CHAPTER 4
RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION IN RESPECT OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION, LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR SCHEDULE AND CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARENTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The basis of the thinking on parental involvement in the learning of young children, which was presented in Chapter Two, was derived from an overview of relevant literature. The role of parents with regard to the physical development, psychosocial development and cognitive development of 7-9 year-olds and how it features in formal education was discussed. Contextual influences on the dynamics of parental involvement such as the educational level and income of parents, culture of the community and family size were recognised. For each dimension of parental involvement, Tsonga custom was finally considered.

The question always remains as to the real effect, form and level of parental involvement from a micro-contextual perspective and no overview of the literature can supply this answer. We need to understand in South Africa, in a particular community school system, what the nature and quality of parent-child relationships in learning situations are to determine how they could be utilised as assets in the education of young learners. Therefore, the researcher's real probing needed to be empirical.

In Chapter Three the aim of the data collection and the research methods used to examine the effect of the support for learning provided in the home of the Grade Two learners in a predominantly Tsonga school were described. The research methods discussed in 3.2.4 will provide the structure for the presentation of the findings in this chapter (Chapter Four).

The data sets collected by means of using a questionnaire, with semi-structured interview, ethnographic observation, a learners' behaviour schedule and correspondence with parents will each be analysed and discussed separately and then the findings will be synthesised in a final discussion.

The context was first considered since it plays a vital role in the education of children. Some descriptive data from the PILEQ will now be used.

4.2 CONTEXT OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

4.2.1 THE SCHOOL

The community depends on the teacher as a secondary educator to ensure that young children will learn effective group behaviour and cultural patterns which are necessary if they are to adjust in life in a particular community. The school offers formal education to learners with the aim of producing future adults, who are physically strong, mentally alert, emotionally stable, culturally sound and socially efficient. According to Ayres and Meyer (1992:31), the most important task of the school is to help emancipate children from the micro-milieu of the family to the macro-reality of the community at large, a community in which they will have to hold their own as adults. The school is expected to have well equipped educators with skills such as communication and imparting of knowledge to help them to obtain these objectives.

The research school is a Primary school in a township outside Pretoria. At the time of the research the school had a staff of 15 members, that is, twelve educators, one secretary and two cleaners and there were 250 learners. The school serves mainly the Tsonga community, with 64.1% of the learners coming from the township, 33.3% from the informal settlement and one learner living in an urban area. The research was undertaken in a Grade Two class of 39 learners in the year after Curriculum 2005 was implemented in the school for the first time. In the year before, there had been two Grade One classes, each containing 26 learners. At the end of that year, eight learners had failed Grade One. Because of a downsizing, one Grade Two class was formed, containing all of the remaining 44 learners. During the first term, five learners moved to other schools in a nearby area, leaving the sample size of 39.

The school strived for a good code of conduct. The educators appeared to care for the learners and demonstrated some understanding of the learners' home environment. The school was not well equipped with resources, but educators displayed their commitment by voluntarily making teaching aids more or less on a weekly basis to enhance their teaching. The culture of teaching was judged positive since most of the educators were willing to give individual attention to learners who were having problems. For example, learners with such problems would be given extra work to complete during break under the supervision of the educator.

4.2.2 THE PARTICIPANTS

4.2.2.1 Data sources and straightforward frequency analysis

Data to be discussed on learners (refer to paragraph 4.2.2.2) and parents (refer to paragraph 4.2.2.3) were derived from the Parental Involvement in Learners' Education Questionnaire (PILEQ) and are of a descriptive nature. Information on the educator (refer to paragraph 4.2.2.4) is based on observation and interaction with the educator.

4.2.2.2 The learners

All the data derive from one Grade Two class which comprised 39 learners, at school and in their homes with their parents. The biographical information on the learners is summarised in Table 4.1 and Figures 4.1-4.2, and comprises gender, home language, living area, age, the number of children in the family, and the chronological position (age-rank) of the child in the home.

The relevance of home language, living area and age of the learners for the learners' learning behaviours and/or the parents' influence on their learning behaviours merits consideration.

Table 4.1 indicates that in total there were more girls (56.4%) than boys (43.6%). Tsonga was the language most spoken, in 79.5% of the homes. Tswana was quite strongly represented (12.8%), leaving three learners fairly isolated in linguistic terms – one boy and one girl who spoke North Sotho at home and one girl from Zambia, speaking English. There were 64.1% of the learners living in the township whilst 33.3% were living in an informal settlement and only one learner, the English speaking girl from Zambia, was living in an urban area. The 15 girls living in the township (68.2% of the girls) represented 9.4% more of their total group than did the 10 boys of their group (58.8% of boys). There were 79.5% learners in the expected 7-8 years age range for Grade Two, leaving 10.3% under-age at six years, and 10.3% of the learners over-age at 9-13 years. Of the four over-age learners, three (7.7% of the total) were girls and one (2.6% of the total) was a boy.

Family size could be expected to play some role in the form and amount of time which parental involvement would take in the learning of their children.

TABLE 4.1 GENDER, HOME LANGUAGE, LIVING AREA AND AGE OF THE GRADE TWO LEARNERS IN THE RESEARCH SCHOOL

Gender	N	%	Home Language								Living Area					
			Tsonga		Tswana		N.Sotho		English		Urban		Township		Informal Settlement	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	17	43.6	13	76.5	3	17.6	1	5.9	0	0	0	0	10	58.8	7	41.2
Girls	22	56.4	18	81.8	2	9.0	1	4.6	1	4.6	1	4.5	15	68.2	6	27.3
Total	39	100	31	79.5	5	12.8	2	5.1	1	2.6	1	2.6	25	64.1	13	33.3

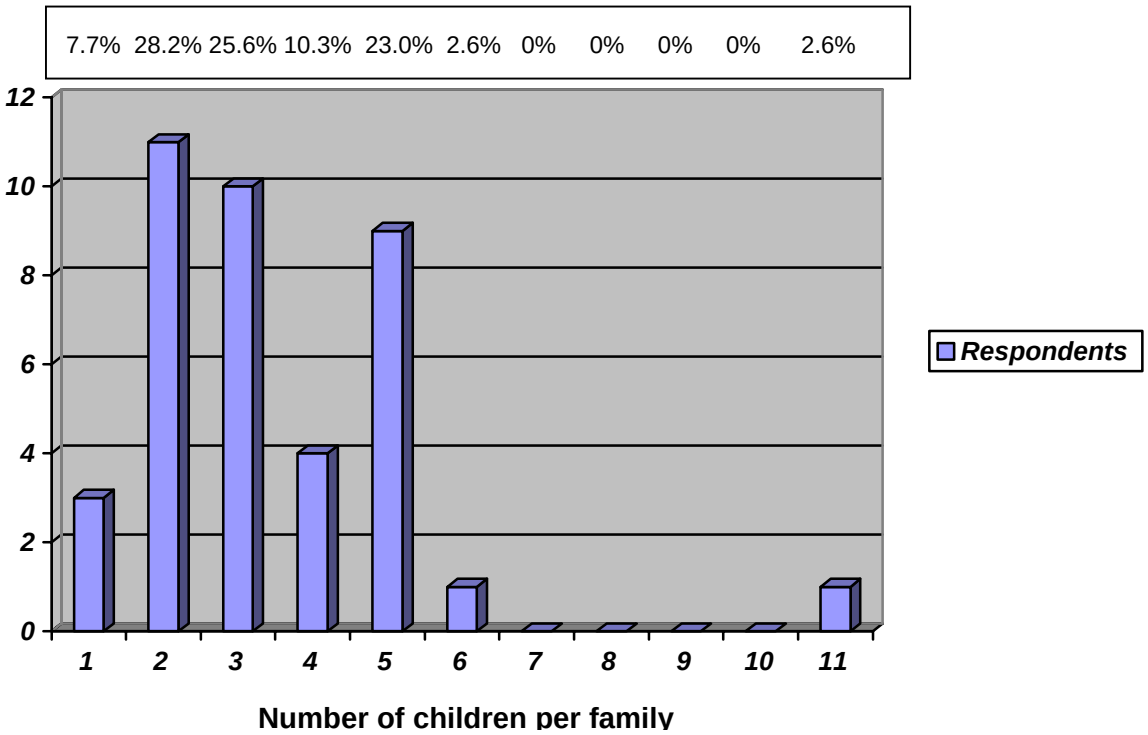
Gender	Age *											
	6		7		8		9		11		13	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	2	11.8	8	47.0	6	35.3	0	0	1	5.9	0	0
Girls	2	9.1	10	45.5	7	31.8	2	9.1	0	0	1	4.5
Total	4	10.3	18	46.2	13	33.3	2	5.1	1	2.6	1	2.6

* Columns for 10 and 12 years contain no data and are omitted for considerations of space

Figure 4.1 illustrates the number of children per family. It indicates that the majority of the learners (61.5%) came from small families with only 1-3 children each: Three (7.7%) learners were the only child in their family; 11 (28.2%) of the learners came from families with two children each, and 10 (25.6%) of the learners from families with three children each.

In fact, family size would seem to be moderate in this predominantly Tsonga school since (with the exception of one 6-child and one 11-child family) five children per family (for 23.0% of the sample) constituted the largest families.

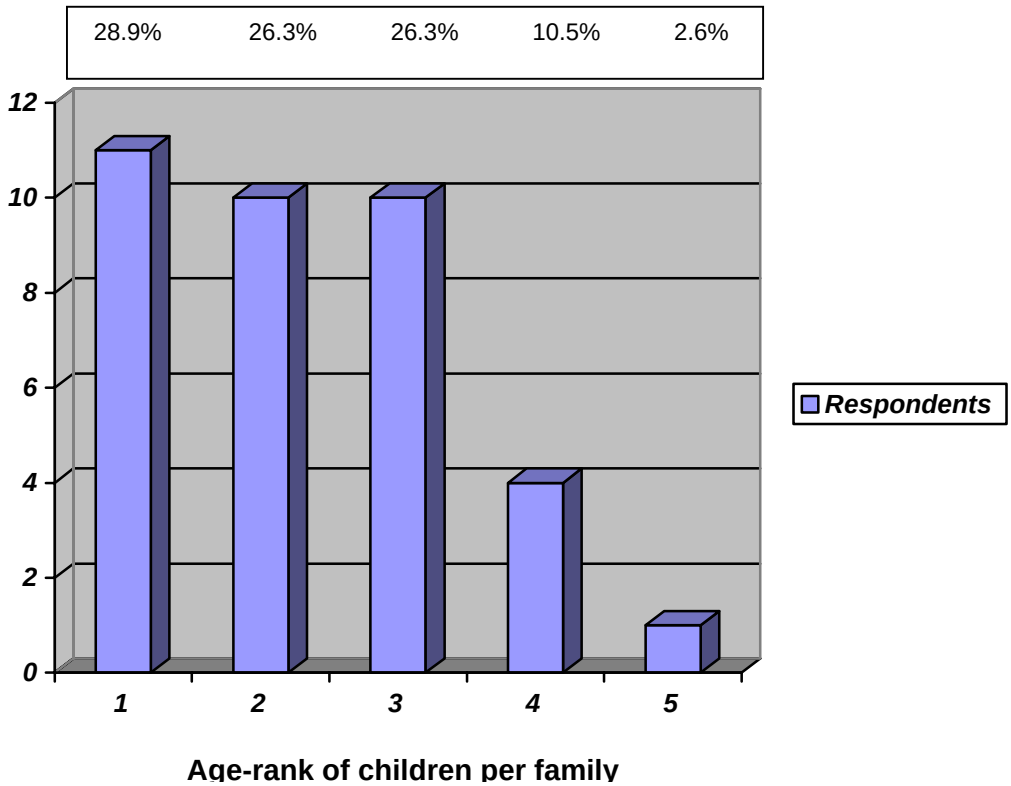
FIGURE 4.1 NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY



The amount of focus and experience that the parents brought to their participation in their children's learning would expectedly be influenced by the age-rank of the child in the family.

Figure 4.2 shows that the vast majority of the learners (81.5%) occupied the first, second and third position in the child/rank. Eleven (28.9%) of the learners were the oldest (or only) child in their family. Ten (26.3%) each of the learners occupied the second and third position in the family. Very few learners (13.1%) were below the third position in the age-rank.

FIGURE 4.2 AGE-RANKS OF THE GRADE TWO LEARNERS IN THE RESEARCH SCHOOL (Data of three learners not supplied)



4.2.2.3 The parents

The Parental Involvement in Learners' Education Questionnaire (PILEQ) and the semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents of 38 learners, and one respondent who was a grandmother of one learner. Only eight fathers could be reached. The biographical information on the parents is summarised in Table 4.2-4.3, and comprises gender, age, qualifications and occupational status.

Gender and age of the parents were considered in an effort to understand the effect of parents' actions on the learning of their children.

Table 4.2 indicates that the age-range of 30 and below contained two fathers (25.0% of the fathers), aged 29 and 30 years. Although the number of mothers in this range (11 – 28.3% of the mothers) was comparable, the distribution differed in that the youngest mother was five years younger than the youngest father.

TABLE 4.2 GENDER AND AGE OF THE PARENTS WHO TOOK PART IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Gender	N	%	AGE																									
			24		26		28		29		30		31		32		33		34		35		37		38		40		41	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fathers	8	17.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0	0	0	2	25.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12.5
Mothers	39	83.0	1	2.6	2	5.1	1	2.6	4	10.3	3	7.7	1	2.6	5	12.8	3	7.7	5	12.8	3	7.7	5	2.6	3	7.7	1	2.6	1	2.6
Total	47	100	1	2.1	2	4.3	1	2.1	5	10.6	4	8.5	1	2.1	5	10.6	5	10.6	5	10.5	3	6.4	1	2.1	3	6.4	1	2.1	2	4.3

Gender	N	%	AGE											
			43		44		46		47		49		52		58	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fathers	8	17.0	0	0	1	12.5	0	0	0	0	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0
Mothers	39	83.0	1	2.6	1	2.6	1	2.6	1	2.6	0	0	0	0	1	2.6
Total	47	100	1	2.1	2	4.3	1	2.1	1	2.1	1	2.1	1	2.1	1	2.1

TABLE 4.3 QUALIFICATIONS, OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND MARITAL STATUS OF PARENTS

Gender	N	%	Qualifications												Occupational status											
			Never in school		Junior Primary		Senior Primary		Junior Secondary		Matric		Diploma		Unemployed		Self-employed		Untrained Labourer		Trained Labourer		Admin.		Professional	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fathers	8	17.0	0	0	1	12.5	1	12.5	3	37.5	2	25.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	4	50.0	1	12.5	0	0
Mothers	39	83.0	4	10.3	14	35.9	9	23.0	7	17.9	4	10.3	1	2.6	12	30.8	8	20.5	15	38.5	1	2.6	2	5.1	1	2.6
Total	47	100	4	8.5	15	31.9	10	21.3	10	21.3	6	12.8	2	4.3	13	27.7	9	19.1	16	34.0	5	10.6	3	6.4	1	2.1

Marital Status	N	%
Married	26	66.7
Unmarried/Single	10	25.6
Living alone	1	2.6
Widowed	2	5.1
Total	39	100

The age-range of 31 to 40 contained 25.0% of the fathers (both aged 33 years). More than half of the mothers, 22 (56.5% of the mothers), fall in this range. There were no fathers from age 34-40 whereas the majority of the mothers (13 – 33.4% of the mothers) in this category range from 34 to 40 years old. Two fathers (25.0% of the fathers) were aged 41 and 44. The age- range of 49-52 contained 25.0% of the fathers (one aged 49 and one aged 52 years). There were relatively fewer mothers in the age-range of 41-47, (five – 13.0% of the mothers) and one grandmother aged 58 years.

The parents' experience of learning could be expected to have an impact on the form and amount of support in the education of their children, as some of them might feel too unsure to venture information or provide guidance and support on account of their limited level of literacy and lack of confidence regarding education generally.

Table 4.3 indicates that eighteen mothers (46.2% of the mothers) had qualified at the Grade Three level with only one father (12.5% of the fathers) who had qualified at the same level. Six fathers (75.0% of the fathers) had qualified at levels beyond primary school, in comparison to twelve mothers (30.8% of the mothers). There was no other after school training, above a diploma. There were a high percentage of unemployed mothers (30.8 % of the mothers) and only one father (12.5% of the fathers) was unemployed. Eight mothers (20.5% of the mothers) were self-employed whilst only one father (12.5% of the fathers) was self-employed.

A high percentage of the mothers (40.0% of the mothers) performed untrained labour and one father (12.5% of the fathers) was an untrained labourer. Half of the fathers (50.0% of the fathers) were employed at the level of trained labour in comparison to one mother (2.6% of the mothers). Three mothers (7.7% of the mothers) occupied administrative and professional posts and one father (12.5% of the fathers) was working in administration. There were 26 (66.7%) married families, 10 (25.6%) unmarried families, two widowed families and only one parent was living alone.

4.2.2.4 The educator

The Grade Two learners had a female Tsonga speaking educator, Mrs A, aged 40. She obtained a three-year diploma in education in 1992 at Thulamahashe Training College in the Northern Province. In 1993 she began teaching in a Sub A (Grade One) class at Bushbuckridge. She taught for a year and at the end of 1993, she moved to her home place in Giyani where she taught Tsonga and English in the three Sub A (Grade One) classes for two years.

Since the beginning of 1996 she had been teaching at the research school in Mamelodi in Pretoria, which made the research year (1998) her third year at the school and her sixth year in the teaching profession. The research year was her first year teaching the Grade Two learners in the new Curriculum 2005.

Mrs A was an educator who appeared to enjoy working with young children. At the time of the practical research year she was teaching one Grade Two class of 39 learners for all their work. She appeared to care for the learners and she displayed some understanding of their home environment. For example, at one time when Learner 8 had not attended lessons for three days, the educator showed concern, and two learners were sent to his home during break to see what the problem could be. It was found that the learner was not well. His parents were advised to take him to the health centre and in the following week the learner managed to return to school. The educator gave him some extra work to do at home to catch up on lost learning. Every morning his work was checked and where mistakes occurred, he was supported.

During the research period, the educator attended a workshop on Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) where the emphasis was on what should be done to facilitate learning. She demonstrated her commitment in teaching by voluntarily making teaching aids approximately four times a week, to make the lessons easier to understand. She was also willing to give individual attention to learners who were having problems.

The educator used the traditional methods of teaching for the greater part. For example, in reading education, at times she would read aloud from the book and learners would repeat in a chorus. She would first start with a sentence at a time, then repeat the process per paragraph. Thereafter, Learner A would be asked to read the first two sentences, followed by Learner B with the following sentences, until all the learners had had a turn to read two sentences. As time permitted, learners would be asked to read a paragraph at a time.

In her English lesson, for example, the educator explained new words to the learners by using flash cards and the chalkboard. She explained the meaning of the words and pronounced them for the class. She let the class as a group repeat the words aloud, and then asked one by one to read the words back to her aloud. If the learners had difficulty with the pronunciation, the educator corrected them. Then she divided them into their small groups and gave all of them the same English reading books as before (Clymer 1996:1-16) which contained the new words. The reason for the group (as indicated by the

educator) was that all the learners would have a chance to read aloud individually to the other learners.

Again, in teaching numeracy, Mrs A would write sums on the chalkboard for addition, subtraction and multiplication signs, using counters. The learners would be asked to do them in their exercise books after explanation, and a few learners would then be asked to supply the answers on the chalkboard.

In accordance with the principles of Curriculum 2005, she also tried to develop within learners the capability to think, reason, deliberate and socialise. Learners with problems would be given extra work to do during break under her supervision.

4.3 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNERS' EDUCATION AS REPORTED ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE (PILEQ) AND IN SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

4.3.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNERS' EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE (PILEQ)

4.3.1.1 Administration of the PILEQ

The questionnaire (refer Appendix A) was administered by the researcher at the respondents' homes on various dates as per appointment. Full co-operation was received from all parents, thereby expediting the research process. The parent of Learner 8 expressed his concern about the researcher's presence and raised a question as to whether the researcher was an ANC member who was sent by the Government to see how learning was conducted. The answer also stated to other parents subsequently, was that the Government was not involved and that the aim of the research was to determine and examine the extent, level, form and content of the support for learning of the parents of Grade Two learners in the learning of their children, and what influence does their involvement have on their children's learning. The parent of Learner 8 was satisfied with the explanation and said that he hoped that as parents they would always be involved in school activities.

Responses were noted by the researcher in written form. The questionnaire, which took 60 minutes to complete, was coupled with a semi-structured interview as well as ethnographic observation, where the learners were assigned some tasks to perform in the presence of their parents and the researcher made notes on the methods employed.

The responses to the questionnaire of the parents were statistically processed. The notes on the interviews were analysed qualitatively.

4.3.1.2 Results and findings derived from the PILEQ

(a) Descriptive analysis of PILEQ data

In this section a descriptive analysis and interpretation of the data with regard to various aspects of parental involvement, such as the parents' knowledge and liaison with the school, visits to the school, help with homework, monitoring the child's progress, utilization of resources and times when children were allowed to watch television or radio will be undertaken. The data are contained in Tables 4.4-4.9. The data represent the responses per family, not per parent, and for each item only the affirmative responses are recorded. The percentage per response category will, therefore, not always add up to 100%.

In addition to the frequency analysis which will be presented in this subsection to describe the various categories of responses, the relationship between sets of the variables was also examined. These relationships will be presented in subsection (b), to consider which are significant and which may be due to chance occurrences.

It should be noted that in some of the tables, the numbers of parents do not add up to the originally stated total sample. This is due to the fact that in spite of all the precautions taken, not all questions elicited responses from all the participants. However, such cases are so few that they are not judged to seriously affect the outcome of the findings and conclusions.

The parents' knowledge about the school and the measure of the extent of their participation in the school affairs could be expected to reflect the quality of focus in their involvement in their children's learning. Data on this issue are contained in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING: KNOWLEDGE OF AND LIAISON WITH SCHOOL

Parents' knowledge of and liaison with school	N (affirmation)	% (of families)
Have met and talked to principal	9	23.1
Know name of class teacher	15	38.5
Know name of a member of Governing Body	8	20.5
Know some functions of Governing Body	15	38.5
Have problems with school	3	7.7

Table 4.4 shows that, in the course of more than five school terms after their child's school entry, only nine families (23.1% of the families) indicated that they had had opportunity to enter into conversation with the principal of the school. By May of the school year, only 38.5% of the families (15) knew the name of the class teacher. Concerning the school governance, eight families (20.5% of the families) knew the name of a member of the Governing Body of the school and 15 families (38.5% of the families) knew some of the functions of the Governing Body. On a positive note, very few families (only three – 7.7 % of the families) had any complaints about the school, but the low percentage of the families who had any knowledge or acquaintance with the school is a matter of concern.

More important than knowledge about the school is the direct interaction of parents with the educator of their children. Since the school cannot educate the child alone and the parent shares the responsibility, there should be a partnership between the two parties. Table 4.5 contains the data on the frequency of visits to the educator at school by parents.

From Table 4.5 it is clear that the majority of the families (61.5% of the families) did meet with the educators of their children on different occasions. Of these, 21 families (53.8% of the families) said that they visited the school only on parent meeting days while only three families (7.7% of the families) indicated that they frequently visited the school at own choice. Fifteen families (38.5% of the families) said that they had never visited the school.

TABLE 4.5 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING: VISITS TO THE EDUCATOR AT THE SCHOOL

Frequency of visitors	N (affirmation)	% (of families)
Only on parent meetings	21	53.8
Only when the child has problems	0	0
Frequently, at parent's choice	3	7.7
Parent never visits school	15	38.5
Total	39	100

The primary area of parental help in their children's learning, should obviously be the home. In this regard, real guidance and support in homework tasks could be expected to have some effect on the learning of the children. Table 4.6 provides some indication of the forms of engagement during homework which was undertaken. Since this item in the questionnaire required an open response, the parents' responses were categorized and counted. The fact that there was no variety and that every family gave only one response

with regard to helping a child with homework, suggests that there was a limited level of involvement.

TABLE 4.6 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING: HELP WITH HOMEWORK

Guidance given in homework	N (affirmation)	% (of families)
Explaining difficult words	23	59.0
Rectifying mistakes, e.g. in numeracy through use of counters	11	28.2
Reading sentence by sentence	4	10.2
Referring child to siblings for help	1	2.6
Total	39	100

Table 4.6 reveals that there was a very limited scope of help reported: All the family responses fell into only four categories and every family gave only one response. More than half of the families (59.0% of the families) explained language items to their children. The method for a particular task was addressed by 28.2% of the families – and then in a very particular way, for example, by correcting the error in a numeracy task through the use of counters (e.g. pebbles and matchsticks). In a small percentage of cases (10.2%), the work was read sentence by sentence by a parent, either in Tsonga or in English. The child had to read first and when mistakes were encountered, the parent helped with pronunciation of the word. Only one family sent their child to her siblings for help.

Helping with the children's problems is not the only form of involvement required. Even when parents do provide assistance, the child will not always ask for help. General supervision over homework is also required. Table 4.7 reveals habits and events by which parents keep a watchful eye over their children's progress.

TABLE 4.7 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING: MONITORING CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

Monitoring children's progress	N (affirmation)	% (of families)
Nearly every day	11	28.2
At least once a week	7	17.9
Only after attending parent meeting	3	7.7
Only at the end of each term	2	5.2
Only when the child has failed	1	2.6
Only when the parent has time	7	17.9
Never monitors child's progress	7	17.9
Missing (no responses)	1	2.6
Total	39	100

The two driving factors regarding the frequency of supervision which were explored in the questionnaire concerned habit and specific events. Table 4.7 reveals that only about half of the families (46.1% of the families) appeared to have some habit of checking their children's work: 11 families (28.2% of the families) nearly every day and seven families (17.9% of the families) at least once a week. The categories concerning events which drove parents to attend to a child's school work all represent a small number of families: Three families (7.7% of the families) paid attention to their children's progress only after attending a parent meeting, two families (5.2% of the families) only at the end of each term and one family only when the child had failed. Nearly $^{1}/_{5}$ of the families (17.9% of the families) checked their children's work only when there was time and an equal proportion (17.9%) never monitored their children's progress.

In addition to monitoring of children's progress, the utilization of resources and special learning opportunities could be expected to have some effect in children's learning. Table 4.8 explores resources which could be utilized, how they could be utilized and special learning opportunities.

TABLE 4.8 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING: UTILISATION OF RESOURCES AND SPECIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Radio, Television and special learning activities	N (affirmation)	% (of families)
Do parents have a radio?	34	87.2
Do parents have a television set?	28	71.8
Do parents explain radio programmes to children?	11	32.4
Do parents explain TV programmes to children?	15	53.6
Do parents take children on outings?	17	43.6
Did the child attend an informal day care centre during the preschool years?	3	7.7
Did the child attend a Nursery school?	13	33.3
Has the child attended any enrichment class?	1	2.6

Table 4.8 indicates that, although the majority of the families had radios (87.2% of the families) and/or television sets (71.8% of the families) in their homes, the number of families who interacted about programmes presented on the radio or television was considerably less. Only 11 families (32.4% of the 34 families who had a radio) explained some of the programmes on the radio to their children while 53.6% of the 28 families who had a television set explained some of the programmes on television to their children. Seventeen families (43.6% of the families) took their children on educational outings.

Only 41% of the children appeared to have attended preschool institutions: Three learners (7.7% of the learners) had attended an informal day care centre and 13 learners (33.3% of the learners) had attended nursery school. Only one learner in the class attended any enrichment class.

In addition to the sharing of use and explanation with regard to radio and television, parents' control exercised over viewing times might also reflect some involvement in their children's learning. Table 4.9 describes the viewing times.

TABLE 4.9 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING: TIMES WHEN PARENTS ALLOW CHILDREN TO WATCH TV

Times when children are allowed to watch TV	N (affirmation)	% (of the 28 families with TV)
Every weekday afternoon	11	39.3
Every weekday evening	6	21.4
One hour a day during the week	3	10.7
Two hours a day during the week	2	7.1
More than two hours a day during the week	2	7.1
Saturdays	25	89.3
Sundays	23	82.1

From Table 4.9 it is clear that there was a wide variety of choices with regard to children's television viewing. A high percentage of the 28 families allowed weekend viewing times: 25 families (89.3% of the families) allowed viewing times on Saturdays and 23 families (82.1% of the families) allowed Sunday viewing times. Seventeen families (60.7% of the families) allowed weekday viewing times: 11 families (39.3% of the families) allowed afternoon viewing times while six families (21.4% of families) allowed their children to watch television in the evenings. The categories concerning the amount of time permitted for viewing during the week all represent small numbers of families: Three families (10.7% of the families) allowed viewing times of one hour a day during the week and two families each (7.1% of the families) allowed two hours and more a day during the week.

The discussion of the descriptive data will be done in combination with the discussion of the relational analysis.

(b) Relational analysis of PILEQ data

To analyse relationships among the data, two-way frequency tables were drawn and examined for possible significant dependence between variables. The Wilcoxon Rank

Sum Test and Kruskal-Wallis Nonparametric Statistics were used to do the more in-depth analysis of significant relationships between variables. According to Reber (1985, in Hayward & Steyn 2001:83), nonparametric statistics is a statistical procedure to determine the relationship between variables without making assumptions about the normality of score distributions. The small number of respondents does not justify reliance on the results of the chi-square (Glass & Hopkins 1996:163).

Tables 4.10-4.16 contain data from the **Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test**, examining the relationships between a set of seven selected aspects of parental involvement in specific characteristics of the parents and learners (gender of children, number of children, marital status of parents, home language, work of parents, parents' type of work and number of years at work).

Table 4.10, containing the relational data about the gender of the learners and aspects of their parents' involvement, indicates that there was no strongly significant relationship between whether the particular learner was a boy or a girl, and the ways in which the parents were involved in their children's learning.

TABLE 4.10 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER OF CHILDREN AND ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Parameter	Wilcoxon 2-sample test Prob >/Z/
Parents' engagement with school	0.8677
Parents' visits to school	0.7752
Parents' finding a problem with school	0.7358
Parents' help with homework	0.2707
Parents' buying resources for children	0.3733
Parents monitoring child's progress	0.9614

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

Table 4.11 which contains the relational data about the number of children in the family and aspects of parental involvement, indicates that there was no significant relationship between how many children were in the family (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) and how much involvement the parents had in the learning of their children, excepting for a significant relationship with the resources which parents bought on the 5% level of significant relationship. This will be followed up in the discussion of the interviews.

TABLE 4.11 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Parameter	Wilcoxon 2-sample test Prob >/Z/
Parents' engagement with school	0.8554
Parents' visits to school	0.5914
Parents' finding a problem with school	0.2794
Parents' help with homework	0.5690
Parents' buying resources for children	0.0270**
Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.2547

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

Table 4.12, containing the relational data about parents' marital status and aspects of their involvement in the education of their children, indicates that there was no significant relationship between whether they were couples, single or widows and the ways in which they were involved in their children's learning.

TABLE 4.12 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS' MARITAL STATUS AND ASPECTS OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Parameter	Wilcoxon 2-sample test Prob >/Z/
Parents' engagement with school	1.0000
Parents' visits to school	1.0000
Parents' finding a problem with school	0.2202
Parents' help with homework	0.8446
Parents' buying resources for children	0.7722
Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.9065

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

Table 4.13, containing the data about the home language of the learners and aspects of their parents' involvement, indicates that there was a significant relationship between the home language (Tsonga, Tswana, North Sotho, and English) and the resources bought by parents and monitoring of their children's progress.

TABLE 4.13 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOME LANGUAGE AND ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Parameter	Wilcoxon 2 sample test Prob >/Z/
Parents' engagement with school	0.6689
Parents' visits to school	0.4702
Parents' finding a problem with school	0.3863
Parents' help with homework	0.1427
Parents' buying resources for children	0.0033***
Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.0302**

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

Table 4.14, containing the relational data about the qualifications of parents and aspects of parental involvement, indicates that there was no significant relationship between whether a particular parent had been to school, had primary school education, had secondary school education or had obtained a diploma qualification, and the ways in which the parents are involved in their children's learning (Table 4.3)

TABLE 4.14 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALIFICATIONS OF PARENTS AND ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Parameter	Wilcoxon 2-sample test Prob >/Z/
Parents' engagement with school	0.3625
Parents' visits to school	0.6195
Parents' finding a problem with school	0.1690
Parents' help with homework	0.5123
Parents' buying resources for children	0.7414
Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.6559

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

Table 4.15, which contains the relational data about parents' type of work and aspects of their involvement indicates that there was no significant relationship between their work (professional, administrative, untrained labourer) and the way in which they were involved in the learning of their children. However, a tendency is observable in that three aspects (0.0817*, 0.0805*, 0.0638*) reflected some significance on the 10% level.

TABLE 4.15 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS' TYPE OF WORK AND ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Parameter	Wilcoxon 2-sample test Prob >/Z/
Parents' engagement with school	0.3230
Parents' visits to school	0.6822
Parents' finding a problem with school	0.0817*
Parents' help with homework	0.0805*
Parents' buying resources for children	0.5622
Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.0638*

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

Table 4.16, containing the parents' number of years of work and aspects of parental involvement, indicates that there was a significant relationship between how long the parent had been working and whether he/she had a problem with the school. However, there was a tendency of a significant relationship on a 10% level (the three that proved significant are 0.0817*, 0.0805* and 0.0638*).

TABLE 4.16 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS' NUMBER OF YEARS OF WORK AND ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Parameter	Wilcoxon 2-sample test Prob >/Z/
Parents' engagement with school	0.7627
Parents' visits to school	0.8006
Parents' finding a problem with school	0.0436 **
Parents' help with homework	0.5163
Parents' buying resources for children	0.0937*
Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.10000

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

TABLE 4.17 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER OF CHILD, NUMBER OF CHILDREN, RANK OF CHILD, HOME LANGUAGE, ETC AND ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

	Relation between aspects of parental involvement and:	Chi-square probability
Gender of child	Parents' visits to school	0.759
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.709
	Parents' help with homework	0.255
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.405
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.407
Number of children	Parents' visits to school	0.574
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.258
	Parents' help with homework	0.548
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.025**
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.118
Rank of child	Parents' visits to school	0.196
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.374
	Parents' help with homework	0.327
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.087*
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.148
Age of parents	Parents' visits to school	0.214
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.209
	Parents' help with homework	0.721
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.454
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.646
Marital status of parents	Parents' visits to school	1.100
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.202
	Parents' help with homework	0.825
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.746
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.989
Home Language	Parents' visits to school	0.452
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.360
	Parents' help with homework	0.130
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.011**
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.052*
Parents' qualifications	Parents' visits to school	0.892
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.680
	Parents' help with homework	0.540
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.631
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.575
Parents Working	Parents' visits to school	0.603
	Parents' finding a problem with school	0.154
	Parents' help with homework	0.493
	Parents' buying resources for children	0.573
	Parents' monitoring child's progress	0.102

* = Significant on a 10% level
** = Significant on a 5% level
*** = Highly significant on a 1% level

Table 4.17 contains the relational data about gender of child, number of children, rank of child, home language, age of parents, marital status of parents, parents' qualifications, parents who were working and aspects of parental involvement in children's learning.

Recognising the fact that Chi-Square may not have been a valid test since a too high percentage (63%) of the cells had expected counts of less than five, it may still be meaningful to note that three possibly significant relationships of resources bought for children emerged from the analysis in Table 4.17 chi-square probability) (child rank: 0.087*, home language: 0.011**, number of children: 0.025**).

The discussion of descriptive data derived from the PILEQ in combination with interviews follows in paragraph 4.3.1.3.

4.3.1.3 Discussion: Relational data

Table 4.10 indicated that there was no significant relationship between the variables "gender of children" and "aspects of parental involvement in children's learning". In this study (refer to Table 4.1) there were more girls (22) than boys (17). Table 4.10 further indicated that there were 13 Tsonga boys, 18 Tsonga girls, three Tswana boys and two Tswana girls in the classroom, leaving three learners fairly isolated in linguistic terms – one boy and one girl who spoke North Sotho and one girl from Zambia, speaking English.

Earlier in the study it was noted that all Tsonga children are the responsibility of the mother while the father is away, for example, due to migratory labour practices, especially in rural areas. On the other hand it was also noted that Tsonga girls are expected to do household chores while the boys are involved in the afternoon activities at school. According to Swart-Kruger (1994:224) reporting on a South African study, parents want to invest in their sons and they burden their daughters with heavy responsibilities. The information above would have, therefore, led one to expect more involvement and more investment in boys than in girls. The findings in this study are contrary to the expectation and might suggest a shift in the urban African community to generally recognise the importance of education for boys and girls alike.

Table 4.11 indicated a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level between how many children were in the family and how much involvement the parents had in their learning (as suggested by the resources they bought). The data, therefore, suggest that the number of children the parents have has some bearing on the extent to which they invest in their children's education. The financial factor seems to play a role (refer to

Figure 4.1). The majority of the families (61.5%) had small families with only 1-3 children each. Eleven families (28.29%) of the sample were large, that is, had five and more children per family. In his research, Rambiyana (2001:173) found that the number of children parents have in school influences how much involvement they (the parents) have in school activities. In this study it was found that the fewer the children were in the family, the more resources were bought for them. Therefore, these findings corroborate Rambiyana's (2001) work and underline the financial factor in parents' support for their children's learning.

Concerning the marital status of parents, there was no significant relationship between whether parents were a couple or were single or widowed, and the amount in which they were involved in their children's education. It is usually thought that single parent families have obstacles, do not have much time, and have more worries and many other related problems which could hinder them from assisting their children with school work. In their research, Comer and Haynes (1991:273) found that the problem of single parent families features very strongly in non-involvement of parents, because the single or teenage mothers lack support to raise their children. In this study, however, it was found that single parents are doing a heroic job and are still concerned about the lives of their children whereas some of the couples give little attention to their children. The majority of the parents (65.0%) were found to be actively involved in their children's education while couples (33.5%) did not show too much involvement concerning their children's education.

Table 4.13 shows a highly statistically significant relationship between the variables "home language" and "resources bought by parents". Within the various home language categories (Tsonga, Tswana, North Sotho and English), Tsonga was spoken the most (79.5%) in the homes (Table 4.1).

Table 4.14 shows that there was no statistically significant relationship between "qualifications of parents" and "aspects of parental involvement". In this study (refer to Table 4.3) there were more mothers (38) than fathers (8). Nearly half of the mothers (46.2%) qualified at Grade Three level while only one father qualified at the same level. The majority of the fathers (75.0%) qualified at levels beyond primary school in comparison to 30.8% of the mothers. A small number (10.3%) of the mothers were totally illiterate, having never attended school. It was found in the interviews that some of the better qualified parents were especially willing to help their children with school work and some of them were members of the governing body, which could lead one, in spite of the quantitative data, to expect that parents' experience of learning has an impact on the form and amount of support in the education of their children.

In Chapter Two (refer to paragraph 2.2.3) it was noted that Jubber (1990:7) is of the opinion that highly qualified and occupationally well-positioned parents have the advantage of transmitting to their children the kind of skills, knowledge and attitudes which encourage and facilitate good school performance. This is in line with Teale's finding (1986, in McCarthey 2000:145) that home background does play a significant role in children's learning. The interviews and ethnographic observation show that some of the illiterate parents were very shy, whereas some of them had a strong drive in being involved in their children's education because they do not want their children to become like them.

Table 4.15 shows a slight relationship on the 10% level of significance between the "type of work" parents do and some "aspects of parental involvement". It concurs with Table 4.4 in a sense that very few families (of the literate and illiterate parents) had a problem with the school which reflected some significant relationship on a 10% level. With regard to helping a child with homework, there was a limited level of involvement (also significant on a 10% level). Furthermore, Table 4.15 indicates a tendency of a significant relationship on a 10% level in parents' monitoring the child's progress for both working and the jobless parents.

This section has discussed the findings from the relational data. The data show that some parents still do not fulfil their roles and responsibilities in their children's education. Another conclusion suggested by the findings is that family background deters some parents from being involved. However, the inferences that could be made from the quantitative data have been scanty and vague. More information is clearly needed to achieve any level of understanding of conditions which underpin the parents' support of the learning of their children.

4.3.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

4.3.2.1 Administration of semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were coupled with the Parental Involvement in Learner Education Questionnaire (PILEQ) and were administered on the same occasion by the researcher. It involved the parents of the Grade Two learners of the research school at their homes. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain more descriptive information and to provide qualitative understanding of quantitative data.

According to Stephens (1990:144), no researcher can demand to gain access to a community. When participants agree to help, they deserve to know what they will be

asked to do, how much time they need to invest and what the purpose of the programme is.

The time scheduled for the interviews was every afternoon from Monday to Thursday, at the parents' homes as per appointment, each immediately after the filling in of the questionnaire. For the parents who could not be reached on those days, appointments were made for the four consecutive Saturdays. All the parents responded to the interviews.

The 39 families and 39 children were all informed about the interviews beforehand, at a parents' meeting. The majority of the parents who participated in this study indicated that they were the child's care-giving parent (with the exception of one grandmother who was looking after the children when the parents went to work). After having filled in the questionnaire with each parent, the researcher went more deeply into issues, which appeared unclear. The researcher would, for example, further ask about the questionnaire item on resources (item 50, Appendix A): What kind of resources do you normally use when you help your child with numeracy? How often do you buy such resources?

Four areas of parental involvement were concentrated on in the interviews: Resources, literacy, television and radio, and homework. The analysis of parents' responses revealed a pattern of levels of concern, which ranges along a continuum: profession of an **active involvement** in the different areas of their children's learning, some **show of interest**, and a **lack of involvement**.

4.3.2.2 Results and findings derived from semi-structured interviews

In interviews with 39 families from diverse backgrounds it was found that most parents demonstrated their willingness to assist in their children's education in different ways, although some of them did not themselves have education at all.

Concerning the question of **resources**, 23 parents appeared to be actively supportive of their children's learning. Some indicated that they were able to buy the necessary resources such as numeracy instruments, drawing books, pictures, crayons, scissors and reading books. The question was asked on how they assist their children when numeracy exercises were given. Some of the responses were: "We use our fingers, pebbles, counters or matchsticks for counting." One of the parents (of Learner 25) added that at times he uses pens, pencils or even crayons for counting. Of the 23 parents who

professed active involvement, 20 were literate, two were semi-literate and one was illiterate.

Of the 39 families, 11 appeared to have some show of interest, despite the fact that they were suffering extreme poverty. They indicated that it would be difficult for them to buy the relevant resources since they did not have money, but knowing that education is important, they improvised, for example, by using their fingers and matchsticks to count. Of these 11 families who appeared to have a show of interest, seven parents were semi-literate and four were literate.

Only five parents appeared to have a total lack of involvement in the education of their children. Of these, four were illiterate and one was literate. They seemed to have little interest in assisting their children as other families were doing. When asked why they did not give support in their children's education, one parent (of Learner 18) said she does not know the value of being concerned since her parents too had never been exposed to education. Her only concern was to have food in the house. Parents (of Learners 11 and 22) who were also not actively involved in the education of their children added that they could not afford to buy school uniforms, so it would not be possible for them to buy resources. Since they could not find jobs, they had no money at all.

Among the parents who indicated that they use fingers, pebbles and matchsticks to count, there were 33 who said that they had been advised to do so by the class teacher when they had attended a meeting early in the year. It was found that of the five parents, who appeared to have no interest in the purchasing of resources for their children, four were illiterate and one was literate, and none of them had ever attended any parents' meeting.

It was found that the amount and nature of **literacy** materials and the goals for using literacy did not differ much between the working-class families and those who were not working. The majority of the parents demonstrated their interest and support for learning in their children's education. For example, of these 34 families (22 parents were literate and 12 semi-literate), 29 families declared that they were actively involved. The parents in 23 of these families were working and six families did not have jobs. The parents were questioned as to how they are involved in the reading and writing development of their children. Parents (for example, of Learners 4, 7, 11, 17, 25, 29 and 37) indicated that they always make it a point that every afternoon they spend a few minutes reading together with their children. One parent (of Learner 37) added that sometimes she allows time for silent reading and then after a few minutes asks her child to draw the relationship between her own background experiences and ideas from the text. She was asked how does the

child feel when asked to do that, and to give an example of how the activity is run. She cited an example of the birth of Christ, that after silent reading she asked her child to connect it with what happens in the family when they are blessed with a newborn baby. Her child mentioned the love and happiness they experience in the home and thereafter she emphasised to the child that Christ was born to love people and people in turn should love Him and love one another as well. One parent (of Learner 29) added that even though she has not had an education, she likes to be present when her child does her reading because she also learns from her child.

Ten families appeared to display some show of interest in reading together with their children. They indicated that even though they cannot afford to buy learning materials for their children, they borrow reading materials from relatives and most of the time they rely on school facilities. Seven of these parents were more interested in reading than in writing. The reading aloud of a few sentences, with children repeating after them, for a few minutes was mostly preferred. One parent (of Learner 21) indicated that he had never been exposed to writing, but he knows how to read, that is why he likes reading more than writing. He added: "I do not even know how to write my name, but I know how to read it." A few of the parents indicated that they do not know how to read nor write, but they are able to speak all of Tsonga, Afrikaans and English. Some parents (of Learners 1, 5, 12, 24, 36 and 38) indicated that although they are literate, they never do reading with their children, they are not actively involved since domestic chores need their attention, especially after long working hours. However, they give instructions that, when children come back from school, they must do their schoolwork before they play on the streets.

Very few parents seemed to have a total lack of participation in reading together with their children because of their own lack of literacy. Two parents (of Learners 20 and 39) indicated that their children are the first borns in the family and that there is no one to help them with schoolwork. These parents added that they cannot read or write themselves and that their children depend only on their educator. They were asked why they do not ask assistance from relatives or friends and the answer was: "We do not want to bother people. We normally ask for food from them and now we believe it will be too much inconvenience for them. We struggle to pay for the school fees and we feel it is okay." Questions were furthermore extended on watching **television** and listening to the **radio** programmes. Parents were asked what happens if their children wish to watch television or listen to the radio when parents do not want them to. A few parents appeared to be actively involved. They appeared to have discovered the value of television and radio. For example, the parents of Learners 16, 25, 27 and 37 indicated that they spend one to two hours per day either watching television or listening to the radio together with their

children, explaining some of the programmes as questions are raised. One parent (of Learner 37) added: "Television and radio are educational, so I thoroughly explain the programmes and sometimes ask my child to tell about any experience she has had or has heard which is related to the characters or feelings awakened by the programmes. She would, for example, then talk about the sadness she felt over a character's loss in some of the programmes she has watched or listened to." One parent (of Learner 25) added that her child obeys whatever she says. She keeps order in her family and tells her child, for example, that programmes will be watched only after the homework is done. She emphasised that she was not lucky enough to be educated, she now wants her children to regard education as priority number one.

Among the parents who appeared only to have a show of interest, one parent (of Learner 18) indicated that even if he does not have education, time is set aside for watching television or listening to the radio. He added that by watching television or listening to the radio he is able to explain some of the programmes to his child. Some parents (of Learners 1, 5, 8, 24 and 36) indicated that they do not have television and radios, and if their children want to go and watch television at the neighbour's place, they allow them because they know their children will gain knowledge and that their children will be able to describe some of the programmes to them.

Some parents (of Learners 13, 20, 21 and 38), however, appeared to have a total lack of involvement and support for learning. They indicated that on weekends they used to spend time together watching television and listening to the radio with their children, but now they no longer have interest since their children never ask questions about the programmes. One parent (of Leaner 20) added that she does not have time at all.

With regard to how parents give support in their children's **homework**, a small number of parents (of Learners 15, 16, 25 and 37) appeared to be actively involved. They indicated that their children are aware that whenever they come from school, they must do their homework before they may become involved in other activities. One parent (of Learner 16) added that his child knows that even if her parents are not at home when she arrives, she must make it a point that she does her homework and that they will check her work when they return from work. If mistakes are encountered, these parents will rectify them, especially in numeracy where they regard the use of counters important. All these parents added that they do read together with their children.

A considerable number of parents appeared only to have a show of interest. Parents (of Learners 7, 10, 12, 18, 21, 26, 33 and 38) indicated that they would like to assist their

children with homework, but they have no time to assist or even check their children's work as they leave for work early and return home late. In most cases when they leave their children are still asleep, and when they come back in the evening, their children have already fallen asleep, so there is no direct supervision coming from them. They indicated that they ask older siblings and aunts to do the supervision. The grandmother (of Learner 7) added that she supervises the child and asks the older siblings to help since his parents come home only on weekends. The grandmother also indicated that she does offer help where she is able to.

A few parents indicated that they do not have patience for doing homework together with their children. For example, the parents of Learners 5, 8, 10, 33 and 36 indicated that they cannot concentrate after their long working hours. If they help with homework and children make mistakes, they become upset because they are tired. They added that it is better for them not to be involved because they are afraid of making more errors. On this note they ask the older siblings to help with homework.

4.3.2.3 Discussion: PILEQ and semi-structured interviews

(a) Parental Involvement in Learners' Education Questionnaire (PILEQ)

For the purpose of discussion, the data are divided into the following categories:

- Descriptive data on the learners.
- Descriptive data on the parents.

The discussion will first focus on the contextual information and address other aspects against the background of context, and finally try to develop more understanding of the dynamics of parents' involvement in the education of their children.

- **Data on the learners**

Table 4.1 indicated gender, home language, living area and age of the Grade Two learners in the research school. The fact that 20.5% of the learners did not have Tsonga as their home language will obviously require one to understand that the school, which was mainly for the Tsonga community, contained a significant number of learners who had to learn through an additional language at the early age of Grade Two. Tswana was quite strongly represented at 12.8%, even though no lessons were presented in Tswana. The fact that 20.5% of the learners were non-Tsonga learners implies that since the Foundation Phase education was not presented in first language, it would obviously hamper their performance. They might lose some of the relevant information because Tsonga was not their mother tongue.

The researcher retained the full sample size of 39 for analysis because the diversity of learners in the classroom was acknowledged. For the reason that non-probability sampling and proportional representation do not qualify any of the variables under consideration every child has a chance to be selected: There was no division of learners in terms of their different backgrounds, for example, culture, tradition, religious affiliation and gender. This type of selection may in turn be a limitation for this study since some factors such as language background were not given further attention.

In his research, Kitavi (1995:247) found that 61.5% of the learners in the rural areas of South Africa have to travel long distances from home to school, which may hamper their learning. In this current research a considerable proportion of the learners (64.10%) came from the township while a third came from the informal settlement, which would lead one to expect that a sizeable number were likely to experience problems such as the following: On rainy days they may not have come to school; they may not always have arrived at school on time, especially because they live far away from the school; the economic circumstances of the families may have compelled some parents to withdraw their children from school; a heavy load of chores at home may have been tiring, which could distract children from doing their schoolwork; and, finally, such chores may have prevented children from engaging in other activities such as sport and play, and they may have had to do their homework in the evenings after an extremely full day. It appears that girls are expected to do household chores. In some instances, girls must cope with running the household and must answer personally for the safety and care of siblings, which could become a stumbling block to good scholastic performance.

According to Alexander (2000:1101), the above problems are caused by poverty which is the result of unemployment and inflation. In his research on the country's market issues (Alexander 2000:1104) it was indicated that in 1996, about 34% of the South African labour force was unemployed.

Literature on the subject confirms that there is a tendency to rely heavily on children for help in running the house. Research by Liddell, Kvalsvig, Shabalala and Qotyawa (1994:4) has shown that urban children were involved in more chores than their rural counterparts – a phenomenon they could not explain. Dawes and Donald (1994:4) refer to Reynold's (1989) observation that teenage girls may be withdrawn from school in order to care for their younger siblings while their parents are at work. Swart-Kruger (1994:223) refers to circumstances that oblige parents to make arrangements that burden their children with heavy responsibilities.

Literature on the South African situation indicates that learner and parental involvement in school activities can really only occur if the school is close to the community from which it draws its learners. For this reason, Bot (1992:68-69) stresses the importance of schools' being situated in areas that are more easily accessible to the local community. Fredrikse (1992:32) quotes one interviewee in his study as saying that distance and transport make learners late for school and prevent them from taking part in sport.

In the research year there was still a clear effect of over- and under-age entry into schools. Entry age was not yet applied consistently. Table 4.1 indicated that there were four (10.3%) under-age learners (six years) and four (10.3%) over-age learners (two learners aged nine, one learner aged 11 and one learner aged 13) which would lead one to have many questions. For example, concerning the under-age learner: Did the parents regard the school as a childcare facility? Was any special attention given to the needs related to their under-age by either the parents or the teacher? About the over-age learners: Is there any history of neglect to address the special needs of these learners in the school? What was the cause of delay for these learners?

Figure 4.1 indicated that five children per family constituted a large family and that 61.5% of the families had only 1-3 children each, which would lead one to expect more active involvement by these parents of such small families than parents who have more responsibilities in larger families. Children from larger families may not receive much assistance from their parents. Pallas (2000:166) indicates that having many siblings limits an individual child's access to educational support materials. That is, coming from a family with many siblings may have a negative influence on the education of the children in some respects related to time and/or cash. As it is, family background is important for educational success (Pallas, 2000:167).

About 80% of the children occupied first, second and third position in the family as indicated in Figure 4.2. This could lead one to expect that the position of the child in the family may influence the extent to which parents are able to support the learning of their children. In many cases the first-born may have no one to look up to, especially where parents are illiterate. They may have to rely on their own resourcefulness in dealing with homework and other activities related to education. On the other hand, second and third borns may be in a better position because their older siblings would have gone to school earlier and so would be in a better position to assist them to complete their assignments and projects at home. Duminy (1991:49) found that older children in a family are in most cases given extra responsibilities and tasks which they, at that stage, might seriously resent and that resistance might be carried over into the school situation.

In some families the first-born may be dependent and spoiled. If there is a gap, for example between the first and second born, the first-born may feel strangely frustrated because suddenly, after three or four years of being on his/her own, another child arrives. This may mean that the warmth and attention the first-born has been receiving is now to be shared. According to Sommerfeldt, Troland, Ellersten and Markestad (1996:927) and Deshler (1996:69-71), the first-born may experience feelings of depression, shyness and anxiety. Their progress at school could also be affected. Therefore, the findings in this study are contrary to the expectation since some of the illiterate parents appeared to have willingness to help in the learning of their children which also did not affect the position of the child in the family.

- **Data on the parents**

According to the literature study and strongly endorsed in the White Paper on Education and Training (1995:53) it is important that all parents take part in the education of their children. Needless to say, parents exert a lot of influence on their children's cognitive development in the early years, thus close contact between home and school should be maintained if the child is to learn effectively (Munn 1993:1).

Table 4.3 indicated the parents' experience of learning which could be expected to have an impact on the form and amount of support for learning in the education of their children. Some of them might have felt too unsure to venture information on account of their limited levels of literacy and lack of confidence regarding education generally.

Initially, in the African culture, only men were to attend school whereas women were to do hard labour in the fields. Higher posts were also recommended for men only, for example, principals or inspectors. According to the Educators' Employment Equity Act of 1998:8, every person has the right to learn, and every person is trainable. In Table 4.3 it is indicated that 75.0% of the fathers in comparison to 30.8% of the mothers qualified at levels beyond primary school. From Table 4.3, one would conclude that even in this era, a considerable number of African mothers still experience illiteracy problems as compared to African fathers.

Table 4.4 indicates that the majority of the families (30 of the 39 families) are not involved with the education of their children in the sense that they have not met and talked with the principal. This may mean that those 30 families leave everything in the hands of the educators and are only interested in the results at the end of the year. As stated in the literature study (Letsie 1994;42; Van Schaik 1990:54-55,) parents regard the school as an autonomous institution, that teachers are sufficiently competent to work alone, and that

their participation as parents amounts to intrusion in the work of professionals. However, if parents do not take part in the education of their children, the children's results would be affected (Duminy 1991:197). Parents can only give meaningful support if they are familiar with what goes on in the school. Sixty one point five percent (61.5%) of the families have attended meetings at the school on different occasions, as indicated in Table 4.5. This means to some extent they know what is happening at school, and are in a better position to support the learning of their children. In his research on an educational home visiting scheme, John (1980:123) found that the relationship between the teacher, the parent and the child will not prevail if the three will not work together. According to the report by the South African National Education Policy Act 1996b (Act No. 27, 1996, Section 5(1)(d)), parental involvement is important concerning education policy decisions.

According to Pallas (2000:166) most theories agree that family support does have a great deal to do with scholastic achievement and success in learning. Cusick (1992:65) supports the views about the importance of the family outlook on life which will facilitate a child's learning at school. It is, therefore, important to note that education of a child should be viewed as a joint venture between the school and the child's family.

In Tables 4.6 and 4.7 it appears that some parents do assist their children with homework. Nearly 60.0% of the families helped out by explaining difficult words to their children. Eleven families (28.2% of the families) used manipulatives such as counters, pebbles and matchsticks to rectify mistakes in numeracy whereas 10.29% read sentence by sentence to their children. This may mean that despite the fact that some of the families are not literate and numerate, they do give support in the education of their children. Research by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988, in McCarthey 2000:145) found that the families used literacy for a variety of purposes, audiences and situations. They read to gain information to meet practical needs, to schedule daily functions and to learn about events. Reading was also used for recreational and educational purposes.

Fewer than 30.0% of the families monitored their children's work on a daily basis, and 17.9% monitored work on a weekly basis. The rest monitored work less regularly – only after attending a parent's meeting or even once per quarter, some parents resorting to monitoring only if they had the time or when the child had failed. One possible reason for the low rate of supervision may be that some parents work far away from home. They leave early in the morning when children are still asleep and return home when the children have already fallen asleep. Parents may be tired and stressed themselves and they may, therefore, not be in a position to give guidance and learning support to their children. This possibility is supported by literature consulted (Grolnick *et al.,* 1997:539;

Weeto 1997:52; Heystek 1999:109) which reveals that stressful events might take time from parents, drain energy and attention, or both, making parents less psychologically available for or aware of the requirement to render support in their children's education.

From Tables 4.8 and 4.9 it appears that few parents interact with their children regarding television or radio programmes. The fact that some children watch television in the afternoon or evening may deny them time to do their homework. This opinion is supported by Singh, Brickley, Trivette, Keith, Keith and Anderson (1995:301) that if parents' supervision regarding home rules for watching TV and for doing schoolwork are weak, their children's performance would be affected. The fact that most children are allowed to watch television on Saturdays (89.3%) and Sundays (82.1%) in comparison to only 39.3% on weekday afternoons and 21.4% on weekday evenings, would lead one to expect that ample time is given to homework during weekdays. Moeketsi (1998:41) brings together the findings of different researchers who all agree that the child's home environment and the support he/she gets from home can help to enhance learning and positively affect scholastic achievement or performance.

In summary it may be concluded from the quantitative data that, according to parents, despite their often-low level of literacy, tiredness from work, and lack of resources, some limited measures are in place to support the learning of their children. However, limitations and constraints seem rife.

(b) Semi-structured interviews

The interviews revealed that some parents appeared not to be actively involved in their children's education due to their poverty and illiteracy. For example, they were hesitant about providing and/or utilising educational resources for their children, helping their children with homework, and taking time to listen to the radio and/or watch television together with their children so as to discuss programmes where the need arose.

These findings partly explain why some parents do not take much active part in the education of their children. As a result of poverty and illiteracy, some parents find themselves too busy looking, amongst other things, for the next meal of the day, school uniforms and next term's school fees and thus neglect or fail to provide the necessary help to their children. The parents should know that the school supplements the home, so it is important to get involved in the education of their children in every small way possible.

The literature confirms that poverty and parental illiteracy cause parents to stay away from school activities (Oosthuizen 1992:61; Van der Linde 1993:40; Van der Westhuizen &

Legotlo 1996:73). It appears that due to poverty and illiteracy some parents feel inferior to visit the school (Heystek 1999:108) and feel uncomfortable when they are requested to get involved in their children's education (Van der Linde 1993:40). Several studies have reported that low-income minority parents often have different beliefs about parents' roles in school involvement and are less involved in school activities than higher income, non-minority parents (Chavkin & Williams 1993:78; Connell, Spencer & Aber 1994:495; Delgado-Gaitan 1991:27). Some parents believe that, since they already experience the difficulty of surviving, their time is spent in making ends meet and they do not feel adequately qualified to make valid contributions towards their children's education. They believe that their children should work hard and that educators and their siblings provide enough help.

According to Jacobs (1991:518), there is a growing body of literature establishing the importance of parents' beliefs in influencing their children's achievement attitudes and academic performance. Jacobs (1991:519) referenced studies that demonstrated that parents' beliefs and expectations are related to the child's self-perception of ability and achievement expectations. These studies further pointed out that parents' beliefs about their children's abilities have an even greater influence on children's achievement attitudes than does previous performance.

It is yet again emphasised that some parents do not find time to attend to their children's schoolwork because of their own work commitment. In his research, McLloyd (1990:320) found that economic hardship undermines parenting generally. Researchers such as Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz and Simons (1994:549) found that, beyond demographic measures *per se*, it is the parents' experienced inadequacy of resources that will be most likely to disrupt involvement in school activities.

The findings indicated (Table 4.5) that some parents have never visited the school. During the interviews with parents, some of them indicated that they leave early for work and come back home in the late afternoon or early evening which could be the reason for not having visited the school. The general unavailability of African parents to their children (mainly due to socio-economic reasons) greatly influences the emotional support which learners receive. Support for learning is not only cognitive, but children need to be supported emotionally, physically, socially, and motivation also plays a role in the growing children. The literature mentions that many parents are forced to choose between employment to ensure survival and attending to their children's emotional and intellectual needs (Ramphele 1992:23).

The description of parental involvement provided by parents who professed to be actively involved and those with a show of interest is likely to have positive effect in their children's education. It was found that some of the parents were able to buy the required resources for their children, were willing to spend some time reading together and helping or supervising their children with homework. These parents knew that they have a role to play in the education of their children and advocated cultural upbringing as a strong factor contributing to the educational success of their children. At the same time they encouraged independent reading to their children.

The findings in Table 4.8 indicated that the majority of the families had radios and television sets. Thirty-four families (87.2%) indicated that they had radios while 28 families (71.8%) had television sets. Even though the number of families who had radios or televisions in their homes is high, it was noticed that only 11 families (32.4% of the 34 families who had a radio) explained some of the programmes on the radio to their children while 53.6% of the 28 families who had a television set explained some of the television programmes to their children.

It was also found that watching television and listening to the radio was allowed in the majority of the families (refer to Table 4.9). A high percentage of the 28 families (89.3% of the families who have a television set) allowed viewing times on Saturdays and 23 families (82.1%) allowed Sunday viewing times which could suggest that viewing did not intrude much on school work during weekdays. When questioned, parents stated that although television and radio are educational, they want their children to spend much time on schoolwork, especially on weekdays so as not to be like their parents who have never been exposed to education.

The interviews have added to the understanding of the parent's motivation and orientation in their children's education. The purpose of the interview was to understand how parents help their children with regard to different learning tasks. They used a few methods of helping, for example, in reading they used drill (revision or repetition) and explanation methods while in numeracy tasks they resorted to pebbles and other counters. During the interviews parents said they enjoyed working with their children and some were also hungry for guidance. Eventually, upon receiving guidance from the researcher, parents said they were learning new ideas when helping their children; they were feeling more comfortable; they were having more self-confidence and interest, and developing a positive attitude and skills about being able to help their children. They expressed appreciation to the researcher, and most importantly they emphasised that they had never

felt that they knew how to help their children, but now they realised how important it was that they take an active role in their children's education.

4.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

4.4.1 ADMINISTRATION OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

The ethnographic observation was conducted by the researcher in the homes of the learners as well as in their classroom.

4.4.1.1 Ethnographic observation with parents in their homes

Overt observation was applied with the researcher as observer-as-participant during the execution of a learning task by the learners under the guidance of their parents. The researcher designed all the learning tasks (based on the class work of the morning at school). The Grade Two learner in the family was given a learning task in numeracy or language (Tsonga or English) and each parent was asked to help his/her child.

The observation took place during the months of May and June of the practical research year, immediately following the interview with each parent. The purpose of the ethnographic observation was to clarify understanding about the interactions between the individual children and their parents in respect of a learning task. Special emphasis and time was given to numeracy and reading skills. The main emphasis was on getting parents involved, for example, in reading and doing numeracy together with their children. A detailed record of the interactions containing many verbatim remarks was kept.

4.4.1.2 Ethnographic observation in the classroom

The ethnographic observation in the classroom took place during the months of May and June and continued in September to December of the practical research year. The learners and their educator were obviously fully aware of the presence of the researcher. The researcher conducted participative observation and communicated with learners in various lesson activities. The educator at all times, nevertheless retained the teaching role.

The main purpose was to observe how learners behaved in class, for example, who raised their hands when questions were asked, after how long did the learners respond to questions, which learners usually or even always responded to questions and what was

their attitude towards learning, what appeared to be the feeling of those who seldom or never raised their hands, and which of the learners were motivated to take part.

Since by this time the learners were acquainted with the researcher, she was qualitatively trying to see how each learner was responding in class. The researcher also wanted to see if there was a culture of learning as well as culture of teaching in the classroom, which of the learners were interested in the lessons and whether the educator understood the behaviour of each child in terms of his/her background. Any form of behaviour, which could perhaps be related to the involvement of learners' parents in their learning, was recorded and will be discussed in paragraph 4.4.2.

4.4.2 RESULTS AND FINDINGS DERIVED FROM THE ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

4.4.2.1 Introduction

During the observation of learners at home with their parents and at school with their educator, it was found that most parents as well as the educator, demonstrated their willingness to help the learners. Learners too demonstrated their interest in learning in many different ways. According to Gee (1990, in McCarthey 2000:146), social and cultural groups have unique and complex ways of integrating written language with daily social life and children have different ways of interpreting texts, telling stories, asking questions or given explanations. Parents too have different ways of assisting their children in schoolwork.

4.4.2.2 Ethnographic observations made at learners' homes

The ethnographic observations were conducted in 39 families with 47 parents (refer to Table 4.3). There were 38 mothers, one grandmother (of Learner 19) who was taking care of children while the parents were at work, and eight fathers (of Learners 4, 7, 8, 16, 24, 27, 29 and 37) who participated in the task. Of the 39 families, 26 (66.7%) reported to be married and living together, 10 (25.6%) were unmarried, two (5.1%) widowed and one parent was separated.

For the purpose of introduction, parents were asked if they liked reading and were requested to mention some of the texts they had read recently, and to say something on what they had read about. The responses included that they liked reading because it "refreshes" their memory, "prevents (them) from yawning", "drives away boredom", "keeps them active" and "prevents them from listening to gossip". One parent (of Learner 32)

mentioned some books she had read, for example, “Tale of Two Cities”, “Going to the Moon”, which she had also read to her child, and two stories from the Reader’s Digest, namely, “What Young South Africans Think” and “Magic Moment with my Son”. One parent (of Learner 10) remembered the story of an old Tsonga woman who used to teach her daughters domestic work while at the same time she was singing. Another parent (of Learner 24) added that she knew how to read but has never read any book because reading is not her hobby. She further exclaimed that it wastes her time of selling vegetables and sweets on the street so as to raise money for her children’s school fees. The parent of learner 20 said that she had never been exposed to reading and writing and she, therefore, did not have an interest in books.

The parents were further asked to come up with some specific activities they did with their children. One parent (of Learner 37) said that she loved baking and that she would encourage her daughter to love it too. She added that she liked spending Sunday afternoons singing songs and reciting rhymes and/or poems to her children while they were listening. One parent (of Learner 36) said that more than anything she liked to knit jerseys for small children and that she had encouraged her daughter to learn how to knit for her dolls. The parent of Learner 23 stated that he loved gardening and planting beautiful flowers together with his son. He added that his son had told him that one day he wants to have his own garden when he is a grown up.

Irrespective of whether the parents in the research group were educated or not, it was found that a considerable number displayed interest in the education of their children, even though at first there were a few who appeared to be reluctant and shy to do numeracy or language tasks with their children.

The interest was shown while the parents were actively helping their children in the numeracy and reading tasks. They generally spent the first few minutes using their fingers and counters such as pebbles to count out the number question or reread the sentences presented to their children until the children were able to do the task on their own. It was observed that the children were more free to do the work with their mothers than their fathers. This agrees with Matlou’s (1993:33) finding that in the domain of modesty and language, there is a great reserve between the children and their father and a very close connection with their mother. Most of the fathers did not respond due to work commitments.

As questions continued, those parents (19.1%, i.e. of Learners 2, 5, 12, 13, 20, 25, 28, 31 and 34) who could not read or write well but were willing to help, requested the older

siblings or adults (aunts) to assist with the learning task in their presence. The siblings and/or adults (aunts) did what was required of them, displaying pleasure at being entrusted with this role and there was ready acceptance of the task from their side. Some parents (of Learners 5, 20 and 31) instructed their children to listen carefully to the instructions given by these helpers to avoid making mistakes. If Learners 5, 20 or 31 happened to make a mistake, the sibling and/or adult patiently asked him/her to repeat the task and to do it aloud until he/she got it right. If the same learner was still encountering a problem, the sibling and/or aunt would persist reading together with him/her until he/she managed to do it on his/her own.

Some parents (of Learners 13, 25 and 34) on the other hand, speedily came up with warnings. For example, the parent of Learner 25 said that mistakes were not permitted. Another parent (of Learner 13) was harsh to her child, saying that if he kept making mistakes there would be no future for him. The parent of Learner 34 admonished the child to be quick and not to waste time. Some parents (e.g. of Learners 12 and 28) were more patient, stating that they believed that if children make mistakes and are allowed more time to correct those, they will become better learners in the future. One parent (of Learner 12) said she felt more comfortable by having been present when her child was doing a learning task and expressed her wish that they (parents) should be afforded an opportunity for literacy education that would enable them to help their children in school work. Parents were enthused by the kind of exercise presented and displayed growing eagerness to know more about the best ways to approach the learning tasks.

In the task of reading the sentences or paragraph or discussing the meaning of some words, some variety of actions was found. For example, some parents (of Learners 4, 6, 8 and 19) asked their children to repeat after them whereas other parents (of Learners 5 and 17) pointed a finger to a sentence for the children to read without help, even for the first time. Another parent (of Learner 22) asked her child to close her eyes while she was reading to her so that she could listen with full attention, to grasp the meaning of the text (Tsonga). For her to know that the child understood the meaning, she selected three words from the text, first in Tsonga and then in English, namely “milenge”, “tindleve” and “rhirhimi” to supply the meaning and wrote them on a piece of paper:

(a)	Milenge	feet
	Tindleve	ears
	Rhirhimi	tongue
(b)	Feet	milenge
	Ears	tindleve
	Tongue	rhirhimi

This same child (Learner 22) was also told to point a finger as she pronounced part-by-part of a word. Sometimes the reading of this learner would be fluent and soft and sometimes it would be more halting or loud.

The majority of the parents (24 – 77.4%) were more knowledgeable in Tsonga than in English. For example, in reading the sentence “Hi kombela xinkwe xa ku basa”, the parent of Learner 18 read fluently and he was quick to finish the sentence. This parent even explained further that in North Sotho it said “Ke kgopela senkgwe se se šweu” whereas in Tswana it meant “Ke kopa borotho jo bo sweu”. In the English task the same parent could not pronounce some words correctly, for example “Children, do not play with electrical wires”. The word “electrical” was difficult for him to pronounce, but he repeated it until he managed to give a clear pronunciation. The Tswana speaking parent of Learner 10 did not find any difficulty in reading the Tsonga task. For example, she knew that “Mi ba rhungula e kaya” meant “Ba dumele ko gae”. She explained that she grew up with the Tsonga people and attended the Tsonga school that is why she was so fluent in reading Tsonga.

If the child’s reading contained errors, some parents (of Learners 7, 16, 19 and 21) would repeat each sentence separately until the child got it right. Some of the parents (of Learners 23, 27 and 37) would try to explain the meaning of a word if they realised it looked unfamiliar to the children. For example, in English when they were reading about “The Mighty God who created heaven and earth”, the parent of Learner 23 realised that her child could not pronounce the word “Mighty” correctly. She then explained the whole sentence in Tsonga, saying it means “Xikwenbu Xi na Matimba”.

Some parents (of Learners 3, 11 and 20) praised and encouraged their children during reading. For example, the parent of Learner 3 said: “Good boy, you have done so well, keep it up”. Another parent (of Learner 11) said: “I know you can do it” and the parent of Learner 20 said: “Keep trying, you are getting there”. Three parents (of Learners 9, 16 and 36) patiently explained unfamiliar words to their children. The parents of Learners 5, 7, 27 and 37 encouraged and motivated their children to sometimes do their homework on their own so that when parents came back from work, they can only check and help correct items where mistakes were made. Some parents (of Learners 33 and 38) from both the informal settlement and the township area, were a bit uncomfortable with this type of exercise, but with time they generally demonstrated their participation. For example, the parent of Learner 33 was absolutely quiet at the beginning whereas the parent of Learner 38 immediately asked for help, she could not even provide extra ideas.

With time these same parents participated in a more lively way. If they knew something is right, they would, for example, wink their eyes to show their agreement.

By contrast some parents (of Learners 10, 18, 21, 26, 30 and 34) were not so willing to help their children. The parents of Learners 1, 4, 13, 32 and 35 were strict and even more impatient. They did not show much willingness to help reading together with their children. One parent (of Learner 13) said: "I am tired and I am not going to repeat if you make a mistake". The parent of Learner 32 said: "In my time there was nobody to supervise me, so I am only going to listen to you". Another parent (of Learner 1) said: "If you make a mistake, I will say 'again' or 'once more' until you get it right".

In numeracy tasks most parents helped their children by using counters (e.g. pebbles, beans and even apples) for counting. If the child happened to add incorrectly, the parent would tell him/her to repeat the work using fingers. Parents encouraged their children to speak out when counting so as to support or enhance concentration and avoid making mistakes again. One parent (of Learner 16, from Zambia) allowed his child to use a calculator instead of counters. He indicated that when the child was in Grade One he had encouraged her to make use of matchsticks, pebbles and fingers to count. He now allowed his child to use a calculator, but only in his presence. When the child worked incorrectly, he was observed to exercise patience and allow her more time until the sum was done in the correct way. The child did not yet have much knowledge about the use of a calculator, but gradually she appeared to be more willing to learn how to use it.

The parents' willingness to do numeracy and to read together with their children was encouraged by the researcher upon completion of the task. A question was asked: "What have you learned from participating in the learning task?" The parent of Learner 29 said: "I learned to be more patient with my child. Sometimes when we work together, my child teaches me since I do not speak English very well and I have discovered that when parents help, children will know that the school is important". To some parents, it was a rather new experience, for example, the parent of Learner 24 said: "I have never done this before. It is exciting and you get a wonderful feeling". The parent of Learner 37 said: "I learned about ways of helping like telling stories and reciting poems and drawing stories that I did not know about". The parent of Learner 28 said: "I have valued and enjoyed the whole exercise. Working together with my child has created an active attention in her school work for the future". Another parent (of Learner 15) added that it was fun and exciting to work with her child, that she had learned what to do.

Children learn by participating in meaningful activities and this proved true, also during the ethnographic observation. Generally the learners reported that they enjoyed doing numeracy and reading with a family member more than alone. In reply to the question: "What do you enjoy or like your parents to do when you do numeracy or when you read?," most responses indicated that they liked to have enough instruments for numeracy; drawing books with lots of pictures; being helped with difficult words; and any positive attention such as nods, encouraging remarks and treats. Some of the learners also indicated that this experience had been new to them. At the beginning of the exercise some of the learners were a bit uncomfortable and they looked tense. For example, Learner 4 looked tense when she was requested to do a reading task with her father. She said she was scared to work with her father because he was always impatient and he never wanted to help her, as he had pointed out that she must do her homework on her own. The parent was asked to give his child support by working together with her. With time, the learner became more comfortable and co-operated.

4.4.2.3 Discussion: Data regarding parents interacting with their children in learning tasks

Parents as primary educators play a vital role in the effective formal and informal primary education of their children throughout their lives. Their role is of inestimable importance in laying the foundation for learning to listen, speak, read and write, and above all, for supervising all learning. Kenway (1996:217) states that parents who speak and read to their children contribute to better performance in their reading in school, even when the parents cannot speak the language of learning and teaching in the school, for example, English.

In this study it was found that some parents' willingness to help their children with learning tasks opened good relationships. For example, in doing the work repeatedly and reading aloud they had engaged their children's active attention. Through this effort more correct responses were observed, for example, there was a close relation in some of the families in the sense that some of the children wanted to take a lead by reading to their parents instead. The parents of these children would also come up with some examples related to what the text was about.

However, it was also observed that some of the learners were not so free to do the work with their parents. They appeared to feel under threat, maybe because it was their first experience of working in someone's presence (the researcher), or maybe because they knew their parents were strict, which could lead one to conclude that a strict or neglectful

parent presents a direct threat to the cognitive development of the child. It could be argued that parents' involvement in learning is not just helping or providing knowledge in the education process, it is about quality and about what happens in this education process. MacLeod (1996:129) reflects this in saying "… involvement is the process of understanding that will open up opportunities for parents to become participants in their children's learning."

Some parents (of Learners 6, 17, 19, 23 and 28) actually learned during the session how to work together and to be patient with their children – they learned how to give their children support for learning and they also learned from their children. It was also observed that some parents asked for advice even before they could try the tasks which caused more sensitivity in the child's interest. Parents should know that a positive and favourable environment would make children develop a positive attitude towards learning. Meadows (1996:46) emphasizes parental reading to children at home, that children will acquire knowledge about reading and books, will pick up positive attitudes towards reading and will even practice some of the skills of literacy which could contribute to the development of other language skills.

Learning was not always effective and successful for some of the learners, since some of the parents were not literate, which could contribute to poor learning behaviours in school. Some of these parents immediately asked for help from the siblings and/or aunts. The siblings and/or aunts accepted the responsibility and helped the children while their parents were watching.

Some of the parents (of Learners 7, 8, 16, 29, 36, 37 and 39) asked their children to read a sentence more than once so as to achieve reading for fluency. If they realized that the pronunciation was not good or the child was hesitant, he/she was asked to read aloud. In some instances, when a mistake was encountered, parents (e.g. the parent of Learner 16) explained the meaning of the unfamiliar word to the child, for example, "A **huge** lion was chasing a hare": To give more clarification of the word "huge", he said it meant "big", and the child understood better. To some parents, the meaning of new words became important as they emphasized in the task, while some parents were more interested in reading fluently. In her research, Desimone (1999:22) found that the meaning and working together of parent and child differ systematically according to particular family characteristics.

It was also observed that some learners whose parents were illiterate and appeared to have feelings of inferiority, still became fluent in the reading of some text during the work

session, which could lead one to conclude that there was little difference between the influence of the assistance given by literate and illiterate parents. This is in line with Heystek's (1999:108) observation that, due to poverty and illiteracy, some parents feel inferior and uncomfortable when they are expected to get involved in the education of their children, though in some instances their children may actually do well academically.

Concerning numeracy tasks, the majority of parents used fingers and counters to count, except for one parent (of Learner 16) who allowed his child to use a calculator instead of counters. In the numeracy task also, some parents were patient to the extent that when a child made a mistake, she was allowed more time to repeat the work and at the same time to speak out when counting so as to do it with full concentration. It was also found that there were some parents (literate, semi-literate and illiterate) who reprimanded a child when a mistake was encountered.

However, some of these parents emphasized that they desired better education for their children than they had had themselves. They said that they needed to be empowered to be part of the education system of their children. Some of them needed the help of siblings and/or aunts to explain the task to their children. Parents indicated that they wanted to play a role in the education of their children, declaring that they should be trained in such a way that they will understand their cognitive role, to give cognitive support to their children by showing them how to solve problems and how to work with others in a group. However, South African research indicates that, while African parents value better education, increased expectations may not always be met (Bot 1992:79). These could be the reasons, that some of these parents are not always involved in the education of their children, which could in turn result in poor performance and some through their impatience, their lack of knowledge or their lack of literacy failed to support their children. The literature confirms that parental illiteracy and lack of knowledge about what a school is meant for, tends to cause parents not to help or supervise their children with schoolwork (Oosthuizen 1992:6; Van der Linde 1993:40; Van der Westhuizen & Legotlo 1996:73).

In his research, Cleaver (1994:12) found that many parents regard their children as extensions of themselves and dream that their children will succeed where they have failed. Cherian (1991:183-188) maintains that the interest parents have in education tends to be associated with their academic motivation and the willingness of their children to be active in learning. So it is important to note that the educational outcomes result from the reciprocal interaction between the qualities that the learner brings from home and the qualities of the school.

Again, it was found during the work sessions that there was extremely little variation in support methods in as far as numeracy and language were concerned. For example, parents did not bring other methods than drill and practice, e.g. problem solving, to enhance learning and/or understanding of the particular text. If the sentence was long, for example, it could have been broken up to bring easier understanding. The lack of variation in support strategies might be strongly related to the education the parents have themselves received, i.e. the parents' poor experience of education under the earlier political dispensation in South Africa. Parental involvement, chiefly in the formerly disadvantaged families, leaves much to be desired. Because of the Bantu education or no education at all of the past, the parents never knew that they are part of the education system. African parents, therefore, still need to be educated and to be encouraged to participate in the education of their children. Engaging in the learning of Grade Two children should include the challenge of problem solving and a broader knowledge of how to supervise them. Grolnick *et al.,* (1997:546) found that if efforts are aimed at increasing home involvement, parents need strategies to help them work with their children.

This may bring one to conclude that many African parents do not have the knowledge of how to supervise their children in schoolwork. Even those who may be literate, their depth of the culture of literacy and their scope of education and knowledge also may be limited, which means that they need to be well trained so as to fully participate in the education of their children. In her research, McCarthey (2000:146) found that parents with less education and lower income tend to emphasise drill and practice over more informal opportunities for literacy learning. In any case, motivation alone without full knowledge and understanding of how to facilitate learning will not be enough to make children want to learn.

However, some parents did report that it was not just reading and doing numeracy together with their children, or supervising them that was important in itself – it was enjoying, developing and supporting the children's curiosity about the text and the meanings it conveys and also showing the children that they value the skills and knowledge of numeracy. The amount of support in language and numeracy did not differ much among those parents who appeared to be empowered and those that lacked education. According to the South African researcher, Mawasha (1986:25), there is a problematic literacy and numeracy to an extent that parental guidance and support are "… often non-existent." If all parents are not involved in the education of their children, it is unlikely that the children will become competent and successful adults.

Finally, one would expect parents with higher education to have stimulated their children more than those that lacked education, as well as to have used the problem-solving method with a thorough checking of children's understanding of the texts in general. In this case, the presence of the researcher might have been a problem to the parents as it was their first experience of being requested to work together with their children in such a situation.

It should be borne in mind that not all children learn in the same way. They come from different homes with different backgrounds and different upbringing and the influence of the home will remain strong. However, not all behaviour can be directly related to the parents' involvement in their children's learning, because of the differences in ability, personality and learning style. Some behaviour may have a relationship in terms of learners' performance and learners' behaviour because children are different and their environments are different too. The relationship may also be different because immediately when the child enters the school environment, he/she meets with different people who may affect his/her behaviour. For example, perhaps some learners from strict and impatient parents tend to behave cognitively in the same way as their counterparts in the classroom.

4.4.2.4 Ethnographic observations made in the classroom

There were 17 boys and 22 girls in the classroom. The classroom consisted of three rows of three tables each. At each of the front tables there were five learners and at the middle and back tables there were four learners each. The learners were mixed in their groups, that is, boys and girls at each table. The classroom was manageable, it was not overcrowded for its size.

During the first few days of the observation the children looked very quiet and tense. They were anxious to know more about the researcher's presence. The first two days were spent without observation, to let the learners and educator become accustomed to the researcher's presence, so that spontaneous and authentic actions could later be observed – that is to observe how the educator taught reading and numeracy skills, but mainly how the learners behaved during these lessons.

During teaching, when a learner (for example Learner 14) was showing passive behaviour, the educator would call upon him and ask why such behaviour. Some learners would say they were hungry since they had not had any breakfast before they came to school, and some would say they were tired because they came walking from the informal

settlement (10 kilometres away from school) since they had no money to board a taxi. This is in line with what Nhlapo (1997:19) has observed, namely that a hungry, thirsty, tired or sleepy child, or a child who has been sitting quietly for too long, is not likely to learn adequately (refer to paragraph 23.3.2). The school had a feeding scheme for all learners to have food during first break but nothing could be done about their tiredness.

Some learners behaved and associated well in the classroom. They were active and used their own initiative, for example during reading period some learners (Learners 2, 7, 11, 15, 16, 25, 27 and 37) were curious and could not wait to turn to a new page. Learner 7 said: “Ma’am, can I read the new page to the class?” Learner 27 said: “Please, let me read the paragraph you have read, Ma’am”. Learner 37 asked self-initiated questions such as: “Can I fly up to the moon? How is it on the moon, cold or hot?” whereupon Learner 15 added: “I would love to go to the moon one day”. Learners 2, 11, 16 and 25 also asked questions such as: “Who taught you numeracy Ma’am? Can I clean the board? Can I write the answers on the board? Can a rabbit swim?”

The same learners enjoyed it to answer questions in full sentences. They were eager to participate in the conversations through these questions. For example, if during reading they were asked to say what they think is going to happen next or what is the picture about, they would think and use their existing knowledge to add what they think will happen or describe the picture to the class. They appeared to be good readers and also had insight in the meaning of the story and the educator’s questions. They appeared to be good in both English and Tsonga, except for Learner 16 (a Zambian girl) who was still struggling to learn Tsonga. Sometimes she would read a word fluently (e.g. tshama hanse) without knowing what it meant. Learner 27 explained to her that it means “sit down”. Some of the learners in this strong group (Learners 2, 11, 25 and 37) would ask to be given an opportunity to tell the class about the extra reading they had done. Learner 2 said: “After having done my homework, I read from a book about a big fat pig who liked swimming. One day when he was swimming, he fell deeper into the swimming pool and drowned”. Learner 11 said: “Have you heard of a cat who lived in a tree? He used to go out quietly at night and steal food from the house next door”. Learner 37 added: “I have read about ‘The giant Panda’. He was so huge that every animal feared him”. These examples created interest in the majority of the learners and they also wanted to add more examples.

Some other learners (Learners 1, 3, 11, 13, 18, 22, 30 and 39) would lose interest during the lesson, look around, look withdrawn, look shy or would not follow instructions or explanations correctly, and some would look bored and started making a noise. For

example Learners 8, 18, 24 and 39, who liked making noises, were called to order and told to concentrate and obey instructions carefully so that they could all benefit from the lesson. Some of the learners (Learners 10, 23, 24, 30 and 39) produced written language with some difficulty and they seemed to use limited skills and strategies while writing. For example, during an English task, Learner 1 wrote “childs” instead of “children”. Learner 10 wrote “tooths” instead of “teeth” and Learner 23 wrote “foots” instead of “feet”, whereas in some instances there were some pronunciation errors in some of the words. For example, “sip” instead of “zip”, “wilbarrow” instead of “wheelbarrow” and “grech” instead of “crèche”.

With regard to numeracy there were still some learners who were slow in writing and those who were still struggling to add, subtract or multiply. For example, Learners 9, 12, 21, 33 and 36 were unable to complete the numeracy tasks. None of them did ask any questions while doing the sums. The majority of the learners (Learners 5, 6, 7, 13, 16, 17, 19, 25, 27, 29, 34, 35 and 37) managed to finish on time (i.e. 20 minutes before time). During the first two weeks learners were busy doing addition sums, in the third, fourth and fifth week they were doing subtraction sums and from the sixth until the last week of the observation period they were busy with the multiplication sums. Some of these learners (Learners 7, 16, 17, 19, 29, 31 and 37) volunteered to give the answers to the sums on the board. On a few occasions, mental arithmetic was done and Learners 7, 16, 17, 19, 27, 35 and 37 would finish well ahead of time.

Finally it was observed that Learners 7, 16, 17, 27, 31, 37 and 38 were doing extremely well in both numeracy and language. Learner 16 was good in English and numeracy whereas Learners 7, 17, 27 and 37 were doing well in Tsonga, English and numeracy. Should they realise they had made a mistake they would immediately rectify it. They were chosen to be group leaders in their class. Learners 31 and 38 were observed to be doing well in Tsonga and numeracy.

The majority of the learners (34 – 87.2%) usually completed their homework at home. Even though the homework was done, however, there were some mistakes in some of the learners’ books (of Learners 1, 4, 18, 24 and 35). When asked about the mistakes in their books, Learner 18 said: “My mother did not come back from work so there was nobody to help me with my homework, I did it on my own”. Learner 1 said: “I was first asked to do the work on a piece of paper, but when I wrote it back on my homework book, I missed some of the words. My older sister did not check if the work was correct”. Learner 35 added: “I thought I had done it correctly because my mom was helping me”.

Homework books were sometimes forgotten at home by some of the learners (Learners 6, 10, 20, 31 and 35). Learner 10 said: "I was late for school and I forgot my homework book on the table". Learner 20 said: "I decided to leave it at home because my brother did not want to help me. I was afraid Ma'am will punish me". Learner 31 said: "I forgot my homework book in the classroom. I promise I will never leave it here again". Learner 6 said: "While I was doing my homework my friend visited me. We went outside to play and I forgot that I had to finish my work".

4.4.2.5 Discussion: Data regarding learners and their educator in the classroom

In order to contemplate accurately what the findings concerning the children's learning behaviours in class have revealed, it is important to briefly discuss the teaching situation because it largely determines the classroom behaviour of the learners.

The educator created a strong teacher influence in her classroom. In the end she had succeeded in motivating each individual learner to learn, to work hard and to ask questions where they do not understand. As the learners were from different environments with different upbringing, they could be expected to react differently in their classroom. Some of them (Learners 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 18, 22, 26, 30 and 39) would show a negative behaviour and react in an unusual way even if they were told to ask questions where they seem not to follow, which could lead one to conclude that within this behaviour there might be negative results from home. Some learners (Learners 7, 15, 16, 17, 19, 25, 27, 29, 31 and 37) would show extremely positive behaviour and want to ask questions more than the others. For example, if there was an unfamiliar word in a sentence, Learners 16, 17, 25, 27 and 37 would ask for its pronunciation and would also ask for help if they found it difficult to pronounce, which could indicate a positive effect of the involvement from home, which in turn may create confidence in children's learning. In her research, MacLeod (1996:126) found that if parents already have reasonable confidence in their own educational capabilities and understand the educational value presented to them, then their children are likely to benefit.

One principle of the educator was to make the children reread a sentence until they got it right. Some would do it (Learners 2, 5, 6, 8, 14, 26, 30 and 36) whereas others would keep quiet (Learners 14, 13, 18, 32, 33, 34 and 35), which might be related to the situation at home where some parents appeared to be strict and impatient about their children's learning (refer to paragraph 4.4.2.2).

Another principle of the educator was to be supportive when mistakes kept occurring. She would point a finger to a word like “accident”, breaking it up so as to make it easier for the learners to read/pronounce. Some learners (Learners 8, 12, 24, 26 and 39) kept on making a mistake, but Learners 7, 16, 17, 27 and 37 were exceptional in doing the right thing and this brings to mind what parents of these same learners did when they were actively involved while helping their children with the learning tasks (refer to paragraph 4.4.2.2).

The learners’ efforts were rewarded by the educator, by being told that they had done well, to keep trying and sometimes there would be encouraging words like “nice try”, “good work” and “you make my day”, especially for Learners 16, 25, 35 and 37.

It was found that Learners 7, 16, 17, 27, 31, 37 and 38 were doing extremely well in both language and numeracy. They were always ready and quick to answer questions. The parents of these same learners had shown positive involvement during the learning tasks at home, except for the parent of Learner 38 who appeared to be strict and impatient. Some of them (Learners 7, 16, 17, 27 and 37) would even ask self-initiated remarks apart from their lesson which appeared to be the result of the positive participation from their parents. It suggests that positive parental involvement in children’s education is a recipe for successful learning. This is in line with Morrow and Young’s (1997:736) finding that a child’s success in learning often depends on the experiences he/she has at home.

It was found that these same learners motivated, and would even encourage, some of the other learners who looked shy in class. For example, when Learners 3, 13, 22 and 33 tried to participate, some of the achievers (Learners 16, 27 and 37) would make self-initiated remarks and say: “it is nice to do it that way”. It yet again suggests that what these learners did resembles what is happening at home unlike for the parents who never praised their children when they did what was right, or those parents who never moved into a problem-solving method to enhance learner participation. Those achieving learners appeared to have the ability positively to take part in class. This confirms Camp’s (1993:19) and Cicogzani and Zani’s (1992:7) findings that the ability to answer questions or to participate in class reflects parental involvement.

It was observed during the learning tasks performed at home that some parents (of Learners 7, 16, 17, 27, 31 and 37) had shown positive involvement while parents of Learners 1, 4, 10, 13, 18, 21, 26, 30 and 34 had shown negative involvement in the education of their children, which could lead one to conclude that some learner’s behaviour could be indeed influenced by their parents’ attitude, not only by the formal

teaching in the classroom alone. Learner 38 was found to be a good achiever despite the negative behaviour of his parents.

The feeling and attitude of Learners 1, 6, 10, 20 and 32 who never raised their hands were observed to normalise during the 12 weeks of observation, which could lead one to conclude that not all learner behaviour can always be related to the home, as it was observed that some of these learners' parents appeared to be less willing to help and were strict and impatient. In time, Learners 1, 6, 20 and 33 asked to be given the opportunity to read a whole paragraph and tell the class what they were reading about, while Learners 10 and 33 volunteered to write the answers for numeracy on the board which could make them become successful adults in future.

More possible considerations of learners' behaviour in class will be discussed in the next section on the Behaviour Schedule.

4.5 THE LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR SCHEDULE

4.5.1 ADMINISTRATION AND ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOUR SCHEDULE

The researcher, on a daily basis, filled in the structured behaviour schedule (refer to Appendix B) about the behaviour of the 39 Grade Two learners, for the period of ethnographic observation, which was 12 weeks. A 5-point scale was used. The schedule was always completed at the end of each school day, reflecting on overall impressions of the learners' learning behaviours on the relevant points. At first, the learners and their educator seemed to be unsettled by the presence of the researcher, but eventually they got used to the researcher and their behaviour was thought to normalise. To accommodate a period of desensitisation to the researcher's presence in the classroom, the data collected during the first week was discarded, leaving a maximum of 55 score points per behaviour.

The main purpose of the schedule was to observe particular learning behaviours more systematically, to inform the qualitative description: Which children had interest in tasks; which of them had confidence and which were passive in class; how was their response when questions were raised; which children were restless in class; what was their reaction in carrying out instructions; who were competent in reading; which children were attentive and obedient in class; how was their speed in writing; who were motivated and how was their effort to participate in the lessons; what was their correctness of responses, including

their group behaviour; who had self-initiated questions or self-initiated remarks, and how did they display their skill and knowledge in class.

In the analysis use was made of non-parametric testing methods since the data do not assume some sort of normal distribution. The aim was firstly to see whether there was a significant upward movement in the learners' learning behaviours between the first five weeks and the last five weeks of the observation period. The reason was to see whether there was educator influence on the learning behaviours. If there were no significant upward movement, it would show that the effect of the educator on the learning behaviours was not strong, although much growth could still have occurred in the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

It could be argued that other factors have shaped the learning behaviours in a fairly stable profile such as within-child factors including the intelligence, learning ability and personality. The external influences could include the support from parents. For the comparison, week six was removed to get two extremes and these were treated as a two-sample case each time. The weeks where a learner was absent might obviously have an effect on the results.

Secondly, we looked at each learner's 18 dimensions of learning behaviours to see which differed significantly from the mean of the group, either positively or negatively, to see how specific learners' learning behaviours related to parents as observed in the learning task. The testing procedure used in this instance was the Wilcoxon Rank-sign test where the differences were used and assigned ranks.

4.5.2 RESULTS AND FINDINGS DERIVED FROM BEHAVIOUR SCHEDULE

Appendix B contains the weekly scores for each learner, coded 1-5 for every dimension of behaviour, the learner's total and mean % score for each dimension, and the group mean % for each dimension. Table 4.18 contains the data for Learner 1 as a frame of reference for description of the trends observed in the data.

TABLE 4.18 BEHAVIOUR SCHEDULE OF LEARNER 1

Dimensions Learner 1 (L1)	Weeks											Score	L.A.%	G.A.%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
Interest	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	41	74.5	74.7
Attention	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	37	67.3	68.7
Confidence	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	42	76.4	75.9
Restlessness	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	34	61.8	61.8
Skill	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	40	72.7	72.2
Knowledge	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	43	78.2	74.9
Speed	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	34	61.8	63.7
Obedience	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	42	76.4	76.8
Motivation	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	39	70.9	65.7
Correctness	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	36	65.5	70.7
Group behaviour	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44	80	77.8
Ex of instructions	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	34	61.8	61.9
Reading comp	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44	80	78.9
Remarks	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	33	60	58.8
Effort	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	34	61.8	61.3
Knowledge	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	43	78.2	75.2
Response	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	39	70.9	68.4
Questions	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	33	60	58.8
												692	69.9	

With regard to learners' learning behaviours, there was no significant upward trend between the first five weeks and the last five weeks of the observation period. The table indicates that there were only 3's and 4's scored for Learner 1. There was no allocation of 1-, 2- and 5-codes. For the rest of the sample contained in Appendix B, there was also an exceedingly limited scoring in the 1-, 2- and 5-codes. The researcher could have been unsure to allocate such scores.

The mean percentage of the group in some dimensions of learning behaviours was high, that is, reading comprehension (76.8%); knowledge displayed during the morning periods (74.9%) and knowledge displayed in the last periods of the day (75.2%). It would seem that the learners in this group were feeling comfortable in the classroom, were learning and performing well and seemed to have positive behavioural and group norms. The mean percentage of the group in some dimensions of learning behaviours was low, i.e. restlessness in movement (61.8%); self-initiated remarks (58.8%); amount of effort exerted (61.3%); self-initiated questions (58.8%) and execution of instruction (61.9%). It would seem that in this group there might be developmental factors in that learners were not paying close attention and were not showing intense effort in their work. No significant difference was found between the first and last five weeks, which would mean the educator's influence might not have been strong.

TABLE 4.19 DIMENSIONS OF BEHAVIOUR WITH SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE FROM MEAN OF CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR (1% level of significance)

Dimensions	Learners																																									TOTAL +	TOTAL –
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39		
Interest in task	+		–	–	–	+		–	–				–	–		+	–	–	+	–				+	+	–	+	+	+		–	+		+		+	+	+		14	12
Attention to task			–					–					+			+														–						+	+			4	3
Confidence	+			+		+	–	–	+	–			+	+	–	+	–		–	+	+			+		–	+	+	+		+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	21	7
Restlessness in movements				–	–	–			–	–				–	–		–	–	–	–		–	–		–			–		–	–							–		0	18
Skill displayed			+												+	+								+	+		+		+					+		+	+	+		11	0
Knowledge displayed (morning per.)	+	+			+	–	–	–	–				–	+	+	+	+		–	–	–	–		+	+	–	+		+			+	–	+		+	+	+		16	11
Speed of work			+				–					–		–			–	–											–	–		+			–			–		2	9
Obedience	–	–			–	–	+	–	–	+	–	–			–	+	–		–	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	–	+	+	+	+	+	+		–	18	15
Motivation										–				–	–					–														+		+				2	4
Correctness of responses			+																+		+		+	+			+					+		+		+	+			10	0
Group behaviour	+	+	–	+	–	+	–	–	+	+	–	+	+	–	–	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	–	+	+	–	+	–	+	+	+	+	27	11
Execution of instructions		–		–						–		–			–		–	–	–	–	–	–	–			+	–	–	–	–	–				–	–	–	–	–	1	22
Reading competence	+	–	–		–	–			–	–		–	+	–	+	+	–		+	+	+	–	–		+	+	+	+	–		–	+				+	+	+		15	13
Self–initiated remarks	+	+	+	–		–	+	–	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	+					+	–	–	+		–	+	–	+	–	–	+	–	–	–	+	+	+	+	15	18
Amount of effort		–	–	–		–				–	–	–	–	–	–		–	–		–	–			–				–	–	–	–		–		–				+	1	21
Knowledge displayed (aftern. per.)	+	+	+		–		–	–		–				+	+	+	+		–	–	–	–		+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+		+	+	+	–	19	9
Reponses to questions		–			–					+						+		–							+		+					+				+	+			7	3
Self–initiated questions	+		+	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	+	+		–	+		–	–	–	+	+	–		+	+	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	21	14
TOTAL +	8	4	6	2	1	4	3	0	2	3	1	1	5	3	5	12	3	0	5	4	6	2	2	10	9	5	11	7	8	1	2	12	4	10	2	14	13	9	5		
TOTAL –	1	5	5	6	8	6	5	9	7	9	4	7	4	9	8	0	8	7	6	7	5	7	6	1	1	5	1	4	5	8	8	0	4	1	5	1	1	3	3		

Table 4.19 indicates each learner's positive and negative significant differences from the mean percentages of the classroom learning behaviours on a 1% level of significance.

In looking at the learning behaviours of the learners, the scatter of significantly positive and negative behaviours within the group is going to be addressed, in rank order. With regard to group behaviour, all but one demonstrated significantly varied behaviour: 27 learners demonstrated significantly more positive behaviour in comparison to the mean percentage of the total class and 11 learners demonstrated significantly negative behaviours. Twenty one learners were found to be actively involved in lessons, coming up with self-initiated questions, whereas 14 learners appeared to be shy and appeared to have significantly negative questioning behaviour, totalling a scatter of 35. In a scatter of 33, there were 18 learners who demonstrated significantly positive obedience and 15 learners appeared to have significantly negative obedience.

A total of 28 cases of scatter, but in greatly different proportions, emerged from three dimensions of learning behaviours. With regard to reading comprehension in class, 15 learners demonstrated significantly positive reading skill in comparison to the mean standard and 13 learners demonstrated significantly negative reading skill. There were 21 learners who appeared to be significantly more confident in the classroom, whereas seven learners appeared significantly less confident. Nineteen learners looked significantly more knowledgeable during the first half of the school day, whereas nine learners appeared to have little knowledge early in the day. The display of knowledge differed greatly in the latter part of the day. Then, there were 16 learners who appeared to be significantly more knowledgeable whereas 11 learners displayed little knowledge in the lessons.

On the other hand, there were also some dimensions which demonstrated low scatter, starting with the lowest one: There were only two learners who demonstrated significantly positive motivation and four learners displayed significantly negative motivation (totalling a scatter of six). There were four learners who demonstrated significantly positive attention to the task, more than the average mean percentage of attention (to task) whereas three learners paid notably poor attention in class (scatter seven).

A total of 10 cases of scatter, but in greatly different proportions, emerged for two dimensions of learning behaviours: With regard to correctness of responses in class, 10 learners were significantly more often correct in their responses, but not one of the learners made a significant number of errors in response to the educator's questions. Seven learners answered significantly more questions than the general response pattern

in the class, whereas three learners looked more reserved and appeared significantly less responsive to questions.

In addition to looking at the trends concerning the dimensions of learning behaviours in relation to the group mean percentage, it is also necessary to consider trends observable in the dimensions of learning behaviours of individual learners.

The main purpose is to try and relate the learning behaviours of each learner as reflected in specific dimensions of his/her learning behaviours, to support which parents gave to their children during the learning task observed during the home visit, looking at learners who differed significantly from the group scores, in the positive respect and in the negative respect. These cases will be discussed in rank order, looking at learners with a significantly positive difference in > 10 dimensions of learning behaviours and a significantly negative difference in > 8.

Learner 36 demonstrated significantly positive learning behaviours in 14 dimensions with significantly negative learning behaviours in only one dimension, followed by Learner 37 with significantly positive learning behaviours in 13 dimensions and significantly negative learning behaviours in one dimension.

Learners 16 and 32 demonstrated significantly positive learning behaviours in 12 dimensions, both displaying no significantly negative learning behaviours whatsoever. Learner 27 appeared to display significantly positive learning behaviours in 11 dimensions and significantly negative learning behaviours in one dimension. Learners 24 and 34 displayed significantly positive learning behaviours in 10 dimensions and significantly negative behaviour in one dimension.

The following learners displayed the most significantly negative dimensions in learning behaviours: Learner 8 demonstrated significantly negative learning behaviours in nine dimensions, displaying no significantly positive learning behaviours whatsoever. Learners 10 and 14 also displayed significantly negative learning behaviours in nine dimensions, but both displayed significantly positive learning behaviours in three dimensions.

Learners 5 and 30 demonstrated significantly negative learning behaviours in 8 dimensions, both displaying significantly positive learning behaviours in one dimension. Learner 31 also displayed significantly negative learning behaviours in eight dimensions and significantly positive learning behaviours in two dimensions. Learner 17 demonstrated significantly negative learning behaviours in eight dimensions and

significantly positive learning behaviours in three dimensions. Learner 15 demonstrated significantly negative learning behaviours in eight dimensions, balanced markedly by significantly positive learning behaviours in five dimensions.

4.5.3 DISCUSSION: BEHAVIOUR SCHEDULE

During the observation of the learning behaviours in the classroom, seven learners (Learner 16, 24, 27, 32, 34, 36 and 37) demonstrated a good many dimensions of significantly positive learning behaviours in comparison to the mean percentages of the total class. The parents of some, but not all, of these learners (Learners 16, 27, 32, 34 and 37) had appeared to be supportive during the learning tasks observed by the researcher in their homes. This could suggest that the support for learning which these parents provide may have contributed to the positive learning behaviours of their children in school.

During the learning task observed by the researcher, the parent of Learner 24 (who also displayed many dimensions of significantly positive learning behaviours) was not so willing to help, even though she knew how to read and write. She appeared to regard learning support as a waste of time, as she had indicated that most of the time she was on the street selling vegetables for her children to have food.

The parents of Learner 34, again, were observed to be even less willing but were strict and impatient and urged their child to work faster during the learning task. Despite the variously negative behaviour of the parents, Learners 24 and 34 showed significantly positive learning behaviours, which may, therefore, not be strongly associated with their parents. In the absence of clear, strong influence of the parents of these learners, they still demonstrated significantly positive learning behaviours in the following dimensions: interest in task, confidence, skill displayed, knowledge displayed, correctness of responses, group behaviour and self-initiated questions. This could suggest that there might be some other factors which may have positively influenced the learning behaviours of these learners, for example, interest, personality, motivation from within, perhaps even self-respect, and/or motivation or teaching skill from the educator.

Looking at the parents' side again, however, one could suspect that covert positive aspects of their treatment of their children somehow did influence the learning behaviours in a positive direction. However, it is notable that the same learners (Learners 24 and 34) displayed significantly negative learning behaviours, failing to put much effort into their work whereas other learners (Learners 16, 27, 32, 36 and 37) did not show any effort

either significantly positive or significantly negative. During the learning tasks at home, the parents of Learners 16, 27, 36 and 37 were observed to be patient, willing to help and explained some unfamiliar words to their children.

Looking from the other side, there were seven learners (Learners 5, 8, 10, 14, 17, 30 and 32) who demonstrated a good many dimensions of significantly negative learning behaviours in comparison to the mean percentages of the total class. The parents of two learners (Learners 10 and 32) had appeared to be less willing to help during the learning tasks observed by the researcher. The negative behaviours of these parents could lead one to suspect that they may have influenced the learning behaviours of their children in a negative direction. There could also be other factors which may have influenced the learning behaviours of Learners 5, 8, 14, 17 and 31, for example, aggressiveness, shyness or intellectual disabilities and/or education factors such as teaching methods.

During the learning tasks observed by the researcher, the parents of Learners 5, 8, 14, 17 and 31 appeared to be patient, willing to help, they encouraged their children to work hard and explained difficult or unfamiliar words to them. The parent of Learner 14 even went to an extent of using special counters in numeracy for more clarification. Therefore, the poorer learning behaviours may not be related to these parents. On the one hand one would suspect that these parents may not have shown a true picture during the learning tasks. On the other hand, there may be other factors that could have affected the learning behaviours of these learners, for example, that they lacked self-discipline, that they were the less gifted learners or that they lacked cognitive developmental skills. One more possible reason may be that there was educator influence in this respect.

4.6 CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARENTS

4.6.1 ADMINISTRATION OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARENTS

Correspondence with the parents took place during October and November of the practical research year, while observation was taking place in the classroom. This took the form of one letter per week. In October two letters were sent to parents and in November three letters were sent (refer to Appendix C). In addition to general information (included somewhat to mask the intention of the correspondence), each letter contained a request. The purpose was to find out operationally which parents of the target group would demonstrate support for learning in the learning of their children by responding to correspondence from the school, and then to ascertain whether their support for learning generally related to the learning behaviours of their children.

Simple and straightforward letters were developed in English. These letters were then translated into Tsonga by the class educator and translated back into English to check for accuracy of the translation. Each learner was given a letter to deliver to his/her parents.

TABLE 4.20: PARENTS' RESPONSE AS PER REQUEST

Parents	Letter 1 (4 cans)	Letter 2 (4 counters)	Letter 3 (Toothpaste box & tube)	Letter 4 (Newspaper)	Letter 5 (4 Pictures)	More than requested	Number requested	Fewer than requested	No response
Learner 1	7	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Learner 2	10	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Learner 3	2	0	2	1	6	1	2	1	1
Learner 4	4	0	2	1	0		3		2
Learner 5	0	5	1	1	0	1	1	1	2
Learner 6	3	0	2	1	5	1	2	1	1
Learner 7	18	17	2	1	3	2	2	1	
Learner 8	1	0	1	0	0			2	3
Learner 9	0	0	0	1	2			2	3
Learner 10	0	0	0	0	0				5
Learner 11	0	0	1	1	1		1	2	2
Learner 12	2	0	1	1	0		1	2	2
Learner 13	3	0	1	1	4		2	2	1
Learner 14	0	0	0	0	0				5
Learner 15	4	10	0	1	6	2	2		1
Learner 16	0	11	1	0	0	1		1	3
Learner 17	6	7	1	1	2	2	1	2	
Learner 18	2	0	0	0	0			1	4
Learner 19	4	0	0	0	2		1	1	3
Learner 20	1	0	1	0	2			3	2
Learner 21	0	0	2	1	2		2	1	2
Learner 22	3	10	1	0	6	2		2	0
Learner 23	0	7	0	0	2	1		1	3
Learner 24	3	3	0	0	2			3	2
Learner 25	31	32	2	1	5	3	2		
Learner 26	0	2	2	1	1		2	2	1
Learner 27	0	0	0	0	0				5
Learner 28	2	3	1	1	2		1	4	
Learner 29	11	10	2	1	1	2	2	1	
Learner 30	10	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Learner 31	4	0	2	0	2		2	1	2
Learner 32	0	0	0	1	1		1	1	3
Learner 33	0	0	0	0	0				5
Learner 34	2	0	0	1	1		1	2	2
Learner 35	3	10	1	1	2	1	1	3	
Learner 36	5	3	2	1	3	1	2	2	
Learner 37	14	8	1	1	2	2	1	2	
Learner 38	0	0	0	0	0				5
Learner 39	2	2	2	1	2		2	3	
More than requested	9	11	0	0	5				
Number requested	4	0	13	25	1				
Fewer than requested	13	5	13	n.a.	22				
No response	13	23	13	14	11				

The number of objects sent in relation to the number requested measured the responses of the parents which were sent to school. The promptness with which the request was carried out, was also recorded by the class educator.

4.6.2 RESULTS AND FINDINGS DERIVED FROM CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARENTS

Table 4.20 represents the parent's responses as per object: The first letter requested each family to help their child find four empty cooldrink tins, since the following day learners were going to build **big towers** and had to learn more about planning and numeracy. It was found that 13 families (33.3 %) did not respond to the request.

Of the 26 families (66.7%) who responded, one family (of Learner 25) appeared to be very actively involved and helped their child find 31 cooldrink tins. Two families (of Learners 7 and 37) also demonstrated very active involvement by helping with 18 and 14 cooldrink tins respectively and the parents of Learner 29 helped their child to find 11 cooldrink tins. Learners 2 and 30 were helped with 10 tins each and the parents of Learner 1 helped their child to find seven cooldrink tins each. Learner 17 was helped with six cooldrink tins and the families of Learners 4, 15, 19 and 31 helped their children with four tins. Fourteen families (of Learners 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22, 24, 28, 32, 34, 35 and 39) were found to be slightly concerned and assisted with three, two and one cooldrink tins. The parents of Learners 5, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 21, 23, 26, 27, 32, 33 and 38 did not respond to the request.

The second letter requested each family to give their child four counters to bring to school for **use in sums**. It was found that nearly 60.0% of the families (23 families) did not take part. Sixteen families responded to the request. Again, parents of Learner 25 showed very active involvement and helped their child with 32 counters. Parents of Learner 7 also managed to give their child 17 counters to take to school, while parents of Learner 16 provided their child with 11 counters. Learner 15, 22, 29, and 35 were helped with 10 counters each and Learner 37 was provided with eight counters. Learner 23 was helped with seven counters and Learner 5 with five counters. Learners 24, 28 and 36 were helped with three counters each, and lastly, two families (of Learners 26 and 39) helped their children with two counters each.

The third request concerned one empty toothpaste box and one empty toothpaste tube since the following day learners were going to learn how to **brush their teeth.** Thirteen families (33.3%) had demonstrated active involvement and helped their children find both a toothpaste box and a toothpaste tube each. Another thirteen families (33.3%) had a

show of concern and helped their children with either a box or a tube. It was found that of the 39 families, 13 families (33.3%) did not take part.

Another request was to give children one newspaper each as they were going to **ring similar words** they had seen in their English lessons. It was found that 14 families (35.9%) did not respond to the request. More than 60.0% of the families responded positively to the request.

The last request was that each family help its child look for four pictures of different types of transport as learners were going to **learn the importance of transport**, how they differ and how reliable they are. The parents of Learner 13 helped their child to take four pictures of different types of transport to school. Parents of Learners 3, 15 and 22 helped their children with six pictures each. Parents of Learners 6 and 25 helped their child to look for five pictures of different types of transport. Eleven families (28.2%) assisted their children with two pictures each and Learners 1, 2, 11, 26, 29, 30, 32 and 34 were helped with one picture each to take to school. Eleven families (28.5%) could not respond to this request.

4.6.3 DISCUSSION: CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARENTS

At the end of the research period, it was found that five families (12.8%) (of Learners 10, 14, 27, 33 and 38) had never taken part in any of the requests. Of these, four families (10.3%) were living in an informal settlement and one family (of Learner 27) was living in a township.

The parents of Learners 10, 14, 33 and 38 appeared not to have been so willing to help their children with the learning task observed by the researcher, whereas the parents of Learner 27 demonstrated their involvement by being patient and motivating their child to learn. Apparently these same parents (of Learner 27) showed positive involvement in the researcher's presence, but there was no link when coming to the school since they did not respond to any of the educator's requests.

It appears that some parents from the informal settlement do not actively support the school as an organisation. This could suggest that the literacy factor, poverty factor and deficient culture of learning cause parents to distance themselves from the education of their children, or from being supportive to the school's requests. Mnisi and Shilubane's (1998:6) finding reveal that some learners indeed have non-supportive homes, little

parental care and involvement, few resources in their homes, little intellectual stimulation and illiterate parents.

Two of the learners who had not brought any of the objects requested to school (Learners 10 and 33) initially appeared to have little confidence in the classroom, showed little interest in tasks, were slow in reading and writing and they seldom raised their hands when questions were asked (see paragraph 4.4.2.4). The negative behaviour of the parents of these learners could lead one to suspect that they may have negatively influenced the learning behaviours of their children. Because of the extra time spent by the educator during breaktime, for them to catch up in lessons in class, these same learners, with time, became better motivated, felt more comfortable and eventually participated more actively.

The findings also showed that some learners (Learners 7, 17, 25, 28, 29, 35, 36, 37 and 39) whose parents were supportive in all of the requests, both from the poor socio-economic background and those from the well-to-do families, had significantly positive learning behaviours. Some of them (Learners 7, 17 and 37) were frequently observed to be confident, had a lot of interest in their work, were generally attentive, and their reading and writing skills were good. This could suggest that no matter how poor the family background, as long as parents show a positive attitude and are supportive toward their children's education, children's learning behaviours would normalise. In their research, Cusick (1992:63) and Pallas (2000:168) found that the higher socio-economic status of the parents, the greater the tendency for them to be involved in their children's learning. However, it was found in this research that it is significant that the positive attitude of some parents reflect the positive learning behaviours of their children and the negative attitude of some parents reflect the negative learning behaviours of their children.

4.7 SUMMARY

Chapter Four concerns the results, findings and discussion of the support for learning given by the parents of the Grade Two learners in a Township school. The data sets collected by means of using a questionnaire, with semi-structured interview, ethnographic observation, a learner's behaviour schedule and correspondence with parents were each analysed and discussed separately and in combination.

In this study it was found that, educated or not, some parents regard education as important in the lives of their children whereas some think that providing support in their

children's education is a waste of time. Some demonstrated their willingness to do the learning tasks with their children in their homes and some were less willing to help.

During the observation of the learning behaviours in the classroom, some learners demonstrated a good many dimensions of significantly positive learning behaviours whereas some learners displayed a good many dimensions of significantly negative learning behaviours in comparison to the mean percentages of the total class. The learning behaviours of the learners was related to their parents' behaviour, but it was not always the case that the parents who demonstrated positive involvement all had children with a significantly positive learning behaviours, or that all the parents who were strict, impatient and less willing to help had children who displayed a significantly negative learning behaviours. There were other factors which were found to have had influence in the learners' learning behaviours, either positively or negatively.

Finally, it was found that some learners whose parents were supportive in all of the requests, from correspondence made with them, performed well in the classroom and displayed a good many dimensions of significantly positive learning behaviours. They were found to be confident, attentive and had interest in the work. Some learners whose parents did not respond to the requests displayed a good many dimensions of significantly negative learning behaviours. They did not put much effort in their work and did not pay much attention to the tasks.

Chapter Five concludes this study with the summary, limitations of the research, final conclusions and recommendations for further research.

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