of some of the responses to the questions in the questionnaire.

4.12.2   Transferability

Creswell and Clark (2017) and Daniel (2019) explain that transferability is related to the use of the research results in other contexts. Daniel (2019) further argues for the importance of transferability as it ensures rigour in the findings especially if you want your research to be applied in actual practices. In explaining my sample and the assumptions which the researcher made, the research phenomena exposed the transferability of the research. The researcher considered the sample from the described population and the

research instrument as two key contributors to ensuring the transferability of the research findings. The appropriateness of the sample is based on my own experience as a parent supporting my child's learning activities. The researcher also made sure, by testing the draft questionnaire, that the research instrument elicited the desired responses (Patten, 2016).

4.12.3 Dependability

According to Higgins, Trehan, McGowan, Henry and Foss (2015) dependability is about whether the data can be repeatedly used as it is stable, objective and consistent. Dependability, especially in qualitative research, is also quality and whether the data collection is aligned to the research methodology. The researcher collected the data through questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The researcher arranged the data in order to present it in a clear, organised format and kept the original recording of the interviews.

4.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This research study adhered to the ethical processes as prescribed by the University of Pretoria's Ethical Committee. Once clearance was obtained, the research process had to adhere to these principles throughout the study. To this end, parents were invited in writing and provided written assurance of the confidentiality of their responses. The participants were again asked at the commencement of the questionnaire whether they agreed to participate in the research [Annexure B]. On responding 'yes', participants could then continue with the questionnaire. On responding 'no', participants did not have access to the rest of the questionnaire.

4.14 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher discussed the research paradigm and its choice in relation to the research. I described the methodology and set out the data collection and analysis procedures, using questionnaires, unstructured interviews and document analysis for triangulation of the data. The researcher indicated the primary research question and sub questions which direct the study. The researcher also argued for the appropriateness of

the data collection procedure to the theoretical frameworks which were presented in detail in Chapter 3. The data analysis will be presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter four the researcher discussed the research paradigm and approach used to collect the data for this study. The researcher also set out the methods for analysis which will be applied in this chapter. As indicated in Chapter four, this study is embedded in the qualitative research paradigm, which enabled the researcher to read and listen to the stories of the participants and to make meaning of the collected data (Creswell & Clark 2017). Data was collected through questionnaires and the data was triangulated through follow-up interviews with five parents and reviewing of three of the children's books.

The parents responded to close and open-ended questions in the questionnaire and open-ended prompts in the unstructured interviews. In Chapter 3, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the applicability of the theoretical framework underpinning this research. The research study is underpinned by Epstein's (1987) model of parental involvement in schools and Baumrind's theory on parenting. I decided to focus on three key types of parental involvement of Epstein and Van Voorhis (2002) for this research study namely, parenting, communication and learning at home. This decision was motivated by the research questions as set out below. These three elements of the Epstein and Van Voorhis model (2002) were applicable to this research study. They are reflected in the analysis of the data as set out in the key themes and sub-themes in this chapter. Furthermore, the researcher also wanted to test with parents their awareness of parenting styles and how these affect their relationship with their children especially in relation to parenting, communication with the school or the child and supporting learning at home activities.

5.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the profiles of the participants of this research study. It also focuses on analysing the data that emanated from the online questionnaires and unstructured interviews with parents as well as the document analysis. The analysis and

discussion on the data are organised in different key themes and sub-themes. The analysis and discussions are guided by the research questions.

5.2.1 Primary research question

- What support do parents require to form partnerships with the school to support their young learners?

5.2.2 Secondary research questions

- How can schools and parents work collaboratively to support learners to enhance their academic achievement?
- What support do parents require in their parenting style to support learners in school?

5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH SETTING AND DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The research setting was clearly indicated in Chapter 4. The participants for this study were all parents who had children attending grades R-2 in public schools. Parents who did not have children in grades R-2 were excluded from participating in this study. Parents also had to have access to technology to complete the online questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted online as the data collection occurred during COVID-19 and South Africans had to maintain social distancing resulting in movement restrictions (Department of Cooperative Governance, 2020, 2021). The questionnaire had different types of questions which allowed participants to write comprehensive responses. The questionnaire was followed up with unstructured interviews with five parents who were available.

5.4 PROFILE OF PARENTS

This section of the chapter describes the biographical data of the sample. Using such a diverse group of parents in the study sample, illustrated how prevalent these parental experiences are with home-school partnerships. It presents the experiences against a cross-section of parents. Table 10 represents the diversity of the profiles of parents.

Table 10 Biographical data of the sample

Parent No	Gender	Age range	No of young children	Grade of child	Occupation	Home language	Qualification
P1	Male	36-45	2	R	Personal administrator	Sesotho	Grade 12
P2	Female	26-35	1	2	Event Manager	English	Tertiary diploma
P3	Female	26-35	2	2	Chef	English	Tertiary diploma
P4	Female	26-35	2	1	Customer service	isiZulu	Grade 12
P5	Female	36-45	3	2	Admin Officer	English	Degree
P6	Female	36-45	2	R	Team Assistant	isiZulu	Tertiary diploma
P7	Male	36-45	2	2	Director	isiZulu	Grade 12
P8	Male	46-56	2	R	Medical Doctor	Afrikaans,	Doctorate
P9	Female	26-35	3	1	Project Manager	English	Degree
P10	Female	46-56	2	1	Health Administrator	Afrikaans	Tertiary diploma
P11	Female	56+	2	R	Operating manager government	Afrikaans,	Honours
P12	Female	46-56	2	2	Lecturer	Sepedi, Sesotho	Masters
P13	Male	36-45	2	2	Senior Management	Setswana	Degree
P14	Female	26-35	2	2	Housewife	Afrikaans,	Tertiary diploma

A sample of 14 parents agreed to complete the online questionnaire. As per the inclusion criteria, only parents who had children in grades R, 1 and 2 could participate by completing the online questionnaire. More females (ten) participated in the study in comparison to four males. The ages of parents were between 26 and 55 years. Only one

parent indicated an age of more than 55 years. The researcher believed that the sample size was adequate to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomena. Based on the occupational profiles of the parents, it was evident that parents' occupations vary across the participants. Parents indicated that they were a housewife, administrator, chef, events manager, director, lecturer and medical doctor. All parents completed minimum grade 12 education and indicated their competence in speaking, reading and writing English. Most of the participants indicated that they have at least two young children in their family. Their children were in either grades R, 1 or 2. Parents indicated that they are not overly concerned about their children's academic progress. Most parents indicated that they had access to caregivers who were responsible for their young children while they were at work.

From the data obtained, more females completed the questionnaire and participated in the unstructured interview, a finding supported by researchers (Doucet, (2011), Antony-Newman, 2019; Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019).

They agree that parental involvement in young children's education and support is often the responsibility of the female parents. In the instance of father and mother, most indicated that both the father and the mother were working. Their children are cared for by caregivers during their absence from home. Since most parents are working, poses a major challenge when it comes to parents' meetings with schools, teachers and school governing bodies regarding the support of their young children.

P2 and her son

In the question pertaining to attending school meetings to support their children, the following parents P1, P3, P4, P7 and P8 responded that:

> They were working class parents. It is very difficult for them to find time during
> the workday to meet with the principal or the teacher. They cannot leave work

and go to schools. Most of the time schools have their meetings from 3 p.m. in the afternoon and they are still at work. Parents also indicated that they cannot let their caregivers attend school meetings.

All parents agreed on the importance of these school meetings with the teachers and principals; however, they felt that the schools should take into consideration the working hours of parents.

Parental support programmes should consider the times when these meeting and support sessions are planned and organised. LaRocque (2013) agrees that home-school partnerships must take cognisance of parents' employment conditions when planning and scheduling meetings. The working relationship or partnership between the school and parents is imperative to support children to achieve their optimal potential. This is clearly articulated in the Bill of Rights Section 28 and 29 pertaining to children's rights to education. The Bill of Rights further stipulates that the state should ensure these rights of children are implemented (Constitution, 1996). The researcher, as a single female parent, can relate to the predominantly female involvement in supporting children's learning activities. It presents its own challenges to organise and cope with, for example, teacher-parent meetings which are arranged at inconvenient times. These times as often during the working hours of most parents. From this data it is evident that home-school partnerships should consider the demographics of the school community, and plan and implement partnerships which are manageable and flexible for both, parents, and school personnel.

5.5   THEME 1: SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

The school as a social construct is a crucial element of this study; it assists in highlighting the core argument of how parents can be empowered to participate in the education of their children (Vincent, 2013). According to Vygotsky (1929), the school as a social construct is shaped by the policy as well as the political and social agenda. It defines the curriculum and how children and their families engage in and with the curriculum. School or education is currently offered as a social instrument and a means to obtain success

and move beyond the current social and financial status (Orozco, 2015). In this regard it was important to obtain the parents' perspective of the schools their children attend.

To elicit parents' understanding of the school as a social construct, the researcher aimed to explore parents' perceptions of the school their young children attended. Participants P1, P2, P6, P8, P11 and P14 agreed that the school their children attended, accommodated their children's learning needs. Furthermore, P1 agreed that, "The *School has a good ethos of teaching and learning. They are following the prescribed CAPS curriculum from the Department of Education"*. P2 indicated, "*The school leadership and management are well organised and there are policies and procedures in place for school management and parental support. The school has a good system of control in terms of curriculum coverage, communication with parents and other stakeholders. The principal is keeping abreast with the latest developments in education by attending workshops and training session*s". Both P6 and P8 agreed that:

> the schools their young children attend keep parents well informed on the activities at the school. Their schools have established a good working relationship with all parents and their school academic track record is evident by the high success rate in the school.

Although most parents praised and acknowledged the schools their young children attended, some parents were of the opinion that there are areas which the schools can improve. P1 stated, *"I feel that the school sometimes expects too much from me, especially in terms of homework which my child comes home with. I can understand that my child is attending school every alternative day due to Covid, that does not mean that I will have to teach my child at home."* P12 believed that the school can improve the quality of education her young child is receiving. She responded: *"I feel that the activities that my child brings home is sometimes too simple and not age-appropriate. I find my child doing more colouring activities than actual mathematics. Teachers need to plan age-appropriate activities, for example, problem solving math."* P13 had a very positive view of the school: "*I found the teachers and management of the school very interactive and the curricular is great for my kid, positions any learning material that creates an*

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independent way of reading/solving and interpretation. Safety during this trying time is being put first and they take into account on-learning without 'burdening' parents."

Rogers (2017) agrees that the school as a social construct is in partnership with the parent community. He further states that the school, as a community, should embrace parents and stakeholders to come together as a whole system, rather than in fragmented components. He believes that the school as a social construct should promote a conducive learning and development space for both the parents and learners. The researcher agrees with Rogers (2017) that although the school plays a significant role in the education of their children, so equally parents too, have a responsibility towards ensuring that they support the school to provide quality education. Although most parents supported the view that the schools their young children attended were good, some parents believed that they were burdened with helping their children with too much homework and inappropriate activity.

According to Caño *et al.* (2016), Epstein, Sanders and Sheldon (2007) and Hoglund, Jones, Brown and Aber (2015), it is expected that parents' comments are expressing satisfaction or concern about the attention given to the academic programme. According to my own experience, a great amount of attention is given to how well the school is organised and managed. Little critique could be given to the teachers' class organisational skills. Yet, this may not be indicative of the quality of teaching and learning happening in the same classroom.

5.6   THEME 2: PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

A home-school partnership is built on a healthy relationship between the school and the parents. The second key theme for this study was to ascertain the nature and value of the collaboration between the home and school supporting children's academic achievements. The importance of such a relationship is recognised in the government policy documents (DEEWR, 2008). The expectation is that the school will approach parents to become involved and guide them in entering and participating in such relationships (Epstein, 2018; Epstein *et al.*, 2018; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2002). I wanted to know what channels the school and parents have established to facilitate the home-

school relationship. The researcher believes that processes of how this relationship can be fostered and implemented are not pre-determined. In this regard the participants had diverse opinions of how they identified their relationship with the school. P2, identified it as, "*Good, lots of clear and concise communication with school.*" It was noticeable that this parent also had easy access to the register teacher "*I have regular conversations with my child's teacher regarding his progress and we can address any difficulties immediately.*" Equally P7, P9 and P13 identified that they have interactive relationships with the schools and that communication is encouraged and welcomed. All three participants alluded that they have transparent communication with the school:

> These parents indicated that they had good communication experiences with the school. They identified that the communication was transparent and that they could communicate with the teacher directly via emails. It was noted that the schools also encourage communication between parents and the 'register' teacher. The register teacher is the class teacher. Parents found that the communication was regular, and they could raise issues regarding their children's academic programme and development. They experienced the teachers to be open and transparent.

Communication is fundamental in establishing the home-school partnerships. Often, language can be a barrier to free communication between home and school (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016). It was evident from the responses that only some parents experienced transparent communication and a sense of welcoming interaction between the school and parents. In this regard, the responses from P1, P6 and P 11 provided a different impression indicating the lack of home-school relationship and communication. P1 responded: *"We have very minimal contact with the school. We try to look at our child's book to see the work he is doing. This is a challenge for the parents to determine from the child's book what they are busy with and to try and determine what he is struggling with."* A critical concern is the response from P11 who indicated: "*I have had a few run-ins predominately about how they handled a bullying incident. I was not immediately contacted and had to call the school to find out what happened. I was very concerned*

about the safety of my child." On the other hand, some participants indicated they have no home-school relationship at all. To this extent P6 related that she,

> had no working relationship with the school except through report cards and the school notices. It was difficult for her to communicate with the school as they have strict rules of communication. WhatsApp messages are only allowed during certain hours and because she is working, she cannot easily have a continuous telephone conversation or WhatsApp conversation. Sometimes the response from the teacher can also be dismissive.

The data confirmed (Ellis, Lock & Lummis, 2015); Santana, Rothstein and Bain (2016) and Taylor (2015) who agree that parents have different perspectives of their relationship with schools. In my opinion, parents tend not to be publicly critical of the schools their children attend. Their responses in this regard were tentative, as if they did not want to assertively acknowledge the difficulty in their relationship with the school. This was discernible from their responses as their comments either started or finished with "*the relationship is good*", as indicated by P1 and P11. Singh and Mbokodi (2011) and Nelson (2019) found that parents want to be involved, but they often lack the confidence, and the terms for parental involvement is then completely determined by the school. The researcher can relate to the comments of the parents. Notwithstanding the difficulty I had with the school in supporting my child's learning, as a parent my choices were limited, and it was better not to disturb the little relationship I managed to establish with the class teacher.

Open communication between the school and parents is a key enabler in establishing a home-school relationship. It is recognised that communication between the school and parents are key in establishing the home-school partnership especially with a focus on supporting the child's learning. Although most parents indicated that they also speak English at home, it may not necessarily be their first language. Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2016) acknowledge that language barriers can impede the communication from the parents to the school.

Parents were asked to comment on the communication they have with the school, specifically focusing on the academic progress of their children. The responses revealed the limited functional home-school relationships. Most parents responded that they have limited to no conversations with the school regarding the academic progress of learners. Three responses of P3, P4 and P14 stood out. P4 responded that the communication happens incidentally: "*They never do, I was only told when they saw me coming to pick him up from school on the last day of the school. I was so shocked as I thought the issues the teacher raised could have been addressed during the school term. It saddened and made me angry. If she did not see me, I would not have had the conversation with her.*" On the other hand, P3 stated: "*The school very much communicates with me. It is about assisting my child with either his words or with counting. I get instruction to help my son but no guidance how I must do it. Sometimes he gets frustrated with my way of helping him.*" Equally, P14 stated: "*The teachers communicate weekly with the parents on the development of the children, indicating what they are doing well, the progress on issues they were struggling with and advice on what we as parents have to help with. The teachers don't tell me how to do it.*"

Most of the participants used words like, *'rarely'*, "*when reports are given'*, and *'once a term'*, to describe their interaction with the school. This is an indication that communication regarding children's academic challenges and progress remain largely in the formal communication arena related to report cards. It also means that their communication with parents is then relegated to only once a term when the report cards are distributed. As indicated by P4, this does not mean that teachers and parents are meeting to discuss the report cards. This is only part of the once per year teacher parent meeting. If such a meeting is needed it must be requested by the parents as indicated by P13.

The responses from participants support Stitt and Brooks' (2014) and Antony-Newman's (2019 a) arguments that the conversation from the school with parents are steeped in the standardised measurement of children's achievement and therefore the communication primarily related to academic report cards. I agree with Georgis, Gokiert, Ford and Ali

(2014) that parents want to have a sense that they are recognised by the schools as having the ability to make meaningful inputs to their children's learning. The varied nature of such relationships does not diminish the importance thereof. It is also acknowledged by Ellis, Lock and Lummis (2015) that parents and teachers can view the relationship differently. This happens as teachers are regarded as the professional partner and parents as the laypersons, with the related power tension present (Santana, Rothstein & Bain, 2016). The researcher is of the view that schools have not yet formalised and institutionalised development interventions guiding parents on how to support their children's learning. As demonstrated by the responses from P2, P4 and P14, the interactions are with the individual parents only.

5.7 THEME 3: INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

A key theme for this research was to determine whether parents were involved in the education of their children. It was also to explore how schools responded to the capacity building needs of parents to support their children's learning. According to Stats SA's (2018) Reading and Literacy study, approximately half of South African children attend day care or educational facilities. The study further found that that most children in this age group do not read, draw or tell stories with their parents (Stats SA, 2018). The finding of the Stats SA statistic was further affirmed by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 report. This report placed South African grade 4 learners' reading ability last, out of 50 countries (Howie et al., 2017). Although the PIRLS study focuses on grade 4, the researcher makes the assumption that learners have developed a foundational competence of reading from grades R–3. Contrary to this finding, parents in the research sample all indicated that they read to and with their children. They also attempt to help their children with phonics. Some parents help their children with numeracy. P10 indicated that they pay for extra lessons for the child. P10 responded: "*When we were reading with my child, I realised that he liked drawing the characters and that he was actually good with it. I then decided to send him for additional art classes. He made quite remarkable progress.*" The researcher agrees with Singh and Mbokodi (2011) and Michael, Wolhuter and van Wyk, (2012), that often schools undermine parents'

willingness to participate in the education of their children. They do not see a continuity of the learning at home and the learning which happens at school.

The responses revealed a lack in terms of enablement initiatives in schools. Most participants responded negatively, with only P7, P9 and P12 indicating that there were interventions from the school's side to enable parents to support their children. This lack of home-school relationship is concerning as it is one of the transformational tenets of the South African schooling system (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Le Mottee, 2016 b). According to P6, parents were oriented on how to check the work children were given for the day and to consolidate the learning. P7 responded: "*By checking if he understands everything he learned at school. I try my best. It seems I am doing something right as it showed on his first term results".* The parent, however, did not indicate how the 'checking' happens and whether they got clear guidelines on how to do 'checking' of the subject areas. The response from P8 is slightly more revealing of the kind of support the school provided parents with. As indicated by P9: "*Although I marked yes, it is a text instruction from teachers on certain areas. I try to follow this at home but sometimes I get stuck as it's not also useful or clear."* The response from P12 indicates an individualised intervention by the teacher rather than an institutionalised approach to parental enablement. P12 responded: *"Feedback sessions informs us of areas that needs focus for development or attention. As such our interaction at home is based or informed by those areas amongst others. We focus then on specific areas and see positive results in our child's development. It works for us at the moment."*

Most parents responded with an emphatic "No". They indicated that they had very little to no conversations with their teachers on the academic progress of their children. These conversations are only done at the end of the first term with the school report. The schools set up an afternoon for parent-teacher meetings which means the conversations are short and kept to a minimum to allow all the parents a chance to speak to the teacher.

As can be deduced from the three parents who had some enablement from the school, such interventions have not yet been institutionalised. Seemingly it is done more on an

individualised basis, depending on the performance of the individual child. Rogers (2017) and Epstein (1987) argue that this should be an institutionalised programme with the necessary enablement, such as human and financial resources allocated to plan and implement home-school relationship programmes.

The responses from parents affirm the argument by Singh and Mbokodi (2011) that parents are willing to support their children's learning. The researcher agrees that this often is not supported by the propensity of the school and the teachers towards parents. I believe parents want to be empowered to support their children. It is evident from the responses that parents are willing to take full responsibility for supporting their children. Parents recognise their responsibility as indicated by P7's response: "*Parents must help educators because it our responsibility to see to it that the child performs well and that they understand what they're being taught, and besides charity begins at home."* This negates the findings from Munje and Mncube (2018) indicating that parents have neither the will nor the intellectual ability to support their children's learning. In this regard, the researcher shared this conviction with P7, that parents do have a sense of responsibility towards supporting their children.

The researcher also concurs with P8 that often it is about not knowing how to support your child with specific learning content, that creates frustration and difficulty between the parents and child. It ultimately influences the home-school relationship when there is no response from the school to the requests made for support. This may give the school the impression that parents are unwilling to participate. The responses from P9 illustrate this sentiment: *"As a parent I do not have confidence in my ability to teach this to my kids, and it worries me that they could be disadvantaged."* Equally P14 responded: *"Parents don't always have a lot of time to do homework with their kids, and they may not understand how to do the homework adds to more frustration."*

The comments from P8 contextualises the predicament of parents trying to support their children's learning when she responded:

As with many things in parenthood, you only learn from your own childhood and upbringing with all its faults and outdated or apparent successes. So, you apply to your children what you think worked for you. But they are so different in a different system and world. So, you try, and fail, and now and then succeed. The school could perhaps teach us some basic and up-to-date skills and how to adjust them to your child. A few examples of where I'm unsure or lost with homework, how to explain material to a child, how to respond to errors, what to strive for (a 100% correct or 50%), i.e., strive for perfection or focus on what he got right, how to deal with own my frustrations.

As a parent I can relate to this as I was often told by my child: "*That is not the way teacher did it.*" or *"You don't do it the same way teacher did it."* Fitriah, Sumintono, Subekti and Hassan (2013) and Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) acknowledge these comments from parents. It is not that parents do not want to be involved but they realise that learning content had evolved, and they do not necessarily feel confident enough to help their children without assistance from the school.

Most parents indicated that they received no training or formal guidance from the school to support their children. All parents agreed that they need guidance to support their children. Firstly, parents acknowledged that they need to be enabled and empowered to participate in the home-school relationship. Parents were transparent in their responses of their lack of knowledge of how to support their children's learning. Secondly, they clearly articulated how they can be supported and offered different ideas how this can be facilitated by the school. Their suggestions considered parents' schedules and acknowledged the use of electronic communication in supporting parental enablement initiatives by the school as argued by Singh and Mbokodi (2011).

Several parents indicated how schools can use online platforms to support them. P2 and P9 provided ideas how parents can be supported via online platforms. As stated by P2:

If I know what work my child must master and complete, I will appreciate tips from the teachers on how to help the kids and also how to motivate them to learn their work. The teachers can give us these tips as they go through the work. When

they start with new words, they can tell us how we need to drill these words with our child and what to look out for and how to correct mistakes. This they can post on the class WhatsApp group then all the parents can do the same thing.

P9 responded:

I think teachers can send support videos where they teach the core concepts. They can also show us then what to look for, for example, when my child is learning words or writing simple sentences or with their sums. I can then refer to how the teacher is doing it.

Other parents, although more conservative in their responses, all acknowledged their need for support and made practically sound suggestions on how they think the school can support them. To this extent P10, P12 and P13 suggested that:

the school can have workshops once a term where the teachers provide information on the work to be covered for the term and then work with parents on how to support their children. Having this knowledge, parents felt that they will be empowered to track their children's performance. They will also be able to check whether their children have mastered a particular piece of work. P6 expanded on this suggestion adding that when parents do this, they can identify with what the child is struggling with and determine whether the child needs additional help, for example tutoring or with any life skill.

The researcher agrees with parents that the knowledge of the learning content throughout the term is helpful. As an example, schools communicated regularly with parents when children could not physically attend schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restriction of movement (Department of Cooperative Governance 2020, 2021). Communication was bi-weekly via SMS or WhatsApp parent groups. Parents could track the child's work progress, challenges and achievements. These communication initiatives were supported by the directives on the continuation of education during COVID–19 (Department of Basic Education; 2020, Macupe, 2020).

5.8 THEME 4: ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORTING PARENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

A key concern, which is the fourth theme for this study, was to determine whether and how schools are institutionalising the *Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools,* discussing the different parenting styles and its effect on appropriate support to young children (DBE and NECT, 2016). It is expected from schools to orientate and prepare parents to enable them to support their children with learning activities (Baumrind, Larzelere & Owens, 2010). This can be done through different activities such as involving the whole school facilitated by the school management team. Alternatively, it can be facilitated within a grade, by a grade co-ordinator or subject co-ordinator. Even more ideal, is for the class teacher at the ECE level, to facilitate this enablement and to establish and maintain a working relationship between the class teacher and parents (Epstein, 1986, 2018).

The research instruments contained several questions to ensure that the responses of the parents were triangulated. The responses of the parents were consistent. Although I assumed that some parents may not have knowledge of government's practical guideline, it was unexpected that all the parents were unaware of government policy providing guidelines for parental support. As argued by Patel, Hochfeld, and Englert (2018) and Rabe (2017a), government policy still ignores some structural and systemic limitations and perpetuates a conservative narrative. For policy content of this nature to reach parents, government must think of more innovative ways to communicate such policy imperatives. It cannot only rely on the district office and school. The researchers agree that home-school partnerships can be one of the solutions for improving children's reading and numeracy levels as indicated by Stats SA and the PIRLS 2016 report. More
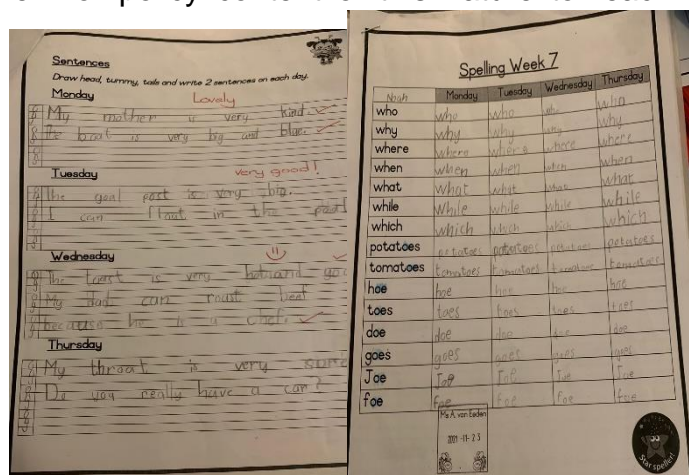
Book of P1's child

effort can be put in by government, to create a more seamless continuum along the efforts of parents and that of the school.

Most of the parents do not participate in the SGB or its substructures. As found by Vincent (2013), respectful participation by both parents and educators are required to support a nurturing learning environment in schools. Parents offered different reasons, with time clashes being the foremost. Some parents also indicated that due to COVID-19 they did not participate in SGB activities during 2020 and 2021. Parents are aware of the responsibility of the SGB to support learning. In this regard, the responses from P1, P12 and P13 indicated that the SGB is responsible for school governance, finance and the creation of a conducive learning environment. P1 responded: "*The SGB must make sure of the children's safety. It must also make sure that the teachers get extra support to help with children when they have difficulty with, for example, reading. Teachers must also be given opportunities to learn different methods to support the children.*" P12 responded: "*They must ensure the school environment is conducive to learning. The SGB play a role in the development of the learners. They must buy teaching and learning aids for the teachers to support them in the class.*" Similarly, P13 responded: "*The SGB must focus on learning interventions which is great. They must make sure parents support children. They must get experts to have workshops with parents.*" Parents also indicated their difficulty working with the SGB. As argued by Singh and Mobokodi (2011) and Segoe and Bisschoff (2019), unequal power relations amongst the school management, the SGB and parents, influence parental involvement in the school. As indicated by P1: "*I like to be involved but often I am not elected. I believe schools are biased and they know who they want on the team. Schools don't want to take parents who are outspoken.*"

The researcher agrees with the responses from the parents that the SGB must consider the academic programme of the learners and what resources they can make available to assist with learning, and ultimately the academic achievement of the learners. As argued by Epstein and Van Voorhis (2002), the school can become involved in parenting, communication with parents and support for learning at home. The researcher believe that this responsibility should not be solely that of the teachers and the school

management team. Parents on the SGB are representatives of the school community and therefore understand the contextual circumstance of the parents. With this knowledge they can create conducive learning spaces for parents.

5.9   THEME 5: PARENTING STYLES

One of the key assumptions I made in this study was that parents will be able to improve how they support their children if they are aware of their dominant parenting style. The video Supernanny (2020) in Chapter 3 illustrated the effect an authoritarian parenting style has when supporting a child's learning. In changing the parenting style to be more supportive, the parent immediately changed the learning experience for the young child. It was evident from the parents' responses that they spend time thinking about the impact their own behaviour may have on their children's development. The responses from P5 and P8 were evident in this regard. P5 responded:

> The kids we are raising now are different from our time. They have fragile hearts and easily get upset if misunderstood. We use the rule of 'proceed with caution' but it is not the reason to let them be a menace to society. They need to know we will love them and support them regardless. But most of all they must always know that they are free to be independent thinkers and inventors.

P8 responded:
> I have so many questions on a child's upbringing and schooling! And your questionnaire made me even more aware of my ignorance. I have to make more of an effort to read about parenting.

The researcher believes parents that may be dominant in one parenting style, yet they have the sense of judgement to determine which behaviour is more appropriate in which situation. The data confirms this conviction. In the following sections, I apply the parenting styles to curate how the different styles align to the three key elements of Epstein and Van Voorhis' (2002) model. In the following sub-themes, the researcher will present the analysis of parenting using Baumrind's (1991) categorisation of parenting styles namely, Authoritative, Permissive and Authoritarian to elucidate how it impacts on the

implementation of Epstein and Van Voorhis' (2002) elements of parental involvement. The three elements which were applied in this study were parenting, communication and learning at home.

5.9.1 Authoritative parenting

According to Baumrind (1991), supported by Malonda *et al*., (2019) and Ismail, Kauthar and Ismail (2016) authoritative parents support their children's learning processes. This is evident in the manner they parent, communicate and engage with the school regarding their children's academic progress. It is evident from the responses that parents with more authoritative parenting styles are more responsive to the needs of their children. According to Ismail, Kauthar and Ismail, (2016), they have the ability to interact with the teachers and leadership at the school in a supportive manner.

5.9.1.1 Parenting

Most parents indicated that it is important for them to be responsive to the feeling of their children. In this regard P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6 indicated that they will consider the wishes of their children. They also give space and opportunity to talk with their children, about their own feelings and reactions in response to their children's behaviour. Additionally, P9, P10, P11, P12 and P14 responded that they make their expectations clear to their children and they will comfort their children when they are upset. All the parents expressed their responsibility to provide for all their children's material, safety, and emotional needs. All parents agreed that they are responsible for their children's learning and they make sure that their children are provided with all the stationery and other requirements as indicated on the lists provided by the school at the beginning of the year.

5.9.1.2 Communication

Most parents responded that they give their children space to speak freely. P1, P3 and P8 indicated that they felt the need to guide these conversations with their children especially when their children disagree with them. They based these on the age of the child. They will have supportive conversations if the children are not successful in their individual undertaking. This can be for schoolwork as well as for other activities such as on the sports field. Most parents indicated that their children know that their opinions are

respected and that they can freely expressed their opinion at home. P1 indicated that she feels anxious about encouraging her child to express his opinion in class. P1 responded*: "I tell my child to feel free to tell his teacher when he got stuck with his homework. He cries and says that teacher will not understand and will be upset when he does not know all his words. It makes me upset and anxious as a parent. Not all children progress at the same pace. I want him to understand that it's ok."*

5.9.1.3 Learning at home

It was evident from the responses from the parents that they do not have a comfortable relationship with the school in relation to their parenting style. P2, P4, P5, P6 and P13 indicated that at home, children are given opportunity to express their feelings or problems and they are being listened to. This unfortunately does not happen at school. They therefore felt that there is a disjunction between how they treat their children at home and what is happening in school. They expressed their willingness to help their children with homework as they know the teacher does not have time to give individual attention to each child in class.

According to Malonda *et al.*, (2019) and Checa and Abundis-Gutierrez (2018), parents who have an authoritative parenting style tend to have a better relationship with the school and are more comfortable in supporting their children's learning. It was evident from the responses that parents were comfortable to communicate with their children and to be responsive to their needs (Baumrind, 1991).

P5 and her son

They were also making demands on their children by being upfront about what their expectations are (Baumrind, 1991). The responses from parents indicate that they do find it challenging to always create conducive learning spaces for their children because they are often ignorant of what is required by the school. The researcher concurs with this

finding, that although as a parent I had good intentions to support my child's learning activities, the communication barrier with the school made it quite difficult. One of the key difficulties, as more explicitly expressed by P1, is the challenge children and parents have in talking with the class teacher about the aspects the child is struggling with. In my opinion, by the time parents are given an opportunity to speak with the class teacher, it is often too late. As indicated in Theme 3, communication with the school is dictated by the school and it is aligned to assessment instruments. The researcher believes that good communication between the school and home influences to what extent you as a parent can support learning at home.

5.9.2 Permissive parenting

It was evident from the responses that most of the participants did not relate to permissive parenting. According to Baumrind (1991), permissive parenting is not about being a neglectful parent. As supported by Ashiono (2013), parents with permissive parenting styles have a sense that they cannot exert control over their children's behaviour and therefore will find it difficult to discipline their children for behaviours that may not be socially acceptable.

5.9.2.1 Parenting

Most parents indicated that they are responsive to the needs of their children, yet this is within reason. They will not grant demands from their children if their children demand it through tantrums or causing commotions. P1 and P2 responded that they have already given in when their children caused a commotion, but they will not readily do it again. P1 indicated: *"I don't always find it is easy to discipline my child. I sometimes give him sweets to calm him down so that we can get on with reading or sounding words."* P2 indicated that she sometimes gives in to the demands to prevent behaviour that can cause a commotion as she would rather just get finished with the homework. None of the other participants related to the permissive parenting style. It is clear from the responses of P1 and P2 that they do not want to engage in confrontation with their children.

5.9.2.2 Communication

All parents indicated that they have healthy communication with their children and that they create safe spaces for their children to engage in communication. Fewer parents (P1 and P2) indicated that they find it difficult to discipline their children and they tend to spoil their children. Both parents stated that their children are doing well in school and so they did not see a need to be overly structured and strict with discipline on their children. P1 responded:

> I take it easy with my son. He is only in grade R and we do some tasks at home. If
> he does not want to do it then I don't stress too much as I can see, as an example,
> from his counting, he knows his numbers. I think he is doing just fine.

5.9.2.3 Learning at home

Permissive parents will generally just let their children get on with their work at school and will not interfere with their children's learning unless so requested by the school. Participants in this study were all concerned about their children's learning progress and therefore all were actively involved in their children's learning at home. In the responses from parents, there was no evidence that showed that parents were not involved in supporting their children with learning activities at home.

As indicated by P1 and P2, they engaged in permissive parenting style when they did not want any confrontation with their children. The researcher concurs that sometimes as parents we tend to make a judgement to allow certain behaviour, although we do not totally agree with it, to complete certain learning tasks at home. As argued by Zeteroğlu and Başal (2018), this behaviour, often in the moment, is based on consciousness and caring rather than neglectful and indulgent parenting.

5.9.3 Authoritarian parenting

Authoritarian parents expect to be obeyed without being questioned (Baumrind, 1991). Parents who prefer their children to conform to a certain set of rules and behaviours tend to favour authoritarian parenting (Cherry, 2015). The chances are that children who do not follow the strict rules of the parents will be punished (Rauf & Ahmed, 2017). The

researcher posed questions regarding authoritarian parenting as she wanted to get a more balanced impression of the participants' parenting styles as well as how it affects them supporting their children with homework and other curriculum activities. The researcher also wanted to determine how parents with more authoritarian parenting styles interact with the teachers and leadership with the school.

5.9.3.1 Parenting

Although most parents indicated that they tend to be authoritative in their parenting style, some parents conceded that they do take away privileges from their children as a form of punishment. In their responses, P4, P5, P7, P9, P13 and P14 acknowledged that the most common privileges such as watching TV and gaming are used as disciplining tools. P4 responded*; "I know my child likes gaming so I don't mind to offer or take away time from his gaming if we can get through his reading without a fuss. He also knows that I keep my word."* Parents said that they have to remove these distractions from their children in order to create conducive learning spaces at home. Parents recognised that they need support to enable them to create learning spaces for the children at home. In this regard, the comments from P13 were noticeable who indicated: "*More interventions for parents are needed, especially in the pandemic, for us to learn how to support our children with online learning and learning at home."*

5.9.3.2 Communication

With the first set of questions, it was already established that parents favoured the authoritative parenting style. It was interesting to note that parents also acknowledged that in certain instances their communication style with their children does include elements of authoritarian parenting styles. In this regard P1, P3, P5, P7 and P14 indicated that they sometimes did not find it necessary to explain why they request certain behaviour from their child. They expect their children to know and trust them that they know best how to do things, especially when it comes to determining the household schedule in terms of homework, dinner and bedtimes. Participants admitted that they sometimes resort to screaming at their children when they disapprove of their children's behaviour. P1, P2, P3, P4 and P14 responded that they may even rant and rave when

they are angry or when they are rushing to get everything done and the children do not respond immediately to their requests.

5.9.3.3 Learning at home

Parents readily acknowledged that they did not find it easy to support their children's learning at home, be it helping with homework or other curriculum-related activities. Given the above, parents then reflected on how they react in situations when they must support their children. P1, P5, P7 andP14 responded that they will sometime criticise their children for not listening, either in class to the teacher or to them as parents on a previous occasion. P14 responded: "*I sometimes tell the boys; 'You are struggling because you did not listen to teacher.' They get very upset with me. I now realise it is in times like that when the whole home learning is not pleasant for me or the children."* Parents also indicated that they remind their children of previous occasions when they did something wrong in an effort to get them not to repeat the same mistakes. As indicated by P4, P5 and P9, they remind their children of occasions they wasted time by not doing their homework and then getting into trouble with the teachers. Most parents indicated that they do sometimes remind their children that they are the parents. Their motivation is to get their children to do their homework and to prevent arguments so to maintain the work-home balance at home. P2 said that she uses it to settle her child at bedtime when he argues about going to bed.

The researcher concurs with participants that as parents it could sometimes be a challenge to create clear boundaries in terms of school, family and individual times respectively, during Levels 1, 2 and 3 lockdown restriction levels (Department of Co-operative Governance 2020). Due to school closures or children attending school on alternative days, managing learning at home became more challenging. As stated by Rauf and Ahmed (2017), parents indicated that when they apply authoritarian parenting style while doing homework, the situation can degenerate into both parents and children being upset. However, parents did not agree that their children had difficulty in learning, as argued by Rauf and Ahmed (2017). They tend to still perform well at school. I deduce that is because parents do not use authoritarian parenting styles all the time. There is a

healthy balance between authoritarian and authoritative style, with a leaning towards authoritative styles.

5.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher presented the analysis of the data in answering the primary research question regarding the support parents require to partner with the school to support their children's learning. The researcher presented the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data. The data was collected through an online questionnaire and triangulated with unstructured interviews with parents who agreed to these interviews, as well as an analysis of some of their children's work, which they were comfortable to present. The researcher presented and discussed what the parents' responses revealed in terms of their experiences and needs in being partners in the home-school partnerships. In this chapter, the researcher also presented and analysed how parenting styles influence the three elements; parenting, communication and learning at home, in the home-school partnership. In the next chapter, Chapter 6, the researcher will discuss the findings, conclusion and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER 6

INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher draws conclusions from the findings to formulate and present recommendations how this study can contribute to the development of support programmes for parents. These programmes can support parents to enter partnerships with schools in order to enhance their children's classroom learning and ultimately their overall academic achievement. In conclusion to this study, the questions and theoretical frameworks were used to present recommendations, which were in one way or another articulated by the participants. The next section will summarise the study in order to contextualise the recommendations.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 introduced the study and provided the background, rationale and conceptual views. It presented the research problem for the study and the rationale for the study. The research problem was then further unpacked through the research questions which provided the direction for the study. Chapter 1, further, set out the envisaged purpose and aim of the research study. The research purpose and questions guided the choice of research design and methodology. Given the research purpose, the theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study were adopted and key concepts were defined and well-articulated.

Chapter 2, drawing on the rational and conceptual views for the study, the researcher sought, read and reviewed a selection of literature sources to gain a broader understanding of the conceptual view of the study. The literature review was organised into broad areas to guide and focus the discussions in relation to the school and home continuum context, policy implementation, current practices internationally and South Africa, as well as the different educational role players. The literature review motivated the development of the conceptual view into the concept of the home-school partnership and the search for realising such a partnership in the South African context.

Chapter 3 elucidated the theoretical frameworks for this study. The research took an in-depth view into parental involvement in children's academic performance. This was done through the application of Epstein's parental involvement theory and model and how it supports the home-school concept. It provided a detailed discussion on the choice and applicability of three elements namely, parenting, communication and learning at home, from Epstein's model for parental involvement in schools. In this chapter the researcher also drew on Baumrind's theory of parenting styles. The purpose was to highlight that parenting styles have an effect on parental support to their children and their relationship with the school. Furthermore, it explains and shows, in the video how parenting styles can influence children's propensity towards learning.

Chapter 4 indicated that the research study was conducted within the qualitative research approach. It further discussed how the research study applied a social constructivist paradigm. In this chapter, the researcher explained her role and experiences with the research phenomenon and provided clarity that the research is conducted with a purposive sample of parents. The motivation for the research approach and paradigm was important as it provided the methods by which the researcher, and the sample population, could make meaning of their own lived experiences in relation to the studied phenomenon. In this chapter the data collection methods were discussed as well as how the researcher ensured validity and credibility of the data collection process as well as the actual collected data. The data was collected through questionnaires and triangulated with unstructured interviews and document analysis. Attention was also given to understand how questionnaires can be used within a qualitative research approach. The researcher also provided an explanation why the main research instrument was the questionnaire and what limitations were placed on the data collection processes due to the COVID-19 restrictions at the time of data collection.

Chapter 5 articulated the analysis and findings from the collected data. The researcher presented the profile of the participants. The analysis of the data follows the approach which was set out in Chapter 4 by categorising the data and creating themes aligned to

the literature review and the theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, the themes are guided by how they address the research questions. The analysis and findings detailed the participants' responses, integrating these with interpretative discussions by the researcher.

6.3   INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The primary research question: *What support do parents require to form partnerships with educational stakeholders to support their young learners*, provided the consciousness throughout this study to search for enablement opportunities for parents. Thus, the question of enabling of parents underpin all the recommendations throughout this chapter. This question is further supported by formulating the recommendations in a practical and implementable manner which will involve all stakeholders. Through this, the secondary research questions will be addressed by applying the findings which focus on the collaboration between schools and parents and the way parenting styles can support learners' learning at home:

- How can parents and schools work collaboratively to support young learners in order to enhance their academic achievements?

- What support do parents require in their parenting styles to support learners in school?

Table11 highlights some of the key concepts that became evident during the literature review, data collections and analysis and its relevance in addressing the research questions as set out above:

Table 11 Identified themes, sub-themes and the relevance to research questions.

Themes	Sub-themes	Relevance to the research question
School as a social construct	School as an enabler through communication • Schools are generally well organised institutions • Education as a social instrument to move beyond social and financial status • School must initiate communication with parents	Main question Secondary question 1 Secondary question 2

Themes	Sub-themes	Relevance to the research question
Partnership between home and school	Establishment of home-school partnerships: • Relationship between the home and school demands good communication • The home-school relationship requires form and structure • Exclusivity of communication and working relationships with teachers and school management	Secondary question 1 Secondary question 2
Involvement of parents in the education of their children	Learning at home support • Parents want to be involved in their children's leaning • Parents lack knowledge how to support their children with learning activities • Lack of training and support	Main question Secondary question 2
Role of government supporting parents in South African Schools	Policy implementation • Involvement of SGB in getting parents onboard. • Existence of policy and guidelines but lack of implementation	Secondary question 1 Secondary question 2

Parenting and parenting styles	The relationship between parenting and parenting styles and parental involvement in learning
	• Parenting
	• Parenting styles
	  o Authoritative parenting style
	  o Authoritarian parenting style
	  o Permissive parenting style
		Main question
		
		Secondary question 1
		
		Secondary question 2

Below a summary of the findings aligned to the themes and sub themes are presented against which the recommendations are developed in this chapter. These findings are the key drivers influencing the recommendations that are presented.

6.3.1 School as Social Construct - School as an enabler through communication

Schools seem to be generally well organised institutions especially against those indicators that will be monitored. Participants indicated that they recognised that the school is a socio-economic enabler and therefore they place a high premium on education and their children attending and succeeding in school. There is recognition that there is room for improvement in the manner schools communicate with parents regarding the academic progress of children. The data provided evidence that parents feel schools can do more to embrace them as partners in the education of their children. Parents also offered the view that they are not in agreement with large amount of homework given to learners in the Foundation Phase but that they are open to support learning and consolidation of learning at home.

6.3.2 Partnership between home and school - Establishing home school partnerships

There is no mainstream attention given to the establishment of home-school partnerships focusing on the academic achievement of learners. The dominant structure for parental involvement in school is through the SGB. The researcher is of the opinion that the role of the SGB has been usurped by school leadership under the disguise that parents are not competent. Yet, according the SASA (1996), there was always the recognition of the need for capacity building for potential and current SGB members. This is once again an element of policy implementation that is not foregrounded and implemented.

6.3.3 Involvement of parents in the education of their children - Learning at home

It must be noted that parents do get involved in their children's learning. This involvement is characterised by the parents' own motivation, knowledge and skills. In other words, it is dependent on how competent parents feel they are to support their children's learning processes. The quality of experiences of children during their learning at home activities

are depended on four elements. Firstly, as indicated in the video in Chapter 3 parenting style plays a major role in the parent establishing a trust and supportive relationship with the child during such learning activities. Secondly, parents have to establish a learning at home support culture. Thirdly, parents need to be informed of the learning content, understand the learning content and have knowledge of techniques and methods how to support the mediation of learning content. Fourthly, parents have to understand their responsibility to establishing conducive learning environments at home. As was indicated by participants they will welcome detailed guidelines by the teacher illustrating tips how to consolidate classroom learning with learning at home activities

6.3.4 Role of government supporting parents in South African Schools- Policy implementation

There seem to be general ignorance, not of their own making, amongst parents about the existence of various government policies, making the state responsible for the enablement of parents to participate in the home-school partnership. The following policies, in one way or another make provision for the enablement of the parents:

- White Paper on Families in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2012);
- National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (RSA , 2015);
- School-Parent-Community Engagement Framework (National Education Collaboration Trust, 2016); and
- Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools (NECT, 2016).

Although these policies are not new in the system, little to no guidance have been shared with parents how they can become involved in the home-school partnership. It is further recognised that the policies are giving clear indications as to what needs to be done but is more silent as to how parents should do it. There is very little training happening regarding preparing potential or current SGB members beyond the initial training to explain the different roles and responsibilities of the SGB portfolios. Although the SASA, (1996) makes provision for training of the SGB to be involved in the curriculum matters

and the enablement of parents, limited to no such training or other capacity building interventions are currently happening in schools.

6.3.5 Parenting and Parenting styles – The relationship of parenting and parenting styles with parental involvement in learning

Parenting is the least known area for development in the context of the school community. The idea of parenting, as articulated by Epstein and Sheldon (2006) was confirmed by parents' focus on making sure that the physical and materials needs of their children as learners are being met. The participants agreed that although they did not think about it, parenting enablement is something, which they will be interested in learning more about. Participants acknowledged that their lack of knowledge and understanding of parenting styles impacted on their ability to support their children with learning activities (Baumrind, 1991). In Chapter 3 of this study, the researcher stated two common assumptions that is being made regarding parenting. Firstly, it is assumed that parents consciously adopt and practice a particular parenting style and secondly that parents know where and how to acquire parenting skills. It was evident from the data that parents have limited knowledge about their own parenting styles or how to describe their own parenting style. It was also evident that parents are open and will be willing if they could, to participate in acquiring such knowledge and to put it into practice. They are also interested in observing the impact thereof in their families and particularly in supporting their children's learning.

6.4 NEW INSIGHTS: VALUE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND RESEARCH APPROACH AND FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

6.4.1 Value of the literature review

The research reviewed international and national literature to gain a greater understanding of the research phenomenon and to influence the choice of the research approach and data collection processes. The literature review provided broad insights regarding the importance of parental involvement in schools. Literature was more limited in articulating how parents can be supported to fulfil their partnership role in the home-school partnership. Overall literature supported parental involvement, and importantly it

supported the notion that home-school partnership should be based on the principles of inclusivity to ensure that all parents of the school community can participate. It was also evident from the South African literature that the home-school partnership, although advocated in policy documents, is not yet implemented and institutionalised in South African schools. This confirms that there is value in the rationale of this study and attention is needed to translate policy into practice in schools and monitor and measure the impact on children's learning progress and achievements. The translation of policy into practice requires a systemic structure as a vehicle for policy implementation. The findings indicate that a home-school partnership with the focus on children's learning should be a priority as articulated in these policy documents; *School-Parent-Community Engagement Framework* (National Education Collaboration Trust, 2016); and *Practical Guidelines*: *How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools* (NECT, 2016). The findings further indicate that parents need guidance how to support their children's learning rather than more policy guidelines. In this study the researcher indicates some tools and tips that can make up the content focus for such a home-school partnership. The findings also indicate that parents need such content to be uncomplicated and simple so that they can find it accessible and easy to engage with. [**See tools and tips Annexure C**]

6.4.2 Value of the theoretical frameworks

The researcher studied and applied two key theoretical frameworks namely Epstein's *Family, School, Community partnerships* theory and Baumrind *Parenting style* theory. Drawing on Epstein *et. al.* (2018) *Family, School, Community partnerships* and how this work is evolving, indicated the practical applicability of the parental involvement model in schools. The theoretical framework provided more insights on the different elements that a parental involvement programme could entail. In unpacking the theoretical framework and applying it to the South African context, the researcher decided to use the concept home-school partnership. This is in recognition of the diversity of parental figures within the South African context and recognising that parental support can be offered by any identified person at home, who may or may not be the parent figure for the child. An additional value of the concept is that it promotes the inclusive narrative. In identifying the

different elements of the model, it assisted to centre the research on three key elements namely, parenting, communication and learning at home. By making the choice, it further provided structure to the empirical data and allowed the research to be focused on the key elements which could be regarded as key change drivers, in response to the secondary questions of this research study. The research findings support the need for the design, development and implementation of home-school partnerships to support children's learning. The research further highlighted the need for a home-school partnership to systematically support children's learning. Such a system-wide intervention has the potential to contribute to addressing the literacy and numeracy levels as indicated by the annual PIRLS reports. The research clearly shows that there is a willingness amongst parents to support their children's learning. Parents have struggled to be recognised as equal partners in their children's learning. Changing the communication focus and strategies, focusing on children's learning can be supported by a home-school partnership.

Furthermore, in unpacking the literature in Chapter 2 and drawing on her own experiences the researcher needed to understand how parenting styles influence home-school partnership with reference to the elements identified as key drivers for home-school partnerships. To this extent the research found value in Baumrind (1994) theory of parental styles. The empirical data indicates that there is a lack of knowledge by parents of the concepts of parenting styles and furthermore their limited understanding of how these parenting styles influence the nature of the support they provide their children during learning at home activities. It was evident, from the research findings, that in responding to the secondary research questions that attention is needed to parenting styles in the proposals for tools and tips to establish and maintain a parent-home partnership.

6.4.3 Value of the research approach and theoretical paradigm

The research was conducted using a qualitative research approach. The social constructivist paradigm allowed the researcher the freedom to acknowledge her own role within this study as well as her own lived experiences with the phenomenon. This

research approach brought richness to the data as participants narrated their own experiences. The value of this research approach is within the authenticity of the data collection processes which allowed for the voices of the participants to be recognised as equal partners in this research, with the researcher and participants each occupying their respective roles. The findings, based on the empirical data, reflect the voices of the participants and how their stories shaped the recommendations of this research study. The research approach also indicated the willingness of participants to participate in the interventions openly and truthfully where they felt they are respected as equal contributors, with the researcher and participants each understanding their respective roles in the research. It was therefore important for the researcher, as indicated in Chapter 5 to hear the voices of the participants. The research approach also enabled the researcher to confirm that that she was not the only parent who felt overwhelmed by supporting her child's learning activities at home. It also confirmed the validity and authenticity of the research question in search of a solution in addressing parents' needs to be enabled to participate in supporting their children with their learning.

6.5   VERIFICATION OF THE RESULTS

In this section the insights obtained throughout this research studies are verified against key literature reference. This is done using the key themes and sub-themes as indicated in Chapter 5 and summarised under sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.5. of this chapter. Through interpretative comments the researcher indicates how the findings from the empirical data are supported by these key literature refences or how it contradicts some of the key literature. The verification process is then used to craft the recommendation and the tools and tips for design and development of a home-school partnership programme in support of creating capacity amongst parents to support their children's learning.

Table 12 below shows an overview of the key themes, how these were interpreted, and the insights gained in relation to the valuable references for this study.

Table 12 Verification of the findings: Themes, sub-themes, insights gained and key literature resources.

Main themes and sub-themes	Interpretative comment from the research	Insights	Key literature sources
School as a social construct School as an enabler through communication • Schools are generally well organised institutions • Education as a social instrument to move beyond social and financial status • School must initiate communication with parents	• Children's learning happens in an organised manner in school which isolate it from the home values and cultures. • The dominant culture at school is often in contradiction to that of the home. • The home-school partnership has the potential to address communication regarding the children's learning and academic progress and create a working relationship through a home-school partnership.	• The finding supports the literature sources that the dominant culture, at school guided by policy, is often in contradiction to that of the home. • This creates a power relationship between parents and educators and school leadership. • The findings concur with the literature resources that the power relationship makes it difficult for parents to challenge the status quo at the school. • Communication is highly regulated by school policies and does not suit the needs of the parents. This is in contradiction to what is recommended in the literature sources.	Caño *et al.* (2016) Epstein, Sanders and Sheldon (2007) Liu and Chen, (2010) Vincent, (2013). Vygotsky, (1929
Partnership between home and school	• Children's learning is predominantly supported by females	• The study found that the empirical data supported key literature	Anthony- Newman (2019 a)

Main themes and sub-themes	Interpretative comment from the research	Insights	Key literature sources
Establishment of home-school partnerships: • Relationship between the home and school demands good communication • The home-school relationship requires form and structure • Exclusivity of communication and working relationships with teachers and school management	• Home-school partnerships should be inclusive and consider that a significant part of the school community could consist of single female headed households. • The data shows that many parents felt excluded from key parental involvement initiatives, such as the SGB, at the school. • The school has to find more accessible channels to make sure that all parents are included in the communication	sources that the school community is diverse. • It further supports the literature that often home-school partnership is founded and implemented on the dominant culture of the school which often does not consider the diverse demographics of the school. • The findings expand on the literature that parents are willing to engage with online communication and capacity building initiatives from the school.	Epstein *et. al.* (2002) Doucet (2011) Segoe and Bisschoff (2019)
Involvement of parents in the education of their children Learning at home support • Parents want to be involved in their children's leaning • Parents lack knowledge how to support their	• Parents want to support their children's learning. • The home-school partnership can be used as vehicle for parents to gain insights to their own attitudes and practices to parenting styles and obtaining skills to support their children's learning at home.	• Contrary to the some of the literature articulating the perceptions of school leadership and teacher, the findings indicate that parents actually do want to support their children learning if they are given the opportunity and skills to do so.	Badat & Sayad, 2014 Đurišić & Bunijevac, (2017) Epstein *et. al.* (2018) Howie *et al.,* (2017) Johnson, (2015) Michael, Wolhuter, and Van Wyk (2021) Michael *et. al.* (2012)

Main themes and sub-themes	Interpretative comment from the research	Insights	Key literature sources
children with learning activities • Lack of training and support	• The home-partnership can provide teachers with easy opportunities to create online learning spaces for parents so that all parents can participate. • There is a perception that parents do not read with or to their children, the data indicated that parents in their own manner do engage with their children's learning • Parents indicated that they support their children's learning using methods which they can remember from school. They agreed that this is no longer suitable and contradicts what happens in class.	• The fact that parents don't know how to support their children's learning does not mean that they do not want to. This finding is supported by the literature that parents need to be enabled to participate in their children's learning. • The findings support the literature on the lack of involvement of the SGB in the ensuring that parents are enabled to support their children's learning. • The findings contradict some literature sources as parents do read with and to their children at level of grades R to 2, but they realise the limitations of their skills.	Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) Singh and Mbokodi (2011)
Role of government supporting parents in South African Schools Policy implementation • Involvement of SGB in getting parents onboard.	• Policy needs an implementation plan. • It was evident that there is no implementation of government policy on supporting the enablement of parents.	• The findings support the literature that there is weakness in implementing policy. • The findings expand on the literature that policy development often does not take the diversity of	Badat & Sayad, 2014 Epstein *et. al.* (2018) Johnson, (2015) LaRocque, (2013) Michael, Wolhuter, and Van Wyk (2021)

Main themes and sub-themes	Interpretative comment from the research	Insights	Key literature sources
• Existence of policy and guidelines but lack of implementation	• There is a lack of knowledge of the existence of the policy guideline and therefore there is a lack of strategies or plans how to implement the policy. • The home-school partnership, if kept simple and implementable can translate the policy guidelines into practices taking into account the power relations between the school and parents	the school populations into account. • Contrary to how the policy documents are described, it does not go far enough to enable parents to fulfil their supporting roles.	NECT (2015)
Parenting and Parenting styles The relationship between parenting styles and parental involvement in learning • Parenting	• There is a need to pay attention to parenting and parenting styles. This can be done within the paradigms of a home-school partnership as it will not single out individual parents but bring consciousness about these issues to all parents. • Communication between the school and parents are key in home-school partnerships. • Parents want to be acknowledged as partners who can make a meaningful contribution. Parents,	• The findings expand on the literature sources whereby according to the findings, parents are agreeable to the use of diverse communication and enablement ways. Seemingly the traditional manner of communication, via printed notes and face-to-face meeting are no longer the only and or the most convenient for parents. Schools have to explore more alternative ways such as online communication with parents.	Dewaele (2018) Venketsamy and Hu (2021)

Main themes and sub-themes	Interpretative comment from the research	Insights	Key literature sources
	notwithstanding their socio-economic circumstance want to be recognised by the school that they can make a meaningful contribution to their children's learning.		

- Parenting styles
   ○ Authoritative parenting style
   ○ Authoritarian parenting style
   ○ Permissive parenting style
	- This was a revelation for many parents in them coming to understand that parenting styles can have a positive effect on the child parent relationship during the learning at home activities and improve learning at home activities.	- The findings indicate the lack of knowledge of parents about parenting style and the understanding how parenting styles can change have a positive effect on the child. Parent relationship during the learning at home activities .
		- The findings challenge the dominant discourse of authoritative parenting being dominant parenting style to practice to create a conducive learning environment and support learning at home. Parents also draw on some elements of the authoritarian parenting style to disciple and motivate children to learn.
			Baumrind, (2013)
			Chen & Gregory, (2011)
			Johnson, (2015)
			Moore & Lewis, (2012)

6.6 RESEARCH CONCLUSION RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the research conclusions are based on the findings from the data and the insights gained through the verification of the findings with the key literature resources. The researcher explicates the recommendations, emanating from the conclusions and broadly advocates for the implementation of policy prescripts and the establishment of home-school partnerships. The recommendations continue within the themes and sub-themes highlighting the key drivers for policy implementation and the realisation of inclusive and implementable home-school partnerships.

6.6.1 School as a Social Construct - school as an enabler through communication

It is concluded from the findings based on the data that communications from schools are irregular. Communication between school and home is intermittent and irregular. Very little communication focuses on the learning needs and learning progress of the children. It can be concluded from the findings that at best communication focusing on the children's learning progress happens once per year face to face with the educator. The rest of the year such communication happens via report cards. It is further concluded that there is no proper structure in the school that can champion the required changes in the communication regarding children's learning and addressing the uneven power relations between parents and educators. Given these conclusions:

- It is recommended that home- school partnerships can play a significant role in addressing the relationships between parents and educators and become the champion for capacity building of parents to fulfil their partnership roles.
- It is further recommended that the introduction and establishment of the home-school partnership should be introduced through the SGB sub-committee responsible for curriculum matters. In order for this to happen there is a need for changes in the propensities of school leadership and educators towards parents as partners in the education of their children and address the structural barriers for parental involvement(Nelson, 2019, Conus & Fahrni, 2019). This will enable the establishment of an organisation wide intervention with grade and class teachers

determining the detail of such a programme. The reason for favouring the establishment of the home-school partnership management within the SGB is because firstly it falls within the key responsibilities of the SGB. Secondly, it will mean that parents will be involved from the onset of the design, development and implementation of such a programme. Thirdly, the SGB sub-committee has to participate in capacity building programmes for their own development. Their involvement in these programmes will provide easy access to parental and educator candidates as champions of such a home-school programmes (SASA, 1996).

- It is further recommended that communication by the school considers parents' demographics, work commitments, language abilities, socio-economic conditions and available time amongst others. If these are not taken into account, some parents may not be able to participate in a home-school partnership. Parents' non-participation could then be misunderstood as parents' unwillingness to participate or parents being incompetent to participate (Johnson 2015).

Yet, parents' participation is depended on whether these potential barriers are considered and accommodated in a home-school partnership.

- It is therefore further recommended that schools have to find alternative ways to communicate with parents. Participants indicated that online communication is a possibility.

- It is also recommended that schools, expand the communication repertoire and that it cannot only be about functions, events, fundraising and minimally about the academic programme and children's achievement.

- It is further recommended that schools include, SMS, emails, videos and WhatsApp to communicate learning content, tips how parents can consolidate learning at home and tips how to support learners who struggle with learning content. This may also mean that teachers can have short facetime calls with parents if there is something in the child's development which needs immediate attention. Parents can also make appointments to call teachers to discuss matters pertaining to the child's academic achievement. Online communication is no longer

the exclusive communication tool for people with access to data as data is an expensive commodity. According to Regulation 9.1 of the Electronic Communications, Postal and Broadcasting Directions published on 2020-03-26 (as amended) it is a requirement that Electronic Communications Service Licensees must provide zero-rated websites where parents and schools can access local educational content.

6.6.2 Partnership between home and school - establishment of home-school partnerships

It can be concluded from the findings, supported by the empirical data that school communities are diverse. This was evident in the sample of parents participating in this research study. Given the comments by the parents sharing their lived experiences, it is evident that some parents do feel excluded from the dominant interactions by the school with the parents. It is further concluded that schools' interactions with parents, do not accommodate all parents and therefore it negates the expressed willingness by parents to participate in the learning of their children. Utilising these conclusions drawn from the findings, the recommendation focuses on the agenda of the home-school partnership.

- It is recommended that home-school partnership should be designed applying a more inclusive propensity so as to refute the values and culture of exclusivity in the school.
- The home-school partnership have to be conscious of applying principles that will advocate for inclusiveness by recognising the diversity of the parental population of the school. By doing this, it is anticipated that such home-school partnerships will instil a culture of continuous learning amongst parents which will make it natural and free for all parents to participate in the programmes under the auspices of a home-school partnership.

6.6.3 Involvement of parents in the education of their children - learning at home support

Contrary to some of the literature sources, it can be concluded that parents want to be involved in the learning activities of their children. The fact that parents do not know how

to support their children with learning activities and homework, can easily be misconstrued as parents' unwillingness to participant in learning at home support.

It must be noted that parents do get involved in their children's learning. This involvement is characterised by the parents' own motivation, knowledge and skills. In other words, it is depended on how competent parents feel they are to support their children's learning processes. The quality of experiences of children during their learning from home activities are depended on four elements. Firstly, as indicated in the video in Chapter 3 parenting style plays a major role in the parent establishing a trust and supportive relationship with the child during such support activities. Secondly, when parents have to establish a learning at home support culture, then parents need to be informed of the learning content, understand the learning content and have knowledge of techniques and methods how to support the mediation of learning content. Fourthly, parents have to understand their responsibility to establishing conducive learning environments at home. Given these four key elements,

- It is recommended that a home-school partnership programme content can address these four elements giving each of the major role players, distinct roles and responsibilities.
- It is further recommended that the home-school partnership becomes a learning space for parents through peer learning activities, facilitated learning activities and sharing of online learning activities for parents. These learning initiatives must be simple to understand and master so that parents can build their supporting learning at home repertoire. As such the home-school partnership can be used as vehicle for parents to gain insights to their own attitudes and parenting practices to obtain knowledge and skills to support their children's learning at home.

6.6.4 Role of government supporting parents in South African Schools - policy implementation

It can be concluded from the findings deduced from the data that there is lack of policy implementation and that the current guidelines are inaccessible to the schools as well as the parents. In this regard it is recommended that the:

- Department of Basic Education review the practical implementability of the policy guidelines focusing on practical guidance for parental involvement. Such a review has to include the establishment of a policy advocacy and implementation plan in order to emphasise the importance of comprehensive implementation of the SASA (1996) and the NECT guidelines (2016). This will be practically possible for two reasons. Firstly, the ECD sector is migrating to the DBE, which will make a seamless programme between ECD centres and schools when children enter grade R and continue to grade 1. (WCED, 2021). Secondly, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), in 2015 introduced the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System (SEIAS), which makes it compulsory for departments to review the impact of their policies. Furthermore, departments have to develop an implementation plan that indicate how the shortcomings of such policy will be addressed in order to ensure impact in the system. (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015). The SEIAS is a guideline for policy makers and administrators to critically assess the socio-economic impact of policy and importantly in this instance also to determine how this policy implementation will be complimentary rather than contradictory to other policy prescripts and confusing for the ultimate implementers. Such a home-school partnership programme will require creative thinking and innovation in order to address and accommodate participants' needs and thus ultimately ensure policy implementation,

6.6.5 Parenting and Parenting styles - the relationship between parenting styles and parental involvement in learning

- **Parenting**

It is concluded that parenting is the least considered element in addressing the improvement of learners' achievements. It is concluded from the stories told by parents, that when issues of parenting are addressed by the school it will improve the way the school understand the background, culture, needs and views of families of their children. It is further concluded that paying attention to parenting in relation to supporting learning, the parents will gain confidence about their parenting and parenting style which can have an impact on the home conditions and the development of more conducive home learning

environments for children. Parents will have a sense of support from the school as well as from other parents. It is recommended that the element of parenting forms a central element of the agenda of a home-school partnership. In addressing parenting within a home-school partnership will break down barriers to learning and enablement for parents. Parents will understand that most if not all parents find it challenging to support their children's learning at home. Within the home-school partnership, underpinned by principles of inclusivity, parents can engage in peer learning, self-paced learning and facilitated learning.

- **Parenting styles**

It can be concluded from the findings based on the responses from the research participants that although they did not think about it before, parenting enablement is something, which they will be interested in learning more about. Participants acknowledged their lack of knowledge and understanding of their parenting style and the impact it has on their ability to support their children with learning activities (Baumrind, 1991). In Chapter 3 of this study, the research stated two common assumptions that is being made regarding parenting styles. Firstly, it is assumed that parents consciously adopt and practice a particular parenting style and secondly that parents know where and how to acquire parenting skills. It was evident from the data that parents have limited knowledge about their own parenting styles or how to describe their own parenting style. It was also evident that parents are open and will be willing if they could participate in acquiring such knowledge to put in practice and observe the impact thereof in their families and particularly on supporting their learners.

- It is thus recommended that a home-school partnership programme content include elements of parenting styles and bringing awareness of parenting styles. It is further recommended that these elements must be simple and practical so that parents can practice their parenting styles in order to make their own observations and adjustments suitable to their own context and what works for them.

6.7   RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research aimed to contribute the discourse of policy implementation and not policy development. The policy document was already written, but there is little evidence of policy implementation. The intention was to determine and understand the views of parents in terms of what support they need from the schools or district offices to support and participate in the home-school partnerships. It further also wanted to discover how parents and schools can work collaboratively. Although the research achieved its aims and objectives, it has to be recognised that any research study is implemented within a certain context which can dictate what is possible and what cannot be done. According Creswell (2014), any qualitative research study has its strength and weaknesses, which present as challenges and limitations on a study. The motivation for conducting this study using qualitative research was to understand the phenomenon of home-school partnership in relation to policy implementation in supporting parents' needs to support their children's learning activities. Given the context in which the research was conducted, several limitations were imposed on the research study. Although the data was still collected in a reliable manner, the researcher had to find alternative ways to access the sample populations. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions on movements, schools were firstly closed for an extended period of time during 2020, during the times the researcher anticipated to do the fieldwork for this research study. When the schools re-opened, physical restrictions were placed on outsiders accessing the school. Therefore, firstly the researcher experienced limited access to the sample. The second limitation was that although all the participants were comfortable to participate in the online questionnaire and online interviews, the design had to take into account the cost of data. Therefore, both questionnaire and interviews had to have a set timeframe so as not to economically impose on the participants' resources. For this the researcher had to first establish participants' access to data and make prior arrangements with the participants to ascertain whether it was affordable for them to have an interview for thirty minutes to forty-five minutes via Zoom.

6.8   RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study *Supporting parents' needs as educational partners to enhance children's classroom learning* open the field for studies and practices on policy implementations. The findings of this study can be taken forward through action research and experiential learning studies focusing on

- Developing the home-school partnership model, testing, through pilots and determine from these pilots the workability of such a partnership in the South African context.
- Working with teachers and subject advisors in developing clear and simple formulated tools and tips, aligned to the dominant teaching methodologies, for parents to use at home to support learning at home.
- Developing interactive online reflective activities that parents can learn about parenting styles and how to interact with their children during the different developmental phases of the child.
- Experimenting with creating multiple communication channels between home and school focusing on the child's learning.

6.9   CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter concludes this study. The intentions of the study were met, and the research questions were addressed through exploring different literature sources, theoretical frameworks and the rich narratives and conversations with the participants.

Importantly, for the researcher, the research study revealed that there is a need for a home-school partnership in South African schools to support children's learning in school. It further indicated the willingness of parents to participate in such a home-school partnership. In narrating their lived experiences parents argued for an acknowledgment of themselves as equals in such a partnership as well as their need to learn and be capacitated to support their children's learning.

In this final chapter, I presented the recommendations in the five areas which could be the key drivers for the design, development and institutionalisation of simple, practical

home-school partnerships. The recommendations draw on the data, which indicated the willingness of parents to participate in home-school partnerships. The data also indicates that the reality is that parents live busy lives, working to meet the basic needs of their family and teachers have endless tasks. Taking these constraints into account to make a home-school partnership implementable, it needs to be simple, easy to manage and it must build on ideas that can be replicated over years. Most importantly it has to show evidence of the value for parents by improving their children's academic achievement.

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ANNEXURE A : SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Note this was a google form completed online

Supporting parents' needs as educational partners to enhance children's classroom learning

Biographical data

Please answer the following questions by placing an x in the appropriate box:

1. Gender
    Female   Male   Non-binary

2. Age

    19- 25   26-35   36-46   46-56

3. Answer the following question by selecting from the drop box
    Number of children

4. Indicate your occupation.

5. Tick he correct box below: Do you have access to caregivers?

Yes		No

6. Select the length of your workday from the drop box below

4 hours	8 hours	10 hours	12 hours

7. Indicate your academic qualifications

Below Gr 12	
Grade 12	
Tertiary certificate	
Tertiary diploma	

Degree	
Honours	
Masters	
Doctorate	
Others – (Please indicate)	

8. Home Language

Afrikaans	
English	
IsiXhosa	
IsiZulu	
Sepedi	
Sesotho	
SiSwati	
Setswana	
Xitsonga	
isiNdebele,	
isiZulu.	
Others – (Please indicate)	

School as a social construct

1. What is your perception (observation/view) of the school your child attends?
2. How would you describe the relationship between yourself and the school?
3. How does the school communicate with you regarding matters pertaining to your child?
4. How often does the school communicate with you regarding your child's academic progress and development?
5. How do you support the school e.g., do you participate on any of the school's structures such as the SGB, PTA, academic, social or cultural committees?
6. How do you think the school can support you in order for you to be a support to your child's academic programme?

Parent supporting the learner

1. What kind of support do you as a parent give to your child?
   a. Provide access to extra lessons (which subjects)
   b. Do you do additional teaching at home e.g., teaching phonics, numeracy?
   c. Do you read to your child? Y/N
      If the answer is yes

      i. When?
      ii. how often if you do?
      iii. what kind of books if you do?
2. Do you play any educational games with your child? Y/N
   If yes, what kind of games?

Parental involvement in SGB

1. Are you a member of the SGB or of any of its sub-committees?
2. What is your view on the role and responsibility SGB?
3. Do you attend any of the activities as arranged by the SGB?
4. Do you attend the school's annual general meeting?
5. Do you volunteer for any tasks either with the SGB or the PTA?

Barriers

1. What challenges do you experience in accessing the school to support you child? (check model of Epstein of involvement)
2. Did the school give your guidance on how to support your child's learning process or any other issues e.g., health, nutritional programme etc.
3. Were you ever visited at home by someone of the school to discuss how your child is going to transition from e.g., grade R to grade 1?
4. How does the school communicate with you on the progress of your child?
5. How often does the school communicate with you on the progress of your child?
6. Did the school give you any guidance/training how to create a safe/conducive learning atmosphere for your child at home?
7. Would you like the school to give you guidance/training how to do this?
8. Did the school give you any ideas or information how to help your child at home with homework and other learning related activities such monitoring your child's school progress and when to engage in discussion with the teachers?
9. How are you encouraged to be involved in decision making in the school?
10. Do you get information from the school about any community services that can support you to help your child?

Government of supporting parents

1. Are you aware of the government policy on supporting parents?
2. Have you been trained on it?
3. Do you know how to access that support that can enable you to support your child's learning progress?

Parenting styles

1. E.g., If they child do not do the homework – how do you react?
2. If they do well at school, how do you react?
3. Do you use some form of punishment or withdrawals of privileges when they do not do their schoolwork?
4. What privileges do you withdraw?

---

1. I explain the reasons behind my expectations. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

2. I provide comfort and understanding when my child is upset. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

3. I compliment my child. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

4. I consider my child's preferences when I make plans for the family (e.g., weekends away and holidays). Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

5. I respect my child's opinion and encourage him/her to express them. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

6. I treat my child as an equal member of the family. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

7. I provide my child reasons for the expectations I have for him/her. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

8. I have warm and intimate times together with my child. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

Authoritative

1. I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs. Rate your response. Choose from (never) to 6 (always):

2. I take my child's wishes into consideration before I ask him/her to do something. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

3. I explain to my child how I feel about his/her good/bad behaviour. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

4. I encourage my child to talk about his/her feelings and problems. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

5. I encourage my child to freely "speak his/her mind," even if he/she disagrees with me. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

Permissive Parenting Style

1. I find it difficult to discipline my child. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

2. I give into my child when he/she causes a commotion about something. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

3. I spoil my child. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

4. I ignore my child's bad behaviour. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

Based on Robinson, C., Mandleco, B., Olsen, S. F., & Hart, C. H. (1995). Authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting practices: Development of a new measure. Psychological Reports, 77, 819–830.

Authoritarian Parenting Style

1. When my child asks me why he/she has to do something, I tell him/her it is because I said so, I am your parent, or because that is what I want. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

2. I punish my child by taking privileges away from him/her (e.g., TV, games, visiting friends). Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

3. I yell when I disapprove of my child's behaviour. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

4. I explode in anger towards my child. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

5. I spank my child when I don't like what he/she does or says. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

6. I use criticism to make my child improve his/her behaviour. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

7. I use threats as a form of punishment with little or no justification. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

8. I punish my child by withholding emotional expressions (e.g., kisses and cuddles). Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

9. I openly criticize my child when his/her behaviour does not meet my expectations. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

10. I find myself struggling to try to change how my child thinks or feels about things. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

11. I feel the need to point out my child's past behavioural problems to make sure he/she will not do them again. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

12. I remind my child that I am his/her parent. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

13. I remind my child of all the things I am doing, and I have done for him/her. Rate your response. Choose from 1 (never) to 6 (always):

ANNEXURE B: Parent letter of consent

Supporting Parents as Partners in Education

Dear Parent

My name is Denise Miller, and I am a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student at the University of Pretoria.   The title of my research study is   Supporting parents' needs as educational partners to enhance children's classroom learning. The research I wish to conduct for my dissertation involves an exploration of the support parents need to be partners in the education of their children.

This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Roy Venketsamy and Dr Keshni Bipath Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Pretoria.

You are kindly invited to be part of the data collection phase of this study by taking part in responding to the online meeting and questionnaire and one focus group workshop/meeting, focusing on enhancing parents' skills to participate in the education of their children. The online interview and workshop will be scheduled according to your availability. The semi-structured interview should not take longer than 30-45 minutes and the workshop not more than two hours.

Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary and confidential. Furthermore, it is your right to withdraw at any point during the research study without any consequences or explanations. You can be assured that your decision will be respected. Confidentiality and anonymity will always be guaranteed by assigning numbers to the participants during the transcription phase. No participant names or personal information will be reported in my findings.

If you are willing to participate in this research study, you will be asked for consent by the researcher to make audio recordings of the semi-structured interview (to make transcription of data easier and more accurate). The recording will be securely stored. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the audio recordings. All data will only be used for academic purposes.

We would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidential and anonymously, for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

You may ask questions before or during the time of participation. If you have any concerns regarding the data collection procedures, please notify me or my supervisor. You as the participant will have the opportunity to verify the expressed views and the transcriptions of interviews made by me if so requested.

Please sign to indicate full comprehension of the nature, purpose and procedures of the research and to give your consent to participate.

Kind regards

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PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, hereby give permission to Denise Miller to include me as a participant in her research on Supporting parents as partners in the education of young learners.

Signature: _____ Date:_____

ANNEXURE C

TOOL AND TIPS FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS AND TIPS

1. It is good to decide on a few principles for policy implementation

Often policies are written in 'government' speak', which can make it very difficult to understand and make the chances for optimal policy implementation become slimmer. It will be good to design a policy implementation plan based on the following principles:

- The policy implementation elements will be understandable, simple and accessible to all.
- The policy implementation, for example the home-school partnership for the school/grade/classroom needs to be inclusively (with all identified stakeholders) designed, developed, and implemented.
- The policy implementation must accommodate the diversity of the school community.
- The implementation plan should be focused on problem solving and therefore it must be creative and innovative.

2. Decide on the purpose of the implementation plan.

Decide in consultation with the identified stakeholders the desired outcomes for the programme and develop some milestones against which the implementation will be monitored and assessed. In this instance the purpose of the implementation plan must be clear. Example: The implementation plan will facilitate the design, development, implementation and review of a home-school partnership programme that focuses on enhancing children's classroom learning.

3. Determine on the key stakeholders and the different roles and responsibilities

- Determine who needs to be involved in the implementation.

- Typically to implement this policy the key stakeholders will be members of the SGB curriculum sub-committee or nominated parents. Recognising that for many parents it may be the first time to be involved in policy implementation design and development, it will be important to encourage parents to share their thoughts of what they want to see the implementation plan can achieve and what activities are possible and not possible given their own circumstances.

- School leadership will be implementation drivers by ensuring that the implementation plan is tested, reviewed and improved. School leadership will also ensure that all levels of the school have the necessary resources and other enablers for implementation. The school leadership will build relationships amongst parents and educators and help to manage any complexities and interdependencies amongst the stakeholders. Ultimately, school leadership will ensure the consistency of implementation.

4. Develop clear communication channels

As indicated throughout the research communication for a home-school partnership is critically important. Communication must be succinct, clear, focused and consistent in its frequency. It is best to create a communication 'rhythm' so that parents know they will receive a learning instruction once a week, or once every second week or once a month. Communication is to share information, sharing learning, receive feedback and share important milestones achieved through the implementation. It helps for all stakeholders to keep motivation. Create spaces for feedback from individual parents relating to challenges they may have encountered and the impact the policy implementation may or may not have on improving their own competence and the children's learning achievements.
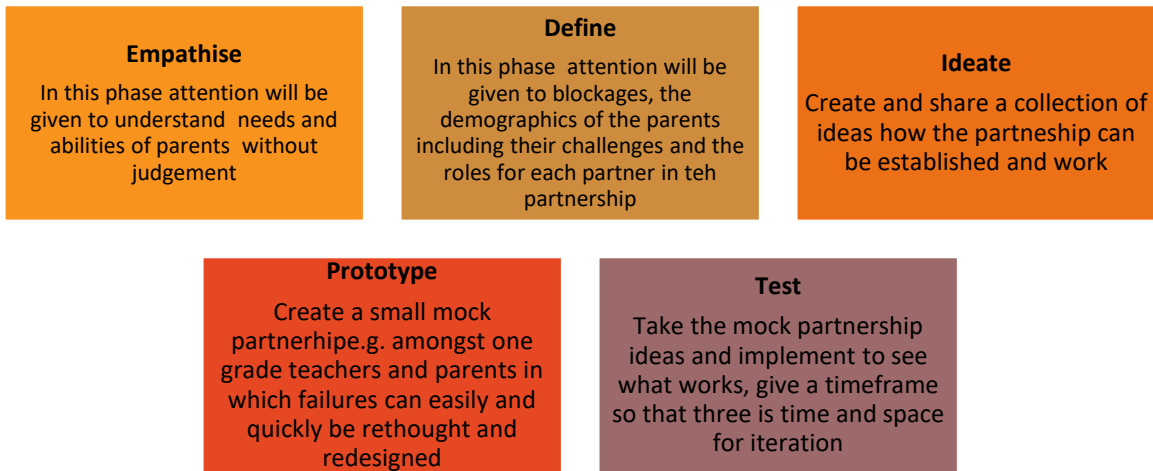
5. Develop capacity building strategies

This is most probably the most important step in the implementation of the home-school programme and realising the intention of the policy. Training, sharing of ideas, techniques and tips will be necessary – it would be wrong to assume that everyone possesses the skills to implement new activities. Keeping in mind the principles of inclusivity, accessibility and the diverse demographics of the school community such training and sharing of ideas have to be innovative and creative. The use of online platforms is a possibility in this regard. See the example of teaching reading as an example later in this annexure.

6. Monitor and measure the impact it may have on the target population

Remember the home-school partnership is to address parents' capacity building needs to support their children with their learning activities. To check whether the partnership is effectively working and to address challenges which are inevitable in policy implementation, engage parents, teachers and school leadership to find out how the implementation is working and whether the implementation of a home-school partnership is having any impact in the way the parents support their children's learning. Check with teachers whether the shared communication with parents and the feedback loops are working. Develop a simple, for example 5 question monitoring instrument and allow parents to show and tell their experiences. This will also help with the continuous improvement of the implementation plans and activities.

7. How to establish a home-school partnership

Empathise

In this phase attention will be given to understand needs and abilities of parents without judgement

Define

In this phase attention will be given to blockages, the demographics of the parents including their challenges and the roles for each partner in teh partnership

Ideate

Create and share a collection of ideas how the partneship can be established and work

Prototype

Create a small mock partnerhipe.g. amongst one grade teachers and parents in which failures can easily and quickly be rethought and redesigned

Test

Take the mock partnership ideas and implement to see what works, give a timeframe so that three is time and space for iteration

Adapted from David Terrar, "What is design thinking?" Enterprise Irregulars blog, 2018, Available at https://www.enterpriseirregulars.com/125085/what-isdesign-thinking/. [Accessed 07 December 2021]

B. PRACTICAL NOTE (FOR TRAINING PARENTS) ON SUPPORTING READING AT HOME

**Provide clear succinct and practical steps for parents to follow.**

Example of a practical activity for parents: Supporting sounding/reading time

Evening 1:	Call the child from watching TV and instruct the child to bring the homework book and start with the sounding. When there is a disagreement between you and the child, push through and continue with the session. (Observe the interaction between your child and yourself)
Evening 2:	An hour before the learning support session, provide the child with and agreeable schedule, ask about what sounding/reading needs to happen, of watching TV, having supper and then sitting together for sounding/reading lesson. When there is a disagreement between you and the child, stop the session, inquire whether s/he needs a break and suggest that you will continue in 2-3 minutes again.
TIPS for reading	Use the following techniques in supporting your child with consolidation of the sounds they learnt in class for the day:

Step 1.	Phonetics is the ability of your child to recognise sounds and then to put the sounds together to make words and to recognise the words.
Step2.	Today we did the **c** sound.
Step 3.	Gather objects in the house (ask the child to help you) that have the **c** sound e.g., **c**ups, **c**akes, **c**upboard, **c**arpet (all of these words have the **c** at the beginning of the word.
Step 4.	Don't rush the child, make it something fun. You can even make little songs and rhymes. Let the child say the words starting with the sound **C.** For fun ask your child if you take away the **C** whether they can hear other words e.g., **CUP** – take away the **C** the word is **up.**
Step 5.	When you are able to hear that your child recognises the sound, write the sound on a piece of paper with an image and without an image and see whether the child can recognise the sound on its own. If not, don't get agitated, just start at step 2 again and repeat. Sometimes it takes a bit longer, so it is better to do it often.
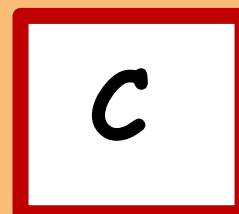
Observation:	Observe your behaviour and the behaviour of your child on the first and the second evening and observe and the impact on the interaction between your child and yourself.

The teachers/school can also video the teacher and include a video how to do this: example below: