Family involvement in Life Skills development of learners in a primary school

CJ Spamer
23796952

Thesis submitted for the degree Doctor Philosophiae in Learner Support at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

Promoter: Dr JA Rens
Co-Promoter: Dr CS Botha

May 2017
I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

[Signature]

Datum / Date

2016-11-22
To Ernus, Stephan and Herman
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A sincere word of thanks to the following:

- My Heavenly Father for grace, opportunities and people He sent who have made this study possible;
- My promoter, Dr Julialet Rens, and my co-promoter, Dr Carolina Botha, for their time and expert guidance;
- My husband, Ernus, and sons, Stephan and Herman, for their patience when I neglected them to work on my studies;
- My parents, Herman and Mariana Gerber, for their unconditional love and support;
- My parents-in-law, Johan and Doreth Spamer, for their encouragement;
- The Western Cape Education Department for granting me permission to conduct my research in a primary school;
- The Governing Body, principal and colleagues of the school where I teach, thank you for your patience and co-operation;
- Marianne Strydom, my editor. Thank you for your patience and understanding.
ABSTRACT

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

Keywords: life skills, parental involvement, primary school, CAPS, models for parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement

The purpose of this research was to determine how families can become more involved in the life skills development of learners in a primary school (Grades 1–7).

I observed and experienced how society, parental involvement and the children’s life skills changed over a period of time at this specific school from where I conducted my research. So I ventured on an unpredictable but exciting journey to investigate how extrafamilial processes like peers, neighbourhood, the economic system and overarching beliefs and values influenced the families, the life skills families taught their children at home and families'/parents' involvement in life skills development done at school. I also aimed to determine how parents/families could become more involved in the life skills development of learners in this specific primary school, with life skills both an academic school subject and those skills necessary to enable children to cope with everyday life and its challenges.

I worked within a qualitative research design, focusing on understanding and describing families’ involvement in life skills development. Because I wanted to understand the human action of families’ involvement in life skills development, I worked within the interpretive paradigm, using the hermeneutic phenomenological approach. I used observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis in my search to understand and describe the phenomenon of life skills education in this particular school community. Analytic autoethnography was my method of choice as I am a teacher at the school under survey.

I discovered that there were a considerable number of barriers that prevented families from becoming more involved (or sometimes even become involved at all) in the
development of the life skills of their primary school children. These barriers included immigrant families, domestic violence, unsafe neighbourhoods in which some learners grow up, financial hardship and grandparents who have to raise their grandchildren.

When I made suggestions at the end of the study on how parental involvement might be supported and improved, it was necessary to involve the school, community, other parents and supportive services in a team effort to assist families to become more involved in the life skills development of their children.

It truly takes a village to raise a child.
OPSOMMING

BETROKKENHEID VAN GESINNE BY DIE ONTWIKKELING VAN LEWENSAARDEGHEDE BY LAERSKOOLLEERDERS

Trefwoorde: lewensvaardighede, ouerbetrokkenheid, laerskool, CAPS, modelle vir ouerbetrokkenheid, hindernisse tot ouerbetrokkenheid.

Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om te bepaal hoe gesinne en families meer betrokke kan raak by die ontwikkeling van lewensvaardighede van laerskoolleerders (Grade 1–7).

Ek het waargeneem en ervaar hoe die gemeenskap, ouerbetrokkenheid en die leerders se lewensvaardighede oor ‘n tydperk van jare verander het by die skool waar ek beplan het om die navorsing te doen. Daarom het ek dit gewaag om ‘n opwindende maar onseker reis te onderneem om te ondersoek hoe faktore buite die familie – klasmaats, die buurt waarin hulle woon, die ekonomiese sisteem en oorkoepelende waardes en beginsels – die families beïnvloed, die lewensvaardighede wat families vir hul kinders leer beïnvloed, en hoe dit ouers en families se betrokkenheid by die skool se ontwikkeling van lewensvaardighede by die leerders beïnvloed. Ek het ook probeer vasstel hoe families meer betrokke kan raak by die ontwikkeling van lewensvaardighede wat die leerders by hierdie skool leer. Met lewensvaardighede word daar verwys na lewensvaardighede as ‘n akademiese skoolvak, asook die vaardighede wat die leerders in hul daaglikse omgang met ander mense nodig het om suksesvol te kan funksioneer.

Ek het vanuit die kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp gewerk, met die fokus op begrip en beskrywing van families se betrokkenheid by die ontwikkeling van lewensvaardighede. Aangesien ek die menslike aksie in families se betrokkenheid by die ontwikkeling van lewensvaardighede wou verstaan, het ek vanuit ‘n interpretiewe paradigma gewerk en die hermeneuties-fenomenologiese benadering gebruik. Ek het waarneming, semi-gestruktueerde onderhoude, foksgroep-onderhoude en dokument-analise gebruik in my soektog om die onderrig-verskynsel van lewensvaardighede in hierdie gemeenskap te kon verstaan en beskryf. Ek het op analitiese outo-ethnografie as metode besluit,
aangesien ek reeds 'n onderwyser was by die skool waar ek my studie ondernem het.

Ek het vasgestel dat daar 'n beduidende aantal hindernisse was wat ouers gekeer het om meer betrokke te raak (of in sommige gevalle selfs hoegenaamd betrokke te raak) in die ontwikkeling van lewensvaardighede by hul laerskoolkinders. Hierdie hindernisse het immigrante-families, huishoudelike geweld, onveilige buurte waarin sommige leerders grootword, finansiële ontbering en grootouers wat hul kleinkinders moet grootmaak, ingesluit.

Aan die einde van die studie het ek aanbevelings gemaak oor hoe ouerbetrokkenheid ondersteun en ontwikkel kan word, maar dit was noodsaaklik om die skool, gemeenskap, ander ouers en ondersteunende dienste ook te betrek in 'n spanpoging om ouers by te staan in die ontwikkeling van hul kinders se lewensvaardighede.
LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 2:  LIFE SKILLS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS
Table 2.1  Specific aims in Life Skills in the three phases in Primary School ........ 77
Table 2.2  Contents of Life Skills Grades 1 – 3 .......................................................... 78
Table 2.3  Contents of Life Skills Grades 4 – 6, and Life Orientation Grades 7 – 9 . 79

CHAPTER 4:  RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY
Table 4.1  Group 1: Semi-structured individual interviews with families ............ 133
Table 4.2  Group 2: Semi-structured individual interviews with colleagues ........ 134
Table 4.3  Group 3: Focus group interview with colleagues ............................... 135
Table 4.4  Group 4: Focus group interview with the School Governing Body ....... 135

CHAPTER 5:  DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
Table 5.1  Group 1: Semi-structured individual interviews with families ............ 160
Table 5.2  Group 2: Semi-structured individual interviews with colleagues ........ 161
Table 5.3  Group 3: Focus group interview with colleagues ............................... 162
Table 5.4  Group 4: Focus group interview with the School Governing Body ....... 163
# LIST OF FIGURES

## CHAPTER 2: LIFE SKILLS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2.1</th>
<th>Interaction of concepts</th>
<th>38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s original theoretical model of the parental involvement process</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s revised theoretical model of the parental involvement process</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 3: LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 3.1</th>
<th>Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory</th>
<th>88</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Development of concepts within different levels of society</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3</td>
<td>Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4</td>
<td>A comprehensive approach to values and character education</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 5.1</th>
<th>Participants’ views of life skills</th>
<th>168</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.2</td>
<td>Learners’ current display of life skills</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.3</td>
<td>Unsafe neighbourhood</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.4</td>
<td>Poor domestic circumstances</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.5</td>
<td>Financial difficulties</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.6</td>
<td>Need for parental guidance</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.7</td>
<td>Parents in need of support</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.8</td>
<td>Immigrant parents</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.9</td>
<td>Parents without a sense of responsibility</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.10</td>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.11</td>
<td>The role of the school</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.12</td>
<td>Emerging themes of data analysis</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.13</td>
<td>Learners’ current display of life skills</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.14</td>
<td>Parents in need of support</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.15</td>
<td>Parents without a sense of responsibility</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.16</td>
<td>Poor domestic circumstances</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Figure 6.1 5-step plan for parental involvement in life skills development .......... 213
# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................................................... iii
ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................ iv
OPSOMMING .......................................................................................................................................... vi
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................................ viii
LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND MOTIVATION: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL ................................................................................................................................. 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................................... 2
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT ......................................................................................................................... 3
1.3 REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY LITERATURE ............................................................................................... 4
1.3.1 Life skills, morals, character and values ......................................................................................... 5
1.3.2 Values education .............................................................................................................................. 5
1.3.3 Character education ......................................................................................................................... 6
1.3.4 Moral education ............................................................................................................................... 7
1.3.5 Life skills education ......................................................................................................................... 8
1.3.6 Programmes for values education, life skills development and parental involvement .................................................................................................................................................................................. 9
   1.3.6.1 Programmes for values education and life skills development .............................................. 9
   1.3.6.2 Models for parental involvement ............................................................................................ 11
   1.3.6.3 Model for barriers in parental involvement ........................................................................... 12
1.4 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY ........................................................................................................... 13
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ...................................................................................................................... 16
1.6 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH ......................................................................................................... 16
1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ............................................................................................................ 17
1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................... 20
1.8.1 Research design ............................................................................................................................. 20
1.8.2 Method .......................................................................................................................................... 21
1.8.3 Site or social network selection .................................................................................................... 22
CHAPTER 2: LIFE SKILLS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS ........................................... 29
2.1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 30
2.2 CONTEXT 1: LIFE SKILLS AS A CONCEPT AMONGST RELATED CONCEPTS .................................................................................. 31
  2.2.1 Definition of concepts ......................................................................... 31
    2.2.1.1 Values ......................................................................................... 31
    2.2.1.2 Character .................................................................................. 32
    2.2.1.3 Morals ....................................................................................... 33
    2.2.1.4 Life skills .................................................................................. 35
    2.2.1.5 Behaviour .................................................................................. 37
    2.2.1.6 Schematic representation of the interaction between the concepts ......................................................................... 37
2.3 CONTEXT 2: LIFE SKILLS WITHIN THE FAMILY .................................... 39
  2.3.1 Benefits of parental involvement ......................................................... 40
  2.3.2 Models for parental involvement ......................................................... 41
    2.3.2.1 Joyce Epstein’s model for school/family/community partnerships ......................................................................... 42
    2.3.2.2 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model for parental involvement ........................................................................... 48
    2.3.2.3 Singh, Mbokodi and Msila’s framework to enhance black
parental involvement in education in South Africa .......................................................... 54
  2.3.3 Barriers to parental involvement ................................................................. 55
  2.3.3.1 Parent and family factors ................................................................. 56
  2.3.3.2 Child factors ....................................................................................... 57
  2.3.3.3 Parent-teacher factors ........................................................................ 58
  2.3.3.4 Societal factors ................................................................................... 59
  2.4 CONTEXT 3: LIFE SKILLS AT SCHOOL ......................................................... 60
  2.4.1 Life skills and human rights in school ...................................................... 61
  2.4.2 Peer pressure ........................................................................................... 62
  2.4.3 Bullying ................................................................................................... 63
  2.4.4 Sexuality Education ................................................................................ 65
  2.4.5 Teaching life skills through extracurricular activities ......................... 68
  2.5 CONTEXT 4: LIFE SKILLS IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM .................. 69
  2.5.1 Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, 2001 ...................... 70
  2.5.2 The CAPS 2012 Life Skills curriculum .................................................. 72
    2.5.2.1 Background of CAPS 2012: Outcomes-based Education and the Revised National Curriculum Statement .......... 73
    2.5.2.2 General aims in the CAPS curriculum ......................................... 74
    2.5.2.3 Life Skills as a subject in the CAPS curriculum ....................... 76
    2.5.2.4 Fragmentation of the Life Skills curriculum ................................ 80
  2.6 CONCLUSION ................................................................................................. 80

CHAPTER 3: LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPES .................................................................................................................... 82
  3.1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................... 83
  3.2 BRONFENBRENNER’S BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY ................................ 84
  3.3 MASLOW’S MOTIVATION THEORY ......................................................... 90
  3.4 EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES AND PROGRAMMES ADDRESSING THE DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF LIFE SKILLS ................................................. 92
    3.4.1 Context 1: Life skills as a concept and character education ............ 92
    3.4.2 Context 2: Life skills within the family and the Head Start Program ... 92
    3.4.3 Context 3: Life skills at school and the Essential 55 ....................... 93
3.4.4 Context 3: Life skills at school and Living Values:
   An Educational Program .......................................................... 93
3.4.5 Context 4: Life Skills in the National Curriculum and the United Nations 
   Children’s Fund ................................................................. 93
3.5 CONTEXT 1: CHARACTER EDUCATION ...................................... 94
  3.5.1 Character education: knowing the good, desiring the good, 
       doing the good .............................................................. 94
  3.5.2 Teaching methods for establishing values and life skills .............. 96
  3.5.3 Parental involvement and life skills in character education .......... 97
3.6 CONTEXT 2: AMERICA – THE HEAD START PROGRAM .................... 97
  3.6.1 History of Head Start ....................................................... 98
  3.6.2 Family involvement during Head Start ................................... 98
  3.6.3 Effectiveness of Head Start .............................................. 100
3.7 CONTEXT 3: ESSENTIAL 55 AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION ............... 102
3.8 CONTEXT 3: LIVING VALUES: AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ............ 104
  3.8.1 Background of Living Values: An Educational Program .............. 104
  3.8.2 The purpose and aims of LVEP ......................................... 105
  3.8.3 Theoretical background for LVEP ...................................... 106
  3.8.4 Implementation of LVEP ................................................... 107
  3.8.5 Results of research on LVEP ............................................. 109
3.9 CONTEXT 4: UNICEF AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION ...................... 109
  3.9.1 Generic life skills and content-specific life skills .................... 110
  3.9.2 Life skills education and life skills-based education ............... 111
  3.9.3 Involvement in a life skills education programme ................... 111
  3.9.4 Teaching methods .......................................................... 112
3.10 CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 114

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ........................ 116
4.1 INTRODUCTION ...................................................................... 117
4.2 WORLD-VIEW OF THE RESEARCHER ....................................... 117
4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .................................................. 121
  4.3.1 Introduction .................................................................... 121
  4.3.2 Research design .............................................................. 122
4.3.3 Research paradigm ............................................................... 122
4.3.4 Research approach ............................................................... 123
4.3.5 Research method ................................................................. 124
4.4 SOCIAL NETWORK SELECTION AND SAMPLING ......................... 128
4.4.1 Sampling method ................................................................. 130
4.5 PHASES OF RESEARCH ........................................................... 131
4.6 DATA GENERATION ................................................................. 136
4.6.1 Observations ....................................................................... 136
4.6.2 Interviews ........................................................................... 139
   4.6.2.1 Semi-structured interviews ............................................. 140
   4.6.2.2 Focus groups ................................................................. 140
   4.6.2.3 Conducting of interviews .............................................. 142
   4.6.2.4 Challenges surrounding interviews .................................. 144
4.6.3 Document analysis ............................................................... 145
4.7 DATA ANALYSIS .................................................................... 146
4.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ................................................... 148
4.8.1 Triangulation ...................................................................... 150
4.9 ETHICAL ASPECTS ................................................................... 151
4.10 CONCLUSION ......................................................................... 153

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS .......................................................... 154
5.1 INTRODUCTION ....................................................................... 155
5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH .......... 155
5.3 BACKGROUND OF THE SCHOOL WITHIN WHICH STUDY WAS
   CONDUCTED ........................................................................... 156
   5.3.1 Geographical and socio-economical context .......................... 156
   5.3.2 Communication ................................................................. 157
5.4 PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY .................................................. 158
5.5 DATA ANALYSIS: OBSERVATIONS, INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENT
   ANALYSIS ................................................................................ 163
   5.5.1 Life skills as viewed by the participants ............................... 163
   5.5.2 Life skills displayed by the learners in their day to day conduct .... 168
   5.5.3 Unsafe neighbourhood ....................................................... 174
5.5.4 Poor domestic circumstances ................................................................. 176
5.5.5 Financial difficulties .............................................................................. 178
5.5.6 The need for parental guidance ............................................................... 180
5.5.7 Parents in need of support ...................................................................... 182
5.5.8 Immigrant parents ................................................................................ 185
5.5.9 Parents without a sense of responsibility .................................................. 186
5.5.10 Community involvement ........................................................................ 189
5.5.11 The role of the school .......................................................................... 191

5.6 SUBQUESTIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND EMERGING THEMES OF
THE DATA ANALYSIS .................................................................................... 195
5.6.1 The kind of life skills displayed by the learners in their current behaviour
at school ........................................................................................................ 195
5.6.2 The nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills
development of the learners in the school ................................................. 196
5.6.3 Possible reasons why some families are not involved in the life skills
development of the learners in the school ................................................. 197
5.6.4 Barriers that prevent families from getting involved in the life skills
development at school ................................................................................ 198
5.6.5 Guidelines that can be implemented to improve the involvement of families
in the life skills development at school ...................................................... 200

5.7 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................. 202

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............ 203
6.1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................... 204
6.2 FINDINGS WITH REGARDS TO THE SUBAIMS OF THE MAIN RESEARCH
AIM .................................................................................................................. 205
6.2.1 The kind of life skills displayed by the learners in their current behaviour at
school ............................................................................................................. 205
6.2.2 The nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills
development of the learners in the school ................................................. 206
6.2.3 Possible reasons why some families are not involved in the life skills
development of the learners in the school ................................................. 207
6.2.4 Barriers that prevent some families from involvement in the life skills
6.2.5 Guidelines that can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school ........................................ 209

6.3 GUIDELINES FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A 5-STEP PLAN ................................................. 211
6.3.1 Step 1: Support to families in need .............................................. 214
6.3.2 Step 2: Parental guidance .......................................................... 216
6.3.3 Step 3: Parental support ............................................................ 217
6.3.4 Step 4: Community involvement .................................................. 219
6.3.5 Step 5: The role of the school ...................................................... 222

6.4 POSSIBLE BARRIERS IN THE EXECUTION OF THE 5-STEP PLAN........ 225

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY ......................................................... 226

6.6 SUMMARY OF STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY .. 228

6.7 CONCLUSION ................................................................. 230

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................. 232

ADDENDUM A ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE ........................................ 257
ADDENDUM B LETTERS FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT A SCHOOL (WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT) .... 258
ADDENDUM C PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL (WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT) .... 263
ADDENDUM D LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL (PRINCIPAL) .................................................. 265
ADDENDUM E INVITATION TO PARENTS TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH ... 267
ADDENDUM F PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM ................................. 269
ADDENDUM G INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARTICIPANTS ............... 270
ADDENDUM H DECLARATION: EDITING .................................................. 272
ADDENDUM I DECLARATION: REFERENCES ............................................ 273
ADDENDUM J QUESTIONS DISCUSSED IN THE INTERVIEWS............... 274
ADDENDUM K MATRIX OF PARTICIPANTS’ RESPONSES AND EMERGING THEMES................................................................. 276
CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND MOTIVATION: FAMILY\(^1\) INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children’s education and development.

( Epstein, 2010: 81)

---

1 The term “family” is used together with the word "parents" in this thesis for two reasons: Firstly, Lickona (1996:93) uses “family” instead of “parents” in his definition of character education. Secondly, several learners in my school stay with foster parents, grandparents, other family members or caregivers who are not parents in the biological sense of the word, but form the intimate and stable group that provide for the child(ren). By using the term “family” instead of “parents”, I hope not to exclude any form of family.
1.1 INTRODUCTION

De Klerk-Luttig (2009:10) wrote that we as a South African community have lost our moral codes; that there is a hole in our moral ozone layer and it is harmful. Lange (2001:7) concurs, “I believe it is fair to state that the South Africa of today is facing a crisis of morality, demoralizing every aspect of society.”

In this chapter the importance of the family’s involvement in life skills development at school will be highlighted. Life skills development does not happen in isolation, so the problem statement will pose the bigger problem of uninvolved parents who do not work as partners with the school (and community) in the life skills development of their children. The review on scholarly literature will name the different concepts regarding life skills development (including values, character and morals) and show that these concepts are in addition to one another, rather than being interchangeable concepts with the same meaning. Programmes for life skills development and values education will also be reviewed in the scholarly literature. The motivation for the study will be followed by an overview of my conceptual framework – Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological theory (1977; 1994) - as well as Maslow’s motivation theory (Maslow, 1943: 372 – 382) that supplements the theory of Bronfenbrenner and the Essential 55 rules (Clark, 2003) which are implemented as a practical example of life skills in the school where the study is undertaken. The aim of the study is to investigate possible guidelines that can improve the involvement of families in the learners’ life skills development.

In Paragraph 1.8 the qualitative research design I plan to use (Creswell, 2009: 4), the interpretive paradigm that will lead my thoughts, the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches I plan to use as well as my research method (autoethnography) will be explained. Attention will also be paid to the social network selection for my study, participants who will be involved in the study, data generation and data analysis, ethical aspects and the contribution of the study. The chapter ends with a short explanation of the

---

2 I use the term "life skills" throughout this document regarding the skills and abilities that enable a person to succeed in everyday life and in different environments; the attitudes and skills that are necessary for healthy choices and positive behaviour to deal efficiently with the challenges of everyday life. I refer to the school subject Life Skills only when explicitly stating that the curriculum is under discussion.
In a report by the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) of South Africa, (South Africa. Government Communication and Information Services, 2000), the deputy Minister of Education used the phrase “sitting on a moral time-bomb”. According to the deputy Minister of Education, common manifestations of the moral crisis in South Africa include murder, robbery and theft, rape, women and child abuse, domestic violence, fraud, drug trafficking, devaluation of people, breakdown of the family as a fundamental social institution, lack of will to resist evil, corruption, dishonesty and lack of moral guidance and role models in the teaching profession.

In this context it can be said that morals are the kind of behaviour that is approved by society, and that the above manifestations of the ‘moral crisis’ are indicative of immoral behaviour – as opposed to society’s accepted code of behaviour. Life skills development\(^3\) in primary school, as set out in school policy and as described in the school subject Life Skills, can “play an important role in equipping learners with knowledge, skills and values (physically, intellectually, personally, emotionally and socially)” (DoBE, 2012:10\(^4\)) to help them behave in a moral way as well as deal with the above immoral issues that they encounter in their lives. Behaving in a morally accepted way and dealing with other people’s (im)moral behaviour should therefore be taught in the family, in the first instance, at pre- and primary school level, and also in the Life Skills subject in primary school, as indeed set out in the Life Skills Curriculum of the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (hereafter referred to as CAPS) Grades R – 12 (DoBE, 2012). The school’s own policy and implementation regarding life skills development will be discussed in full in Chapter 3.

\(^3\) In the school where the study is undertaken, the school has a life skills policy, based on Clark's (2003) Essential 55 which is applied in addition to the Life Skills curriculum. Life skills in this specific school encompasses Life Skills as a subject in the National Curriculum (CAPS), life skills in the day to day encounter with fellow learners, as well as the school’s application of Clark’s Essential 55.

\(^4\) In the Reference Section DoBE is listed under: South Africa. Department of Basic Education (DoBE).
At the school where I teach, however, I experience a lack of involvement in some families. I see how parents and families leave young children waiting unsupervised at school for hours before they pick them up after school, how attendance at parent evenings gets less every year, how communication between the families and the educators declines as the years pass and how suggestions from me as a teacher towards parents on how to improve learners’ academic work/behaviour/diligence towards schoolwork go unnoticed. It seems to me as if some families in my school do not really care about their children anymore. As one parent (the mother of a gangster) put it to me a couple of years ago: It is the school’s responsibility to educate her child and teach him manners.

In the light of this context, the problem statement for this study is to find guidelines that can assist and support the families to become more involved in the life skills development of the learners in a primary school.

1.3 REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

In the discussion of life skills and the development of life skills, the reader will also come across the closely related concepts values, character and morals. These concepts and life skills are very similar in meaning, as they complement one another. Therefore clarification of the four terms has to be done in order to prevent confusion in the review of the literature to follow. For explanatory purposes I would present the concepts of values, character, morals and life skills in a linear depiction, as a person’s values could theoretically be seen as the basis on which the person’s character develops, which in turn shapes the person’s morals, all of which together can be viewed as life skills, which eventually manifest in the person’s behaviour:

Values → character → morals → life skills → behaviour

Such a linear development of these aspects in a person’s development is, however, rarely the case; more realistically these aspects develop in an intertwined and complex way; hence these concepts mostly occur alternately in literature.
1.3.1 Life skills, morals, character and values

Pendleton (2007:48, 49) describes general life skills, such as promptness, work ethic, respect, commitment and responsibility, as skills that enable a person to achieve success in life. These skills can be regarded as life skills as well as values [which Halstead (1996:5) describes as the principles that guide our behaviour]. On the other hand, it can also be said that these life skills are based on other values such as honesty, pride and self-realisation. In my opinion life skills have values as well as morals [which are concerned with the choices of right and wrong, good or bad (Thompson, 1995:883)] as basis. In other words, I see life skills, morals and values as different concepts. Life skills are based on a person’s morals and values, and moral behaviour can be seen as the manifestation of a person’s values. The three concepts therefore cannot be separated. Hence, when I refer to life skills development, in general as well as in the school subject, it will include both values education and moral education. The education for character – teaching a child to act upon his values (Elbot, Fulton and Evan, 2003:1) – will also be included in the development of a child’s life skills and will therefore be discussed together with life skills programmes in Chapter 2.

In this regard, the concept life skills encompasses values, character and morals, because the abovementioned life skills of promptness, work ethic, respect, commitment and responsibility, can also be viewed as manifestations of moral behaviour as based on a person’s character, morals and values. Life skills development therefore encompasses value education, character education and moral education, all of which are described in literature as concepts that are interrelated but not synonyms.

1.3.2 Values education

Mergler and Spooner-Lane (2012: 67) writes that "...there are different terms used for values education in the literature – moral education, character education, personal and social education, citizenship education, civic education and religious education". It might be true that these terms are mistakenly used for values education, but it is not true that these terms are synonymous for values education (as discussed in paragraph 1.3.1).
Values education is "...an open initiative in education for the development and actualization of values" (İscan, 2015: 192). Values education helps young people to choose and develop the values (behaviour standards agreed upon and shared by most people in a society) they deem important to maintain a satisfactory quality of life (Oğuz, 2012: 1320, 1321). As learners develop their own values and construct their own meaning, teachers support the process of meaning making. "In constructivism and critical pedagogy, teachers do not directly transfer values to children because it is the students' job to construct their own meaning and develop their own values" (İscan, 2015: 193). Nielsen (2005: 4) points out that indoctrination can be defined as "(a) one is told what to do or think, (b) provided with no reasons, and (c) given no alternatives". Values education without indoctrination would mean that the teacher or parent has to provide reason and alternatives when teaching the preferred core values. The choice of values taught in a school depends on the specific society, as there is no universal answer as to which values should be taught. For a more lengthy discussion on the definition of the concept ‘values’, I refer to Paragraph 2.2.1.1.

1.3.3 Character education

The concept ‘character’ is defined in Paragraph 2.2.1.2. The education for character is described by Lickona (1996:93) as a comprehensive approach that includes the school, family as well as community in the quest for moral education. According to Lickona (1996:93) character education can be defined as “the deliberate effort by schools, families, and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values”. According to this definition, character education cannot be taught by the school only, it is also dependent upon the family and the community. Family involvement therefore can be viewed as a crucial characteristic of effective character education, due to the fact that it is one of the three pillars of character education, according to Lickona’s definition (Berkowitz and Bier, 2005:64), namely the family, the school and the community.

Like Lickona, I prefer the term “family” rather than "parents", as I have learners in my class who are living with caregivers or foster parents and not their biological parents. There are also learners in extended families. Richter, Amoateng and Makiwane (2003:10) define family as “...a group of people who are related to each other through marriage, blood, birth
or adoption...” and conclude that “...families may be complex or multi-generational and simple or nuclear in nature”. According to Richter, Amoateng and Makiwane (2003), families can be seen as social units that are interdependent, relatively stable over time, have their own identity and perform supportive tasks like the generation of an income, the socialisation and education of children and the care of dependent family members (older people, children, sick or disabled people) (Richter, Amoateng and Makiwane, 2003:10,11).

Lickona stresses that character education involves the heart (emotions), hand (actions) and mind (knowledge), and that it “helps students know ‘the good’, value it and act upon it” (Lickona, 1996:96). This description of character education as an approach that involves a child’s emotions, actions and knowledge, is in accordance with the view of the Life Skills curriculum in the CAPS document, namely that learners should develop holistically (emotionally, cognitively and in their actions).

1.3.4 Moral education

In Paragraph 2.2.1.3 ‘morals’ are described as the judgement of persons, actions, societies and behaviours in terms of what is believed to be right and wrong according to customs (Conradie, 2006:1, 2). Sherblom (2012: 122) writes about moral education, as the “gradually developed capacity to reflect upon what is right and wrong with all the emotional and intellectual resources of the human mind”. Lamprecht (2013:11) also focuses on the moral crisis that can develop when role models are absent in people’s lives and states that “many South Africans never had good role models in their life. About 90% of the prisoners in Pollsmoor said that they never had a strong fatherly role model. 80% of the women in jail reported that they have been sexually abused since they were very young.” Lockwood believes that “it is unrealistic to expect children to shift towards good character if the moral authority of parents is absent” (1997:16), and Halstead (1999:267) agrees that “not all families make a conscious effort to help children to behave morally, to learn moral values, to develop moral habits and moral reasoning...”

It is clear from these descriptions that character education and value education can be seen as integrated with moral education in terms of educating children towards personal moral reflection and moral reasoning (Althof and Berkowitz, 2006:508). Pipher (1997:157) also refers to the moral education of children as being about building character in the
young to make informed and responsible choices. Hence character education can be seen as an educational approach in which learners are taught to become independent moral thinkers. Researchers are of the opinion that the skills of moral reflection and moral reasoning should be part of all subjects in the curriculum (Althof and Berkowitz, 2006:510; Davies, Gorard and McGuinn, 2005:348).

1.3.5 Life skills education

These principles of value education, character education and moral education, as described in the literature above, are in line with the skills in the CAPS Life Skills Curriculum (DoBE, 2012:5). The CAPS Grades R – 12 (2012) replaced all previous Curriculum Statements of 2002, 2003 and 2005. CAPS Life Skills Grade R – 3 serves the purpose to “…ensure that the foundational skills, values and concepts of early childhood development and of the subjects offered in Grades 4 – 12 are taught and developed in Grades R – 3” (DoBE, 2011a). The CAPS Life Skills Curriculum Grade 4–6 aims to equip learners with values and skills that are necessary for “self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country” (DoBE, 2012: 3, 4). It also aims to produce learners who are able to, amongst others, “identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking” (DoBE, 2012:5). In grade 7 the focus of the CAPS Life Orientation Curriculum is “…the development of self-in-society. It promotes self-motivation and teaches learners how to apply goal-setting, problem-solving and decision-making strategies. Learners are guided to develop their full potential and are provided with opportunities to make informed choices regarding peer pressure, substance abuse, respect for other religions, personal and environmental health, study opportunities and future careers” (DoBE, 2011b:8).

In general, the CAPS Curriculum for Life Skills aims at developing life skills that will assist the learner to become independent and play an active and responsible role in society. “Learners are equipped with the skills that will assist them to deal with challenging situations positively. ... They learn values such as respect for the rights of others and tolerance for cultural and religious diversity in order to build a democratic society” (DoBE, 2012:10). The promoted life skills (problem solving, group work, collection and organizing of data, responsibility towards the environment and responsibility towards each other)
(DoBE, 2012:5) are based on values such as honesty, diligence, trustworthiness, loyalty, respect and responsibility.

As described in literature, values, character and morals are all part of life skills, and all figure in the Life Skills Curriculum as indicated above. Hence, in this research where the concept ‘life skills’ is used, it will include values, character and morals. The education for life skills is not done randomly. There are international programmes for life skills development and values education that can be adapted for the South African context. The involvement of families and barriers in parental involvement are also supported by models that can be adjusted for a South African context. These programmes and models will be discussed in Paragraph 1.3.6 and in Chapter 2.

1.3.6 Programmes for values education, life skills development and parental involvement

In this subsection of Chapter 1, I will first give an overview of three programmes for values education and life skills development. These programmes will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2. Then follows three models for parental involvement and a model for the barriers in parental involvement. These models will also be discussed more extensively in Chapter 2.

1.3.6.1 Programmes for values education and life skills development

The Essential 55 (Clark, 2003) is used as practical life skills taught by the school where I teach and where I plan to conduct the study. In his book, The Essential 55, Clark provides 55 guidelines (or rules, as he calls them) which he accumulated over a few years of teaching to change apathetic children into motivated learners. These 55 rules vary from basic good manners to life skills. Our school uses a choice of ten life skills out of the 55 rules (one for each week of the term). These rules are put up against the classroom walls, communicated to the parents in the weekly newspaper and discussed in the school’s weekly assembly. Clark (2003:165 – 171) bases these 55 rules on four principles: Children need and like structure, children will work hard for a teacher they like as a person, children want to know exactly what is expected of them, and children need to know that they are
cared for. In my research I want to investigate how the *Essential 55* used at our school can be implemented more successfully, with more families who support the school's effort and who also implement these life skills at their homes.

In other countries programmes for values education and life skills development are implemented collaboratively by departments of education, communities and families to enhance the life skills education of the learners. The *Head Start* programme (Paragraph 3.3) that is implemented in the United States of America is instrumental in getting parents involved in life skills education in schools (Hale, 2012:506 – 508; Currie and Thomas, 2000: 755 – 757). This federally funded programme began with President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in the USA who developed Head Start, a programme that provides health, education, nutrition and parental-involvement services to low-income children and their families. Studies undertook by Currie and Thomas (2000) indicated that the Head Start programme had a positive influence on the children’s academic performance. However, those studies also indicated that the socio-economic status of the schools played a role: Head Start learners who attended schools in better socio-economic areas performed better than the Head Start children who attended schools in poor socio-economic areas. The prerequisite, however, is that the example for the life skills taught in this programme is set at home, by the family. Thus the family can either confirm or jeopardise the life skills conveyed at school.

*Living Values: An Educational Program* (LVEP) is another international programme that contributes to life skills education (refer to Paragraph 3.4). LVEP started as a suggested international project by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University in 1995 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. Seven years later, in 2002, LVEP was used in 70 countries at schools, day-care centres, parent associations and refugee camps. The purpose of this programme is to assist teachers by providing a framework and guiding principles for life skills development in children of any age (even for adult education) as well as providing the educational material. LVEP focuses on twelve universal values (peace, respect, cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, love, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance and unity). The chosen values are a response to the need for values in a 21st century world where violence, social problems and a lack of respect for one another and the world around us are a reality (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004b: 250). LVEP
views the child as a unity comprising physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004a: 139) and therefore their programmes address these four dimensions. The approach followed by LVEP includes the building of intrapersonal and interpersonal social and emotional skills as well as values-based perspectives and behaviour. It involves the community by using parents, educators, caregivers and people in deprived situations such as street children (Living Values, 1996a).

The *United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)* plays an important role in the development of life skills programmes internationally, integrating the human rights-based approach to education for all with a child-centred approach (UNICEF⁵, 2012: 18). The UNICEF report of 2012 on life skills education will contribute to this study by supplying a thorough definition of life skills and by incorporating families and the community in their theoretical discussion of life skills education, as explained in paragraph 3.6. UNICEF defines life skills under three broad categories, namely cognitive skills (life skills necessary for responsible decision-making), personal skills (life skills necessary for self-awareness and self-management) and interpersonal skills (life skills needed for communication, teamwork, empathy) (UNICEF, 2012: 9). In addition to this definition, UNICEF included the definitions of the World Health Organisation (1999: 1) and the United States-based Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL⁶, 2015) for a coherent description of life skills which can serve as a solid starting point for this study.

### 1.3.6.2 Models for parental involvement

Values and life skills education has to be done with the parents and teachers as partners in education. A working relationship between these two (out of character education's three) pillars of education have to be established, complementing each other and not stepping into each other's world. When parents want to influence their child’s education, they enter a boundary into the teacher’s professional world. When teachers recommend families about what they should do to be better parents, they cross into the family's area (Davies, 1997:73). In an attempt to better understand the parent-teacher partnership, I will study three models for parental involvement.

---

⁵ In the Reference Section UNICEF is listed under: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).
⁶ In the Reference Section CASEL is listed under: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).
The first model for parental involvement is Epstein’s model, which will be described in more detail in Paragraph 2.3.2.1. Epstein (2010) developed a model to support and enhance the partnership between the school, family and the community. In her model she developed a framework for the six types of involvement between the school, family and community, namely parenting (helping families to establish home environments that support learning), communicating (communication as a two-way process between the school and families), volunteering (organising help and support from parents), learning at home (guidelines from the school to assist parents in helping their children at home), decision making (including parents in school decisions) and collaborating with the community (using sources from the community that can help both the school and the families).

A second model for parental involvement that will be discussed in Paragraph 2.3.2.2, is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model (1995, 1997). This model focuses on the role of the parent, why parents decide to become involved, different forms of parental involvement, mechanisms through which parental involvement influences the child's learning and mediating factors (strategies having to be appropriate to the child's development and fitting in between the school's demands and the parents' expectations).

Lastly there is the South African model for parental involvement by Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) who developed a framework for black parental involvement. Their model focuses on five strategies to enhance black parental involvement: making parents aware that their input is necessary for the school; informing parents of the school’s mission, vision and objectives; commitment where parents and teachers want to work together, and the coordination of activities and responsibilities and evaluation to determine any needs for improvement. This model is also discussed further in Paragraph 2.3.2.3.

1.3.6.3 Model for barriers in parental involvement

The programmes discussed in this paragraph highlight the importance of the school-parent partnership. Therefore the model of Hornby and Lafaele (2011) which aims to identify and explain barriers to parental involvement also has to be taken into account. This model,
which is described in Paragraph 2.3.3, divides the barriers into four areas, namely parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors and societal factors.

With this research I want to investigate how these programmes and models can assist in developing guidelines (see Chapter 6) that can support the school-parent partnership and the involvement in life skills education by as many families as possible.

1.4 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

I am teaching at a primary school in the Western Cape. The school hosts 884 learners from Grades 1 – 7, including a diversity of cultures, races, religions and languages. (The background of the school will be described in more detail in Paragraph 5.3.) Over the past decade I have observed how the life skills of the children in the school have changed and how the parents’ involvement in their children’s life skills development, and education in general, has declined. I wanted to know why it happened that the children and the parents’ involvement changed over time. I wanted to understand what the reasons were for this change and what, if anything, could be done to reverse this situation. As I was already involved in the situation, already being an insider in the situation I wanted to research, I am "...not a separate entity detached from research but a central part of culturally others living in a sociocultural context of research work" (Qutoshi, 2016: 164).

The problem that I encountered in the school was that the parents or caregivers seemingly were either not aware of or simply did not want to support the school’s life skills development programme. I saw in the afternoons that there were learners who had to go home to communities where some of them were confronted by gangs, gang fights, violence, poverty, drugs and other conditions totally unfavourable for a child’s development.

For me to understand the seemingly indifference to life skills development of some of the children and their families, it would be necessary to understand the context within which the families of these children lived, what their attitudes towards the learners’ life skills development in school were, what formed the network of the social rules in their communities that caused the phenomenon of family involvement (or the absence thereof) in their children’s lives.
It sounds as if I am teaching at a school for at risk children only, which is not the case. There are families that operate perfectly “normal”, as described by Richter, Amoateng and Makiwane (2003) in paragraph 1.3.3. Unfortunately there are also households (that I am aware of) where children are being abused by parents, family members or by the mother’s boyfriend or friend. There are families of the learners in my class where the mother abandoned her children and left them for grandparents or other family members to raise. Some of the children in the school can describe in detail how the gangs operate in their neighbourhood and that they have to be in the house at a certain time of the day because it is too dangerous to be out on the streets. Some of the children have lost a parent in a gang fight where the parent was killed inside their house by a random shot. There are learners who have family members who are involved in gangs or who are drug dealers. There are several learners who have a single parent working in a low-paid job with long hours, like car watching. The parent is seldom at home and the children never know when there will be food on the table. There are learners who carry the full responsibility for their younger siblings, waking them up in the mornings and making sure that they come to school, even when the parent(s) are at home. A number of children have to grow up in a household where there is only one parent, due to divorce or the death of the other parent. Then there are parents who couldn’t care less whether their children are properly dressed or fed or given food for the seven hours they spend at school during the day. Sadly, what I describe here is not hearsay, but the circumstances of children who have been in my class the past few years.

It is not surprising that situations, as described in the previous paragraph, have a direct impact on morality. According to Swartz (2010:314) children who grow up in circumstances as those mentioned above, will probably “lack moral reasoning ability (and) personal responsibility for moral (or immoral) action”. Affouneh (2007:344) agrees with Swartz that “conflict affects children not only physically and socially but also in terms of their moral development”. The children can be influenced by the violence, hatred and aggression in conflict situations, which some of them encounter daily. I asked myself how values could be upheld by parents in such circumstances. Is it possible, for instance, to teach children about reconciliation and forgiveness when violence and killing continue to be part of their everyday experience? Richter, Amoateng and Makiwane (2003:21) report that “(t)here is a
gap between idealization of the family and the reality which affects all South African communities as they find themselves living in conditions which make it difficult to actualize cherished beliefs about what families are and should be”. It is this gap that I, and my colleagues at the school, is confronted with daily as we try to teach children who often come from really horrible conditions. Declining family involvement is the order of the day. There can be numerous reasons for the declining involvement: single-parent families, children who stay with grandparents or other family members, parents who have to work so hard to earn a living that there simply is no time left to spend with the children, parents who neglect their children, parents involved in criminal activities, child abuse in some families, cultural variables – the list is endless.

Having seen these circumstances year by year motivated me to undertake a study in order to understand why some families seemingly did not want to, or were not able to, join the school as partners in their children's life skills development that would “assist them to become independent ... in responding to life’s challenges and to play an active and responsible role in society” (DoBE, 2012:10). It is difficult to teach the learners to do their schoolwork if the families at home do not model values like respect and responsibility themselves. I find it difficult to teach respect if I know that some children have to witness violence in the family when they are at home, or when some children’s families are involved in drugs – either using or selling. And it is difficult (and maybe unfair) to teach a child to do his homework and to be motivated to do his best at school, when that child sits in class worrying about his mother being beaten regularly by his father.

As a teacher I must regard the caregivers of the learners as their in loco parentis, whether it is the grandmother, the uncle or aunt, or any other family member or even unrelated person who looks after the child. I also want to be able to help them become “active participants in the life of the school, they must feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what the children are doing in school” (Padak and Rasinski, 2010:294). But to be able to help them, I have to understand the barriers that prevent them from being fully involved in their children's life skills development.

Carolyn Ellis (2004:37 – 380) best describes the research I plan to undertake by comparing it to a wide angle lens, focusing forward on the society and culture I plan to
investigate, and then focusing backward on my own personal experience. By focusing forward and backward, zooming inward and outward, I hope to develop guidelines infused with both objectively collected data and my subjective experience and understanding of the phenomenon of involvement in life skills education.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the light of the introduction and the motivation of the study as described, the main question to be investigated is:

*How can families become more involved in the life skills development of learners in a primary school?*

The subquestions of this main question are:

- What kind of life skills do the learners show in their current behaviour at school?
- What is the nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills development of the learners in the school?
- Why are some families not involved in the life skills development of the learners in the school?
- What are the barriers that prevent families from involvement in the life skills development at school?
- Which guidelines can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school?

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The main purpose of my research is therefore to investigate how families can become more involved in the life skills development of learners in a primary school.

The subaims for this main aim are the following:

- Describe the kind of life skills displayed by the learners in their current behaviour at the school.
- Observe and explain the nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills development at school.
development of the learners in the school.

- Understand and describe possible reasons why some families are not involved in the life skills development of the learners in the school.
- Identify barriers that prevent some families from involvement in the life skills development at school.
- Suggest guidelines that can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school.

1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner provides the conceptual framework for my study. But in the light of Paragraph 1.4 where I describe the circumstances in which some of the children of the school have to live every day, I deem it necessary to supplement Bronfenbrenner’s theory with Maslow’s motivation theory. Bronfenbrenner’s theory explains the influence of the microsystem (including the child’s family and community) on a child’s development, but the motivation that a child has to learn life skills when living in dire circumstances in this microsystem, is described by Maslow. Therefore the two theories will both be discussed in this study.

Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1994 and Rosa and Tudge, 2013) sheds some light on the role of the family as context in the development of the child’s intellectual, social, psychological and moral development. According to this theory the family is the primary context in which children develop, with the other settings being *inter alia* the school, the neighbourhood and the wider community including religious communities, the parents’ workplace, local government, cultural communities and so forth, all of which influence each other reciprocally.

Bronfenbrenner’s theory confirms the definition of character education as described in Paragraph 1.3.3, as his theory emphasises the interconnectedness of the school, community and family as partners in the educational process. Bronfenbrenner indicated that not only do processes inside the family influence children’s character or moral development, but also conditions outside the family. According to Bronfenbrenner (1986: 371) our world consists of five systems of interaction: (1) Microsystems, (2) Mesosystems,
A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles and interpersonal relations that occur in the immediate environment – the family. Berry (1995: 379, 380) also views the family system as the central focus of influence in a child’s life. Former President Mandela (1994: 437) also expressed concern about what could go wrong in this microsystem: “Poverty and breakdown of family life have secondary effects. Children wander about in the streets of the townships because they have no schools to go to, or no money to enable them to go to a school, or no parents at home to see that they go to school... This leads to a breakdown in moral standards, to an alarming rise in illegitimacy, and to growing violence which erupts not only politically, but everywhere.”

The mesosystem comprises the interaction between microsystems, including the relations between home and school and school and workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 40).

The exosystem lies outside the family and does not directly involve the family but can affect or be affected by the family, and it includes the school system and wider social system; also health care and the mass media, according to Berry (1995: 380) and Bronfenbrenner (1977: 515).

The macrosystem includes traditions and ideologies which form a part of social identity. This larger system of cultural beliefs, political trends and ‘community happenings’, acts as “a powerful source of energy in our lives”, according to Swick and Williams (2006: 372) and Bronfenbrenner (1994: 40).

The chronosystem examines “…the influence on the person’s development of changes (and continuities) over time in the environments in which the person is living” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986: 724). Berry (1995: 380) states that these systems “can be visualised as concentric circles surrounding the family”.

When using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, I will use his full theory in its developed form which deals with the four key concepts of process, person, context and time (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield and Karnik, 2009). I will take...
into account the interaction between the child and his family, friends and environment. Past experience, skills and motivation will also be considered, as well as the environment (context) within which the child and family live. Time includes short periods of time (a lesson, a year in my class, seven years in our school), as well as development over extended periods of time. The influence that the challenging circumstances under which some families live has on a child’s development, is explained by Bronfenbrenner. But the extent to which these circumstances influence a child’s motivation to acquire more and better life skills, is explained by Maslow (1943) and his motivation theory.

Maslow's motivation theory supplements Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory. I mentioned in Paragraph 1.4 that there are children at the school who suffer from poverty and violence at home or violence in the community. The motivation that a child has to learn life skills when living in dire circumstances is described by Maslow, as discussed in Paragraph 2.2.4.

Maslow's motivation theory (1943: 372 – 382) is based on a hierarchy of the needs that he proposed. According to this theory people's needs motivate their actions. These needs are only motivators as long as they are not met. When the need is met, it no longer is a motivator and the person moves on to the next level of needs. The needs move from basic needs to higher level needs. The five levels of needs are:

- physiological needs (breathing, food, water, clothing)
- safety needs (security, safety, family, health)
- belongingness and love (family, relationships, friends)
- esteem needs (self-esteem, self-respect)
- self-actualisation (the need to achieve your full potential)

The self-actualisation needs were later expanded into cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, self-actualisation and selftranscendence (D'Souza and Gurin, 2016: 213), but for the purpose of this study the focus will be on physiological needs and safety needs which Maslow calls the Basic needs, or the B-needs (being needs). These needs are "of primary importance when they are not met" (Harrigan and Commons, 2015: 24).
Bronfenbrenner and Maslow’s theories can contribute to understanding the involvement of families in the life skills education of the learners in my school, the influence of the school, families and community on the development of life skills of the child, and possible reasons why some children seemingly do not develop positive life skills.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research design

I regard the qualitative research design as best suitable for my research as I want to observe and understand the meanings that specific people ascribe to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009:4). In this study it is the family involvement in life skills education of the learners in a primary school.

As qualitative research embodies exploring, understanding and describing, I work within the interpretive paradigm. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007(a):58) “(i)nterpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics”. Therefore I will use a predominantly hermeneutic phenomenological approach in my search for truthful knowledge, where I understand hermeneutics as “the subjective understanding or interpretation (Verstehen) of human action” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:30). Phenomenology, as a “study of direct experience taken at face value” (Cohen, Manison and Morrison, 2007: 18) is a valuable approach within the interpretive paradigm, as it supports the subjective understanding of behaviour. In order to understand the family involvement in life skills education, it is also important for me to understand internal relations amongst family, school, community, parents’ work, history of the family and cultural group. This is what Nieuwenhuis (2007(a): 59) refers to as the hermeneutic circle: “(T)he way in which, in understanding and interpretation, part and whole are related in a circular way... in order to understand the whole it is necessary to understand the parts, and vice versa.” Carr and Kemmis (1986: 84) agree that society is not a total of independent systems, but that the different systems must be seen and understood as dependent upon one another in order to work within the interpretive paradigm; ...the crucial character of social reality is that it possesses an intrinsic meaning structure that is constituted and sustained through the routine interpretive activities of its individual members.”
1.8.2 Method

In my research I used autoethnography, a method and a form of writing that falls between anthropology and literature studies (Wall, 2008: 38; Denshire, 2014: 831). Synonyms for autoethnography used in literature include auto-anthropology, auto-biographical ethnography or sociology and self-narrative research and writing (Anderson, 2006: 373).

The word autoethnography comprises three aspects: auto (which means self, thus pointing to a personal experience), ethno (sociocultural or cultural experience) and graphy (writing). Autoethnography is therefore a research and writing method that explores, and aims to understand personal experiences where the researcher is living in the sociocultural context of the research work (Qutoshi, 2015: 168).

The researcher is personally involved in the field of research. Therefore the researcher writes in the first person (using "I"), reflecting on his own experiences in the particular group he was part of. "When researchers write autoethnographies, they seek to produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience. They accomplish this by first discerning patterns of cultural experience evidenced by field notes, interviews, and/or artefacts, and then describing these patterns using facets of storytelling (e.g. character and plot development)" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 5). The personal writing style of autoethnography "...wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act ... to put culture or society into motion" (Ellis and Bochner, 2006: 5).

There has been critique that autoethnography is "...a turn toward blurred genres of writing, a heightened self-reflexivity in ethnographic research, an increased focus on emotion in the social sciences..." (Anderson, 2006: 373). It is therefore important that autoethnography should still follow good research practice and use research strategies like "note-taking, memory work, narrative writing, observation and interview" (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington, 2008: 22).

Ellis and Bochner (2006: 5) prefer autoethnography that "embraces intimate involvement". They use performative, artistic and poetic texts (2006: 7) like stories, fiction and narrative
as a means to analyse and theorise. Anderson (2006: 374) refers to Ellis and Bochner's use of autoethnography as evocative or emotional autoethnography (Anderson, 2006: 374). On the other hand, Anderson prefers an alternative to evocative autoethnography, one that he describes as analytic autoethnography. As I feel more comfortable with this version of autoethnography, analytic autoethnography is the method that I will use in my qualitative research. Anderson (2006: 375) defines analytic autoethnography as follows: "...ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group... (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena."

1.8.3 Site or social network selection

One primary school in the Western Cape will be selected as the site for the research. The selected school is the one where I teach and where I experience personally the social context in which the study is conveyed. The Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in the school is mainly English Home Language: for each Grade there are three English Home Language classes and one Afrikaans Home Language class, although the English learners are not all raised with English as their mother tongue. Some of the learners are Afrikaans speaking but their parents prefer them to be in an English class. Some of the English learners come from other provinces in South Africa, or even other countries in Africa, and are French, IsiXhosa, Zulu or Sotho speaking. The English Home Language used in the classes is therefore not the home language of all the learners.

From a socio-economic point of view, the school population is diverse. They come mostly from very poor to middle-class families. Some of the learners come from areas like Khayelitsha and Elsies River, which are informal settlements or low socio-economic housing areas. These are learners whose families prefer to send them further away from home to a school with seemingly higher educational and disciplinary standards than the schools closer to home. These learners commute by taxi, bus or train and have to get up very early every morning to be in time for school. They are the very learners who encounter problems when there are bus or taxi strikes, as often occur in these areas.
1.8.4 Participants

The participants are all the families of the school who are willing to participate, as well as all the teachers who are also willing to participate in the action research. The participants are divided into four groups: Group 1 consists of 23 parents who took part in semi-structured individual interviews. Group 2 includes four colleagues who were also interviewed individually in semi-structured interviews. Group 3 is a focus group of nine colleagues, and Group 4 is a focus group of the School Governing Body. In Paragraph 5.4, I discuss in full the participants of the study, as well as how and why I have chosen them.

1.8.5 Data generation

“The data generation will include collecting information through interviews, observations and documents as data sources (Creswell, 2009: 178). Data will be generated in the following ways (Creswell, 2009: 121):

- Interviews will be conducted face-to-face with the families and colleagues, and through focus-group interviews with my colleagues and the School Governing Body.
- Observations will be made, during school times and during interviews, on participants’ behaviour, activities in the school, or any other relevant occurrences at the research site. Observations will be recorded in field notes.
- Documents to be studied and analysed will include public documents like policy documents, newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports and learners’ progress reports; also private documents like personal journals, letters or e-mails where relevant, with permission from the participants.

1.8.6 Data analysis

Data analysis (also refer to Paragraph 4.7) is performed within the interpretive paradigm and discussed in Chapter 5. “Qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative (non-linear) process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined and not merely a number of successive steps” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(c): 99,100).
It is therefore necessary to go back to my original field notes from time to time to verify my conclusions or to go back to the participants to gather more information or verify the information I have collected (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(c): 100).

Content analysis will comprise of an analysis of the above-mentioned documents as well as transcripts made of interviews. Creswell (2009:185 – 189) suggests the following steps in data analysis:

- Organise the data for analysis (transcribing interviews, typing up field notes, sorting and arranging data).
- Read through the data to obtain a general sense of the information.
- Begin a detailed analysis with the coding process.
- Use the coding process to generate a detailed description of the people involved.

1.8.7 Trustworthiness

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all research requirements are adhered to in terms of applicable and accurate data generation and analysis strategies, so that the results and findings can be accepted as a true version of the whole process and the outcome thereof. Camiré, Trudel and Bernard describe trustworthiness as the attempt to increase the credibility of the interpretations and findings (2013: 193). One method of ensuring correctness or validity of results and findings is triangulation – the use of various sources of data generation and data interpretation (refer to Paragraph 4.8.1).

Creswell (2009: 191,192) recommends strategies to help the researcher to assess the accuracy of the findings as well to convince the readers of the accuracy or validity of the findings, including member checking, by taking back the final report or specific descriptions or themes to the participants and determine whether the participants feel that the work is accurate. The use of rich, thick descriptions also helps to convey findings by providing detailed descriptions or as many perceptions as possible. Presenting the negative or discrepant information helps to add to the credibility of the findings, as the findings become more realistic. Another strategy to assess the accuracy of findings, is to spend prolonged time in the field, as it helps the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of the
phenomenon. Ask a peer to review, discuss and ask you questions about the study to help assess whether the findings are as accurate as you thought. Finally, the use of an external auditor at the finalisation stage of the research (a person who has not been involved in the research itself but who can provide an objective assessment of the research) is a valuable strategy to assess accuracy of the research findings.

1.8.8 The role of the researcher

I am a teacher and will also be the researcher in the school. As such I have the privilege to be a part of the group of people who will be the topic of my research, and with whom I plan to get even more involved as I already am in my day-to-day encounters at the school. As autoethnographer I can use my personal experience at the school and with the community together with the theory and accumulated data to analyse, understand and explain the phenomenon of parental involvement in life skills development. I have an intimate knowledge of the school setting and of the learners I work with. It will be necessary to distance myself from my role as teacher and any subjective feelings towards the learners and families, and to be the researcher able to do the interpretations from the participants’ viewpoints. However, as teacher I still need to abide by the rules of the organisation I am a part of – the school.

As researcher I can bring skills and insights that other participants might not have. But it might also be necessary for me as researcher to step back, listen and learn when the participants involved define their needs and contribute their knowledge of a situation of which they know more (Babbie, 2013:342).

1.8.9 Ethical aspects of the research

The following ethical principles will be adhered to in the research:

- Ethical clearance had to be obtained from the Ethical Committee of North West University.
- The Western Cape Education Department granted permission for research in this particular school.
- The school’s principal granted permission for the research.
• The school and participants are kept anonymous in any reports and confidentiality are maintained – only the researcher and participating teachers know who the participants are. The raw data is not accessible to people not involved in the study.

• Families as well as the teachers participating in the research signed a written consent that they had taken part voluntarily, that they could withdraw from the research at any time without being penalised, and that they understood the aim of the research.

1.8.10 Limitations of the study

The study is about one school in one province only and the results may not be transferable to other schools in different contexts. Another limitation include the language barrier: There are a group of parents who are neither English nor Afrikaans Home Language speakers. Their ability to communicate with me via an additional language might have an influence on the quality of interviews. Scheduling a time for interviews might also limit the participants, as some parents work very late and are dependent on public transport. It can be problematic to arrange an interview with those parents; however, I will do my best to interview a group of parents that represent the varied parent population of the school. In Paragraph 5.4 I will describe the participants and limitations in the choice of participants in more detail.

1.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

1.9.1 To the discipline

The thesis will contribute to knowledge expansion on the implementation of the CAPS Life Skills Curriculum by way of developing new knowledge about family involvement in life skills development in schools. The main purpose of this research, however, is to investigate how families can become more involved in the life skills development of learners at a primary school. I hope to make fellow educators aware of all the factors influencing the teaching and parental involvement of life skills development, and to help fellow educators understand that life skills development cannot be viewed one-dimensionally as a single subject in the CAPS document at school only.
1.9.2 To research in the faculty

I will contribute to the Community-based Educational Research (COMBER) project by adding new knowledge about family involvement in the life skills development of learners in a primary school.

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1: Orientation, problem statement and motivation

This chapter serves as orientation for the rest of this study. The problem of a hole in our moral ozone layer, the values and life skills needed to prevent bigger societal problems, and the lack of parental involvement and support in the school's attempts to teach children life skills, are brought forward. The research question is formulated and the research design and method are discussed briefly. A more in-depth discussion of the research design and method will follow in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2: Life skills in different contexts

This chapter will discuss life skills in four different contexts: 1) as a concept among related concepts, 2) within the context of the family, 3) in the context of the school and 4) in the context of the National Curriculum (CAPS).

Chapter 3: Life skills development in different educational landscapes

Chapter 3 is an extension of Chapter 2. The conceptual framework for the study, Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory, is discussed and supplemented with Maslow’s Motivation Theory. Then different life skills and/or values education programmes that correspond with the four contexts of life skills as set out in Chapter 2, are discussed. These educational programmes and/or approaches are Character Education (context 1: life skills as a concept), the Head Start Program (context 2: life skills within the family), the Essential 55 (context 3: life skills at school), Living Values: an Educational Program
(context 3: life skills at school), and UNICEF (context 4: Life Skills and the National Curriculum).

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

This chapter provides an explanation of the world-view of the researcher, the research methodology, the study population and sampling and data generation.

Chapter 5: Data analysis

The data collected through interviews, document analysis, literature study and participant observation is now brought together and analysed and compared with supportive literature. Emerging themes in the data analysis are compared to the subquestions of the research to determine whether the subquestions have been answered by the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, findings and recommendations

Guidelines are suggested to support parental involvement in life skills education at the school that I used for my study. I suggest activities that can be implemented, based on school-based and home-based parental involvement. Suggestions are also made to support those parents with barriers preventing them to become involved in life skills education. There is also a discussion on future possibilities for further study proceeding from this study.

1.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the focus is on a need for life skills education together with the partnership of parents, school and community. In Chapter 2 the concept of life skills will be studied in four different contexts in which it presents itself in the lives of our children.
CHAPTER 2
LIFE SKILLS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Life skills education provides knowledge, skills, values and attitudes by means of the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and with others, and learning to be.

(Delors et al., 1996: 22 – 25)
2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will discuss life skills in different contexts. The first context is (a), where life skills is a concept amongst other related, but not synonymous, concepts. I will define and discuss the concepts values, character, morals, life skills and behaviour. These concepts are interrelated, but cannot be used interchangeably as sometimes happens in articles. I will show how the concepts are driven by cognition, emotion and action, and how the immediate environment of a child (family, school, peer group, community) plays a role in the development of a child and his value system.

The next context within which I will discuss life skills will be (b) the family, and more specifically the involvement of parents as active partners in the educational process, together with the school and community. I will discuss models for parental involvement as well as barriers preventing parents becoming more involved as partners in the educational process.

This will be followed by context (c), the school. I will highlight different day-to-day situations at school where life skills have to be implemented, namely bullying, sexual education, children's rights and extracurricular activities. These situations require specific life skills which are addressed in school. Here the focus will be on life skills as tools needed and used by children and not on Life Skills as a school subject.

The fourth and last context will be (d), the curriculum. I will discuss the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Skills in the Primary school, which includes the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and the Senior Phase. I will explain the background of the CAPS curriculum, the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy and the three CAPS Life Skills documents covering the three phases in Primary school. The focus will be on the aims and contents of the curriculum and whether they meet the needs of a 21st century primary school child.
2.2 CONTEXT 1: LIFE SKILLS AS A CONCEPT AMONGST RELATED CONCEPTS

2.2.1 Definition of concepts

The concepts of values, morals, character, life skills and behaviour lie very close to one another and can be confused. I will commence by defining the above-mentioned concepts, showing how each of them is a concept on its own, but also interact with and are dependent on one another.

2.2.1.1 Values

When I define “values”, I refer to values that promote human life. They include moral, cultural, religious, educational, ethical and democratic values.

Values are the ideas, beliefs and understandings that guide the individual's behaviour (Bulach and Butler, 2003: 203). The root of the word “value” in its Latin context (valere) and old French context (valior) defines a value as something worth striving and living for. Halstead(1996:5) defines values as “…principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards of life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity”. The Department of Education (2001:9) agrees with Halstead’s definition by describing values as essential for life, not only desirable, and that they give meaning to our individual and social relationships.

Each person's set of values (good or bad) guide and direct the individual's thoughts, choices and behaviour when confronted with reality, therefore acting as beacons navigating humans' lives and helping them to live cooperatively with each other (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(d): 9 – 11; Camiré, Trudel and Bernard, 2013: 188). Values are also the criteria by which people, objects, situations or actions are judged. According to Müller (2004: 159) our values appear in our attitudes, opinions, beliefs, preferences, thus creating each individual's unique pattern of behaviour. This does not mean that values can be static. As an individual's experiences mature, the values also evolve and mature. Values are related to the experience that shape and test the individual every day (Raths, Harmin and Simon, 1978: 9 – 10).
Thompson (1995: 1087) includes in the characteristics of values that a person's values are determined by his view on religion, reality and humanity. Values are different from one's principals (fundamental truths that form the basis of our reasoning and action), but they are connected to one's convictions and beliefs. Values are personal as they develop throughout one's life and add to the meaning of each individual's life; values also guide decisions and evaluation of behaviour. Heenan (2009: 3) adds to these characteristics of values in that values have a universal character (describing universal values as values that produce behaviour that is beneficial to the individual, others and society) and that, although values are personal and subjective, they can also be objective in that there are values that are accepted worldwide as virtuous. The individual orders values by relative importance and a person's values represent what one wants to be/become (Rens, 2005: 13 – 21, Bilsky and Schwartz, 1994: 164).

\[ \text{2.2.1.2 Character} \]

Values and character are mutually dependent on each other. Character consists of the person acting upon his/her values (Elbot, Fulton and Evans, 2003: 1) which, in turn, means that character develops as the person's values develop. Character “...comprises the sum total and distinctive pattern of a person's virtues ... with the sense that he or she can be counted upon to act in accordance with those traits” (Halstead and Pike, 2006: 16).

According to Lickona (1991: 51) good character consists of three interactive components, namely moral knowing (mind), moral feeling (heart) and moral behaviour (hand/action). He then defines character as “...knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good”. Vessels (1998:3) describes a person of character as somebody with a conscience (feeling), the ability to reason autonomously and fairly (mind) and the ability to act in a way consistent with the moral reasoning and moral feelings (action). Good character is acquired and develops over the lifespan through teaching, learning, life experiences and practising, although childhood and adolescence are the critical periods when the family, school and the peers are most influential (Sim and Low, 2012: 383, 384; Lake, 2011:681; Steen, Kachorek and Peterson, 2003: 10 – 13).

Lickona and Davidson (2005: 2) have seven perspectives on character:
• Character is a distinguishing mark: our patterns of behaviour mark us as individuals or cultures;
• Character encompasses virtues such as justice and honesty;
• Character is positive values in action;
• Character can be seen as a psychological muscle which must be exercised to be strengthened;
• Performance character is significant of qualities we need to master assignments (perseverance, discipline, etc.), while moral character consists of qualities like integrity and justice which are important for interpersonal relationships;
• Character differs from personality in that personality is mostly inborn, while character is created by the individual’s choices; and
• Character develops regardless of the level of brain maturity.

2.2.1.3 Morals

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Thompson, 1995: 883) describes how morality and character link up when it defines “moral” as “…concerned with goodness or badness of human character or behaviour, or with the distinction between right and wrong” as well as “concerned with accepted rules and standards of human behaviour” and “conforming to accepted standards of general conduct”. The word “morality” comes from “mos”, the Latin word which refers to customs. The meaning of morality is indeed to “behave according to customs” and therefore implies judgement of persons, actions, societies and behaviours (Conradie, 2006: 1, 2).

Morality is interpersonal and practical. It governs behaviour (like bullying, stealing and name calling) that impacts on other people, by considering whether it is right or wrong in society (Marshall, Caldwell and Foster, 2011: 52). Morality is an interaction of judgement, beliefs and behaviour. The individual acts morally by acting in accordance with certain judgements and intentions which make him/her belief that it is right to act in that specific way (Straughan, 1989: 46). Swartz (2010: 309) explored how young children living in an impoverished South African township understood morality. These youngsters viewed morality as action (behaviour), embodied (who you are) and as located (where you are), connecting society and social interaction with behaviour. At heart, education and schooling
are moral enterprises (Ryan, 1997: 82; Kohlberg and Hersh, 1977: 53). In other words, by teaching our children to be moral, we teach them to understand right and wrong and then to choose doing what is right (Vessels, 1998: 3).

Jean Piaget (1965) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1977) viewed the child’s moral development as development of cognitive structures. Piaget investigated the development of moral judgement in children by observing their understanding of the rules of games (he watched boys playing marbles). In children’s behaviour developing from egocentric to cooperation and understanding one another's perspectives, he noticed the influence peers and social interaction had on children's moral development. He also noticed how the nature of relationships influenced children’s ability to understand one another's perceptions. Children have to be able to understand other points of view, even those conflicting with their own perspective, to participate cooperatively (Carpendale, 2000: 189 – 194). In Piaget's work I see the practical side of morality, namely that morals are connected to society, the rules of society and which behaviour is regarded by society as moral.

Kohlberg defined three moral stages, which he subdivided into two stages each. The first stage is the Preconventional level where the child will obey laws to avoid punishment and to gain a reward. The second stage is the Conventional level where good behaviour is what pleases or helps others. At this stage there is an understanding of authority, fixed rules and the maintenance of social order or conventions. The Postconventional, Autonomous or Principled level is the third stage where there is an effort to define and understand moral values, to accept morals agreed upon by society, to adhere to one's conscience and a movement away from concrete moral rules to universality (Kohlberg and Hesh, 1977: 54, 55).

In both Piaget and Kohlberg's cognitive developmental views on how a person's morality develops, one can see how the cognitive development of a person leads to action. The more mature cognition becomes, the more socially acceptable the actions become. As Reed (2008: 373) puts it: “The task, or purpose, toward which moral development moves … is the coordination of cooperative social action for the common good.”

A person or community's moral standards determine the way in which the person or
community expresses its values and what is regarded as right or wrong (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(d):18). Bigger (1999: 7, 8) agrees when he writes that, although society does not always hold a unanimous view, morality refers to norms of socially accepted behaviour. As a result, moral education should not only include moral rules but also moral decision making. As Nieuwenhuis (2007(d): 243) puts it: Morals (morality) are “…concerned with the judgement of the goodness or badness of human action and character.” These (moral) judgements become evident in the skills that people need to cope and to be successful in everyday life, namely in their life skills.

In Paragraph 3.2, I will explain how Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory can challenge the reader to expand the definition of morals and morality beyond the borders of right and wrong within the family, school and community. I will discuss how development of a child's morals can be influenced by the parents' workplace conditions, politics, health and social services, substance-use practices, and so forth.

2.2.1.4 Life skills

In Chapter 5 (5.5 Data analysis), I will refer back to the definition of life skills as discussed in this paragraph. I will argue that all families do not understand the full meaning of what life skills encompass, and therefore they need to be informed about the definition of life skills to enhance the quality of their support in the school-parent partnership and their involvement in the life skills development of learners in a primary school.

Life skills are the skills that enable a person to succeed in everyday life and in different environments, such as life at home, at school and in the community. The World Health Organization (WHO, 1999: 3) notes that life skills are abilities, thus distinguishing life skills from qualities like self-esteem and tolerance. Qualities like self-esteem, sociability and tolerance are facilitated by learning the underlying life skills (like self-awareness, dealing with conflict, respect and dealing with emotions) first. Life skills can be defined as behavioural (communicating effectively with peers and adults), cognitive (making right decisions), interpersonal (being assertive, self-composed) and intrapersonal skills (setting goals). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Life Skills Grades 4 – 6 (DoBE, 2011(b): 10) acknowledges that life skills education deals with the holistic
(cognitive, behavioural and emotional) development of the learner. The learners are equipped with "knowledge, skills and values that assist them to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential”. The discussion on Life Skills as a subject in the primary school will commence in Paragraph 2.5.

Life skills and values are closely related concepts, as some values, like cooperation, discipline, perseverance and patience can also be regarded as important life skills (Camiré, Trudel and Bernard, 2013: 188; Danish, Forneris and Wallace, 2005: 49). Mulaa (2012: 307) and Balda and Turan (2012: 328) agree that Life Skills Education focuses on teaching learners the knowledge they need to develop attitudes and skills that are necessary for healthy choices and positive behaviour to deal efficiently with the challenges of everyday life. UNICEF (2012: 2 and 7) adds to this in that life skills are needed for taking positive action to change society and the environment.

The WHO Department of Mental Health identified five areas of life skills that are relevant across all cultures:
- decision making and problem solving;
- creative thinking and critical thinking;
- communication and interpersonal skills;
- self-awareness and empathy;
- coping with emotions and coping with stress (WHO, 1999: 1).

The United States-based Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) aims to promote children's success in school and life. CASEL has identified five core groups of life skills, which they call “social and emotional competencies” (CASEL, 2015) and which are more or less the same as the WHO’s areas of life skills:
- self-awareness: the ability to recognise one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behaviour;
- self-management: the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts and behaviour. [It seems as if one touches here on the field of emotional intelligence: “... (a) non-cognitive intelligence centred on awareness of and effective regulation of emotions” (Leary, Reilly and Brown, 2009: 422), or “...the ability to deal effectively with emotions” (McEnrue, Groves and Shen, 2009: 152)];
• social awareness: the ability to understand and empathise with people of diverse cultural backgrounds and cultures, to understand socially acceptable behaviour and to recognise resources from the community and family;
• relationship skills: the ability to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with individuals and groups by displaying effective communication skills; and
• responsible decision making: the ability to make constructive and responsible choices about personal behaviour and social interactions.

By looking at the definition of life skills and the groups of life skills as discussed in the previous paragraphs, it is evident that these life skills are attainable (Sobhi-Gharamaleki and Rajabi, 2010: 1819).

2.2.1.5 Behaviour

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary (Thompson, 1995: 116) “behaviour” is “the way one conducts oneself; manners ... the treatment of others; moral conduct ... the response (of a person, animal, etc.) to a stimulus”. Straughan (1989: 92) writes that a person's values are seen in his/her behaviour. Behaviour is determined by a person's values (and, as discussed, by a person's character, morals and life skills) and will be consistent with the individual's values. Wringe (2007: 13) agrees that a person's behaviour is connected to his/her values, but it is also driven by thought and emotion: “(B)ehaviour is but the external or symptomatic expression of inner cognitions or other states of mind...”

2.2.1.6 Schematic representation of the interaction between the concepts

I view the interaction of the concept of values, character, morals, life skills and behaviour schematically as concentric circles, with arrows to indicate that the concepts are interrelated and not static. Figure 2.1 represents the interaction of the concepts, and how the concepts develop in interaction with the family, school and community.
When the discussed concepts are represented schematically, I view values as the concept underlying the other concepts. Therefore I put values in the centre of the schematic representation, with arrows pointing to the four different concepts. Values guide people's thoughts, emotions and behaviour, but cognition, emotion and action also play a primary role in character, morals, life skills and behaviour. Therefore these three key words need to share the centre circle of the diagram with values.

Character, morals, life skills and behaviour are interdependent of each other. Character consists of the person acting upon his values, but character also determines the moral decisions a person makes when choosing between right and wrong. Life skills are the abilities that enable a person to cope with everyday challenges, where choices are made based on a person's character. Behaviour is the visible culmination of a person's values, character, morals and life skills. These four concepts are represented in the same
concentric circle with arrows indicating their interrelatedness, as well as arrows pointing to values, showing where each of the four concepts stems from.

The outer circle is the environment in which values, morals, character, life skills and behaviour play out and develop daily. This circle is necessary to emphasise that a child's development does not happen in a vacuum, and that family, school and community are paramount in the development of a child's values and, ultimately, life skills and behaviour. In Chapter 3 I will discuss Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model which confirms that and describes how a child's development does not occur in isolation from different levels of society.

2.3 CONTEXT 2: LIFE SKILLS WITHIN THE FAMILY

Family or parental involvement in the education of children has been acknowledged as an important element in the education of children of all age groups. Mulaa (2012: 313) writes that the family should “...be the first and fast 'educator' of the life skills to the children. The skills need to be central to the family...” Okeke (2014: 1) describes these 'first educators of life skills' as “... active partners in the process of educating their children”. Mncube (2010: 234) writes that parental involvement encompasses different forms of participation in the child's educational development. He defines parental involvement as “...having an awareness of, and involvement in, school work, an understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and learner success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about learner progress”. Parental involvement in life skills education would therefore require active partners in the process of life skills education, where the families have (a) an awareness of the life skills education done at school and (b) a commitment to communication with the educators regarding life skills education at school, in order to understand fully how (c) to support and establish this component of education at home.

Parental involvement is an important aspect of a child's school career, and one which should never be underestimated. Involved parents benefit the child's school career, the relationship between the family and the school, and also the parents themselves. In Paragraph 2.3.1 I will give an overview of why it is necessary and beneficial for the child
that the parent should be involved in his education and how it can be beneficial for life skills education specifically.

2.3.1 Benefits of parental involvement

In Chapter 6 (Paragraph 6.3) I suggest a 5-step plan with guidelines for parental involvement in life skills development. The reason for these guidelines is the importance of parental involvement in the parent-school partnership in educating the learners. Firstly, parental involvement is important because there are definite benefits for the child, family-school relationship, and for the parents when they are involved.

Parental involvement in a child's education benefits the child's academic performance. It has been associated with the benefit of children obtaining higher marks in their schoolwork (Davies, 1997:76; Gonzalez et al., 2013: 185; Hornby and Lafaë, 2011: 37 and Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005: 105). Davies (1997: 76) writes that parental involvement can lead to children staying in school longer, and Hornby and Lafaë (2011:37) report that it also improves school attendance, attitudes, the children's behaviour and mental health and what they expect from school (Mncube, 2010: 235). Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004: 305) conveyed a study on black parental involvement and they found that the children whose parents were involved early in their school career, became more empowered to deal with their school work on their own when they were older. Life skills, like working independently, work completion, punctuality and asking advice when he/she does not know what to do, are instilled while the child is still young, developing independent learners in later years when “...some parents were no longer able to assist their children due to the complexity of the subject matter”.

Parental involvement is also beneficial to the school-family relationship. It strengthens the relationship between the school and family: it improves parent-teacher relationships, the morale of the teacher and the school climate (Hornby and Lafaë, 2011:37), and by displaying good relationship skills, the parents and families contribute to their children's life skills for maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships. Teachers of involved parents also report that they have more time for teaching and for paying children individual attention, as they are helped by involved parents (Davies, 1997:76).
Involvement by the parents is beneficial to the parents as well. It improves parental confidence, parental satisfaction and interest in their own children (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:37). Parents also gain skills and knowledge that help them raising their children (Davies, 1997:76). Working parents often have little time left for school-based parental involvement, or their jobs do not allow much flexibility for taking time off to get involved at their child(ren)’s school (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011: 41). When parents get involved with the children’s learning at home, it gives them (the working parents) an opportunity to become involved in their children’s education (Watkins, 1997: 3). Research also indicates that parents involved in decision making have a greater feeling of ownership and they are more committed to the school and in supporting the school (Mncube, 2010: 235).

Parental involvement is much more than meets the eye. For example: parental involvement is not simply the way in which parents are visibly involved in school activities. According to Hornby and Lafaele(2011: 37) parental involvement can be both home-based (activities like listening to children reading, supervising children doing their homework, talking to children, taking them to museums) and school-based (activities like attending parent education workshops, attending parent-teacher meetings, be involved in the parent-teacher association). Watkins(1997: 3) supports this view: “Although the term parent involvement is frequently used to describe teachers' attempts to involve parents in ongoing classroom or school activities..., this term can also refer to parents' involvement in learning activities at home...” In the next paragraph it will become clear how efficient and balanced models for parental involvement support both home-based and school-based involvement.

In order to understand parental involvement in life skills education and how parents can become involved in supporting the life skills taught at school, it is important to understand the full meaning of parental involvement. There are different models explaining how parents can be active partners, together with the school, in the education of their children. These models will be discussed in the next paragraph.

2.3.2 Models for parental involvement

I indicated that I will suggest guidelines to improve parental involvement in life skills
development in Chapter 6. Therefore I will discuss a few models of parental involvement, the principles of which I will apply in my guidelines in Chapter 6. A number of theoretical models of parental involvement have been developed over the past three decades, focusing on family support for schools, schools liaising with families and the partnership between the school and the family. An overview of a few of these models includes:

- Sattes (1994) developed a three-dimensional framework of commitment, training and variety.
- Lueder (2000) developed a model of “energy-in and energy-out” that focuses on expanding the roles of family support for schools and the schools reaching out to the families.
- In Swap’s model (1993) there is a hierarchy for parental involvement: it starts with the “protection model”, moving on to “school-to-home transmission” and “curriculum enrichment models” and from there to the “partnership model”.
- Hornby (2000) created a framework that elaborates hierarchies of parental contributions and parental needs, providing a model that includes eight types of parental involvement: communication, liaison, education, support, information, collaboration, resource and policy.

I will discuss three parental involvement models in the following paragraphs. Firstly, the model of Joyce Epstein (2010) that focuses on building a school, family and community partnership with caring as the core concept. In a caring community these three spheres will work together, sharing the same goals and missions. The second model is Hoover-Dempsey's model that focuses on the role of the parent in the school-family partnership, rather than on the partnership created by a caring community, giving a different perspective on parental involvement. The third model is a South African model by Singh, Mbokodi and Msila, focusing on the needs of parents in South Africa specifically, especially black parents.

2.3.2.1 Joyce Epstein’s model for school/family/community partnerships

Joyce Epstein (1991, 2005 and 2010, originally published in May 1995) published her model in 1995. The starting point of her model is to build a school, family and community partnership with caring as the core concept. By using caring as focus point of her model,
Epstein's model of parental involvement contributes to instil life skills regarding interpersonal skills, communication, social awareness skills and relationship skills. Epstein proposes a theory of overlapping spheres of influence that directly affect the child's learning and development, namely the families, the school and the community. In a caring community these three spheres work together, sharing goals and missions. The external model of overlapping spheres recognises that the family, school and community can either be drawn together or pushed apart. This external model corresponds with Bronfenbrenner's Mesosystems (refer back to Paragraph 1.7 for Bronfenbrenner, but the model will also be discussed in full in Paragraph 3.2). “The mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (e.g., the relations between home and school, school and workplace, etc.)” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:40). The internal model of overlapping spheres shows how essential interpersonal relations occur between individuals at home, at school or in the community. This internal model of overlapping spheres corresponds with Bronfenbrenner's microsystems, “a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting ... that invite ... engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with ... the immediate environment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39).

Epstein developed a framework of the six most important types of involvement by educators and parents: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. The six types of involvement are represented in three tables, namely Table 1: Six Types of Involvement and Sample Practices, Table 2: Challenges and Redefinitions for the Six Types of Involvement, and Table 3: Expected Results of the Six Types of Involvement. These three tables will be discussed briefly in the paragraphs to follow, but I will not include a copy of the three tables in the discussion. For a complete view of Epstein’s three tables of school/family/community partnerships, I refer to her article School/family/community partnerships: caring for the children we share (2010: 85 – 87). Epstein writes that the activities in the tables are interconnected, as one activity can lead to or affect another activity. This interconnectedness is not shown by the tables. The model is a very comprehensive model, so I will not discuss the model in full. I will only refer to the facets of the model that is applicable to this study.
Table 1: Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Sample Practices

Involvement type 1 is Parenting. Parenting helps families to establish home environments that support children as learners. Sample practices for parenting include suggestions for home conditions that will support learning at home, parent education, family support programmes that help families with health, nutrition, and other needs and home visits when the children move from one phase in school to another. (In the South African context it will be the transition from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase, from Intermediate Phase to Senior Phase.)

Involvement type 2 is Communicating: effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication. Sample practices are information meetings with parents at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed, language translators to assist the families who need them, folders in which the children’s work can be sent home regularly, information on choosing schools, courses, programmes or activities within the schools, and clear information regarding the school policies.

Involvement type 3 is Volunteering: recruiting and organising help and support from parents. In Paragraph 6.3.1 the importance of help and support among parents will be discussed again. Sample practices would be parent patrols or other activities to ensure safety at school, a school and classroom volunteer programme to help teachers, learners and other parents, an annual survey to identify available talents, times and locations of volunteers, and a class parent, a telephone tree, or other structures to provide all the families with the needed information.

Involvement type 4 is Learning at home. The school provides information and help to families in supporting learners at home with their academic work, information on homework policies, information on how to help learners improving their skills in the various assessments, calendars with activities for parents and learners at home, and family mathematics, science and reading activities at school. In South African context some families’ need for support to enable them to help the learners at home with homework is discussed in Chapter 5, Paragraph 5.5.7. Especially the grandparents voiced this need during the interviews I undertook.
Involvement type 5 is Decision Making, namely to include parents in school decisions and developing parents as leaders and representatives. Sample practises: Create an active parent-teacher association for parent representatives, correspond information on school elections for school representatives, and have networks in place to link all the families with the parent representatives.

Involvement type 6, Collaborating with the Community, involves identifying and using sources from the community that can help school programmes, families and student learning. This can be done by having learners and families take part in community programmes like recycling and by providing information for learners and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support and other services. Collaborating with the community can also be done by service integration through partnerships involving the school, counselling services, health services and other organisations and businesses. The involvement of alumni in school programmes for learners is yet another way of collaborating with the community. The involvement of the community in South African context will be discussed in Paragraph 5.5.10 (data analysis) and again in Paragraph 6.3.4 (5-step plan for parental involvement in life skills development).

Table 2: Challenges and Redefinitions for the Six Types of Involvement

Important in Epstein’s Table 2 are the challenges for each type of involvement, as this is what we will also have in South African context. Therefore I will only discuss the challenges for each type of involvement and not the redefinitions as well.

Challenges for involvement Type 1 (Parenting) include providing information to all the families and not only to those families who want it or need it or can attend workshops or meetings, and ensuring that the information going out to families and from families is clear.

Challenges for Type 2 (Communicating) include considering the parents who do not speak or read English well, the parents who need a large type of print, and reviewing the quality of all communication that goes out to the families and establishing clear two-way channels for school-home and home-school communication. The challenge in communicating with

---

7 In this document I use the word “learner” but Epstein uses the word “students”. In the discussion of Epstein’s Model I will therefore stick to Epstein’s word of preference, namely “students”.

45

CHAPTER 2 : LIFE SKILLS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS
the immigrant parents in South African context will be discussed in Paragraphs 5.5.8 and 6.3.3.

Challenges for Volunteering (type 3) lie in the recruiting of volunteers widely enough so that all families will know that their time and talents are needed, and adapting schedules to enable working parents to also participate.

Challenges for type 4 (Learning at home): Coordinating family-linked homework activities where learners have several teachers, and involve families and their children in all the curriculum-related decisions.

Type 5 (Decision making) is challenged to involve parent leaders including all racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the school, train leaders to serve as representatives of other families, and include learners in decision-making groups.

Collaborating with the Community (Type 6): Informing families of community programmes for learners such as tutoring or business partnerships, ensuring equity of opportunities for learners and families to participate in community programmes, and integrating child and family services with education.

| Table 3: Expected Results of the Six Types of Involvement for Students, Parents and Teachers |
| In Epstein’s third table, type 1 (Parenting) can expect that students will have respect for their parents, will learn positive personal qualities and values from their parents, will find a balance between time spent on chores, other activities and homework, and will become aware of the importance of school. Parents will understand parenting and child and adolescent development and they will feel the support from the school and other parents. Teachers will understand families’ backgrounds and concerns, they will gain respect for families’ strengths and efforts and will understand student diversity. |

Expected results for type 2 (Communicating) will be that learners will become aware of their own progress and effort needed to improve grades, will better understand school policies and will be able to make informed decisions on school courses and programmes.
Parents will better understand school policies and programmes, monitor their child’s progress, respond to student problems and interaction with the school and that teachers will improve. Teachers can be expected to have increased diversity and use of communication with families, appreciate parents’ networks and have the increased ability to understand the parents’ views on their children’s progress.

Expected results for type 3 (Volunteering) include that students will improve in skills for communicating with adults and develop an awareness of the skills and talents from other parents and volunteers. Parents are expected to understand the teacher’s job, gain self-confidence about their ability to work at the school, and have an awareness that families are welcome and valued at the school. Teachers will readily involve families in new ways, be more aware of parents’ talents and will pay greater individual attention to students with the help from volunteers.

Type 4 (Learning at home) can produce the expected results that students will complete their homework as they gain in skills and abilities to do their homework, will have a positive attitude towards homework, and that their self-concept as students will improve. Parents will know how to support their children at home, will discuss the children’s school work at home, become aware of the child as a learner and understand the instructions that come with what the child is learning in each subject. Teachers can be expected to design assignments better, respect family time, reinforce student learning and be satisfied with family involvement.

Decision making (Type 5) can expect from the students that they become aware that they represent their families at school, and understand that their rights as students are protected. Parents are expected to give their input into policies that are to the child’s educational benefit, experience ownership of the school and be aware of the school, district and state policies. Teachers will be aware of parents’ perspectives as a factor in policy decisions and will regard the family representatives on committees of equal status as themselves.

Expected results for type 6 (Collaborating with the community) include that students will learn new skills through their curricular and extracurricular experiences, and will be aware
of career options. For parents the expected results are that they will have knowledge and
use of local resources to increase their skills and to obtain needed services. Teachers will
be more aware of community resources that can enrich the curriculum, will be open to the
use of mentors, business partners and community volunteers to assist students, and will
be more knowledgeable and helpful in referring children and families to needed services.

Epstein adds an Action Team for School, Family and Community to work towards creating
a caring school community. This team includes teachers, parents, children and at least
one member from the community. The team sees to it that practices for all six types of
involvement are coordinated, and they organise, implement, evaluate and improve the
activities. The Action Group manages the funds necessary to support the work and
expenses needed to run the programme. Starting points (together with goals, expectations
and present strengths) are identified by surveys, telephone interviews or questionnaires.
The Action Team now develops a three-year plan, which will be presented annually at the
school so that teachers, families and learners will know what has been done over the past
year towards building a caring community. This plan will also be assessed annually to see
whether improvements to the plan are needed.

Epstein’s model is very comprehensive, but I will refer to this model quite a lot in Chapter 6,
as it is a very useful model to adapt in a South African context and, more specifically, to
adapt for guidelines for the school where I am undertaking my study.

2.3.2.2 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model for parental involvement

Where Epstein's model focused on a partnership that creates a caring community, Hoover-
Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) focused on the role of the parent in the school-family
partnership. They refer to Epstein's work throughout the discussion of their model, but
mostly refer to the role of the school, child and family, thus providing an alternative angle
to parental involvement. This model does not acknowledge the community as a third
member of the educational partnership. Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler
(1995, 1997) developed a model for parental involvement by focusing on two questions:
Why do parents become involved in their children's education? How does parent
involvement make a difference in their children's educational outcomes?
The model progresses through five levels. Level 1 and 2 are concerned with the first question regarding the reason for parental involvement. Levels 3 to 5 are concerned with the second question, namely the difference parental involvement makes in the child’s educational outcomes.

![Diagram of parental involvement model](image)

**Fig. 2.2** Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s original theoretical model of the parental involvement process (Walker, Wilkins, et al., 2005: 86)
Level 1: Reasons for parents' basic decision to get involved

- Personal construction of the parental role: The parents see involvement as part of a parent's role, most probably because it was modelled by their own parents or friends' parents.
- Parents have a personal sense of efficacy to help children succeed in school: Parents' sense of efficacy comes from four sources, namely they experienced success in involvement-related activities, they see others' success in involvement-related activities, verbal persuasion by others and emotional arousal when their child's well-being is at stake.
- Opportunities and demands for involvement presented by children and schools: Parents perceive that they are invited or demanded to become involved by their children's excitement when the parent visits the school, by a consistently inviting environment at the school or by a regular newsletter asking for volunteers. In Paragraph 6.3.5, I discuss the importance of involving parents by inviting them, as there are parents who are willing to help, but are waiting for an invitation from the school. Therefore this invitation for parental involvement has to be a part of the school's conduct towards families, as will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Level 2: How parents choose specific types of involvement

- Specific domain of skill and knowledge: Parents choose to become involved in areas where they perceive themselves as skilled and knowledgeable. In Chapter 6 the importance of involving parents with talents will be discussed again (Paragraph 6.3.4).
- The mix of employment and other family demands: Demands of employment (how readily a parent can take time off from work, the distance between the school and work and the work schedule) and family responsibility (infant or elderly care, demands from other siblings) will determine parental involvement.
- Specific invitations and demands from the child and the school: For example, a child who asks a parent to join the class on an outing, ends up asking the parent to help transporting the children to the outing.
In 2005 Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler and Hoover-Dempsey published an article in which they revised Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model. Changes were made to Level 1 and Level 2 by reorganising the information. Levels 3 to 5 stay the same. The changes are as follows:

**Revised Level 1: Parents' decision to become involved**

Parental role construction and self-efficacy are put together under the overarching idea of Parents' Motivational Beliefs. An individual's understanding of their roles (what he can and has to do) is created socially (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005:108). Bronfenbrenner (1986: 723) refers to this as the mesosystem where processes are not independent.

General and specific invitations are combined under the heading “Invitations to Involvement from Others”. Invitations from members of the school community can be a motivator as they convey the message that the parent's participation in the child's education is important. This includes a welcoming school climate, specific teacher invitations and specific invitations from children (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005: 113).

Parents' perceptions of their available time and energy and parents' skills and knowledge are now combined under Parents' Perceived Life Context. Parents reported that time and energy variables are often barriers to their involvement. Another barrier is parents' perception of their personal skills which shape and determine the kind of involvement activities they are willing to take part in (Walker et al. 2005:96).

**Revised Level 2: Parents' involvement forms**

Level 2 defines involvement forms as home-based involvement and school-based involvement (Walker et al., 2005: 97 – 99). Home-based involvement revolves around activities empowering and supporting parents to help children with school work at home (information on the curriculum, informing parents how they can help children at home, offering parents positive feedback on their attempts to help, and so forth). School-based involvement strategies include empowering the teacher for parental involvement, learning about the children's family and culture, inviting parents to events at school, and so forth.
CHAPTER 2: LIFE SKILLS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Level 3: Mechanisms through which parental involvement influences child outcomes

- Modelling: Parents involve themselves in aspects of their children's educational lives, for example asking questions about the school day, talking to the teacher after school, attending a sports game or coming to a school concert. By doing this, the parents show the children that school-related activities are important.
- Reinforcement: Positive reinforcement like attention, praise or rewards is given for different aspects of school success (good behaviour, studying well, completing homework).
- Instruction: Parents can engage in direct, close-ended instruction (giving orders or commands, learning spelling words, memorising factual work) or direct, open-ended instruction (questions that request higher-order cognitive skills, asking how? and why? questions).

Level 4: Tempering/mediating variables

- Developmentally appropriate involvement strategies: Parents need to choose activities that are within the child's abilities, and help and respond to the child in a supportive way.
- Fit in between the parents' involvement activities and the school's expectations: The child is the link between the school and home, having to live in both adults' domain. The child has to meet both the teacher and parent's expectations, demands and requests. An easy fit between school and home (corresponding expectations and demands) gives the child the opportunity to pay all his attention to the tasks of both school and home.

Level 5: Child/student outcomes

- Skills and knowledge: Involvement activities by the parent (for example, modelling and reinforcing life skills taught at school) will enhance the child's skill and knowledge development.
A personal sense of efficacy for succeeding in school: Parental involvement in the child’s educational experiences at school and at home – offering praise, complimenting the child, giving direct and indirect instruction, encouragement and affirming success in the classroom – reinforces the positive value of academic success.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model of parental involvement contributes to a slightly different set of life skills taught to children, due to the change of focus from Epstein’s model. The life skills used and modelled in this model include the following:

- self-awareness skills by assessing your own values, strengths and weaknesses (refer to Level 1 and Revised Level 1);
- relationship skills, necessary to maintain a rewarding relationship (refer to Level 2 and Revised Level 2);

Fig. 2.3 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s revised theoretical model of the parental involvement process (Walker, Wilkins, et al., 2005: 88)
• decision-making skills (refer to Level 3);
• social awareness skills (refer to Level 4);
• skills necessary for creative thinking, critical thinking and problem solving (refer to Level 5).

2.3.2.3 Singh, Mbokodi and Msila's framework to enhance black parental involvement in education in South Africa

Where Epstein's model focused on a partnership that creates a caring community, and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler focused on the role of the parent in the school-family partnership, the next model focuses solely on how parents in South Africa, especially the black parents, can be assisted to become actively involved in educational matters of their children's' school. Singh, Mbokodi and, M Msila (2004) developed a framework for black parental involvement, after they had investigated the problems faced by black parents in historically disadvantaged secondary schools, namely low socio-economic status, home conditions not suitable for learners, absence of collaboration between the school and the families, parents not being able to help their children with schoolwork as the work is unrelated to them, parents feeling intimidated by the school, and the passivity of learners. By applying this model, the life skills of communication, being aware of another person's perspective and taking it into account, working together with other people and developing self-awareness, will develop in both the children and the families.

Their model focuses on identifying effective strategies to enhance black parental involvement. Their framework is divided into five stages:

• Stage 1: Convening level where parents are made aware that they can enhance the quality of schools and education, that their input is necessary and where opportunities for parental involvement are created.
• Stage 2: Clarification level where parents are made aware of their role in contributing towards the school, jointly agreeing on the school's mission, vision and objectives and informing parents of curriculum matters.
• Stage 3: Commitment level where teachers and parents must want to work together towards a better education for the children.
- Stage 4: Attainment level where activities are coordinated, educational matters are discussed and where joint responsibility is assumed for the utilisation of resources.
- Stage 5: Evaluation. Educational outcomes, cost effectiveness and communication channels are evaluated and improved.

In Paragraph 6.3.5 the importance of this model is explained, as it is vital that all the parents in the South African schools should be aware of their importance, and that they can contribute to the school and the education done at the school. The model of Singh, Mbokodi and Msila highlights the reality that there are definite barriers that prevent parents and families from getting involved in their children's education at school. In the next paragraph I will address the different barriers that do this.

The three models of parental involvement I discussed are valuable in Chapter 6, where I suggest guidelines for parental involvement in life skills education. The model of Epstein supplies important guidelines on how the school, families and community can become more involved in the education of our children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model focuses on the reasons why parents become involved, and this will also be incorporated in my suggestions for the improved involvement of families. Finally, Singh, Mbokodi and Msila’s strategies to enhance parental involvement will also be an important component in my suggested guidelines. Although all three models are concerned with parental involvement, each model focuses on a different facet of parental involvement and will therefore contribute to the final suggestions at the end of this thesis.

### 2.3.3 Barriers to parental involvement

I mention four and discuss three models on parental involvement in Paragraph 2.3.2. Still, despite the available literature, parental involvement needs to improve in our South African schools. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) presented a model, trying to identify and explain barriers to parental involvement in four areas, namely parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors and societal factors. In Chapter 5 (Data analysis, Paragraph 5.5) I will discuss the barriers faced by the families in South African context, and more specifically, barriers faced by families of the community of the school where I undertook my research. These barriers will be addressed in Chapter 6 (Paragraph 6.3) when I
suggest guidelines to improve parental involvement in the life skills development of the learners of our school.

2.3.3.1 Parent and family factors

The parents' opinion of themselves, their role in educating their children and their view of their children, can be a barrier to parental involvement. This includes parents who believe that their only role is to get their children to school, where after the educational responsibility become the school's (Refer to Paragraph 5.5.9 where I discuss parents who shift their educational responsibility onto the school.); parents with a low self-esteem regarding their ability to help with the children's schoolwork who might avoid contact with the school for this reason, and parents who believe that the intelligence level of their children cannot change, so encouragement and involvement at school will not make a difference.

Perceptions from the parents on how important the school views their involvement can also be a barrier. Parents who are encouraged by the school and teachers to be (become) involved, will be more involved than parents that perceive the school and teachers as not open and inviting. “...(M)any parents have reported that they would be more involved in helping their children at home if teachers communicated more with them, or requested their co-operation...” (Watkins, 1997: 3).

The current life contexts of parents play an important role in their involvement: Parents who did not complete high school might find it difficult to help their secondary-school child with homework, and some parents might feel inferior to teachers who are better qualified than themselves, therefore being reluctant to work together closely with the teacher(s). Epstein (1991: 290) and Watkins (1997:4) both agree that less educated parents are less likely to become involved in their children's education or help their child at home. Difficult family circumstances can create major barriers, for example solo parents (in Paragraph 5.5.7 I discuss the needs of single parents, and in Paragraph 6.3.3 I suggest help for solo parents) and parents with young families or very large families who do not always have the time to get involved. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004:184) add to this that a non-custodial parent in a broken home, parents who live far away due to migrant labour, grandparents or
other relatives or older siblings who have to fulfil the care-giving function are often missed out in home-school communication (especially the needs of grandparents, that will again be discussed in Paragraph 5.5.7 and in Paragraph 6.3.2). Unemployed parents might find it difficult to afford a car and/or a babysitter so that they can come to school meetings. Some parents’ jobs allow little flexibility for taking time off to come to the school and parents with poor physical or mental health will also find parental involvement difficult.

Involvement of parents is also influenced by difference in class, ethnicity and gender. Working-class parents and parents with a low monthly income are less involved, less informed and have less access to resources. They are more likely to experience problems with language, transport and child care (as I also discussed in Paragraph 3.6, mentioning the difficulties that very poor parents have in taking part in all the advantages of Head Start). Cultural differences, where culture is viewed as family domain and education is viewed as school domain, can also affect parental involvement negatively, as well as the role of gender in parental involvement where, traditionally, the mother was the one who was involved but now also has to balance an increased workload and participation in the labour market with involvement in school activities.

### 2.3.3.2 Child factors

As children get older, parental involvement tends to decrease. Parents and teachers can mistakenly assume that older children do not want their parents to be involved in their education, and this misinterpretation can be a barrier to parental involvement.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities need parental involvement to implement individual educational help or programmes. It might happen, though, that parents believe their child can achieve academically more than the teacher expect of him/her or that the teacher needs more involvement from the parent than the parent can (or want to) give. This kind of disagreement can then be a barrier to parental involvement.

Gifted and talented children can facilitate parental involvement, as the parents enjoy attending school events. However, parents lose confidence in the school when they regard their own child as more academically gifted than viewed by the teacher. Parents also lose
confidence in the school when a child is very talented in an extra-mural activity that demands a lot of practising time, leading to the child falling behind with academic studies. Then the parents view the school as not co-operative in supporting the child keeping up with his schoolwork. Once again, disagreement between the school and the parents can negatively influence parental involvement, as I indicated in Paragraph 5.5.11 after I had conducted semi-structured individual interviews with parents.

2.3.3.3 Parent-teacher factors

Differences in the goals and agendas between the school and the families affect the degree of the parents’ school-based involvement. Schools might view parental involvement as a means to increase the children’s achievement or as a method of addressing cultural disadvantage or inequality. To the school, the home-school relationship is aimed at shaping the parents’ attitudes and practices to improve schooling. Parents, on the other hand, focus on improving their children’s performance, voicing possible concerns about their children, comparing their child’s progress to the other children in the class, learning more about the curriculum and teaching methods used and wanting to understand and maybe influence the ethos within the school. When the parents and the school have different agendas, this might lead to frustration and decreasing parental involvement.

Different attitudes among parents and teachers about schooling and education can affect parental involvement. If education is about schooling, the teachers are the ones who possess the knowledge, skills, power and expertise. But if schooling is a part of education, it is the parents who have the power and expertise as they are involved in 85% of their children’s education that is done outside the school. The goals of the parents and teachers will have to be clearly defined to ensure that both parents and teachers are working towards the same goal, thus resulting in satisfied and involved parents.

The use of the term “partnership” between school and parents can create frustration. Partners are equally involved, negotiate with each other and mutually respect each other. But in reality the home-school relationship is often about rights and power, with the school directing the parents on how to engage with the school. Parents can be disillusioned by the difference between rhetoric and reality, resulting in poor parental involvement. Epstein
(2005: 25) writes that the ability of a school to develop an effective school, family and community partnership programme rests largely on the school's knowledge of partnerships. Epstein therefore suggests that the school gets involved in professional networks to broaden the school's views on practise and leadership and to broaden their knowledge on how partnerships work and the required skills needed in a successful partnership.

2.3.3.4 Societal factors

Historically the school organisation was structured along factory production lines, executed formally, inflexibly and according to timetables. Parental involvement focussed on supporting the school, while the school assumed responsibility for education. Although there has been a major shift in modern times with parents seen as playing an important role in schooling and education, this historical view on the school and parental involvement constrains parents in their involvement.

Demographic factors that decrease parental involvement revolve around an increase in parental working hours, greater number of households where both parents work, and an increasing number of divorces and separations resulting in single-parent households and re-partnered families. Parents have to cope with more stress, less money and less time, as confirmed in Paragraph 5.5.7 in the context of the school where I conducted my research. Ultimately this has a negative influence on parental involvement.

Politically there is no legislation on parental involvement accompanied by appropriate action such as strategic implementation, information dissemination, training or teacher education programmes on working with parents and families. Teachers are not always skilled to work effectively with parents. As parental involvement is not supported politically by government policies, it does not receive the status and support it needs.

Related to the previous paragraph is the issue of economics and funding. In Western countries, economics is dominated by free market policies. The effect of this on education is that education practices have to justify their share of available funding, resulting in little or no money available to develop parental involvement programmes in schools.
In Chapter 5, I list more societal factors that present barriers for parents to become involved (or more involved) in the life skills development of their children. These factors include an unsafe neighbourhood in which some of the learners grow up (Paragraph 5.5.3), poor domestic circumstances (Paragraph 5.5.4), financial difficulties (Paragraph 5.5.5) and immigrant parents (Paragraph 5.5.8).

2.4 CONTEXT 3: LIFE SKILLS AT SCHOOL

The school is a unique and dynamic environment for children to acquire, practise and learn life skills. It is an educational partner and an extension of the families' life skills taught at home. The value and contribution of the school as context, within which life skills are taught, developed, experienced and acquired, include that the teachers at school are equipped with material (textbooks, teacher manuals, courses) to present the more challenging life skills. This includes the sensitive topic of HIV/AIDS, where teachers can provide the children with the correct information, elaborate on the important choices to be made and provide a safe environment where discussion can take place and children feel free to ask questions. Another contribution of the school to life skills development includes the dynamics at school and the situation where children of different cultures, socio-economic groups and religions are put together in one class or group, thus acting as a good training-ground for life skills that is not required at home. These include skills like group work, communication, interpersonal skills, coping with peer pressure, coping with bullying, relationship skills, and so forth. School time is time for practising the life skills that children have been taught at home. Handling conflict, making the right choices, respecting people even when it is difficult and time management, are some of these skills. Life skills at school “…enable(s) learners to acquire and develop a variety of skills that prepare them for responsible living” (Muyomi, 2012: 307). Unfortunately is it true that the school has to stand in for families where life skills are not taught. Bender (2002: 25) writes that the “…majority of children in South Africa do not have the opportunity to learn life skills from their families. Poverty, migratory labour, poor or no housing and long distances from the workplace are a few of the destructive forces that have affected the family life... (i) t is the school, rather than their parents, that is now responsible for helping these children to develop and learn life skills.” I will refer to this issue again in Paragraphs 5.5.5. The school is the place where children have to learn and practise life skills that underpin the
responsibilities accompanying their rights as delineated in the Constitution of South Africa, 1996, Act 108 (the Bill of Rights).

In short: At school life skills are taught as a school subject, but it is also a place where life skills have to be applied and practised because of the nature of the school environment. Life skills as a subject in school will be discussed in Paragraph 2.5. The rest of this section (Paragraph 2.4) will focus on how life skills develop in different situations at school and how teachers and parents can help children developing those skills.

2.4.1 Life skills and human rights in school

South Africa signed the United Nations’ (UNICEF’s) Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, which oblige the country to pass laws to protect children physically and mentally. These rights were written into the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108, Chapter 2: the Bill of Rights (1996) ensuring, amongst others, a safe teaching and learning environment in schools. As important as it is for children to be aware of these rights, as important it is to teach our children the skills they need in order not to violate these rights of other children in the school and community. A practical way of teaching the learners at our school these life skills is, among others, by means of the Essential 55 which will be discussed in Paragraph 3.5.

The life skills taught at school as a result of the responsibilities connected to the children's rights are, among others, the following:

- The right to dignity: assessing another’s feelings by not reacting inappropriately when he or she makes a mistake, assess other children’s strengths knowing (and accepting) what can be expected from them academically and socially.
- The right to equality: self-management (for example, waiting your turn) and accommodating children of another religion, gender, language and culture.
- The right to an environment that is not harmful to health: the ability to take other children into account and not endanger their safety by games played on the playground.
- The right to privacy: interpersonal skills in engaging with friends.
- Freedom of expression: communication skills, knowing what to say and what not,
including the skill of responsible communication on social media.

- The right to have an environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations: the skill of responsible decision-making based on respect for others and for the planet we live on.
- The right to an education: the skills of decision-making, problem-solving and time management to make the most of their education.

The diverse situations at school requiring different life skills help children develop their “...personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest extent” (Chürr, 2015: 2416).

2.4.2 Peer pressure

Hendricks, Savahl and Florence (2015: 100, 105 and 106) describe peer pressure as a subjective experience of feeling pressured or urged by others to do certain things, and that it is in adolescence that individuals begin forming groups with their peers, adopting styles and values from them in an attempt to form an identity and to maintain a group identity. “The desire to be part of, or to belong to, a specific group is inherent in adolescents’ development … (o)ften, for adolescents, engaging in risky behaviour such as substance use with peers, is a way of getting attention and respect from peers.” The influence that the peer group has, especially in the higher grades in a primary school, can never be underestimated. Peers, and acceptance by peers, are important from a young age, but they “…grow in importance as children transition to adolescence” (Fearon; Wiggins; Pettifor and Hargreaves, 2015: 62). Fearon; Wiggins; Pettifor and Hargreaves (2015: 63) classify peer exposure as belonging to one of six types. For primary school purposes, I find the following three appropriate:

- Perceived peer behaviours could provide models of behaviour to be copied by the group.
- Peer approval might cause children to change their behaviour to what they perceive their friends engage in.
- Peer connectedness, or social and emotional support in the group.

Children need the relationship skills of resisting inappropriate social pressure and of
resolving conflict in a situation where peer pressure is eminent. Self-awareness life skills to recognise one's own emotions (for example recognising that the person is under pressure to conform to a group) and to possess confidence to make the right decisions have to be discussed and practised in school, so as to prepare children to handle peer pressure. Lai, et al., (2013:129) stress the importance of positive skills in anger and anxiety management, decision making, risk management and conflict resolution in helping a child resist substance use under peer pressure in adolescent years. Griffith (1999: 98 and 99) describes the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse And Resistance Education) – a life skills programme in primary schools in the United Kingdom. Important to notice are the life skills the programme is based on:

- Providing accurate information on drugs, including alcohol, tobacco and solvents. Together with the information, children are teaching decision-making skills.
- Showing children how to resist peer pressure.
- Giving children alternatives to drug use.
- Building the children's self-esteem, in order to develop their self-management skills.

Although the D.A.R.E. programme is not done in South African schools, is it a good example of how life skills are taught and developed in our own primary schools.

2.4.3 Bullying

According to Laas and Boezaart (2014: 2 667 and 2 668) bullying is a worldwide phenomenon that can impact on children both physically and emotionally. Sometimes children drop out of school because of being bullied, and therefore bullying can permanently damages both the psyche and education of the child. A significant amount of all bullying incidents occur in school context. Greeff and Van den Berg (2013: 504) write that, although bullying occurs worldwide, past studies have shown that 58.2% of all learners in South Africa have been bullied at some or other time. Mncube and Steinmann (2014: 205) add that bullying in South Africa has reached worrisome levels. Several newspaper articles are published on the occurrence of bullying in South Africa schools. In Paragraph 5.5.2 I unfortunately had to report that, despite all the measures the school has in place to prevent, punish and rectify bullying, bullying is still displayed by a group of learners in the school where I conducted my study.
Bullying encompasses three elements:

- Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour where the bully behaves in a negative manner.
- Bullying forms a behavioural repetitiveness over time.
- Bullying is the result of a power imbalance.

In a school context, the characteristics of bullying may include: creating a pattern of victimisation; inflicting harm to a learner or his property; an emotional attack on the learner; controlling the victim through fear; disrupting the orderly function of school activities with negative behaviour, and creating a counterproductive learning environment through hostility (Laas and Boezaart, 2014: 2 669). Mncube and Steinmann (2014: 205) add non-physical bullying to the list, which includes teasing, name-calling, whispering campaigns, exclusion and threats of harm.

Another form of bullying that already occurs in primary schools is cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is the use of information and communication technologies, for example e-mail, cell phone, instant messaging, internet, tablets or any other way of sending or retrieving data to bully, harass, threaten or conduct repeated and hostile behaviour intended to harm others. These include sexting, involving the sending of nude or semi-nude photos or videos, and/or suggestive messages via mobile devices (Smit, 2015: 1–3).

I can by no means say that it is in the school's power or in the ability of life skills education to solve the problem of bullying. The problem is too complex, as it has been associated with poverty, poor academic performance and a lack of social skills" (Timm and Eskell-Blokland, 2011: 340) as well as “...linked to experiences of violence in home, as children learn that violence is a primary mechanism for negotiating relationships” (Mncube and Steinmann, 2014: 208). UNICEF (2012: 11) writes that when violence and unfairness is common at home and in the community, children are more likely to imitate it as they view this as acceptable behaviour. Such children find it difficult to recognize these issues as negative norms later in their life, and may need more opportunity to learn about, discuss and reflect on positive alternative patterns of behaviour. UNICEF already mentions a part of the solution, namely that a situation should be created where alternative ways of dealing with problems should be taught and discussed with the bully (bullies), which can be done (and usually is done) at school. What the school can do more in a difficult situation where
a child is a victim of bullying, is to focus on the self-worth, self-confidence, social and problem-solving skills of children who are bullied, as well as on positive coping skills that children can be taught (Greeff and Van den Berg, 2013: 515). The CAPS document for the Life Skills curriculum includes bullying, how to deal with bullying and how to get out of the bully habit in the Grades R – 3 curriculum (DoBE, 2011a:42) and in the Grades 4 – 6 curriculum (DoBE, 2012: 14). Additional skills with which the school equips the children, are strategies on how to handle and avoid bullies, as well as teaching the children where they can look for help and where they can report it when they become the victims of bullying. The schools also inform children of all forms of bullying, so that they can be aware of what bullying is, that it can never be right and that they can make responsible decisions on dealing with the situation. Mncube and Steinmann (2014: 210) are also very adamant that each school should formulate a clear anti-bullying policy.

2.4.4 Sexuality Education

Our children grow up in a world where HIV and AIDS are a reality. While there are some children who have only heard about HIV/AIDS, there are also children in South Africa who have lost parents, siblings, friends and teachers to the disease (Coombe, 2000: 4). There are also children in our country who are forced to become young carers due to the impact of HIV/AIDS. Young carers are defined as “children and young persons under 18 who provide or intend to provide care, assistance, or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility that would usually be associated with an adult in response to familial health problems” (Lane, Cluver and Operario, 2015: 55). These children are forced to take on caring responsibilities before they are adults. And although families do not view this as appropriate, they acknowledge it as necessary for the survival of the household (Lane, Cluver and Operario, 2015: 63).

Vandemoortele and Delamonica (2002: 6) write that the “education vaccine” is the only vaccine available against HIV at this stage. According to them the “spread of education also changes the family and community environment in which such behavioural changes become socially acceptable. Indeed, young women who want to protect themselves against HIV must often change their behaviour in ways that conflict with traditional values and customs” (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2002:7). Coombe and Kelly (2001: 441)
agree to this, adding that education itself “tends to enhance the potential to make discerning use of information and to plan for the future and to accelerate favourable socio-cultural changes”, but they immediately qualify their statement by saying that knowledge alone about HIV/AIDS will not lead to behavioural changes; knowledge has to be complemented with attitudes and skills that will shape children’s behaviour after they have left school. The *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (discussed in Paragraph 2.5.1) highlights the importance of HIV/AIDS by explaining an educational strategy of dealing with HIV/AIDS and teaching our children to nurture a culture of sexual and social responsibility (DoE, 2001:65 – 68). The national curriculum, our CAPS document on Life Skills and Life Orientation, also aims to educate our learners on AIDS, teaching them the (correct) facts, informing them about myths and realities surrounding the disease, and responsible decision making in the Grades 4 – 6 teaching plan (DoBE, 2012:14) and the Grades 7 – 9 teaching plan (DoBE, 2011b:10).

The importance of sexuality education and the teaching of self-awareness skills, self-management skills and relationship skills are highlighted by Francis (2010:315) that most young people attend school before engaging in sexual intercourse and that therefore the schools are well placed to intervene in the context of HIV and AIDS. Abu *et al.* (2016: 21) agree: “Schools and education systems have the opportunity to reach children and young people with HIV/AIDS prevention education before many are sexually active.” According to them, HIV/AIDS prevention education has to include all the related knowledge and skills, linking children with relevant health services, and reaching out to children who are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, namely girls, young people who use drugs, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and children whose economic circumstances might cause them to exchange sex for money or material benefits. Francis (2010: 315) warns that the youth might know about sex, but they lack the “practical and social knowledge” that makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Penpid, Peltzer and Igumbor (2008: 48) also state the importance of including life skills in HIV/AIDS education, mentioning the importance of self-esteem and relationship skills. These are the knowledge and skills the schools have to supply children with from as early as possible.

In its Guidelines for Educators (DoE, 2002: 8) our Department of Education explains why
sexual education and the accompanying life skills should be introduced as early as possible to the children:

- Learners need to have information about HIV/AIDS presented to them from the first time they start school, in a way that is appropriate for them in the context of life skills education.
- Learning programmes have been developed for life skills education for all ages, and teachers are trained to present these learning programmes.
- Children know about sex at a very young age. “It is a difficult fact that many children are already sexually active by the age of 12” (DoE, 2002: 8).
- Many children become aware of HIV/AIDS as they know people who are ill or have died of the disease. Children spread information about this endemic themselves, which is not always accurate or true. Therefore schools have to give children the correct information before they hear the incorrect version from their peers.

In a booklet for parents the Department of Education (DoE, 2003:13) assures the parents that children are not only taught information on HIV/AIDS, but also the necessary life skills. The content of the programmes in the booklet focuses not only on HIV and AIDS, but also on a number of related topics such as self-awareness, how to manage feelings, relationships between boys and girls, and strategies to avoid early sexual activity. The booklet also includes discussions about values, community customs, and beliefs and attitudes. Hanass-Hancock (2014: 229 and 230) agrees that sexual education should include critical thinking, that children should be actively involved in the sexual education programmes, and that their confidence, self-efficiency and relationship skills should be built during these programmes. The children have to be “involved in the critical analysis of their living circumstances and the social norms of their communities”. Magnani et al. (2005: 303) conducted a life skills programme for adolescents in KwaZulu-Natal, and confirmed that life skills education does have a positive effect on children's sexual behaviour as it helps adolescents to acquire knowledge, develop relevant skills to enable them to reduce risk of HIV transmission and also to change selected behaviours.

In conclusion: The school can provide sexual education from as early as possible, teaching and developing all the necessary life skills for children to help them make responsible decisions, but the school needs the parents and community as educational
partners for optimal success in this endeavour. In Paragraph 5.5.2 it will be discussed that there are learners in our school who make bad decisions, also decisions regarding their sexuality. This again has implications for HIV/AIDS. “Our schools are like a busy crossroad where many sectors of society meet. This puts parents and educators in a powerful position to become partners and do something about the trauma caused by HIV. When we work together our schools will become symbols of hope and circles of care” (DoE, 2003: 6).

**2.4.5 Teaching life skills through extracurricular activities**

Extracurricular offerings cover a wide spectrum of activities that are associated with some form of academic assistance, coupled with different types of personal, social, or cultural activities consistent with the goals of the specific extracurricular programme” (Van der Merwe, 2014: 198). Extracurricular activities include performance activities related to music and drama, team sport activities (including the different types of sport within the context of the school), school leadership involvement and clubs and societies.

Extracurricular activities are important in a child's holistic education, educating our children cognitively, emotionally and physically. They contribute “to a variety of developmental gains, including identity exploration, emotional control, and social intelligence” (Whitley et al., 2016: 312). Whitley, Wright and Gould also point out the powerful impact sport can have on a child's development, especially because it is so popular and because it is so easily accessible. They identify the most important life skills taught after they have worked with underserved South African children and youth between the ages of 5 and 18 years. According to me, these life skills are also applicable to extracurricular activities in most primary schools in our country:

- Self-regulation skills (goal setting, discipline, responsibility, concentration, time management and making informed decisions);
- Work ethics (dedication, working hard to become successful);
- Social interaction skills (communication, teamwork and good manners towards team members);
- Emotional control (dealing with mistakes, anger management - refer to emotional intelligence as described in paragraph 2.2.1.4), and
- Leadership skills.
Levine (2016: 25) believes that the life skills gained from extracurricular activities help build better citizens. What the children learn in sport, have to be transferred to non-sport settings (as mentioned earlier in this paragraph). Therefore the teacher’s example is very important, as life skills are actually caught, and not taught (Danish et al., 2005: 54). The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE, 2001: 50) also suggests sport at school to help shaping social bonds and to nurture nation building at schools. (Refer to Paragraph 2.5.1.)

Extracurricular activities take place in a more relaxed environment than in the classroom, and the children have a more open and relaxed relationship with the educators/coaches. This is a positive environment for children to learn both sport skills and life skills. Whitley et al. (2016: 317) write that the children can become actively involved in life skills education during extracurricular activities as they are engaged in discussions with their coaches, not just sitting passively in class listening to lectures. Van Hout et al. (2013: 619) add that, apart from cognitive and social skills gained in participation in extracurricular activities, these activities also help prevent children from getting involved in alcohol, crime and drugs.

### 2.5 CONTEXT 4: LIFE SKILLS IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Paragraph 2.3 dealt with life skills in the family, focusing on the different capacities in which parents or caregivers can be involved in life skill education. It was stated that involvement can be either school-based or home-based. Both forms of involvement implied that the parents are aware of the life skills taught at school, and that those skills are supported at home. In Paragraph 2.4 the life skills taught at school (as an educational partner of the family) were described, with the focus on different situations at school that require different life skills. Paragraph 2.5 will concentrate on two documents: (1) the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE, 2001), which describe ten human rights values that were considered important to address social ailments, as well as 16 educational strategies to assist educators in teaching the ten proposed values. (2) The second document is our National Curriculum. I will begin by highlighting the life skills taught in all the subjects in general, then move on to the life skills taught specifically in the subject Life Skills. I will review whether the life skills taught at school and at home are
represented (and to which extend they are represented) in the National Curriculum.

2.5.1 Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, 2001

Although the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy of 2001 is not linked to the CAPS curriculum, it is of importance to teachers of the school subject Life Skills, as well as to all other teachers trying to infuse life skills into their subjects. The Manifesto is divided into two sections: Section 1 constitutes ten constitutional values, and Section 2 presents 16 educational strategies or approaches that can be used by parents, educators or community members in the education of the ten proposed values (DoE, 2001).

The ten constitutional values suggested in the Manifesto are: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), the rule of law, respect and reconciliation (DoE, 2001). These values especially underpin social awareness life skills and relationship skills. In Paragraph 5.5.1, I will discuss again how families view relationship skills like respect and living together successfully with the people around us, as important skills to teach their children.

Section 2 of the Manifesto presents 16 educational strategies to assist everybody in an educational capacity to promote the values of the Constitution, together with the corresponding life skills (DoE, 2001: 23 – 77). The strategies can be used not only by teachers, but also by parents or community members. The first strategy, nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools, is to promote dialogue in the schools. The children need to be heard and listened to. Children also need to be provided with proper role models at school, as “what parents or teachers do is much more important than what they say they do. If teachers do not want learners to be absent, they must not be absent. If teachers expect homework to be completed, they must complete their homework” (DoE, 2001: 27). Therefore role modelling – promoting commitment as well as competence among educators – is the second strategy. In Paragraph 5.5.4, I discussed role modelling, with the focus on the parent-teacher partnership, and how important it is that the parents and teachers should model the same values and life skills to promote successful life skills development. The school needs the cooperation of families to model
the same commitment and competence at home as the teachers do at school. The third strategy is to ensure that every South African is able to read, write, count and think, and with this comes the fourth strategy, namely to infuse the classroom with a culture of human rights. The next three strategies, namely making arts and culture part of the curriculum, putting history back into the curriculum and introducing religion education into schools, is an appeal to use the curriculum to promote critical and creative thinking as well as tolerance among fellow South Africans. In Paragraph 5.5.2, I refer to the learners of the school where I have conducted my research as understanding, tolerant and supportive towards their schoolmates’ different religious convictions. These children grow up with the different languages, races and religions and to them it is a part of the society they live in every day. Strategy eight, making multilingualism happen, is an acknowledgement of the importance of education in the child’s mother tongue. Equally important is that the children should be healthy and that they should be provided with an alternative to anti-social behaviour. So strategy nine is to use sport to shape social bonds and nurture nation building at schools. Apart from the health benefits, sport is also a means to transcend language and culture, creating an area of common interest and goodwill among people (DoE: 2001: 51). This is why (as described in Paragraph 2.4.5) schools have to provide extramural sport activities.

The next three strategies focus on equality among all the children in South Africa. These strategies are to ensure equal access to education, to promote anti-racism in schools and to free the potential of girls as well as boys. In Paragraph 5.5.2, I share my observation that the educational strategy of promoting anti-racism is implemented effectively and successfully in the school where I have conducted my research. Strategy thirteen, dealing with HIV/AIDS and nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility, is a plea for empathy with the victims of HIV/AIDS but also a call to supply the children with the knowledge and skills necessary to make the right decisions regarding sexuality, and to raise HIV/AIDS awareness. The importance of sexual education is also discussed in Paragraph 2.4.4. Strategy fourteen is to make schools safe to learn and teach in and to ensure the rule of law, as children cannot learn when they do not feel safe (compare with Maslow’s motivation theory in paragraph 3.3). Therefore the physical safety of the children on the school grounds, as well as safety from bullying and sexual harassment, is necessary in an optimum learning environment. Strategy fifteen – ethics and the
environment – is about “adopting an ethic of sustainability ... changing our basic relationships with the Earth and with each other” (DoE, 2001: 75). The last strategy is to nurture the new patriotism, or to affirm our common citizenship.

Although Green (2004: 255) writes that there is a “lack of attention to the perspectives and practices of educators themselves”, I regard these 16 strategies as valuable in assisting all educators, whether they teach the subject Life Skills, or teach life skills by means of any other school subject. The Manifesto, especially the 16 proposed strategies, is the product of numerous discussions by educators and people of educational knowledge, lots of research and many debates. The groundwork done with the Manifesto can add value to the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

In Paragraph 2.5.2.1, I will elaborate on South Africa’s Education Department having changed the National Curriculum three times in 22 years. I should think that a document that was supposed to serve as a frame of reference for educational matters would also have been discussed and revised to stay relevant to the changing curriculum. But 15 years later the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy that could complement the CAPS Life Skills document has still not been discussed and debated again. Ironically, Professor Asmal is quoted in the Manifesto (2001:23) saying that “(values) must be put on the table, be debated, be negotiated, be synthesised, be modified, be earned”. The lack of further deliberation on the Manifesto, the values and the educational implications impede the use of a potentially powerful document.

2.5.2 The CAPS 2012 Life Skills Curriculum

Schools in South Africa follow the CAPS curriculum. For the purposes of this study I will focus on the primary school (Grades 1 – 7) and examine only the subject Life Skills in the CAPS curriculum. The school subject Life Skills in the primary school (Grades 1 – 7) includes three documents:

- Life Skills Foundation Phase Grades R – 3 (DoBE, 2011a)
- Life Skills Intermediate Phase Grades 4 – 6 (DoBE, 2012)
- Life Orientation Senior Phase Grades 7 – 10 (DoBE, 2011b)
Before I discuss the CAPS Life Skills curriculum in Paragraph 2.5.2.3, I will give a quick overview of the curricula preceding CAPS since 1994. I believe the changing of curricula has had a negative impact on the teaching of Life Skills as a school subject, as the educators did not have enough time to become familiar with its contents or to feel equipped to present Life Skills as a subject.

2.5.2.1 **Background of CAPS 2012: Outcomes-based Education and the Revised National Curriculum Statement**

South Africa is currently (in 2016) implementing its third new curriculum in the 22 years since the first democratic elections in 1994. This means that the continuity of academic content, teacher education, learners’ textbooks and life skills taught indirectly in the different subjects, and the life skills taught in the subject called Life Skills, are seriously fragmented and lack cohesiveness. A quick overview of the three curricula:

- There were 19 different educational departments in pre-1994 South Africa (DoE, 2002: 4 – 5). These departments were separated by race, geography and ideology. After the 1994 elections the National Education and Training Forum started revising the syllabus and rationalising the subjects to pave the way to a single national core syllabus. In 1997 the Statement of the National Curriculum for Grades R – 9 was published (Government Notice 1445). This curriculum, Curriculum 2005, was introduced into schools in 1998, based on the concept of Outcome-based Education (OBE).

- Curriculum 2005 and its implementation were reviewed in 2000 by a Ministerial Committee. On 30 July 2001 the Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R – 9 (Schools) was released for public commentary on the preliminary document. In December 2001 the Ministerial Project Committee incorporated the public’s suggestions and contributions (DoE, 2002: 2). This resulted in the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 9 of 31 May 2002, which was introduced into the Foundation Phase in 2004.

- There were still challenges and pressure points in the Revised National Statement that needed attention, so the Minister of Basic Education appointed a task team to identify the problems that negatively impacted on the quality of teaching in South
Africa, and to address the challenges. This resulted in a National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grade R – 9 and a National Curriculum Statement Grade 10 – 12. From 2012 the two statements were combined into a single document, the National Curriculum Statement Grade R – 12. The most important changes in the NCS of 2012 were:

- The reduction of the number of subjects in the Intermediate Phase (General Education and Training Band). The subjects in the Intermediate Phase are now: Home Language, First Additional language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology, Social Sciences and Life Skills.
- A clearer specification and description of what is to be taught, learnt and assessed in each subject on a term-by-term basis: the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R – 12 now comprised of a Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for each of the approved subjects listed in the NCS document.

The practical implication of these changes is: There were 19 different educational departments in South Africa in 1994, four years later Curriculum 2005 was introduced, another six years later the Revised National Statement was phasing into the schools and yet another eight years later CAPS was introduced. Each time it required a change in student-teacher education and in teacher training. The effect on training for the school subject Life Skills was that teachers experienced themselves as not properly equipped to teach the subject: Prinsloo (2007: 165) wrote that “(t)he general impression given by respondents ... was that most teachers ... were ill-equipped to cope with the demands of the life orientation programmes”. Harrop-Allin and Kros (2014: 77) wrote seven years later that the “...demands made by the Life Orientation/Creative Arts curriculum on teachers demonstrate how the CAPS curriculum fails to address the teachers’ problems, including lack of training”. Although Prinsloo wrote about secondary schools, primary school teachers had (and still have) the same experience regarding teaching the subject Life Skills.

2.5.2.2 General aims in the CAPS curriculum

The CAPS documents for all the different subjects consist of four sections. First, there is
the Foreword by Minister Angie Motshekga (the same in all subject documents). Section 1 is the general introduction to CAPS and is basically the same in all the subject documents. Section 2 provides information about the subject, Section 3 clarifies the contents and the teaching plan, and Section 4 supplies the assessment guidelines.

Section 1 of all the different subjects in the CAPS documents for Grades R–9 states the same general aims of the South African curriculum. The word “general” in the heading proves that these aims are for all the subjects and not only for Life Skills. Under heading 1.3(d) all the subjects’ documents state that the “National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 aims to produce learners that are able to:

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
- organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation” (DoBE, 2011a:5; DoBE, 2011b:5 and DoBE, 2012:5).

The importance of these general aims is that they represent, when compared with the description of life skills in Paragraph 2.2.1.4, the life skills we need to teach our children. These general aims are also in line with the WHO Department of Mental Health’s five areas of life skills that are not only relevant to all subjects, but also relevant to all cultures (WHO, 1999:1). This implies that life skills are taught as a part of all the subjects in the CAPS curriculum (grades R – 9), and not only in the subject Life Skills (or Life Orientation, as it is named in grades 7 – 9). Life skills are a reality in the CAPS documents and the responsibility of every teacher teaching the CAPS curriculum. In Paragraph 5.5.1, where I discuss the different interviewees’ perceptions of what they regard as life skills, the most popular answers included the ability to identify and solve problems, make the right decisions using critical and creative thinking, work effectively as individuals and with others.
as members of a team, and to organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.

2.5.2.3 Life Skills as a subject in the CAPS Curriculum

Before I discuss Life Skills in the CAPS curriculum, I have to admit that the choice of life skills in a curriculum for a multicultural country like South Africa cannot be easy. “(S)kills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings” (WHO, 1997:1).

Section 2 of the CAPS Life Skills documents is the introduction to the subject Life Skills. In this section the subject is defined, specific aims for the subject are demarcated, topics are discussed and the Life Skills study areas are explained. The specific aims for Life Skills in the three different phases in the primary school are represented in the following table (DoBE, 2011a: 8; DoBE, 2012: 12; DoBE, 2011b: 8 and 9):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Foundation Phase</strong></th>
<th><strong>Intermediate Phase</strong></th>
<th><strong>Senior Phase</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical, social, personal, emotional and cognitive development.</td>
<td>Guide learners to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential.</td>
<td>Guide learners to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative and aesthetic skills and knowledge through engaging in dance, music, drama and visual arts.</td>
<td>Teach learners to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities and to respect the rights of others.</td>
<td>Develop learners’ skills to respond to challenges and play an active and responsible role in the economy and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of personal health and safety.</td>
<td>Guide learners to make informed and responsible decisions about their health and environment.</td>
<td>Teach learners to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities and to respect the rights of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the relationship between people and the environment.</td>
<td>Develop creative, expressive and innovative individuals; develop skills such as self-awareness, problem-solving.</td>
<td>Guide learners to make informed and responsible decisions about their health, environment, subject choices, further studies and careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of social relationships, technological processes and elementary science.</td>
<td>Interpersonal relations, leadership, decision-making, and effective communication.</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in activities that promote movement and physical development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide learners with exposure to experiences and basic skills in dance, drama, music and visual arts including arts literacy and appreciation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow learners to enjoy the health benefits of exercise and develop social skills through participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.1 Specific aims in Life Skills in the three phases in Primary school**

Paragraph 2.2.1.4 earlier in this chapter states that life skills can be behavioural, cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal. When looking at the specific aims of the three documents, it appears that it covers all four facets of life skills. There is also a clear progression in the life skills from the Foundation Phase through to the Senior Phase. Interesting to note is also that the specific aims of the three phases correspond with the sixteen strategies mentioned in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy*, Paragraph 2.5.1 (DoE, 2001).

The subject Life Skills comprises Beginning Knowledge, Creative Arts, Physical Education and Personal and Social Well-being in Grades 1 – 3. In Grades 1 – 3 Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being are presented as one unit, therefore the life skills have to be selected from the contents of the Beginning Knowledge. The contents
of the subject Life Skills in this phase are included and represented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What we need to live</td>
<td>About me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At school</td>
<td>Myself and others</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy habits</td>
<td>Everyone is special</td>
<td>Health protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The weather</td>
<td>Healthy living</td>
<td>Keeping my body safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family</td>
<td>Seasons</td>
<td>Rights and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety in home</td>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>Healthy eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My body</td>
<td>Animals and creatures that live in water</td>
<td>Insects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping my body safe</td>
<td>Animal homes</td>
<td>Life cycles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My community</td>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Public safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manners and responsibilities</td>
<td>Road safety</td>
<td>Pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants and seeds</td>
<td>People who help us</td>
<td>How people lived long ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Our country</td>
<td>Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes</td>
<td>Ways we communicate</td>
<td>Products and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture maps</td>
<td>Life at night</td>
<td>Disasters and what we should do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td></td>
<td>Animals and creatures that help us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sky at night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Contents of Life Skills Grades 1–3 (DoBE, 2011a)

The themes in the Grades 1 – 3 teaching plan that were regarded as important by the interviewees (as discussed in Chapter 5), were manners and responsibilities (Paragraph 5.5.1 highlights how important the participants viewed respect), healthy living (in Paragraph 5.5.1 there were a group of participants who emphasised the importance of knowledge to make the right decisions regarding smoking, alcohol and drugs), people who help us (knowing who and where help and support can be found in the community, as
discussed in Paragraph 5.5.10), feelings (dealing with conflict, Paragraph 5.5.1), rights and responsibilities (the importance of being a good citizen, as discussed in Paragraph 5.5.1) and bullying (myself and others in Grade 2, discussed in Paragraph 5.5.2).

In Grades 4 – 6, Life Skills encompasses Personal and Social Well-being, Physical Education and Creative Arts (Visual Arts and Performing Arts, which include dance, drama and music). In Grades 7 – 9, the subject Life Orientation has as contents Life Orientation (Personal and Social Well-being in the previous grades) and Physical Education as contents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 4 – 6 (Intermediate Phase)</th>
<th>Grades 7 – 9 (Senior Phase)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of the self</td>
<td>Development of self in society (self-image, peer pressure, sexuality, challenging situations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and environmental responsibility</td>
<td>Health, social and environmental responsibility (substance abuse, common diseases, HIV/AIDS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td>Constitutional rights and responsibilities (human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, citizen’s rights and responsibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World of work (career fields, learning styles, time-management, decision-making, knowledge of the world of work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Contents of Life Skills Grades 4 – 6, and Life Orientation Grades 7 – 9 (DoBE, 2012; DoBE, 2011b)

When the life skills (real-life situations that occur at school) I discussed in Paragraph 2.4 are compared to the content of the subject Life Skills in grades 1 – 7 (the primary school years), it seems that the CAPS curriculum provides for the needs of primary school children and the skills they need to succeed in everyday life and in different environments.

In Chapter 5, the interviewees viewed social responsibility (Grades 4 – 6) and constitutional rights and responsibilities (Grades 7 – 9) as important in the development of life skills. In Paragraph 5.5.1, I describe how the participants regarded the skills surrounding being a good citizen as important. Dealing with conflict positively and appropriate communication skills that include dealing with conflict (development of the self
in Grades 4 – 6) were also very important to the participants. Together with conflict resolution came the theme of bullying in Paragraph 5.5.2. Bullying, how to respond to it and how to get out of the bullying habit is a part of the Grade 4 – 6 teaching plan under the heading Development of the Self. Another theme that will be discussed again in Chapter 5 is time management (World of Work, grades 7 – 9). In Paragraph 5.5.2, I will again refer to the learners’ understanding and support of the different cultures and religions among themselves in the school as described in the Grades 4 – 6 and Grades 7 – 9 CAPS documents,

**2.5.2.4 Fragmentation of the Life Skills Curriculum**

I mentioned in Paragraph 2.5.2.3 that the subject Life Skills includes Physical Education as well as Creative and Visual Arts in Grades R – 6. This might pose a problem to equip teachers to present such a diverse subject. Harrop-Allin and Kros (2014:77) writes: “The new curriculum has grouped six subjects together (each with specialist knowledge, values and skills) into Life Skills: Visual Arts, Drama, Music, Dance, Physical Education and Life Orientation. Teachers are confronted with the impossible task of teaching six subjects in 1,5 hours a week, and are expected to have subject knowledge and experience of each.” It might be necessary to do more research on the practicality and feasibility of the combination of more than one learning area in one subject, as it has practical implications for the teachers.

**2.6 CONCLUSION**

The definition of concepts at the beginning of the chapter explained the hierarchy and interrelatedness of values terminology. I described values as the basis on which character, morals and life skills are built, driven by cognition, emotion and action, ultimately leading to one’s behaviour. It explains why I will have to start working with values, character and morals when I want to develop a child’s life skills.

The next two contexts, within which I discussed life skills, were the family (the immediate context for a child) and the school (where a child spends a substantial part of his day). I discussed models of parental involvement in the education of their children, as well as the
barriers parents might face in becoming more involved as active educational partner together with the school. I then described life skills in a school context and what a school can do to teach a child life skills to succeed in everyday life, facing different challenges.

I ended the chapter with life skills in the context of the national CAPS Life Skills curriculum, focusing on the aims and content of Life Skills as an academic subject that has to supply our children with the necessary knowledge from where life skills can develop.

In Chapter 3, I will start off by discussing Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. I will explain why the family, school, peer groups, child care groups and community play an important role in the moral development of a child, especially within the microsystems and the mesosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39, 40 and Bronfenbrenner, 1986: 723). I will use Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explain how the motivation to learn of families and children living with poverty, domestic violence and violence in the community is influenced by their circumstances.

I will then discuss Character Education (a valuable approach to life skills and values education), as the principles used in Character Education are also used by the life skills and values programmes I will discuss further on in Chapter 3, namely the Head Start Programme, Clark's Essential 55, Living Values: An Educational Programme and UNICEF's life skills education programmes. I will focus on how these different programmes represent the contexts of life skills as discussed in this chapter and how it can assist in guidelines for parental involvement in life skills education at the school from where I conducted my research.
I have only one year to make a life’s worth of difference in each child in that classroom, and I give it everything I’ve got.

(Clark, 2003: xxiv)
3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I discussed life skills in the different contexts within which a child can be confronted with them, namely life skills as an academic concept, life skills within the family, life skills at school and life skills in the National Curriculum. In this chapter I will begin by explaining my conceptual framework for this study, namely Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1994). In Chapter 2, I discussed the fact that a child might be confronted with life skills and life skills development in different contexts. In this chapter I will explain, with the help of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, that these different contexts form a part of different systems within which a child operates every day. These different systems (including the family, school, community, government system, religious system and overarching values and morals) affect one another reciprocally. According to Bronfenbrenner's model, human development (values, character, morals, life skills and behaviour) does not happen in isolation. Processes outside the family (school, parents' workplace, culture, and so forth) have a direct impact on the child's development inside the family. It will become evident why the family, community, economy, culture, politics and time are all important in the development of a child and his life skills. In addition to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, I will discuss Maslow's motivation theory (Maslow, 1943: 372 – 382), as the basic needs of people (physiological and safety needs) impact on the motivation of parents to teach life skills, and on children to learn life skills. If a child’s basic needs are violated, it has definite implications for the effectiveness of the parent-school partnership in supporting a child’s life skills development.

Then I will discuss different life skills and/or values education programmes that correspond with the four contexts of life skills as set out in Chapter 2, namely character education (Context 1: Life skills as a concept), the Head Start Program (Context 2: Life skills within the family), the Essential 55 (Context 3: Life skills at school), Living Values: An Educational Program (Context 3: Life skills at school), and UNICEF (Context 4: Life skills and the National Curriculum). Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological theory will put the four contexts in perspective, explaining how these contexts form part of a bigger system and how they fit into an overarching organisation of interactive systems.
3.2 BRONFENBRENNER’S BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY

Bronfenbrenner's theory (1977, 1994) shows that a child's development does not occur in a vacuum and that the child is directly or indirectly connected to different levels of society, which all play an important role in the child’s development. He disagreed with research in psychology on children's behaviour, as it was conducted in isolated environments, there was a unidirectional process between the experimenter and the subject, settings were unfamiliar to the child, situations were limited and artificial, and research was done for short periods of time only. Bronfenbrenner combined the fields of sociology, education, anthropology, psychology and other specialist areas to create his theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Rosa and Tudge, 2013: 245 and Brendtro, 2006: 162 – 164). He refers to his perspective as the ecology of human development, defining it as follows: “The ecology of human development is the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process is affected by relations obtained within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977: 514). In its report on Life Skills programmes, UNICEF (2012:11) agrees with Bronfenbrenner's view on a child's interrelatedness with his environment: “...the social norms of the wider community and the social structures in which children observe, experience, test and internalise those norms, influence the development of relevant skills and behaviours. For example, prevailing religious and cultural attitudes and conventions ... can restrict the opportunities to develop empowered and responsible behaviours around these issues.”

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development has changed and developed since it was first proposed in the 1970's as an ecological approach to human development, until his death in 2005 when it was termed “the Bioecological Theory of Human Development”. Rosa and Tudge (2013: 243) divide the evolution of Bronfenbrenner's theory into three phases (They acknowledge that the dates given are imprecise as they relied on date of publication of articles rather than dates of writing and submission): Phase 1 (1973 – 1979, the initial phase when the theory was proposed), Phase 2 (1980 – 1993, when the theory
was modified and more attention was paid to the conceptualisation of the environment and the developmental process) and Phase 3 (1993 – 2006, when proximal processes were defined and placed central to the bioecological theory, and the Process-Person-Context-Time [PPCT] model was described as the appropriate research design for the bioecological theory).

In Phase 1, Bronfenbrenner viewed ‘ecology’ as the key concept in the study of human development. He viewed the ecological environment as a “set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 38, 39). These structures are represented as a series of concentric circles which, from the innermost level to the most remote level, he provided with the following names:

- **microsystem** (immediate context: family, home, child care, school, peer group and workplace);
- **mesosystem** (the interrelations among major settings at a particular point in a developing child's life; a system of microsystems: interaction among family, school and peer group, for example);
- **exosystem** (formal or informal structures in which the developing person is not situated but being influenced by, for example the parents' workplace might have a follow-up effect on the child at home, or political decisions which might influence the choice of school a child attends);
- **macrosystem** (it differs fundamentally from the other systems as it refers to overarching systems of a culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal and political systems) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977: 514 – 515).

In the second phase of evolution of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, his main goal was to show ways in which the environment could be conceptualised. He used a person-context model (in which personal characteristics, like gender or biological condition, were included) and a process-context model (the influence of an external setting on a developmental feature, for example the effect of a parent's workplace on the functioning of the family). The person-process-context model and thereafter the process-person-context model viewed the interactions of the person and context as important for the person's development. This model was revised and refined in the third phase. Another important development in this
phase was consideration of time as an important component of research: Bronfenbrenner added a chronosystem to the four systems in his initial theory. The chronosystem takes into account that events and experiences that influence and change a person, occur over a lifetime. These experiences can stem from the external environment (going to school, moving to another neighbourhood) or from the individual self (becoming ill). These changes can also be expected (entering school) or unexpected (sudden death of a family member). The important characteristic is that these events change the relation between the individual and the environment. Another important change in the second phase was the redefinition of the macrosystem: Bronfenbrenner added to its definition, claiming that the macrosystem was overarching over the micro-, meso- and exosystems (Rosa and Tudge, 2013: 248 – 251).

In the third phase of the development of his theory Bronfenbrenner made room for proximal processes and included the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model as a research design to conduct bioecological research. Proximal processes are the interactive processes between the developing organism and the other objects in the environment. Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994: 572) called these processes “the primary engines of effective development”. There are three defining properties that identify the proximal processes:

- Proposition 1: “(H)uman development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment ... the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994: 572). Examples of this type of interaction include activities between parent and child, children playing with friends, learning new skills.

- Proposition 2: “The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the developing person, of the environment ... and of the nature of the developmental outcome under consideration” (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994: 572).

- Proposition 3: “Proximal processes serve as a mechanism for actualising genetic potential...” (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994: 572).
Bronfenbrenner’s full bioecological theory deals with the interrelations among the four concepts of process, person, context and time (the PPCT model). According to Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield and Karnik (2009: 200) “...in order to implement a study that is guided by bioecological study, all four elements of the model should be present”.

- **Process:** Proximal processes, as mentioned above, are fundamental to Bronfenbrenner’s theory.
- **Person:** Characteristics that individuals bring into a social situation include demand (such as age, gender, physical appearance), resource (including past experiences, skills, intelligence) and force (temperament, motivation, persistence, and the like).
- **Context:** The context, or environment, involves four interrelated systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (as discussed earlier in this paragraph).
- **Time:** Time can constitute micro-time (what happens during a specific activity), meso-time (interactions and activities that occur consistently in the developing person’s environment) and macro-time (the chronosystem, as described earlier).

(Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield and Karnik, 2009: 200 – 2020)

Paat (2013: 956) describes Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory as a framework of knowledge that can help “identify ecological risks facing immigrant families”. In my study I will rely heavily on Bronfenbrenner's theory, using the PPCT model, to help identify the ecological risks these families, as well as the other families in the community, are facing.
In Chapter 2, I discussed values, morals, character, life skills and behaviour as separate but interrelated concepts that involve a person’s cognition, emotion and action. I indicated the interaction of these concepts in Figure 2.1. After discussing Bronfenbrenner, I will indicate how these concepts fit into Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1986) by combining Figure 2.1 and Figure 3.1. The combined model below (Figure 3.2) shows how values, morals, character, behaviour and life skills develop in the Microsystem (the family, community, school, and in the other systems within which a person operates daily), but also that the development of a child’s values, character, morals, life skills and behaviour is influenced by all five systems identified by Bronfenbrenner.
Figure 3.2 Development of concepts within different levels of society

I indicated with Figure 3.2 how values, morals, character, life skills and behaviour develop in the microsystem and are influenced by all four other systems. I also mentioned in Paragraph 1.4 that there are children at the school where I conduct my research who have to live with gangsterism, drugs, poverty and violence in the community, or even domestic violence. These children face challenges within the microsystem that most probably have a negative influence on their motivation to acquire life skills like motivation, creative thinking, and the like. Therefore I have to add Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (his motivation theory) to Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory to explain the difficulty and to give full insight in the situation within which some of our school’s parents and children find themselves every day. In Paragraphs 5.5.3 and 5.5.4 I describe the circumstances under
which some of the school’s children have to develop life skills.

3.3 MASLOW’S MOTIVATION THEORY

Maslow (1943: 372 – 382) proposed his hierarchy of needs theory, which he called a motivation theory, in which he included five motivational needs. According to him these needs are motivators only as long as they are not satisfied. Once a need is satisfied it is no longer a motivator. The needs progress from lower-level needs to higher-level needs. The five needs were originally:

- physiological needs (breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion);
- safety needs (security of body, employment, family, health);
- love and belongingness needs (family, friendship);
- esteem needs (self-esteem, self-respect, respect of others);
- self-actualisation needs (“What a man can be, he must be.”).

![Figure 3.3 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2014)](image)

The self-actualisation need was later expanded into four needs, namely cognitive needs,
aesthetic needs, self-actualisation and finally selftransendence. Maslow calls the self-actualisation needs the B-needs (being needs) and the first four needs the D-needs (deficient needs) because the latter are the needs essential to sustaining life. Greene and Burke (2007: 120) call people who move beyond self-actualisation ‘selfless actualization’, as these people move away from their own needs, focussing increasingly towards ‘being outside oneself’. The drive towards self-actualisation is beneficial to a society as it will lead to compassion, care and problem-solving (D’Souza and Gurin, 2016: 210).

The importance of Maslow’s needs hierarchy to life skills education, is to raise awareness among educators and parents that the child needs to have at least the first two D-needs (physiological needs) met before he can be motivated to develop his intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and consequently his life skills, enabling him to cope in society among fellow South Africans. The relevance of Maslow’s theory in a South African context is confirmed by Harper, Harper and Stills (2003: 17): “...children of different cultures and countries have the same basic human needs.”

Harper, Harper and Stills (2003: 22) suggest certain counselling strategies (guidelines) for children whose D-needs are not fulfilled. I will refer back to these strategies in Chapter 6. For children whose physiological needs are not met Harper, Harper and Stills suggest that the teacher or school counsellor seek the support of social services and resources to help the children and their families obtain food, shelter and clothing (refer to Paragraph 6.3.1). The family and children also have to be referred to private and government agencies that can provide the resources and services to the family in need. Lastly a social worker will have to consult with the family on the topic of survival skills, nutrition, how to acquire social services and resources, financial management, employment, and dealing with problems like alcoholism, drug abuse and addictive gambling.

For the children whose safety needs are not met there are also a few guidelines suggested by Harper, Harper and Stills. At school peer mediation groups can be developed to help resolve conflict among children before it leads to violence. Schools also have to establish preventative group guidance to prevent bullying, psychological harassment, sexual harassment and fighting. For children who are exposed to homelessness, abuse and
violent crimes, the community have to become involved in developing and supplying safe havens where these children can be accommodated.

3.4 EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES AND PROGRAMMES ADDRESSING THE DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF LIFE SKILLS

I described values as the basis on which character, morals and life skills are built and said that these concepts are driven by cognition, emotion and action, ultimately leading to an individual’s behaviour. Therefore values education and character education programmes can be just as relevant to life skills education, as the same principles apply to values education programmes, character education programmes and life skills development programmes.

3.4.1 Context 1: Life skills as a concept and character education

Context 1: Life skills as a concept amongst related concepts is supported by the character education approach to values education, as the same principles for character education and life skills education are relevant. Both character education and life skills education stress the importance of involvement by the family, school and community. Character education also deals with values, character, morality and life skills, as Lickona (1991) describes the purpose of character education is to educate young people to choose to do the good and act upon core ethical values. Therefore the character education approach to values education will be discussed, as it encompasses the different concepts underlying life skills (as explained in Paragraph 2.2).

3.4.2 Context 2: Life skills within the family and the Head Start Program

Context 2: Life skills within the family is addressed by the Head Start Program in America. In Paragraph 3.6 it will become clear how this anti-poverty preschool programme supports parents who struggle financially and parents who need parental support and guidance. It covers six major aspects of child development: an educational programme, health services, social services, psychological services, nutrition and a parent-participation programme. The Head Start Program includes Epstein’s principles for school/family/community
partnerships (Paragraph 2.3.2.1), as well as some of the barriers described in Hornby and Lafaele’s model (Paragraph 2.3.2), especially the parents and family factors (Paragraph 2.3.3.1).

3.4.3 **Context 3: Life skills at school and *The Essential 55***

Context 3: *The Essential 55* is a book written by Clark (2003) and which lists 55 rules for learners. These 55 rules include good manners, classroom rules and life skills. The school where I work and do my research uses the life skills listed in this book to teach the children the life skills they need in their daily conduct towards one another. Therefore *The Essential 55* can also be applied and used as a programme for life skills development. The practical rules set out in Clark’s book address situations like bullying, respect for other cultures and religions, and respect for the rights of fellow students as described in Paragraph 2.4.

3.4.4 **Context 3: Life skills at school and Living Values: An Educational Program***

Context 3: LVEP (Living Values: An Educational Program) is another programme that I will discuss in the context of life skills at school. This programme is a non-profit entity, used by educators around the world, as it provides educators with a framework and guiding principles in teaching twelve universal values. The most valuable contribution of the LVEP, is the material it supplies (refer to Paragraph 3.8.4) that can be used internationally by any teacher. The guidelines and supportive materials are available in 23 languages and are aimed at values education for general use, as well as values activities for refugees, children affected by war, activities for street children and activities for drug rehabilitation. In a school where we host refugees, neglected children and children who grow up in areas where gangs and gang fights are a reality (as described in Paragraphs 5.5.3 and 5.5.4), the guidelines and material for LVEP are valuable.

3.4.5 **Context 4: Life Skills in the National Curriculum and the United Nations Children’s Fund***

Context 4: Life skills in the National Curriculum has a lot to gain from the last programme in this chapter, namely Life Skills Education by UNICEF. This organisation gives valuable
support in developing a life skills programme within the curriculum (Paragraph 3.9.3) and by describing generic life skills and content-specific life skills (Paragraph 3.9.1).

3.5 CONTEXT 1: CHARACTER EDUCATION

Character education can be described as a “...movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible and caring young people by modelling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values we share” (Goswami and Garg, 2011: 46). Character education is a comprehensive, holistic approach to values education that includes the application of all the concepts related to life skills, namely values, character, morals, life skills and behaviour. These different concepts surface in character education by means of (amongst others) exposure to different values (concept of values), development of character by developing the ability to make moral choices that will be to the benefit of the social community (concept of character), moral education and moral reasoning (concept of morality), critical thought, social and emotional learning, conflict management, education in life skills (concept of life skills) and creating a caring community (concept of behaviour).

Lickona (1991, 1993, 1996, and 2005) is one of the leaders of character education, which promotes schools, families and communities as the three pillars in the educational process.

3.5.1 Character Education: knowing the good, desiring the good, doing the good

According to Lickona (1991: 51) “(g)ood character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good”. Character education strives to develop this good character in children by “deliberate effort by schools, families and communities to help young people understand, care about and act upon core ethical values” (1996: 93).

To educate for character is to educate for respect and responsibility. In Paragraph 2.2.1.2, I referred to Lickona’s (1991: 68) description of character as moral knowing (knowing moral values, reasoning upon your values, making decisions according to your values), moral feeling (loving the good, empathy, self-control) and moral action (will, doing what is
Character education is not limited to one subject (or learning area) only, but is seen as an approach and a way of teaching that infuse the whole curriculum, as well as extracurricular activities, just as it is done with life skills education *per se*.

Figure 3.4 (below) illustrates school-wide strategies for teaching character based on respect and responsibility. The three main strategies are:

- caring beyond the classroom (role models, taking part in projects outside the borders of the school);
- school, parents and communities working together as partners of character education, and
- creating a positive moral culture in the school.

Different strategies (moral reflection; moral discipline; the teacher as caregiver, model and mentor, and so forth) are given in the second circle to promote strategies a school can implement to infuse character into the whole curriculum:
3.5.2 Teaching methods for establishing values and life skills

The methods used in character education can also foster life skills development regarding self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and decision making. Methods used in character education include the use of the narrative (stories, poetry, myths, legends, novels) to effectively convey values and traditions. Together with the narrative, moral reflection is important so that children can discuss and debate moral issues that came up while listening to these stories or while learning in any other situation. Teachers should create enough opportunities where every child can discuss, demonstrate and practise the values they have chose and accepted, but this means that there should be a moral school climate where the learners feel respected, accepted and free to share their thoughts in class. Cooperative learning in the classroom will promote working together, sharing, responsibility and respect for each other's work (Goswami and Garg,
Teachers are expected to be positive role models in character education, as they model and teach the positive values of good character. Teachers should also create and use opportunities to involve the parents and the community, as parents and community are, together with the school, the three pillars upon which character education is build (Spamer, 2007: 79 – 82). In Paragraphs 6.3.4 and 6.3.5 I will refer again to the importance of the relationship between the school and community.

### 3.5.3 Parental Involvement and Life Skills in Character Education

Goswami and Garg (2011: 47) made suggestions for parents to get involved in character education. They encourage parents to be a model of good character at home, respecting your spouse and children, teaching children good manners and also that with rights comes responsibility. They advise parents to encourage their children to solve their problems on their own as far as possible, but with the necessary support from the parents where needed. Lastly they stress the importance of families spending time together. They suggest that parents spend time with their children every day, listening to them and having a family meal together as often as possible. Children need quantity time with their parents more than a bit of quality time now and then. These character education activities can also be regarded as home-based parental involvement with life skills education taking place within the family.

In both character education and life skills education the parent-school partnership is important in conveying and establishing positive values and life skills. As indicated in Paragraph 2.3.2, human development (from values right through to behaviour) does not take place in a vacuum, but is dependent on interaction with different levels of society.

### 3.6 CONTEXT 2: AMERICA – THE HEAD START PROGRAM

I ended Paragraph 3.5.3 by reiterating the importance of the parent-school partnership in conveying values and teaching life skills. The Head Start program in America has been developed to aid and support parents who face certain barriers that prevent them from giving their children the education and developmental support they need. By helping the
families in need, the parent-school partnership should improve and life skills education will benefit.

3.6.1 History of Head Start

Head Start, an American federally funded programme, was launched in 1965 by Lyndon B. Johnson and the Office of Economic Opportunity as an educational weapon in the war against poverty. This anti-poverty preschool programme covers six major aspects of child development: an educational programme, health services, social services, psychological services, nutrition and a parent-participation programme, so that the economically disadvantaged children who take part in this programme can start schooling on an equal foot with their more privileged peers. The programme for parent participation is viewed as one of the most important aspects of Head Start as the emphasis is on parent involvement and the conveying of life skills, which are important for the child's development. The classes in Head Start are limited to 15 – 20 children, each with a teacher and an aide (who both have to receive training at a Head Start teacher training institute). In 2011, 900 000 children were provided with Head Start at a cost of more than $6.7 billion. In the past 50 years research has been done on the effectiveness of Head Start (focussing on the fading out of the immediate gains of Head Start), how Head Start affects the academic performance of different racial groups, Life Skills programmes in Head Start classes and federal funding for the programme (Currie and Thomas, 2000: 756; Hindman, Miller, Froyen and Skibbe, 2012: 654; Kim, 2013: 503 – 504; Hanley, Fahmie and Heal, 2014: 443 and 444; Brazziel, 1967: 344 – 346; Samuels, 2013:6 and Hale, 2012: 506, 507). In 2014 Congress authorised $500 million in the Omnibus Act to create a new Early Head Start Child Care Partnership initiative. This initiative supports states and communities to expand a high quality early learning for the children who need it most: the poor and disadvantaged children (Schilder and Smith Leavell, 2015: 109).

3.6.2 Family Involvement during Head Start

Hindman, Miller, Froyen and Skibbe (2012: 654 – 655) distinguish four types of family involvement during Head Start:
Family involvement at home

The family and its engagement in learning activities are important in a child's early development. For example: reading books to a child and having conversations with a child can help develop his/her vocabulary, the discussion of letters and sounds and fun writing activities develop phonetic awareness, mathematical games can develop number sense and enjoyable educational games can foster a positive attitude towards learning. This is the beginning of teaching the child the life skill of critical thinking.

Family involvement in the community

By engaging their children in their communities, families introduce their children to the wider world and the resources it can offer. Engaging children in the community in Head Start includes visits to the library, visiting a museum, attending sporting events and church functions and attending cultural opportunities. Social awareness skills, amongst others, can develop in this way.

Family involvement at school

Families can be involved at school by volunteering to help in the classroom (teaching in small groups) or other areas of Head Start (like staffing the office). Family involvement can also include participating in decision-making bodies, serving as liaisons between the school and other families, or by communicating personally with the teachers to share important information on their children. Brazziel (1967: 346) writes that “...parents who can help plan and execute an activity which affects their family so much will be more willing to support this activity and … strengthen home life in a way possible to help their children develop”.

The first three types of family involvement during Head Start are also explained fully in Epstein’s model for school/family/community partnerships (Paragraph 2.3.2.1). In her Table 1 she describes six types of involvement, including sample practices which correspond with these three types of involvement in Head Start. Type 3 (family involvement at school) also corresponds with revised level 2 in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model for parental involvement (Paragraph 2.3.2.2). These models, as well as
the principles of the Head Start programme, will be discussed again in Paragraphs 6.3.1, 6.3.2 and 6.3.5.

- Unanswered questions about family involvement regarding low-income families

Early studies indicated that family involvement was less in low-income families, but recent studies show a bigger variety in the involvement of low socio-economic status families.

### 3.6.3 Effectiveness of Head Start

In 1969, four years after the launch of the Head Start programme, the Westinghouse Learning Corporation released their evaluation of Head Start. The report focused on immediate intellectual gain by the preschoolers who took part in the programme, as well as on permanent improvement in IQ scores. The report concluded that there were no satisfactory benefits to children attending this programme. The report also mentioned that the immediate gains of Head Start faded out over time, so it didn’t appear to be permanent (Hale, 2012: 509).

Lee and Loeb (1995: 62 – 63) investigated why cognitive and affective advantages gained by Head Start vanished or faded over time. There were possibilities such as different Head Start sites providing different qualities of work in their programmes, lack of follow-through education and less favourable educational environments to which poor learners were exposed. Lee and Loeb were interested in the quality of the schooling children received once they had graduated from the Head Start programme. The programme is aimed at the “poorest of the poor” children who are concentrated in areas where there are schools of low quality, or schools with unchallenging programmes. Their investigation found that the most disadvantaged children attended low quality schools. These schools proved not to have an academically stimulating climate, they were unsafe and the relations between the staff and learners were less harmonious. The children who originally benefited from the Head Start programme had to attend inferior schools afterwards. This seemed to have undermined the early advantage these children had. “(T)hese especially poor children, even with the early benefits of Head Start, move out of the programme into some of our nation’s worst schools. Thus, it is not surprising that such an early boost is undermined”
(Lee and Loeb, 1995: 73 – 74). Currie and Thomas (2000: 755 – 757) also investigated the possibility that “...the initial positive effects of Head Start may be undermined if Head Start children are subsequently exposed to inferior schools”, focusing on Head Start children from different cultural groups. They found that certain cultural groups are more likely to be enrolled in poor schools after finishing the Head Start programme. The conclusion is the same as Lee and Loeb, namely that “…Head Start children in better schools do better” (Currie and Thomas, 2000: 771).

The effectiveness of a partnership between Head Start and childcare centres was also researched recently. The congress authorised $500 million in the 2014 Omnibus Act as part of President Obama's Early Education Plan. This placed renewed interest on research regarding the benefits of Head Start and child care partnerships. In a case study done by Schilder and Smith Leavell (2015) their findings supported the argument that a partnership between Head Start and child care services improved the services to children and families in need (although there are numerous challenges to be met). The reasoning behind the research was that Head Start's primary goal was to focus on children's developmental needs on a part-day and part-year basis, where child care programmes focus on the child care needs of parents who are working or studying on a full-day and full-year basis. This means that the children of parents who do not have the flexibility to transport their children during the day or who find it impossible to take time off in the summer, can be precluded from taking part in all the advantages that Head Start can offer. It is also mentioned in the article that all child care centres are not necessarily on high standards, as the licensing standards for centres in many states only have to meet minimum health and safety requirements. By aligning child care services with Head Start standards, the goal is to improve the quality of child care.

By looking at the effectiveness of Head Start together with child care centres and the effectiveness of Head Start once the children graduated from the Head Start programme, it seems to me that the Head Start programme alone is not sufficient in having a lifelong effect on children. But together with the involvement of the family, the gains of Head Start can last without fading after a few years, even when the children attend inferior schools or inferior child care centres. The same argument applies to Living Values: An Educational...
Program. The variety of life skills taught in these programmes will be lost if not modelled, enhanced, repeated and practised at home. It does seem, however, that “...continuing support through primary and secondary education so that the benefits of early interventions can be sustained into later life” (UNICEF, 2012: 11) might be necessary to support and guide not only the child, but also the parents. Therefore parents have to be supported by the school to know how and what they have to do for the life skills development of their children at home. This matter will be discussed again in Paragraph 6.3.5.

3.7 CONTEXT 3: ESSENTIAL 55 AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

Life skills education at the school where my research is undertaken (life skills on day to day basis in the children’s general behaviour) is done on the basis of Clark’s Essential 55 (2003). From his experience as a teacher, Clark compiled a list of 55 rules he regards as a “guide to how life should be lived and appreciated”, including rules about “how we live, interact with others, and appreciate life, and ... speak to everyone” (2003: xviii). The 55 rules in the book can be regarded as the basics of good manners, but to Clark “they’re about preparing kids for what awaits them after they leave my classroom. It is about preparing them to handle any situation they may encounter and giving them the confidence to do so. In some ways, it is a fifty-five-step plan” (Clark, 2003: xviii, xix).

The principal and staff of the school where my research is undertaken, made a selection of ten (one rule per week per term) out of the 55 rules that they deemed important and applicable for the school’s children. These rules include social skills, especially:

- Rule 2: Make eye contact. When someone is speaking, keep your eyes on him or her at all times.
- Rule 3: If someone wins a game or does something well, we congratulate that person.
- Rule 4: During discussions, respect other learners’ comments, opinions and ideas.
- Rule 5: If you win or do well at something, do not brag. If you lose, do not show anger.
- Rule 9: Always say thank you when given something.
- Rule 11: Surprise others by doing random acts of kindness.
- Rule 15: Do not ask for a reward.
- Rule 50: Be positive and enjoy life. Some things just aren't worth getting upset over.
- Rule 52: Accept that you are going to make mistakes. Learn from them and move on.
- Rule 53: No matter what the circumstances, always be honest. Even if you have done something wrong, it is best to admit it.

The rules are revised, swapped and changed from time to time, but mainly stay the same so that the children can learn the most important rules. Each week one rule is chosen as the Essential 55 of the week. It is communicated to the parents via the weekly newsletter, for parents to be aware of what the children are taught at school and for the parents to instil the same rules at home. The rules are also visible in all classrooms, and in the weekly assembly the week’s Essential 55 is discussed with the children.

The general aims of the CAPS documents (Paragraph 2.5.2.2) include working effectively as individuals and together as a team, and communicating effectively. These aims can be translated into the Essential 55 with rules such as: Respect other students’ comments and ideas (Rule 4), complete your homework every day (Rule 16), follow the specific classroom protocols (Rule 21), and if anyone is bullying you let me know (Rule 48).

Teachers reinforce the rules in class during the week, discussing them with the class or focusing the children’s attention on a rule when applicable (e.g. look me in the eyes when you talk to me, we don’t laugh when somebody makes a mistake, let’s give Johnny a hand for his good test results, or reminding a child so say thank you when a birthday learner hands out the cake that he brought to school). The whole school (from grades 1 – 7) do the same rules so that, by the time a child finishes primary school, each child would have been exposed to these life skills repeatedly for seven years. The practicality and easiness of application of the 55 rules in Clark’s book make it accessible and understandable to even the youngest child in the school. It also makes it easy to communicate these rules to the parents to implement at home as well (discussed again in Paragraph 6.3.5) as they do not need further explanation.
3.8 CONTEXT 3: LIVING VALUES: AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Living Values: An Educational Program (henceforth referred to as LVEP) contributes to the context of life skills at school. The purpose of LVEP is to assist teachers by providing a framework and guiding principles for the values and life skills development of the children at school.

3.8.1 Background of Living Values: An Educational Program

LVEP started as a program initiated by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) religious organisation (a Hindu-related new religious movement which originated in India during the 1930s). The BKWSU suggested an international project called “Sharing Our Values for a Better World” to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in 1995. The project focused on 12 universal values (peace, respect, co-operation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, love, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance and unity – values that assist self-awareness skills, social-awareness skills and relationship skills) and a book, Living Values: a Guidebook, resulted from this project. These 12 values remind of the constitutional values in the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001: 13 – 22), namely democracy, ubuntu, an open society, non-racism and non-sexism, responsibility, respect and reconciliation (discussed in Paragraph 2.5). A short section in this book covered values in the classroom. It was this section that eventually led to LVEP.

In 1996 a meeting, which was co-sponsored by the Education Cluster of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and by BKWSU, took place. It was attended by 20 educators from all over the world. The Guidebook, as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, was used as guidelines for the educators to discuss how values could be integrated with education to prepare learners for lifelong learning. This group of educators developed the aims of values education. A testing programme was developed and a set of materials, the 'Living Values Educators' Kit' was distributed among 100 participants. The project called 'Living Values: an Educational Initiative' was launched in 1997. By 2002 LVEP was already used in 70 countries at day-care centres, schools, youth
clubs, parent associations, health centres and refugee camps. As the programme developed, its link with the BKWSU weakened and LV educators emphasised that there is nothing more in the LV material that is distinctive of BKSWU (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004a: 137, 138; Living Values, 1996a). At this stage BKSWU is one of the principal sponsors of this programme, though not the only sponsor. The programme is a non-profit entity, used by educators around the world, endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and sponsored by the Spanish Committee of UNICEF, the Planet Society and the Brahma Kumaris (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004b: 249).

### 3.8.2 The purpose and aims of LVEP

The purpose of LVEP is to provide teachers with a framework and guiding principles for the development of the whole person. By “whole person” the LVEP views the child or adult as an individual comprised of physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004a: 139). This is the same sentiment as our Department of Basic Education (2012: 10) that views Life Skills in school as “…the holistic development of the learner”. As LVEP follows a holistic approach, it builds intrapersonal and interpersonal social and emotional skills, as well as values-based perspectives and behaviour. The wider community is involved by using parents, educators, caregivers and people in deprived situations such as refugee camps or street life. Adults are the facilitators in an approach that is child-centred, flexible and interactive. The educators create an atmosphere in which the children can feel loved, respected and safe. In this safe atmosphere the educator models values, engage in value-based discussions with the children and implement various values activities and values projects (Living Values, 1996a).

The aims of LVEP are:

- to help individuals think about different values, to reflect on them and to express them in relation to themselves, others, the community and the world (critical thinking skills);

---

99 In the Reference Section UNESCO is listed under: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
● to deepen understanding, motivation and responsibility when making positive personal and social choices (decision-making skills);
● to inspire individuals to choose their own personal, social, moral and spiritual values (self-management skills); and
● to encourage educators and caregivers to regard education as providing learners with a philosophy of living (self-awareness skills) (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004a: 134; El-Hassan and Kahlil, 2005: 82 and Living Values, 1996a).

The 12 chosen values are a response to the cry for values in a 21st century world where children are confronted with and affected by violence, social problems and a lack of respect for one another and for the world around them (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004b: 250).

3.8.3 Theoretical background for LVEP

The website of LVEP provides the theoretical background for this educational programme at http://www.livingvalues.net/reference/docs-pdf/lvTheoreticalBackgroundandSupport.pdf. According to the LVEP, values education has to take place in a value-based atmosphere. A child needs to feel loved, respected, valued, understood and safe. Learning works best in an environment where a child experiences these five emotions. Emphasis is placed upon positive reinforcement instead of punishment, so that learners can experience the above-mentioned five feelings as opposed to feeling shamed, inadequate, hurt, afraid and unsafe. In addition to a safe learning environment, LVEP values the modelling of positive values by the adult as powerful and necessary.

a) Each lesson has to start with a values stimulus. The stimulus can be the receiving of information from literature, stories or cultural information. It can also be internal reflection or imagining by asking learners to visualise a value in action (for example: imagining a peaceful world). Another stimulus can be exploring values in the real world, like games, dramatisation, real news or subject matter.

b) Children discuss their feelings about the value in an open, respectful atmosphere. Educators can use questions to give direction to the discussion or to delve into emotional
c) Discussions are followed by the exploration of ideas. This can be done by small group activities for an art project (drawing, painting, making mobiles, dancing, music), journaling or dramas. It can also lead to mind-mapping values and anti-values. The teacher can spark this by asking a question like “What is the relationship between...?” Intrapersonal skills like relaxation exercises (helping children to experience a value like peace, respect or love) or self-regulation (calming oneself down) are used. Exploration of ideas also includes interpersonal communication skills like conflict resolution skills, positive communication, co-operation games and doing projects together. Children must also understand (be made aware of) the practical implications of the values in relationship with the society, environment and the world they live in.

d) Finally the learners have to learn to apply their values-based behaviours in both family life and society. This can be special projects, parents/businesses getting involved in putting the newly acquired values into action, or the learners sharing their creative work with fellow learners.

The theoretical background for teaching the values according to LVEP principles, are similar to the teaching methods for establishing values and life skills in character education (Paragraph 3.5.2). Both approaches favour a stimulus to start the discussion, followed by activities that include cognition and emotion, and ending the process with modelling the chosen value.

3.8.4 Implementation of LVEP

The LVEP is an international values education programme that offers guidelines and supporting materials in implementing the programme. It is not a curriculum reform or a national strategy (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004a: 134). It can be used for a child or adult at any age, can be adapted for classroom use in different situations and can be used in connection with other values education programmes, as proved by a study done by Komalasari (2012) at an Indonesian university. “Those who promote the LVEP are well
aware of other educational initiatives and refer to or include ideas from these, if they are considered consonant with or complementary to the concepts of the LVEP” (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2004b: 246, 247).

The material developed for LVEP is available in 23 languages. The Living Values Series consists of the following books:

- *Living Values Activities for Children Ages 3 – 7*
- *Living Values Activities for Children Ages 8 – 14*
- *Living Values Activities for Young Adults*
- *LVEP Educator Training Guide*
- *Living Values Parent Groups: a Facilitator Guide*

There is also material for children at risk:

- *Living Values Activities for Refugees and Children Affected by War Ages 3 – 7*
- *Living Values Activities for Refugees and Children Affected by War Ages 8 – 14*
- *Living Values Activities for Refugees and Children Affected by Earthquakes Ages 3 – 7*
- *Living Values Activities for Refugees and Children Affected by Earthquakes Ages 8 – 14*
- *Living Values Activities for Street Children Ages 3 – 6*
- *Living Values Activities for Street Children Ages 7 – 10*
- *Living Values Activities for Street Children Ages 11 – 14*
- *Living Values Activities for Drug Rehabilitation* (Living Values, 1996a)

Although this material will not be used in the guidelines that I will suggest in Chapter 6, it is necessary for both teachers and parents to be aware of these books that can be used as support. The school where I conducted my research hosts learners who are refugees, there are immigrant children who also have to adapt to a new country with new customs and languages, there are neglected children (to whom the material for street children can easily be used), there are those who grow up in a community where gangs and gang fights happen on a daily basis (also children affected by a “war”) and there are children who use drugs. The supportive material of LVEP and their guidelines can be very helpful. These
books are easily available through amazon.com, and one or two of the books can be downloaded from LVEP’s website.

3.8.5 Results of research on LVEP

Studies done by Arweck and Nesbitt (2004a) in English primary schools the United Kingdom showed why this kind of values education programme was attractive to schools in the United Kingdom:

- The universal values (generic skills) used in this programme appealed to most people.
- People of any religion can feel comfortable with this programme as it is not bound by an ideological framework.
- It is a flexible approach that can adjust to any given context.
- It can fit into statutory curriculum requirements.
- Both adults and pupils need to examine and clarify their own values.
- The principles can be applied to all school subjects and all people involved in the school.
- Support and training are provided for schools that need it.

Hassan and Kahlil (2005) undertook a study to examine the effects of LVEP on behaviours and attitudes related to intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences in elementary school learners in a private school in Lebanon. The study's result indicated a significant difference in self-esteem perceptions, behaviours and attitudes, thus proving successful in the teaching of interpersonal skills and intrapersonal skills.

3.9 CONTEXT 4: UNICEF AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

In its fourth context life skills is viewed as an academic subject in our CAPS curriculum. This is contrary to the previous contexts where life skills were the skills (or tools) that people need to succeed in everyday life and in different environments. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2012) is valuable in this context, as it plays an important role in the development of Life Skills Education (LSE), both nationally and internationally. The
importance of LSE as a formal programme is emphasised in the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000: 16): “All young people must be given the opportunity to gain the knowledge and develop the values, attitudes and skills that will enable them to develop their capacities to work, to participate fully in society, to take control of their own lives and to continue learning.” The LSE programmes conducted and supported by UNICEF, as well as the principals applied, can open up educators’ views and grant new insights into our own CAPS Life Skills curriculum and the execution thereof.

According to the UNICEF report on life skills education programmes (2012: 18) it was found that in 2006/07 there were 156 countries with UNICEF-supported LSE activities, of which 145 countries integrated the life skills programmes into their curriculum (primary and/or secondary schools). The programme material used integrates the human rights based approach to education for all, and the teaching and learning approaches are child centred. The themes of LSE interventions from the 2007 stocktaking revolved mainly around HIV and AIDS, violence, health, hygiene, peace education and reproductive health, and rights (UNICEF, 2012: 18). The role-players in LSE interventions are the rights holders (children and their parents), the duty bearers (parents, teachers, school staff, and educational planners) and the community.

3.9.1 Generic life skills and content-specific life skills

In Paragraph 2.2.1.4 life skills is discussed as a concept, quoting the WHO Department of Mental Health’s five areas of life skills that are relevant across all cultures, as well as CASEL’s five core groups of life skills. UNICEF’s document includes these definitions of life skills, summarising them under three broad categories they call “generic life skills” (2012: 9):

- cognitive skills (the critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary for decision-making);
- personal skills (skills necessary for awareness, drive and self management); and
- interpersonal skills (the skills needed for communication, negotiation, co-operation, teamwork, inclusion, empathy and advocacy).
Generic life skills are those skills that are independent of social and cultural contexts, enabling a person to deal with challenges and to participate in society. Content-specific life skills developed as a response to specific challenges, for example HIV/AIDS, conflict and substance abuse. Certain life skills need to be taught to deal with such risks, and these skills are usually delivered in combination with relevant knowledge. Within life skills education the teacher has to distinguish between generic life skills and content-specific (or thematic) approaches (UNICEF, 2012: 9 and 10).

3.9.2 Life skills education and life skills-based education

UNICEF also distinguishes between life skills education, and life skills-based education. Life skills education is educational interventions that address certain areas, for example interpersonal skills that can help people communicate effectively, or decision-making skills that can help a person make informed decisions. Life skills-based education is a combination of learning experiences that develop knowledge and attitudes, as well as the corresponding skills needed to make the right decisions and to take positive action (UNICEF, 2012: 1 and 2).

3.9.3 Involvement in a life skills education programme

In UNICEF LSE, the engagement of national leadership and the participation of children, parents and the wider community are regarded as important prerequisites for the planning of a successful programme.

UNICEF (2002: 21 and 22) views the involvement of national leadership in the development of a life skills programme as very important, as involvement from national-level leadership secures sustainability and improves the relevance of the programmes. In South Africa we have the advantage of involvement of national leadership, thanks to the CAPS curriculum where life skills in everyday life and the subject Life Skills/Life Orientation forms a part of the national curriculum from grades R – 12. Bernhardt, Yorozu and Medel-Añonuevo (2014: 285 and 286) mention the following measures as important when developing successful life skills programmes:
• Involving young men and women in the development of programmes to ensure that they respond to the youth’s needs;
• Engaging youth and community leaders in the process of identifying issues to be addressed in the programme;
• Using media and networking online and offline to empower children to participate in society;
• Strengthening the competency of teachers to teach life skills.

The above-mentioned measures also have to be kept in mind after the development of a life skills programme, as it can enrich life skills education by incorporating youth and community leaders, media, networking and teacher development, while the programme is already implemented. The World Health Organization (1999) wrote after an inter-agency meeting that “(t)he development of life skills is a dynamic and evolving process, which should involve children, parents and the local community in making decisions about the content of the programme”. The statement in UNICEF’s report (2012: 22) that “…the development of appropriate life skills and behaviours is influenced by social and cultural influences ... (s)trong linkages to families and wider communities are thus important to build a supportive and conductive environment…” is also in concordance with Bronfenbrenner’s view on the importance of the community as a whole on a child’s development.

Together with the involvement of the role-players (the right holders, duty bearers and the community) in a LSE programme, is the importance of a coherent approach where behavioural goals are clearly stated, information is accurate, the key message is reinforced and appropriate practical skills are introduced.

3.9.4 Teaching methods

Successful implementation of a life skills programme depends greatly on how well equipped the teacher is to present the program:

• Development of training material for the teacher trainers is important.
• A teaching manual, providing lesson plans as well as a framework for the series of
lessons, is necessary to support the teacher.

- Teachers need to be continuously trained and supported in the subject and the use of training material. (WHO, 1999)

A valuable aid for teachers is the *Peace Corps' Life Skills Manual* (Peace Corps, 2001) which makes available training guides, curricula, lesson plans, manuals and other material generated by Peace Corps. The Information Collection and Exchange (ICE) works with Peace Corps technical and training specialists to develop information and support needed in LSE. Themes in the manual include HIV/AIDS and STDs; communication skills, decision-making skills and relationship skills which are also present in our CAPS documents’ general aims (Paragraph 2.5.2.2).

By choosing appropriate teaching methods the teacher has to bear in mind that “...LSE involves the use of interactive and participatory teaching and learning methods and experiential and activity-centred pedagogy” (UNICEF, 2012: 25). LSE cannot be done by the presentation of information only. Life skills are taught and learned by interactive and participatory teaching and learning methods, based on social learning processes such as hearing an explanation of a certain life skill, observation of the skill, practice of the skill and then feedback on individual performance of the skill (WHO, 1999). Interactive teaching activities include class discussion, brainstorming, peer-supported learning, role play, games, simulations, debate, stories and practical community development projects. Apart from being teaching methods, these activities also aid in developing life skills like self-expression, interpersonal communication, working in a group, negotiating, problem solving and empathy. At the same time content-related knowledge, attitudes and skills are developed.

Teachers, as facilitators, must display and develop the same skills they expect from their learners. Teachers must also be careful not to be judgemental, so that the children can feel free to express themselves, knowing that what they discuss will remain confidential.

A good framework for teaching will include clarity on three questions: *which* skills should be taught, *why* these skills are important and *how* these skills should be taught.
3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter served as an extension of Chapter 2. It started with the conceptual framework for the study, namely Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological theory, in order to put the different contexts in Chapter 2 into perspective. Bronfenbrenner’s theory was then supplemented by Maslow’s Motivational Theory, as circumstances in the Microsystem (Bronfenbrenner) can influence the person’s motivation to develop life skills.

I discussed programmes for values and/or life skills development, which complement and support the different contexts in which life skills were described in the previous chapter. The programmes (or educational endeavours, as they are not all formal programmes) discussed in this chapter, will be of use to suggest guidelines for parental involvement, with the school as starting point, focusing on what can be done (and what has been done by other programmes) to promote more and better involvement from families in life skills education. The multi-faceted character education served to illustrate life skills and all the related concepts as described in Paragraph 2.2. I gave an overview of Character Education as a valuable approach to values education, and as a point of reference for other programmes of values education that also use the principles of Character Education. This was followed by life skills within the family, focusing on the family in need and the help offered with the Head Start Program of America. Life skills at school is the focus of the Essential 55, which are life skills (rules) used by the school where the study is conveyed. They are practical rules that can be used in any school, and a very easy start for any school wanting to introduce a life skills programme. Life skills at school is also the focus of LVEP, which aims at providing educators with material and support in the teaching of critical thinking skills, decision making skills, self-management skills and self-awareness skills. The last context of life skills was life skills in the curriculum. UNICEF’s life skills education programmes served as enrichment to our CAPS curriculum in South Africa.

In Chapter 4, I will provide a detailed description on the way I view the world – my world-
view, research methodology, social network selection and sampling, time frame, data generation, data analysis, reliability and validity and ethical aspects surrounding qualitative research.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The crucial point of analysis is to reach the self-understanding of the person acting in the situation, analysing and understanding his or her reasons for their actions.

(Waghid, 2002: 47)
4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, I discussed the conceptual framework that underpins my studies, namely Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory, supplemented by Maslow’s Motivation Theory as it is important to better understand the participants of the school from where I conducted my research. Character Education, UNICEF’s international life skills programmes, Clark’s Essential 55, the international LVEP and America’s Head Start Program were discussed as educational programmes and approaches, within which life skills development materialises.

In this chapter I will elaborate on my world-view, research methodology, social network selection and sampling, time frame, data generation, data analysis and ethics surrounding qualitative research. In short, this chapter will explain how I planned and executed conduct my research.

4.2 World-view of the Researcher

“With the growing realisation that there are no innocent, unbiased ways of looking at the world, that everyone wears glasses and looks at the world through a particular lens, window or frame, the idea of world view has become common currency” (Olthuis, 2012: 1). As an educator (teacher and parent) it became clear that my educational practice and my world-view (the way I view truth) cannot be separated. I am not unbiased in the way I view and experience the world and therefore I am not unbiased in the way I educate and teach. Van der Walt (2014: 450) agrees that “...there is a direct relationship between the educator’s ... life concept and how she approaches the education of children”.

I described in Paragraph 1.4 that I am a teacher at a primary school in the Western Cape and that I have observed over the past decade how the children in the school’s life skills have changed and how the parents' involvement in their children's life skills development, and education in general, have declined. I wanted to understand why it happened that the children and the parents' involvement changed over time, what the reasons were for this change and what, if anything, can be done to reverse this situation. As an insider in the
situation I wanted to research, I have made observations regarding learners’ life skills development and the families’ declining involvement. But I wanted to understand the context within which these families live, the families’ attitude towards life skills development and the network of social rules that underlie the families’ involvement in their children’s lives. Looking for truth and knowledge in a socio-cultural context, giving my own interpretation of it, I must admit that I have a postmodern view of the world. But I have to acknowledge and apply the modernist importance of educational facts and knowledge, and the value of scientific methods in education. Therefore my world-view lies between modernism on the one hand and post-modernism on the other hand. To me the answer lies in “limited relativism” (Leicester, 2000: 79), a third possible world-view which Olthuis (2012: 1, 2) and Kaplan (2001: 45) call the post-postmodern world-view. In order to put post-postmodernism in perspective, I would like to give a short overview of the modern and postmodern world-views.

The “central core of modernism was formal deductive theory founded on sense experience” (Kaplan, 2001: 50). Modernism as a world-view celebrates certainty, predictability and inductive reasoning. It also favours order, organisation, rationality, linearity and progress. The “world of science and scientific method; the authority of the expert; the singularity of meaning (and) truth and objectivity” are important. Modernism has its “...faith in reason (and) science as the singular, linear ... forces for health, knowledge, continual growth and success...” (Olthuis, 2012: 2). But certainty and predictability do not work in education where we work with the complexity of human nature where children, their behaviour and their learning patterns are unpredictable and unique. Children have to be seen as individuals and not as copies of each other that can be treated all in the same way. A child of the 21st century needs to be prepared for an ever-changing and unpredictable world, faced with technological development, living in a society where AIDS is more of a reality than three decades ago, families changing to more single parent households than in the past and information they are bombarded with via cell phones, computers, internet access, to name only a few. The child of the 21st century needs to receive an education where he will be equipped with life skills that will enable him to make the right decisions independently and to adapt to a changing society, as Talen and Ellis (2002:37) put it: “...society...gradually loses its ability to live off values borrowed from earlier traditions.” It
is important to notice, though, that the positive attributes of the modern world-view, namely the notions of being a reflective practitioner and doing critical reflection have to be incorporated in my daily practise as educator and in my methodology as autoethnographer. Going back to the facts, scientific methods, order and organisation are valuable lessons to be learned and practised even though I do not have a modernist world-view.

Postmodernism, on the other hand, is a paradigm that questions the modernistic claims that reality can be described objectively. Postmodernism is a complex world-view; difficult to define in single ideas or sentences. Both Olthuis (2012: 2) and Leicester (2000: 73, 74) describe postmodernism as an umbrella term with the following key features: Postmodernism encourages a blurring of boundaries as it includes and recognises several perspectives or theories about the same topics, encouraging choice and synthesis of the best viewpoint(s). In a postmodern worldview entire texts should be understood in context and should be open to different interpretations, and truth and knowledge should be found in the socio-cultural contexts.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:27) add a few characteristic hallmarks of postmodernism, including the absence of laws and patterns of behaviour, with the importance of the individual and the particular. Meanings are rooted in time, space, cultures and societies and are not universal across these, favouring relativism rather than absolutism in deciding what constitutes knowledge, research and findings. There can be multiple interpretations of the world, even contradictory interpretations, and these interpretations are still coexistent and of equal value. Knowledge is viewed as a human and social construct, recognising that researchers are a part of the world they are researching.

The importance of words like relativism, variation and change explains why the postmodern world-view can be associated with uncertainty (Leicester, 2000: 74). As with modernism, postmodernism also poses valuable characteristics that have to be acknowledged and accounted for. Olthuis (2012:3 – 5) describes the “dethronement of reason” as one of the positive influences of postmodernism as opposed to modernism where the reason could be the answer to all problems. He also acknowledges the
postmodern recognition to the necessity of the unconscious and emotional ways of knowing. A postmodern world-view is closer to how I view truth and reality in education, but I cannot deny the modernist importance of educational facts and knowledge, and the value of scientific methods in education.

The world-view that I can associate with, the post-postmodern worldview, is dated by Dubey (2011: 364), who claims that the 1990’s marked the end of postmodernism and the start of post-postmodernism, which is characterised by a renewed engagement with the social world. The emphasis in the post-postmodernism is on creativity and self-renewal, opposing the rigidity of positivism and the relativism of the post-modernism (Talen and Ellis, 2002: 36). Baya (2013: 158) describes it as a contradictory mixture between automation and autonomy. Van der Walt (2014: 461 – 463) sees in the post-postmodern world-view (which he prefers to call post-post-foundationalism) the balance between the modern world-view's objectivism and postmodern world-view's relativism. To him it is the human rationalism that enables us to understand context, to interpret, to reach out to cultures other than our own and to get involved in interdisciplinary conversations. Educators use and apply educational knowledge, but also amend it when the situation changes or asks for a different approach. Creativity and ductility are features of the educational practise. The post-postmodern world-view is not static, but constantly unfolding and developing. Leicester (2000:79) believes the post-postmodernism “...combines ... the normative potential of modernism ... with the flexibility of postmodernism...”

According to Leicester (2000: 80) the educational implications of post-postmodernism are that it encourages increasing human knowledge and understanding, exploring different valid perspectives, emphasising the shifting of human boundaries. These are elements found in the reflective practitioner in qualitative research. Lifelong learning is also encouraged, as well as the idea that there is no fixed body of knowledge in one's life. There are always new things to learn.

Another educational implication of post-postmodernism is that the phenomenon of globalisation reminds us that there are “universal forms of human experience and
knowledge”. As educators we must be careful to impose local values and knowledge in a multicultural society.

In conclusion, my world-view is a balance between rigidity and relativism, a balance between the firm base of educational research, theories and findings over the years, and the interpretation and adaption to modern challenges in education. As a result of my post-postmodern world-view, I conducted my research from a qualitative research design where I took the insider perspective as my departure point in social action, aiming at understanding and describing human behaviour, rather than explaining and predicting it.

4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.3.1 Introduction

Qualitative research provides an in-depth and detailed understanding of observable as well as non-observable phenomena, contrasting positivism that underpins quantitative research. There are many varieties of qualitative research, so the purpose of qualitative research, its boundaries, disciplinary fields or even terminology cannot be narrowed down in a single definition (Cohen, Mansion and Morrison, 2007: 219). Nieuwenhuis (2007a: 47) writes that “…qualitative research is an umbrella term for a range of qualitative research strands that have developed over the years”. I undertook this study from a qualitative research design, focusing on understanding and construction of knowledge by observing and investigating people in their natural environment (Paragraph 4.3.2). I worked from the interpretive paradigm, aiming to interpret and understand human behaviour. The interpretive paradigm is subjective, where the social context within which the actions take place, has to make sense to the researcher (Paragraph 4.3.3) In Paragraph 4.3.4 I will elaborate on the two strands that I chose to work with within the qualitative research design, namely the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches. Once again these approaches aim at interpretation and understanding. As I am part of the culture I am studying, I chose autoethnography as research method within the qualitative design. Autoethnography as a method allowed me to analyse, understand and describe my personal experiences as teacher at the school from where I undertook my research, while I
could experience that I as a researcher also grew and developed. This method will be described in Paragraph 4.3.5.

4.3.2 Research design

I worked within a qualitative research design as it supported my world-view from which I undertook my study. In 4.2 I described my world-view as post-postmodern, a balance between rigidity and relativism. My world-view reflects that I do not believe in doing educational study as a scientific method, gathering information with the senses only, developing statistically sound samples and predicting patterns and laws. Being a teacher, I wanted to understand the processes and the social and cultural contexts underlying the behavioural patterns of the community I serve and of the children in my class. Qualitative research is concerned with investigating these 'why' questions. It granted me the opportunity to study people by interacting with them and by observing them in their natural environment, because qualitative research focuses on the quality of information (the depth of the enquiry) and not on the quantity (the breadth) of information. The focus of this study was on describing and understanding parental involvement in life skills development. Diefenbach (2009: 77) describes qualitative research as “explorative”, where new questions can emerge while investigating and where “…an increasingly better and deeper knowledge and understanding of the objects of reasoning and recognition of emerging patterns” develop.

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 278 and 279) derive four features typical of quality research designs, namely a detailed engagement with the object of study, a small number of cases selected to be studied, a multi-method approach and design features which are flexible, allowing the researcher to adapt when necessary.

4.3.3 Research paradigm

The interpretive paradigm aims at interpreting and understanding human behaviour. It is a subjective action where the social context within which the actions take place, has to make sense to the researcher (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 87 – 89). When I was interviewing and
observing the participants in my study, I had to understand their social context, culture and background to understand and interpret their actions, answers and views. Qutoshi (2015:169) put my experience as interviewer and observer into words by writing that interpretivism helps the researcher in "understanding new meanings to life events by creating meaning from … events and situations”.

By working within the interpretive paradigm, it was more than interviewing and observing. Waghid (2002: 46, 47) writes that interpretive inquiry asks for self-understanding of the researcher (before social understanding can take place) as well as transparent explanations and interpretations (no concealing of deeper understanding of the events). It was also necessary to remember that the interpretive paradigm only informed the researcher about the situation; it did not prescribe for any action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 152).

4.3.4 Research approach

In a qualitative research design, the understanding of human action is paramount. As the focus was on understanding and interpreting humans and their actions, my research design aimed at how and why the school, families and children in my study interacted with one another, their motives for their actions, their relationships and the results of their actions (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(a): 54). Therefore I worked with the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches within the qualitative research design.

"Hermeneutics is the science of text interpretation" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:31) that originated as the interpretation of Biblical texts by reading the text without any other ecclesiastical help or explanations. In the 18th century hermeneutics was also used to interpret literature, works of art and music. German scholars like Dilthey, Rickert, Simmel and Weber later started using the term “hermeneutics” as a way to interpret and understand human action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 86). “Hermeneutics sees reality as humanly interpreted … it … acknowledges that any reality is human interpretation... " (Fersch, 2013: 88). In the hermeneutic approach the researcher cannot be objective and uninvolved. The researcher brings his own experiences, fore-meanings, biases and
prejudices to the process of interpretation and critically reflects on it in the process of understanding human action (Fersch, 2013: 88, 89).

The other interpretive approach I used, was phenomenology. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 28) describe the aim of phenomenology as to understand, but not explain, people. Human beings interpret, define and give meaning to their world. Therefore phenomenology takes into account that people are continuously constructing, developing and changing their interpretation of the world. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:18) write that phenomenology values the importance of subjective consciousness and that it understands consciousness as active and meaning giving. Reality is socially constructed; therefore people describe their world as they make sense of it (Babbie, 2013: 334).

These approaches of interpreting and understanding are complemented by the research method that uses analysing, interpreting and understanding in a self-reflective way, namely autoethnography. Autoethnography is in the first instance looking at myself as researcher, but also, in the bigger social content of the culture I was working in, positioning myself as participant together with the colleagues, parents and children I was working with while making sense of the reality I was studying.

4.3.5 Research method

“(M)an is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be … an interpretive (science) in search of meaning” (Geertz, 2003: 187). In my research I become part of the culture in order to analyse it, interpret it and describe it for the purpose of advancing sociological understanding.

My method of choice within the qualitative research design is autoethnography. According to Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008: 22) “(d)istinctions among methodological approaches rest in the depth of the reflexive exploration and whether social and cultural issues emerge and … how this takes place”. Autoethnography gives me as researcher the opportunity to be part of the culture (or the particular group) and to analyse and interpret
the acquired data in a self-reflexive way, so “...autoethnography intentionally assumes a personal stance, breaking with the general proscription against the researcher getting involved at that level” (Babby, 2013: 334). As the autoethnographer become part of the culture he is working in, the narrative inquiry is written in the first person, bringing a personal accountability and an active voice to the research (Dyson, 2007: 40).

In essence, autoethnography is a combination of ethnography and an autobiography. It is a look at the self, but within a bigger social context, exploring and analysing the self-other relations by positioning ourselves as participants together with our subjects (Tomaselli, 2013: 170). Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011: 1 and 2) define autoethnography as “…an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)...as a method, autoethnography is both process and product. (I)t is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on the research...” Carolyn Ellis (2004: 37 – 38) describes the core of autoethnography as … “(f)irst they look through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing forward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretation. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition.”

In the writing up of the analysed cultural experience, autoethnographers use personal narratives (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington, 2008: 25), incorporating short stories, fiction, novels, metaphorical expressions, photographs, journals, art based expressions, layered writing and poetry. By 'layered writing’ or 'layered account' I understand the connection among personal experience, theory and the research practices (Denshire, 2014: 843) or, as Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011: 6) put it: the author's experience is put alongside data, analysis and literature, illustrating how data collection happens simultaneously with analysis, creating “multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 739). Ellis and Bochner (2006: 10), two leaders in autoethnography, explain why the narrative is important in autoethnography by pointing
out that “(t)he difference between stories and traditional analysis is the mode of explanation and its effect on the reader. Traditional analysis is about transferring information, whereas narrative inquiry emphasizes communication.” Autoethnography uses stories to analyse and describe. To Ellis and Bochner (2006: 3) an analytic and objective report of facts can have the reader become a “detached spectator” where “(T)here’s no personal story to engage (him). Knowledge and theory become disembodied words on the page.” Bochner (2012: 156) repeats this sentiment by writing that autoethnography has as its goal to connect social sciences to humanities by means of storytelling, emphasising subjectivity, emotionality and self-reflection of autoethnography. Qutoshi (2015: 165) agrees with Ellis and Bochner by writing that autoethnography is a genre of writing that “...can invite readers to get engage (sic) with more insights to a phenomenon under study”. Qutoshi (2016: 164) also writes that an autoethnographer writes about the self that “...is not a separate entity detached from research but a central part of culturally others living in a sociocultural context of research work.” This personal involvement is apparent in autoethnographic writing, and as a result of the personal experiences accompanied by reflection, the autoethnographer changes as an individual, growing personally, becoming a subject of one’s own research (Dyson, 2007: 38). “For autoethnographers, life and work tend to blend together since their work is writing about their lives” (Kafar and Ellis, 2014: 17).

Dyson (2007: 39) noticed that, as autoethnographer, he was both subject and object, both insider and outsider, of his own research. And by being an insider, he believed the voice of the insider to be more authentic than the voice of an outsider/observer in the study. I had the same experience doing my research. Apart from being more authentic, having “hands on experience” as an insider in the sociocultural setting I was a part of has certain advantages, for example that I already knew the research environment, participants, organisation and had pre-existing knowledge of the context. Interaction with the group was more natural and relaxed as we already had a relationship. I also had easier access to the people I work with, as well as to information needed.

There are also disadvantages in being an insider. I must be aware that, as I am familiar with the organisation and people involved, I can have a narrow perception of the situation
under study. I must be able to look at social structures, cultural structures and patterns with a fresh eye. I must also be careful that my personal beliefs, experiences, values and expectations do not influence my observations, judgement and anticipations. Self-reflection will be necessary to prevent me from being biased (Greene, 2014: 3, 4). Botha (2012: 38) writes that the researcher, who combines the personal and professional lives, has to be accountable and reflexive to prevent self-serving subjectivism.

In the autoethnographic method of research there are two approaches, depending on the relationships between the personal world and the social and cultural worlds the writing enquires into. Ellis and Bochner (2006) classified these two approaches as evocative autoethnography (emphasizing the personal) and analytic autoethnography (valuing a sense of objectivity) (Denshire, 2014: 835). Ellis and Bochner favour evocative autoethnography, wanting the reader to feel and care and empathise. They want the reader to move toward the “embrace of intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation” (Ellis and Bochner, 2006: 6). Although it is dedicated to critical thought and good analysis, it resorts to poetic, performative and literary forms to emphasise communication, creating an emotional resonance with the reader, “moving the reader to feel the feelings of the other” (Anderson, 2006: 377). Analytic autoethnography, on the other hand, is advocated and practised by Anderson (2006). According to Anderson (2006: 376, 377) the work of Zurchner and Hayano pointed in the direction of the development of analytic autoethnography, but it was overshadowed in time by the approach of evocative autoethnography. Anderson (2006: 378 – 388) describes analytic autoethnography as ethnographic work that includes five key features, namely (1) CMR (complete member researcher status), (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) visible and active researcher in the text, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to an analytic agenda. To Anderson (2006: 387) “(a)nalytic ethnographers are not content with accomplishing the representational task of capturing ‘what is going on’ in an individual or social environment. This distinguishes analytic ethnography from evocative ethnography and similar first-person narratives.” I feel comfortable with analytic autoethnography, as I want to describe and analyse my personal experience to understand my sociocultural experience at the school where I work and undertake my research. As a post-post modern researcher a method which accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's
influence on the research, is complementing my world-view. But I do feel uncomfortable with the extent to which evocative autoethnography focuses on the aesthetics and links to art. To me it turns the attention away from the analytic thought and self-reflective work that preceded the final report.

Apart from telling the story of the researcher’s sociocultural engagement, autoethnography has to remain credible as a scientific research method. Writing in the first person brings an amount of risk because it exposes the autoethnographer’s feelings and beliefs. This leaves the door open for being criticised for a lack of objectivity (Dyson, 2007: 40). Therefore the story has to be told analytically, using the theoretical background, methodological tools (participant observation, interviews, field notes, and the like) and research literature, comparing and analysing personal experiences against existing research, to prevent autoethnography from being an autobiography, only telling the researcher’s story (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 4). Pitard (2016: 175) also states that the telling of the story must be accompanied by a critical reflection. Wall (2008: 39) notes that, although autoethnography begins with a personal story, it explicitly links concepts from the literature to the autoethnographer’s personal experience. Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008: 23) agrees: “If our methodology lacks transparency, then the value of the work can be questioned” and Bochner (2012: 161) adds: “Reflection is the heart of autoethnographic storytelling … Facts are important to an autoethnographic storyteller: they can and should be verified.”

Integrity and expertise as researcher are key to successful and ethical autoethnographic research. It is important to be attentive to choices, transparent about decisions and options and to demonstrate authenticity regarding understanding the situation, making judgements and making decisions (Holian and Coghlan, 2012: n.p.). Tomaselli (2013: 167) also warns autoethnographers against writing ‘faction’ (the blurring between fact and fiction).

4.4 SOCIAL NETWORK SELECTION AND SAMPLING

The population I was working with were the families, teachers and learners of one primary school in an urban area in the Western Cape. It is a school of 884 children of Grades 1–7,
including a diversity of languages, races, cultures and socio-economic circumstances. The school is situated in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town, but attracts learners from a wide variety of neighbourhoods including Mitchells Plain, Langa, Khayelitsha and Elsies River. Children from these neighbourhoods have to travel substantial distances and are often dependent on public transport including taxis and trains. The Language of Learning and Teaching in the school is mainly English Home Language, although English is not the mother tongue of all the children in the English classes. Some of the learners in the English Home Language classes come from homes where Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, Zulu, Sotho or French are their mother tongue. To these children English is their Language of Learning and Teaching, but it is not their home language. This also had an impact on the interviews when I spoke to parents who could barely understand English. In addition to the three English Home Language classes per grade, there is also one Afrikaans Home Language class in each grade. The background of the school is described in more detail in Paragraph 5.3.

I interviewed four groups of people: Group 1 were semi-structured individual interviews with families, and Group 2 were semi-structured individual interviews with colleagues. Group 3 was a focus group interview with my colleagues and Group 4 was a focus group interview with the School Governing Body. This will be discussed in more detail in Paragraph 4.5.

Observations (as described in Paragraph 4.6.1) were done while I was teaching, observing how the learners reacted to different situations, what they said and which life skills they displayed. I also observed the families while I conducted the interviews to acquire data which they did not necessarily provide during the interview, for example the environment they raise their children in, the way they address me and their children, how important life skills development really are to them, and the life skills they displayed themselves.

In selecting participants for this study it was a consideration to me that I already had a specific purpose in mind (purposive sampling, Paragraph 4.4.1). As there were enough respondents willing to take part in the interviews, I could choose from the available participants those people representing all the planned selection criteria as set out in...
4.4.1 Sampling method

The main focus of my research was to investigate how families could be involved in the life skills development of the learners in a primary school. I was curious to find out what was the nature of the families' current involvement in the learners' life skills development were, as well as why some families were not involved in the life skills education of their children. I wanted to know what were the barriers that prevented some families to get involved in their children's life skills education. This purpose in mind determined the sampling method I chose for my research.

A sample can be described as “a representative subset of a population” (Mertler, 2009: 248). I had a choice between two sampling methods: non-probability sampling (that does not allow for any person in the population to have a probability to be selected) or probability sampling (where each element in the population has an equal chance of being selected). As I worked within a qualitative research design, I wanted to work with the parents and teachers of the primary school in the Western Cape where I work and who were willing to take part in the study, therefore I chose to do non-probability sampling. When conducting non-probability sampling, the important characteristic is that the choice of people included in the study is not a random selection (Denscombe, 1998: 15), focusing on the uniqueness and exclusive distinguishes of a certain group. For this reason Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 161) suggest that, when using non-probability sampling, it might be more fitting to talk about a group or individuals rather than to refer to them as a sample.

By using the non-probability sampling method, my findings and recommendations are limited to one primary school in one province and cannot be generalised to the whole population of South Africa. Field, et al. (2006: 567) also highlight that the non-probability sampling method I chose has a limited extent to which valid inferences to a population can be made.
Non-probability sampling includes convenience sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and purposive sampling (Babbie, 2013; Maree and Pietersen, 2007; Babbie and Mouton, 2001). I chose purposive sampling, a method of sampling where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind. Denscombe (1998: 15) describes purposive sampling as where the sample is “hand picked for research ... (because) given what I already know about the research topic and about the range of people ... being studied, who ... is likely to provide the best information?” Babbie (2013: 128) also uses the words “useful” or “representative” when selecting the people being observed in the study. I interviewed parents and caregivers whom I thought would be able to provide me with information regarding the life skills education (or the absence thereof) of primary school children by their families. Schreuder, Gregoire and Weyer (2001: 285) warn that the researcher must be aware not to choose elements (families) to manipulate the outcome of the study.

4.5  PHASES OF RESEARCH

I conducted my research over a period of three years. Some of the phases were executed simultaneously, for example the theoretical research, observations and interviews could be done at the same time. Other phases, like the data analysis and conclusions, were done following the collection of data. The data analysis was done first, followed by the final chapter, the conclusions which resulted in suggested guidelines.

The starting point was the life skills development done at the school where I teach and the questions I had about how parents can become more involved in the life skills development of the learners as done at school (refer to the motivation for the study, Paragraph 1.4) The school uses Clark’s book, *The Essential 55*, with its 55 rules on how to interact with other people around us, how to speak to other people and how to behave in our general conduct with the people around us, including class mates (Clark, 2003: xviii), as explained in Paragraph 3.7. Using these practical examples of life skills development of the learners at our school, I started working on a theoretical framework of models on parental involvement, barriers for parental involvement (Paragraph 2.3) and programmes for life skills and values education (Paragraphs 3.5 – 3.9). Document analysis (Paragraph
4.6.3) was done throughout the three years, studying the CAPS documents but also school policies regarding life skills education, focusing on *The Essential 55* by Clark (2003), other school policy documents (the school rules and the school’s policy on bullying) and documents with information on supporting the children in need in our school (Anon., 2016).

While I was working on the theoretical substructure, I wrote down observations (Paragraph 4.6.1) while teaching, while talking to parents, while conducting interviews and when I saw or heard important incidents at the school in general. I observed how parents reacted when they were confronted with their children’s behaviour, I wrote down any behaviour relevant to the study and I observed how children reacted in group work situations, in conflict situations and in general.

The next phase in my study was the conducting of interviews. I asked my colleagues who were willing to participate in the research, and conducted semi-structured individual interviews (Paragraph 4.6.2.1) with those colleagues. The selection of participants from the families for semi-structured individual interviews was done by sending out letters to all the parents of the school where I invited them to have an interview where we could discuss the life skills education of the children of our school. (See Addendum E.) I also identified parents whom I thought could make an important contribution to the study, for example the caregivers whom I knew took care of a family member.

I also invited the members of the School Governing Body for a focus group interview (Paragraph 4.6.2.2), and I conducted an interview with the members willing to take part in the research.

Colleagues who were willing to take part, were also interviewed in a focus group.

I organised the interviews into four groups of people. Group 1 was the family, parents and caretakers of learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7. The selection criteria I used provided for parents of different age groups, different cultural groups, different languages and parents of different marital status (i.e. widow/er, married or divorced). These parents were interviewed in semi-structured individual interviews.
Group 1: Semi-structured individual interviews with families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Group 1: Semi-structured individual interviews with families

The second group of participants were colleagues whom I interviewed individually. It was important to me to interview these specific colleagues, but I did not want to interview them

10 The interviewees were given participant numbers to protect their privacy.
11 Where the language is indicated as Afrikaans/English it means that the parents are Afrikaans speaking, but they choose to raise their children in English.
in a focus group. Two of the colleagues included the Principal and a Head of Department who are strong leaders, and could unwillingly intimidate the rest of the focus group with their personality and leadership position. Another colleague whom I chose for an individual interview was the school’s social services liaison teacher, whom I wanted to interview individually to ensure that none of the valuable contributions she could make, would become lost in a group discussion where people interrupted each other and sometimes misunderstood the question, so leading the group discussion in a wrong direction. The fourth colleague I chose for an individual interview has a dominant personality.

Group 2: Semi-structured individual interviews with colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleague</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.2 Group 2: Semi-structured individual interviews with colleagues*

The third group of interviews was a focus group with my colleagues. I included colleagues representing the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. I could not include male colleagues in this group, due to unavailability on the day of the interview. A wide range of ages in this group provided for different perspectives on life skills development of the learners of our school.
Group 3: Focus group interview with colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleague</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Intermediate Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Intermediate Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Senior Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Intermediate Phase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Group 3: Focus group interview with colleagues

The fourth group was the School Governing Body (SGB). I included males and females, parents and colleagues, and once again of a wide age difference. Two members of the SGB cancelled just before the interview, resulting in a small focus group.

Group 4: Focus group interview with the School Governing Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>School secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Colleague/Parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Group 4: Focus group interview with the School Governing Body

After I had completed the interviews, I transcribed the interviews (Paragraph 4.6.2.3). I chose to transcribe each interview immediately after conducting it, while I could still remember the observations I had made during the interview and any possible subtext of the interview. I wanted to ensure that I captured all the detail.
Coding of the transcribed interviews followed. In Paragraph 4.7 I will describe that I chose to do open coding, attaching labels to phrases to categorise them. These phrases were read and re-read afterwards so that I could organise them into categories. Those categories were given names, and refined into subcategories where necessary.

The next phase was the analysis of the data. All the theoretical data, observations, coding of interviews and documents were put together to analyse, interpret and describe family involvement of life skills development of the learners of our primary school. The data analysis was then followed by the final phase, namely the suggestion of guidelines that could support and assist in the involvement of families of our school in the life skills development of their children.

4.6 DATA GENERATION

Nieuwenhuis (2007b: 81 and 82) writes that the gathering of data and the analysis of data is one ongoing, cyclical process. The two processes are not separate. The other important guideline is the criterion of the saturation of data. Data gathering stops when reflection and analysis of data show that no new ideas are surfacing. Nieuwenhuis mentions documents, observation, interviews and focus groups as data gathering techniques within the qualitative research design. Autoethnography can easily become an unscientific telling of the researcher’s story if good research practice, including data generation, is not followed. “Auto-ethnography should follow good research practice ... and use a variety of research strategies like note taking, memory work, narrative writing, observation and interview” (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington, 2008: 22).

4.6.1 Observations

I observed the learners in the school (their day-to-day conduct, how they handled different situations, how they responded to conflict, and which life skills they displayed). These observations are shared in Chapter 5. I also observed the parents while conducting interviews with them. I chose not to write down any observations while we had our
interview, as I wanted to pay my full attention to the interviewee and the situation. After conducting the interview I wrote down my observations (body language, the environment, subtext, and my overall impression). “Observation is an essential data gathering technique as it holds the possibility of providing us with an insider perspective of the group dynamics and behaviours in different settings” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(b): 84). Kawulich (2005: n.p.) metaphorically describes observation as a “written photograph” taken by all five the researcher’s senses to explain how the observer immerses into the group/community being observed. Observation implies an open mind, as it might happen that behaviour that the researcher did not expect or think about, is observed. As Hickson (1972: 39) commented: “Negative observations are as important as positive ones. Absences, tardiness, nonverbal behaviour, and power relationships are among the kinds of negative and positive behaviour that should be observed.”

There are four levels of researcher participation. Mertler (2009: 80) calls it the “Participant-Observer Continuum”.

- At the far left of the continuum the teacher-researcher acts as observer, a non-participant, observing as an “outsider”.
- The next point is the observer as participant where the teacher-researcher acts primarily as observer but gets into the situation with a little bit of conversation with the participants.
- The participant as observer becomes part of the research process. Although the researcher observes and takes notes, the researcher also interacts with the participants. The researcher gains an insider perspective but had to take care not to lose his/her objectivity.
- The complete participant (full participant) is firstly part of the group/community, but also researcher. (Kawulich, 2005: n.p.; Nieuwenhuis, 2007(b): 85; Mertler, 2009:80, 81).

By using autoethnography as research method within a qualitative research design, I was part of the group I observed and whom I was working with. As Dyson (2007: 39) puts it: I was both insider and outsider of my own research. I was not a participant observer; I was a complete participant, a part of the culture I studied. I share Dyson’s (2007: 39) view that
“...I was both part of the lives of the participants and part of the 'case', which I was investigating.”

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 298) identify ways in which participant observation assist the educational researcher in explaining how “...an orderly social world is established and maintained”. Firstly, it enables the researcher to distinguish ongoing behaviour and to note its prominent features. Participant observation also takes place over a long time, granting the researcher the opportunity to develop a more intimate and informal relationship with the participants, as I did with the learners in school. Further on, direct observation is faithful to real life as participants (especially the learners) act naturally in the school setting, not pretending to be something they are not. Participant observation improves the quality of data collection and interpretation, as the researcher has access to the background of the situation being observed (Kawulich, 2005: n.p.). Lastly, people's actions are more telling than their words, and participant observation gives the researcher an opportunity to view these unsaid nuances (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 295).

Disadvantages of participant observation, on the other hand, mainly include the potential subjectivity of the researcher. “Participant observation is conducted by a biased human who serves as the instrument for data collection; the researcher must understand how his/her gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation” (Kawulich, 2005: n.p.). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 210) add three more threats to validity and reliability to participation observation, namely that the researcher can be unaware of important preceding events influencing the present behaviour, participants can be untypical of the sample of the study, and the presence of the observer might evoke different behaviours from the participants. (I was well aware that this might be the case when I interviewed the families, as I did not know the individual people so well that I could detect any unnatural or irregular behaviour as is the case with the observation of the learners at school with whom I spend much more time.) Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 210) conclude that triangulation should be used to address these threats.
4.6.2 Interviews

Interviews can be used supplementary to participant observation, as the research interview is conducted to “obtain research-relevant information from the interviewee … compared to other techniques of data collection e.g. questionnaire, observation, etc. interview may serve as a rich source for exploring people’s inner feelings and attitudes” (Dilshad and Latif, 2013: 191). It is a conversation (face to face or by telephone) between the researcher and the participants in the study, in which the researcher puts the questions to the participant(s). The questions should be planned carefully to be honest and unambiguous. “Wording questions is a tricky business. All too often, the way we ask questions subtly biases the answers we get” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 289). Interviews can be conducted with individuals or with groups (Mertler, 2009: 108). Qualitative interviews are significantly different from quantitative interviews as the qualitative research interviews attempt to understand the world from the respondent's perspective and to explore the meaning of respondents' experiences (Dilshad and Latif, 2013: 191).

Pring (2000: 39) regards interviews as the opportunity that the “objects of research” have to speak for themselves in order to express the significance they attach to the action observed. The interviewer learns about the observed participant's views, beliefs, opinions and behaviours and gets to see the world through his/her eyes. This helps the interviewer-researcher to understand the participant's construction of knowledge and understanding of social reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(b): 87).

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007(b): 87), there are different types of interviews. The first type is open-ended interviews that take the form of a conversation between the researcher and the participant. There is a series of interviews with the same participant. According to Mertler (2009: 110) open-end interviews aim at gathering different kinds of information from different individuals. The second type of interview is semi-structured interviews. These interviews take the form of the researcher asking several pre-prepared questions, but with the possibility of following up the participant's response with alternative questions. Structured interviews follow an interview guide that gives detailed and developed
questions. The researcher then only asks those questions. Lastly Mertler (2009:110) adds focus group interviews to the different types of interviews. This is a group of approximately 10 to 12 people being interviewed simultaneously.

I used semi-structured interviews with the families of the children and I used focus group interviews when I had conversations with the teachers and the Governing Body of the school where my research took place.

4.6.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

To me the advantage of semi-structured interviews was that I could conduct the interviews from a readily-prepared interview guide (which saved me time) but I could also explore related issues that surfaced, adding new questions to my interview guide when and where necessary.

Pring (2000: 39) writes that the semi-structured interview allows the participant the opportunity to explain his/her opinions and actions, and Neumann (1987: 166) agrees. “While carrying out qualitative interviews ... it is important to leave the structuring of the conversation to the interviewee, with the interviewer providing minimal guidance.” From time to time it was difficult for me to leave the structuring of the conversation to the interviewee, especially when the interviewee kept on steering the interview away from the issues I deemed important. But in the end those unexpected responses were the ones that provided for data (in Chapter 5) that I could not have foreseen.

Key features of semi-structured interviews include that the interviews are scheduled in advance at a designated time, the interviews take place at location outside everyday life, the interviews are organised around a guide of predetermined questions, and new issues and questions surface during the course of the interview (Whiting, 2008: 36).

4.6.2.2 Focus groups

In Paragraph 4.5 I explained that I used two focus groups in my interviews. A focus group
is a relatively homogeneous group of individuals with distinctive characteristics who focus discussions on a given topic. Focus group interviews can be a valuable research tool when the researcher lacks substantial information on the topic, but focus groups are also beneficial when the researcher wants to find out that people's perceptive and reasons are behind their pattern of thinking (Dilshad and Latif, 2013: 192).

There are two ways in which focus group interviews can be used in the qualitative design: the researcher can set up a group of five to twelve respondents and ask them individual questions, ensuring that each person has the chance to respond, or the focus group as a whole can be used to find and generate information (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 292). A focus group that operates as a group discussion focuses on one particular topic. It uses group dynamics, participants build on each other's ideas, comment on each other's views, debate and even bring conflict into the process of data generation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(b): 90). A focus group can also be used for triangulation when data is collected with different approaches (e.g. interviews and observation).

As I discussed in Paragraph 4.4.1, I chose non-probability purposive sampling as my sampling method. By using focus groups I could select the participants who could help me explore my research problem best and who could provide me with the desired information, as the participants of a focus group do not statistically represent the population (Babbie, 2013: 349).

By choosing the participants for the focus group, Babbie and Mouton (2001: 292) suggest certain criteria to bear in mind:

- Choose enough participants (six to twelve people) to compensate for those who do not want to take part in the conversation.
- Select enough members to prevent individual dynamics outweighing the group dynamics.
- Keep away from "experts", groups of friends and unco-operative participants.
- Be careful that a group is not too large, as it can end up in small groups within the bigger group, talking at the same time.
- Bear in mind that a larger group requires a higher level of skill from the
Focus group interviews have the advantage that the dynamics of a group of participants encourage people to think more creatively and more laterally, as participants interact with one another and not merely respond to the researcher. This group dynamics also brings out aspects of the topic that would not have emerged during individual interviews. Another advantage of focus group interviews is that it captures real-life drama in a social environment. Focus groups also deliver rich qualitative data within a reasonable short time (Babbie, 2013: 349).

Babbie (2013: 350) points out certain challenges surrounding focus groups, focusing mainly on the role of the interviewer. The interviewer has to be an experienced and skilled moderator, guiding a group of people through conversation and possible conflict, and controlling a group where individuals may dominate the group, but at the same time being aware as interviewer not to bring his own views and interpretations into play. The interviewer also has to work around group conformity, stick to the topic and be aware of side-tracking the real issue being discussed, as can easily happen in a group.

4.6.2.3 Conducting of interviews

Whiting (2008:36 – 39) presents an outline of how the interviews should be conducted.

- Good participants have to be identified by choosing participants who are knowledgeable about the topic being explored, and who will be able to make a contribution to the research. It has to be people who are not too shy to talk. “The key is to find the person(s) who is (are) best qualified, in terms of your research question, to provide you with the information required” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007(b): 88).
- Prepare for the interview by drawing up a checklist of preparations and areas that need to be clarified, for example to explain to the interviewee the purpose of the interview, the format of the interview, permission to use a digital recorder, assure
the interviewee that he/she has the right not to answer the question, and so forth. This was done before my interviews when I discussed the informed consent form with the participants (Addendum G).

- Recording the interview is necessary, as the atmosphere during the interview is more relaxed when there is no distraction from the interviewer taking notes during the discussion. This does not mean that the interviewer cannot make notes during the interview about his/her thoughts, impressions and feelings and observations of the respondent’s non-verbal communication. Audio recorders are common methods of recording interview data, or certain brands of cell phones also have voice recorders that can produce a clear, audible recording of any interview.

- It helps to bear in mind the different phases of the interview. It starts by building rapport, creating a more relaxed atmosphere, followed by the apprehension phase where the opening question should be formulated clearly and open-ended. This can lead to the prompt question(s) that steer the interview. Questions need to be planned well (before the interview) to be unambiguous and easy to understand and respond to. Although this phase of interviewing can lower apprehension, it is sometimes only much later in the interview that both the interviewer and interviewee feel relaxed and at ease. The exploration phase takes place when the researcher ask more in-depth questions. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 291) suggest two ways in which the researcher can come to understand what the interviewee really means to say. The one is to ask “why” questions (but not so much that it upsets the interviewee), and the other is to look out for apparent contradictions in what the person is saying and then asking him/her to explain the seemingly contradicting statements. When the interview reaches the co-operative phase, the interviewer and participant feel more at ease with each other. Often during this stage the participant will be more prepared to share personal detail, more sensitive questions can be asked and it can even prompt a confessional element from the participant which add more depth and richness to the data. During the participation phase of the interview, success is indicated by the interviewee who will feel free to guide and teach the interviewer. The final phase is when both parties feel ready to finish. It is important to end on a positive note, e.g. thanking the interviewee.

- Transcription: After the interview the recording of the interview needs to be
transcribed verbatim. Theron (2015: 4) suggests that sometimes it is not necessary to transcribe verbatim, and that transcribing the essence of the interview can be sufficient. I experienced that, when interviewees started repeating themselves, I felt it unnecessary to transcribe the same information again. During transcription interviewers can be surprised by phrases they used unknowingly, or by their speech, which appears disjointed when seen in written form (Whiting, 2008: 38, 39). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 537, 538) list transcription conventions, which include giving each speaker a pseudonym and keeping a record of which pseudonym goes with which speaker; record hesitations, short to long pauses and silences; volume of the speaker (or when the speaker says something that is inaudible); indicate emphasis in speech; recording non-verbal activity (e.g. standing up); recording uninterpretable noise (write in brackets 'noise' or 'unclear noise'); indicating speakers talking at the same time during a focus group interview (e.g. the word 'together' after the speaker's name); being consistent in spelling, especially when using software for retrieval of information; numbering each line or section; and ensuring that wide margins and double spacing are used for annotating text in hard copy form.

4.6.2.4 Challenges surrounding interviews

Diefenbach (2009:876) writes that “(s)cience in general is a human endeavour and one cannot have ideas, assumptions, theories, and formulas without the human factor”. As in observing the participants in my study, I had to be aware of my own thoughts and theories to keep myself from being a biased observer and, in this case, a biased interviewer where I could easily direct the interview in a way I would want the participant’s response to be. Babbie and Mouton (2001:290) use the concept “socially acceptable incompetent” to describe the role of the researcher. The researcher has to be “helped to grasp even the most basic and obvious aspect of that situation”. I had to give the participants the opportunity to provide me with information, and not the other way around.

Another challenge involved the selection of interviewees. I had to choose participants who could help me explore parental involvement in the life skills development of primary school
children. The participants had to be people who were knowledgeable, able to reflect on information, able to be cross-checked and not shy to air their thoughts (Whiting, 2008: 36; Diefenbach, 2009:879). The selection of participants also had to reflect the demography of the school under study, so as to give a true account of the parents’ views, experiences and needs.

Lastly, Diefenbach (2009:881) warns against interviewees who are so keen to answer the questions correctly, truthfully and comprehensively that they might mislead the interviewer. The participant wants to provide the socially acceptable answer or supply information that is appropriate and sufficient. As a result, the information might not be accurate and true.

4.6.3 Document analysis

“Documents once located and examined do not speak for themselves but require careful analysis and interpretation” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 253). Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating both printed and electronic documents to elicit meaning, increase understanding and develop empirical knowledge. It is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a way of triangulation (Bowen, 2009: 27, 28). Documents can include agendas, minutes of meetings, books, brochures, letters, press releases, organisational reports, administrative documents, email messages, survey data or any document that is connected to the research. In my study I used the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001), the National Curriculum, namely the CAPS documents for the school subjects Life Skills (Grades 1 – 3, 4 – 6) and Life Orientation (Grades 7 – 9), documents regarding school policy (school rules and the school’s policy on bullying), and the school’s social support file (Anon., 2016) with information on learners who need special support due to bad social circumstances.

It is important to distinguish between primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources are generally not published and are gathered directly from the participant or organisation (for example: the different policies of the school where I did my research, the documents on children in need who are/were being supported by the school, the CAPS Life Skills document and the Manifesto). Secondary sources are based on previously
published work (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b: 82, 83).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 253) highlight the reliability of documentary evidence in education: “Such sources tend in the main to record approaches adopted by policy makers and administrators, and so many privilege a top-down view of education. This has often tended to undermine consideration of working-class children and youths, girls and women, and ethnic minorities ... documentary sources have often been criticized for failing to engage with the classroom, the learning context, and the interface between teachers and learners.” This perceived gap between policy makers and administrators on the one hand, and teachers, children and parents on the other hand, is discussed in Chapter 2 where I took a careful look at the CAPS Life Skills document. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 253) also provide necessary information on understanding an education policy document when focusing on three aspects that help to understand the context of a document:

- the authorship of the document, which include consideration of its origin, the processes by which the document was created and the individuals and groups directly involved in creating the document;
- to whom the document is addressed (the audience), and
- the outcomes of the document, its impact on debates and policies and its longer term influence.

Finally, according to Bowen (2009: 29, 30), specific uses of documents include that documents can provide background and context (like the social support file of our school that provided background that I would not have gathered from observations or interviews), information included in documents can suggest possible questions that need to be asked, documents provide supplementary research data, documents provide a way to keep track of change and development, and document analysis can verify findings or confirm evidence from other sources.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Babbie (2013: 390) describes qualitative data analysis as the “... nonnumerical
examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of research.” The process of linking theory with analysis is an iterative, ongoing process between data collection, processing, theory and analysis, as the aim of qualitative data analysis is to interpret and make sense of the gathered information. In search of explanatory patterns in the acquired data there are a number of ways the researcher can use, including:

- Discovering patterns, including cross-case analysis (looking for patterns that appear across several observations);
- Semiotics, the science of studying science like Morse code, music, mathematics and the meanings connected to them;
- Conversation analysis, the attempt to describe structure, language used and patterns in conversation;
- Coding, when the researcher reads through transcribed data, dividing it into “meaningful analytical units”. (Babbie, 2013: 390 – 395; Nieuwenhuis, 2007c: 99 – 105);
- Content analysis, an inductive and iterative process where data is studied from different angles, looking for both similarities and differences in the text. The aim of content analysis is to “…describe the characteristics of the document's content by examining who says what, to whom, and with what effect” (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013:400);
- Hermeneutics, a way of understanding textual data that requires a high level of interpretive complexity (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013:400).

I will use coding as method to analyse the data acquired by means of interviews. Theron (2015: 4) describes coding as a method of organising data, but also as a pivotal link between collected data and the explanation of the meaning of the data. Nieuwenhuis (2007c: 105) elaborates on this by adding that “(c)oding is the process of reading carefully through your transcribed data ... dividing it into meaningful analytical units. When you locate meaningful segments, you code them.” A code is a label that the researcher gives to a part of the text or to a piece of information. The coding process then enables the researcher to quickly collect, retrieve and categorise all the data with similar thematic ideas, thus helping the researcher identifying patterns in the data.
There are different kinds of coding, for example *in vivo* coding, open coding, analytic coding, axial coding and selective coding (Theron, 2015: 5). I chose to do open coding, which Theron (2015:5) calls initial coding. Open coding is the attachment of a new label to a phrase or piece of text to describe or categorise it. Open coding is among the first steps of coding, as it creates categories for further coding. It can be done line-by-line or phrase-by-phrase or even in bigger units of texts. By reading and rereading the text, the researcher searches for key concepts. These key concepts are coded and from there on they can be organised into categories, with the categories given names by the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:561). I found it necessary to subdivide some of the categories into smaller categories, and then read the text and categories a few times before I was sure that the categories truly represented what I understood from the data I had collected.

Theron (2015: 4) suggests a few practical aspects when doing coding. Firstly she suggests that the data should be typed on the left two-thirds of the page, leaving the right margin open for notes. While the researcher reads the notes, ‘precoding’ can be done by circling or highlighting important words or phrases, and ‘notes to self’ can be made. Coding should be started while the researcher is still collecting the data, although it might mean that the codes will change during the later cycles of coding.

Creswell (2009:92) points out ethical issues regarding the recording of the research, namely that the researcher will stick to the facts when writing up the research and refrain from falsifying or inventing facts, that the researcher should acknowledge the inputs of colleagues and other individuals who had taken part in the research and that researchers should not engage in submitting the same data to more than one publication. Mouton (2001:241) adds that any form of plagiarism must be avoided.

4.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

A reliable research instrument is an instrument that can be applied by different people or even in different projects, but the findings will stay the same. In other words, a reliable
instrument is “repeatable and consistent” (Pietersen and Maree, 2007: 215). In autoethnography Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011: 10) mention that “questions of reliability refer to the narrator’s credibility”. Lincoln and Guba (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007: 18, 19) refer to the aspects of credibility (done by prolonged engagement, observation cross-checking of data, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and member checking), transferability (achieved by using thick descriptive data), dependability (an external audit that examines the process) and confirmability (an external audit that examines the data and reconstruction of data) in their model of trustworthiness.

Validity is “(a) term describing a measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure”. (Babbie, 2013:191). As qualitative research is more exploratory, less structured than quantitative research and more open-ended than quantitative research, researcher bias can be a threat to the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Johnson, 1997: 284). Mertler (2009: 115, 116) recommends three different procedures to assist the qualitative researcher in assessing the validity of his/her research:

- Triangulation (discussed in par 4.8.1);
- Member checking where the researcher discusses his final product with the participants;
- Prolonged engagement and persistent observation. By spending a lot of time with the participants, the researcher gains their trust and gets to know the people, their culture ad their behavioural patterns “to the point of being routine”;
- Creswell (2009:191) also recommends using rich, thick description to convey the researcher’s findings. A description becomes thicker and richer when the qualitative researcher adds detailed descriptions of the settings, interpretations, perspectives and behaviour he observed. In autoethnography a rich and thick description is done to “help facilitate understanding of a culture for insiders and outsiders, and is created by (inductively) discerning patterns of cultural experiences – repeated feelings, stories and happenings – as evidenced by field notes, interviews, and/or artefacts” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 5).

Together with validity come accountability and transparency. Porlezza and Splendore (2016: 199) describe transparency as an openness where information is disclosed instead
of hidden. Babbie (2013: 51) refers to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), which established a Transparency Initiative, requiring association members and survey researchers to “report openly and fully the details of their research methods”. But transparency is more than openness about actions and report. It also includes transparent information, where the gathered information is readily available and presented in a meaningful, easy-to-comprehend way. Lastly, transparency can serve as a characteristic of an individual, an entity or an organisation (Jankowski and Provezis, 2014: 480).

Accountability refers to the researcher taking responsibility for decisions, actions, consequences and quality of performance (Porlezza and Splendore, 2016: 199). Biesta (2004: 234) writes that accountability has to do with responsibility, pointing out the connotation to “being answerable to”. Botha (2012: 39) sums up accountability as “...the acknowledgement of my own context and the power afforded by my position”. I used thick descriptions and triangulation (Paragraph 4.8.1) to ensure transparency and to guarantee accountability.

4.8.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is important in facilitating interpretive validity and establishing trustworthiness of data in qualitative research (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2007:39). “Triangulation is a process of relating multiple sources of data in order to establish their trustworthiness or verification of the consistency of the facts” (Mertler, 2009:11). It is a way of integrating multiple sources of data, such as observation, interviews, field notes, research diary and document analysis (as I did in my study) and a way of verifying, confirming and generalising whether data obtained on the same topic is consistent. Babbie (2013:117) describes triangulation as “(t)he use of several different research methods to test the same findings...”, and Zuber-Skerrit (1996:16) mentions that at least three methods are necessary for comparison. Farmer et al. (2006: 378) describes the overall goal of triangulation as a way “...to enhance the validity of the research by increasing the likelihood that the findings and interpretations will be found credible and dependable”. Flick (2017:53) adds another dimension to triangulation, namely that triangulation should
be used as a source of extra knowledge about the issue in question and an extension as a research program. By using data-triangulation (the combination of different data sources), investigator triangulation (employing different observers or interviewers) and theory triangulation (using various theoretical points of view), triangulation is used as a strategy to deepen the understanding of the issue under study, and not only to verify and confirm data.

Triangulation can be done according to paradigms, methodologies (which involve the use of more than one research method), methods, researchers (introducing the research to several evaluators and auditors), data (as discussed above) or theoretical perspectives (the use of different theoretical perspectives to interpret the data) (Farmer et al., 2006: 379; Konecki, 2008: 15; Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 275).

I used triangulation in Chapter 5 where I compared the coded data from the interviews with the observations I had made, documents I had consulted and the theoretical data in Chapters 2 and 3. It provided me with peace of mind that my analysis was honest and transparent, as the gathered data had been verified by triangulation.

4.9 ETHICAL ASPECTS

Research ethics deals with the philosophical enquiry into the moral judgement of right and wrong in the research process (Pring, 2000: 140). Ethics focuses on how the research participants are treated, the level of honesty and openness towards the participants, and the way in which the results are obtained and reported (Mertler, 2009: 34). There are two principals guiding educational research: (i) respect for the dignity and confidentiality of the research participants, and (ii) the pursuit of truth (Pring, 2000: 143).

Babbie (2013: 35, 36) distinguishes between anonymity (where not even the researcher can identify the respondent) and confidentiality (where the researcher is able to identify the respondent but promises not to do so). As I was working with semi-structured interviews and focus groups, it was not possible to work anonymously with the participants, but I could assure them of keeping their identities and the information they shared with me confidential.
I had to request ethical clearance from the Ethical Committee of North West University (Ethics Number NWU-00166-13-A2), which I added as Addendum A. I also had to apply for permission to conduct research in a public school at the Western Cape Education Department (Addendum B) as well as ask the principal's permission to do research at the school where I was teaching (Addendum D).

As a researcher I had to respect the participants as well as the site of data collection. There were certain ethical issues that needed to be adhered to. I had to develop an information form for participants to sign before they took part in the research (Addendum F). This information form included identification of the researcher, the purpose of the research, the type of participant involvement, any possible risk to the participant, guarantee of confidentiality, informing the participant that he could withdraw from the research at any time, and provision of the contact details of people who could be contacted if any questions arose. Before I undertook the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups, I had to obtain the participants' written consent, signing the informed consent form (Addendum G), acknowledging that their participation during the interviews was voluntary (Creswell, 2009: 89 – 91). The research process had to be transparent, so I offered the participants a summary of the results to acknowledge their contribution to the research (Mouton, 2001: 244). Another ethical issue, which is actually just a matter of plain good manners, was to get permission from the school's principal, Governing Body and factotum to have access to the school when I had to meet with the focus groups for the interviews.

I had to make sure that the participants did not experience the interviewing as moral inquiry. It was important for me to remember that I needed the respondents (the families and colleagues) to conduct my research. I had to treat them with the respect they deserved. Although there are guidelines on ethical aspects of research, there were many situations where my own values had to guide me. “Science speaks on facts but is silent on values” (Hodgekinson, 2001: 300). As I was conducting the interviews I was very close to the participants of my study and had to take care to make ethically accountable decisions in our communication, thus assuring confidentiality.
Once the data had been collected during interviews, transcribed and interpreted, it should be kept for seven years. After that I must discard the data to prevent other researchers from misusing it.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explained how I conducted my research. I conducted the research from a post-post modern world-view, meaning that, although I find truth and knowledge in socio-cultural contexts, I still value scientific methods in education. I discussed the qualitative research design I had chosen, the interpretive paradigm that led and shaped my thoughts, the hermeneutic and phenomenological approach that helped me interpret and understand, and autoethnography as my method of choice, as I was an insider who wanted to understand and describe the group I am a part of. I described that I had collected the data by means of observations, interviews (semi-structured individuals, as well as focus groups) and document analysis. I used triangulation to ensure that the collected data is reliable.

In Chapter 5 I will analyse the collected data, using open coding to describe and organise the data into meaningful categories. These categories (or emerging themes) will be used to answer the subquestions of the main research question as stated in Paragraph 1.5. Triangulation will be done, thus comparing the coded data with documents, observations and the theory in Chapters 2 and 3 to ensure that the data analysis is transparent.
CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

If schools truly want parents to be partners in education, they must allow parents ample opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns and views in a co-equal relationship with teachers.

(Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2004: 184)
5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 I described the qualitative research design from where I conducted the research. In Chapter 5 I aim to interpret and understand the data I had collected by using the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches, trying to determine the different factors that influence parental involvement in life skills development done at this specific school, to what extent the socio-economic situation of this school’s families affects their involvement in life skills development, and which guidelines can be suggested to address and improve parental involvement at this school.

The analysis of the data gathered from documents, observations and interviews is done inductively, and I present it by using thick descriptions to represent the complexity of the situation regarding the different facets of life skills development and the school-parent partnership (Cohen, Manison and Morrison, 2007: 17). I prefer reporting the direct phrases and sentences of the participants, as the subtext and language used by the interviewee sometimes tell us more about the participant enriching the meaning of the text (Cohen, Manison and Morrison, 2007: 539) and enhancing credibility of the data collected.

The data I collected from semi-structured interviews, focus-group interviews, documents and observations made will be presented integrated, as these different sources of information supplement and support one another. At the same time they serve as triangulation to establish the trustworthiness of the collected data.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

For the purpose of putting data analysis into perspective, I will repeat the main question for this study (as formulated in Paragraph 1.5): How can families become more involved in the life skills development of learners in a primary school? This question refers to the life skills children display in their day to day conduct and how they cope with the demands of everyday life, but it also includes the Essential 55 implemented by the school as the school’s life skills programme (explained in more detail in Paragraph 3.7). The main question also refers to a partnership between the school and families that is necessary for
life skills development.

The question is supported by subquestions that helped to determine the current life skills that today’s children display, families’ current involvement in life skills development, reasons why some families are not involved in life skills development, barriers that prevent families from teaching their children life skills, and possible guidelines that can help families and schools working together in teaching children life skills. These subquestions will be discussed together with the data analysis in Paragraph 5.6.

5.3 BACKGROUND OF THE SCHOOL WITHIN WHICH THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

The school has 884 children from Grades 1 – 7, and hosts a diversity of cultures, languages, races and socio-economic circumstances. The aim is to educate each child holistically, focusing on academic excellence but also on participation in sport, culture, outings and camps.

5.3.1 Geographical and socio-economical context

The school where my study was conducted is situated in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. The Grade 1 – 7 staff consist of 42 members (9 male and 33 female), and 4 ladies in the Administration Department of the school. From Grades 1 to 7 there are 884 children in the school, of which 51% are boys and 49% girls. The cultural representation is as follows:

- African: 27%
- Coloured: 45%
- Indian: 1%
- White: 15%
- Other: 12% (This group consists mainly of children whose parents chose not to reveal their culture on CEMIS, the Centralised Educational Management Information System.)
Although the school is situated in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, the children come from different neighbourhoods. Children from Elsies River, Mitchell’s Plain, Khayelitsha and Gugulethu (amongst others) also attend, using trains and taxis to come to school. Some children have to get up very early, catching the first train at six o’clock, to be in time for school at a quarter to eight. In the analysis of the data it is therefore important to bear in mind that the school’s parent community is not necessarily from the same suburb that the school is situated in. When I refer to the community served by this particular school, it has to be kept in mind that the school community includes a few other suburbs (like Elsies River, Ravensmead, Gugulethu and Mitchell’s Plain) that are not in the school’s immediate environment. Thus the school community goes far beyond the geographical borders of the suburb within which the school is situated. This has certain implications (complications) for events like parent meetings and other events at school, as there are parents who are dependent on public transport over quite a distance to come to school. In cases of cable theft or protests, some children using trains for transport come to school very late, or sometimes they do not come to school at all.

As our parental community is spread over a wide geographical area, as explained in the previous paragraph, and as many parents find it difficult to come to the school due to their demanding working hours, it is important that the communication between the school and the parent community has to be good enough to compensate for the lack of personal contact.

5.3.2 Communication

Communication between the school and parents takes place on a regular basis. A weekly newsletter informs the parents about achievements by individual scholars, sports teams or cultural groups during the past week. It also informs parents of important upcoming events in the week to come. Any other important information is conveyed in the newsletter, as well as the coming week’s Essential 55 (see Paragraph 5.3.4).

Parents who need to see a teacher, can either phone the school secretary for an appointment, or they can write a letter in the child’s school diary (custom made for this
particular school) from where the parent and the teacher can communicate in writing. The school diary also includes the school’s code of conduct, the school rules and an undertaking to support the school, which is signed by both the parent and child at the beginning of each year.

At the beginning of the year there is a parent-teacher evening where the parents meet their children’s class teacher for the year, and where any uncertainties for the year to come can be discussed. Thereafter there is a parent meeting once every term where the teacher invites the parents to discuss possible academic or behavioural problems by the children. These meetings are also open for any other parent who wishes to see a teacher.

Other communication during the term includes letters of information about sport and cultural events (date, place, time), letters to the family when a child hasn’t done his homework or misbehaved, or a letter from the principal with important information. School-parent communication is a priority at the school, and parents are invited to contact the school whenever necessary. I experience the school as open, willing and inviting to discuss any issues the parents might experience.

### 5.4 PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

In Paragraph 4.4 I explained that I had chosen non-probability sampling (not allowing for any person in the population to have a probability to be selected for the study) when I selected the participants for the interviews. These interviewees were divided into four groups: individual semi-structured interviews with parents, individual semi-structured interviews with colleagues, a focus-group interview with colleagues and a focus-group interview with the School Governing Body. The participants had to be either members of the parent community of the school, teachers involved in the school or members of the School Governing Body to represent the whole group of people involved in the day-to-day development of life skills of the learners of the school. As I planned to conduct the interviews with a specific purpose in mind (to investigate how families can become more involved in the life skills development of learners in a primary school) I decided on purposive sampling when I selected participants for the semi-structured interviews as well.
as for the focus group interviews.

For individual, semi-structured interviews I sent out a letter to the parents of the specific school, inviting them to take part in the research (Addendum E). Fifty-three (53) parents replied that they were willing to come for an interview with me. When I started contacting these parents, I realised that some of the parents did not understand the invitation, due to a language barrier. They completed and signed the tear-off slip and sent it back to school without knowing what the letter was all about. (I refer to this language barrier in Paragraph 5.5.8, and again in Paragraph 6.3.3). When I phoned these parents to confirm an appointment they were not willing to take part in the study when they realised what it was about. Other parents lived too far from the school and it was not possible to agree on a venue for the interview. A third group of parents were willing to participate in an interview, but it was not possible to arrange a time for our interview, due to their long working hours. I arranged interviews with the remaining parents/caregivers and continued with the interviews until I reached a saturation point where the participants started repeating information I had already gathered, not adding new ideas to the data I had collected. This resulted in 29 interviews, including the four groups of interviews, namely colleagues (semi-structured individual interview as well as a focus group interview), members of the School Governing Body, parents and/or caregivers, and grandparents raising children as their own. As it is a multi-racial school, I included African, Coloured and White interviewees, and also parents of different home languages. I also interviewed both male and female interviewees, as well as married parents and single parents, as I had indicated in Chapter 1 that there are several children in the school who grow up in single-parent households. In the parent community it was important to include participants of different age groups, as I expected that older parents or caregivers would encounter different challenges from those of younger parents or caregivers. The questions I asked in these interviews are included in Addendum J.

I presented the tables of participants in Chapter 4, but for the convenience of not having to page back and forth in the thesis, I provide them again. The biographical detail of the participants in Group 1 was as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Language&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 22</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 23</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Afr/Eng</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Group 1: Semi-structured individual interviews with families

I conducted individual interviews with colleagues as well as a focus group interview with colleagues. As I am an insider (as autoethnographer), I know my colleagues well enough to make an informed decision about whom I could interview in a focus group and whom I would rather have to interview individually. I viewed some colleagues as important enough

---

<sup>12</sup> The interviewees were given participant numbers to protect their privacy.

<sup>13</sup> Where the language is indicated as Afrikaans/English, it means that the parents are Afrikaans speaking but they choose to raise their children in English.

---

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS
to have an interview with, but due to various reasons they were not suitable for a focus-group interview, e.g. two of those colleagues included the principal and a Head of Department who are strong leaders. I did not want to risk the possibility that their personality and leadership position could intimidate other colleagues in the focus group. Another colleague whom I chose for an individual interview is the school’s social services liaison teacher. She could make a valuable contribution to the study, so I did not want to share her with a group. The last colleague I chose for an individual interview is a person who was able to make a valuable contribution to the study, but has the type of personality that can take control of the conversation and not give other colleagues a chance to say what they think. I also experienced another, more personal, quality of response when I interviewed these colleagues personally than when they would be interviewed as a member of a focus group. By interviewing colleagues individually as well as in a focus group I involved a bigger group of the staff in my study, with the surprising result that a bigger group of my colleagues – feeling a part of the process – became interested in the research I was busy with. These colleagues’ contributions were a valuable asset when I made my suggestions, as described in Chapter 6, to implement them in our school. It now became “our” project.

The colleagues whom I chose to interview individually, my Group 2 of interviewees, was the following group of people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleague</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.2 Group 2: Semi-structured individual interviews with colleagues*

The two focus-group interviews were an interview with a group of colleagues, and an interview with the School Governing Body, including parents, teachers and the school secretary.
Group 3 of my interviews was formed by my colleagues, whom I interviewed as a focus group. I included colleagues from all three Learning Phases in the primary school, as the study includes the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. The different phases represented different expectations of the life skills development in our school. Only female colleagues were available, but I conducted interviews with male colleagues individually for a balance between male and female colleagues. I chose colleagues of different age groups, in order to obtain information from different levels of experience. The older colleagues could provide information of activities relevant to the study that had not been undertaken by the school in the past. They could also recall what had worked and what did not, as well as problems that they had encountered. The younger colleagues were more in touch with the emotions of especially the more senior learners, because they interact with the learners in a more informal way and could therefore give valuable insight into what our learners feel and experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleague</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Intermediate Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Intermediate Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Senior Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Intermediate Phase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.3 Group 3: Focus group interview with colleagues*

The second focus group (Group 4) was the School Governing Body, representing both colleagues and parents. The combination of parents and teachers in one group created unique dynamics and interesting viewpoints on the questions asked. Two participants could not attend the interview, resulting in a small focus group. The School Governing Body is a group of people getting along very well, so the interview generated a lot of data,
as the participants interrupted one another, their inputs were complementary to one another’s and they were not afraid to differ from one another. The school secretary (who is also a grandmother) could share valuable observations of her daily dealings with parents. Once again I included different age groups, resulting in different viewpoints and years of experience with children. Different genders in one focus group also provide interesting dynamics, especially as the male participant was a colleague with many years of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>School’s secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Colleague/Parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Group 4: Focus group interview with the School Governing Body

5.5 DATA ANALYSIS: OBSERVATIONS, INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

5.5.1 Life skills as viewed by the participants

I wanted to determine the participants’ view of life skills, as it was important to me that both the interviewees and I would have the same concept in mind when we discussed the issue. Further on, what the families viewed as life skills represented what they taught their children at home. Their definition of life skills could indicate whether the school and the families were working towards the same goal in life skills development, which is important to know when I suggest guidelines in Chapter 6 (as stated in the subquestion: Which guidelines can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school?). In the interviews it became clear that the participants found relationship skills and decision-making skills the most important skills.

Some of the participants mixed up life skills and values, as Participants 1, 10, 17 and 22
(Group 1, semi-structured individual interviews with family members) and Member 1 of the School Governing Body (SGB) answered that respect was an important life skill. In Paragraph 5.5.2 I refer to children in the school who show respect towards different races and religions in the school. It confirms that they are being taught that by parents who value respect as important. The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001:19), as discussed in Paragraph 2.5.1, also emphasises the importance of respect when it singles out respect as one of the ten proposed values that should be infused in education. The Essential 55 (Clark, 2003:10), which forms part of the schools’ life skills programme (refer to Paragraph 3.7) has a Rule 4 stating that other learners’ comments, opinions and ideas should be respected. (The learners are reminded of this rule for one week in each term.)

“Respect for others is very important: respect your fellow pupils and respect your teachers. And then also their culture. We come from different backgrounds, everybody is different and you’ve got to respect that.” (Participant 21, group 1: individual interview with a family member)

I believe the participants who regarded respect as a life skill were thinking about the relationship skills that accompany respect, like communication skills, conflict resolution, and understanding socially acceptable behaviour.

Participants also viewed life skills as those skills necessary to live successfully with the people around them. The skill to live successfully with those around you is also one of the general aims in the CAPS document (2012:5), namely to produce learners that can work effectively with other learners in a team. (Refer to Paragraph 2.5.2.2 for all the general aims of CAPS.) Colleague 2 (Group 2, individual interview with colleagues) describes living successfully with others as follows:

“…things like manners and how to conduct yourself, how to treat other people, being a decent human being; a functioning adult. Somebody that can be an asset to society and not a liability.”

Together with the skills necessary to live with the people around me, Colleague 1 (Group 2,
individual interviews with colleagues) and Member 4 of the SGB viewed being a **good citizen** as a life skill, once again most probably referring to the social skills that underpin good citizenship. The specific aims of Life Skills as a subject in CAPS (Paragraph 2.5.2.3) also provide for citizenship education by stating that learners in the Intermediate (DoBE, 2012:12) and Senior Phases (DoBE, 2011b:8) should be taught to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities, but also to respect the rights of others. Social responsibility (DoBE, 2012:14) and constitutional rights and responsibilities (DoBE, 2011b:10) are also a part of the subject Life Skills in CAPS. Practical examples of life skills as good citizens in our relationship with the people around us as seen by the participants included good manners, not judging people, doing your part in society, not fighting, anger management, choosing the right friends, communication and handling conflict at the workplace (family member of Participant 11, Colleague 1 and Member 1 of the SGB).

**Conflict management**, the last of the relationship skills, was important to Participants 2, 11, 16, 17 and 19 (Group 1, individual interviews with family members). Participant 19 taught her child:

“He must not fight with other friends, and if somebody swear he must come and tell me and then he must not fight back. He must tell me if there is anything that is wrong or (if) somebody fight with him, he must just come to me and tell me.”

At the school we as teachers have to keep on reminding the children not to fight back when they are provoked, but rather tell the teacher or, during break time, tell the teacher on duty so that the conflict can be resolved in a civilised way. Even the Essential 55 (Clark, 2003:15) as described in Paragraph 3.7 has Rule 5 that reminds the learners that they should not become angry when they lose in a game, something which is very relevant among young children. Communication skills that include dealing with conflict is a part of the Intermediate Phase’s subject Life Skills (DoBE, 2012:14), where the learners are taught different techniques of dealing with conflict and dealing with your own emotions when you are angry. It was good to hear from the participants that they taught the same relationship skills at home as those we try to instil in the learners at school.
Decision-making skills were also viewed as important to the participants. Colleague 1 regards it as a life skill to make the right choices, to choose to do the right thing, to choose to be on time and to choose to finish my work. Colleagues 1, 2 (Group 1, individual interviews with colleagues) and 11 (Group 2, focus group interview with colleagues) and Participants 2, 6 and 11 (Group 1, individual interviews with families) also regarded responsible decision-making as their definition of life skills. The general aims of Life Skills in the CAPS document include that learners should develop the ability to “organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively” (DoBE, 2012:5). Decision-making is also one of the specific aims in the Intermediate Phase (DoBE, 2012: 12) and the Senior Phase (DoBE, 2011b: 9).

To Participant 11 (Group 1, individual interview with family members), Colleague 4 (Group 2, individual interview with colleague) and 9 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) and Member 5 of the SGB, working with time and money (time management and financial planning) was very important. Time management is a part of the Senior Phase subject Life Orientation (DoBE, 2011b: 10) as described in Paragraph 2.5.2.3, but I often observe in my class that the learners struggle to manage time. They will waste time when they have to do work in class (even when writing a test or exam with a time limit) and then they are not done when the time is up. I also find that learners are given assignments more than a week before they have to be handed in, and then there will still be children who are not done on the due date, often with a letter from the parent asking for a few more days as there was not enough time to finish the day before.

Being equipped with knowledge to help children making the right choices was important to the participants, especially when it came to the children’s safety. There were parents who regarded knowledge as being able to make the right choices as important life skills, as Participant 21 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) taught her daughters:

“Be careful, look around you, walk with someone from school, don’t walk alone, stay in groups and let me know where you are. I want to know. When you feel uncomfortable in any situation, don’t keep quiet.”
“When you see this people I don’t know this people, no anyone to tell you come to my house. No go in car. Walk slowly, slowly ... go to school. When you get problem, when you see this people maybe want to get you problem on the way, try to shouting.” (Participant 1, Group 1: individual interview with a family member)

Parents, like Participant 17 (Group 1, individual interviews with family members), were adamant that their children must know never take sweets from strangers, as they might contain drugs. These parents regarded the knowledge of being safe as an important prerequisite for the skill of making the right decisions for their own safety. It was important to Participants 9, 12, 13 and 16 (Group 1, individual interviews with family members) that our children have to be informed about drugs and drug abuse, about sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancies, the internet, pornography and sexual assault.

The safety of our children depends on knowledge, as the participants have said. I already mentioned decision-making skills as a part of CAPS’s specific aims for the Intermediate and Senior Phases, but find it alarming that knowledge of substance abuse and personal safety is not a substantial part of the Intermediate Phase’s contents in the curriculum (for the contents of Life Skills and Life Orientation refer to Paragraph 2.5.2.3). In the Foundation Phase Life Skills (DoBE, 2011a:42) substance abuse is discussed in Grade 2 under the topic Healthy Living, in the Intermediate Phase Life Skills (DoBE, 2012:14), substance abuse is in the teaching plan for Grade 5 only and the Senior Phase has a section on substance abuse in Grades 7 and 8 (DoBE, 2011b: 10).

There were participants who confused practical skills with life skills: Participant 14 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) viewed life skills as the physical skills you need in your job and office skills like operating a photocopy machine, and to Participants 8 and 11 (all of them from Group 1, individual interviews with family members) life skills are being able to make your own sandwich, dress yourself, pack your school bag, clean and tidy up the house, cook a meal and look after yourself. Participants 11 and 13 (Group 1, individual interviews with family members) viewed cleanliness, hygiene,
grooming and using the toilet as life skills.

The participants regard relationship skills (respect, living with the people around you, being a good citizen) and responsible decision making as the most important aspects of life skills. Together with this, it was important to them that children should have knowledge of the dangers of society to enable them to learn the skills necessary for their own safety, which is a reflection of the unsafe communities in which some of these children have to grow up. When comparing the participants’ views of life skills with CASEL’s (CASEL, 2015), five core groups of competencies (refer to Paragraph 2.2.1.4), the participants did not view self-awareness skills (assessing own feelings and strengths), self-management skills (regulating own emotions and motivating yourself) and social awareness skills (empathy) as important life skills. It will therefore be necessary to include a programme for parents and families to inform them of all the facets of life skills so that families can better equip their children in life skills development.

![Participants' view of life skills](image)

**Figure 5.1 Participants' views of life skills**

### 5.5.2 Life skills displayed by the learners in their day to day conduct

The subquestion, what kind of life skills the learners show in their current behaviour at school, was asked to assess what the parent-school partnership has to do to improve the learners’ life skills development. I have to know what kind of life skills our learners display
to be able to suggest effective guidelines for the family involvement in meaningful activities for the learners' life skills development. Interviews and observations revealed to me that the children display both positive and negative life skills in their day to day conduct. The positive display of life skills encourage parents and educators that there is success in our educational attempts, whereas the negative display of life skills raise questions as to what can be done to rectify those negative skills.

On a positive note there are children in the primary school who display self-awareness skills, self-management skills, social awareness, relationship skills and the necessary decision-making skills. As Member 4 of the SGB noticed, there are beautiful children at our school displaying the necessary life skills, together with their parents who are involved in their children’s school career, watching their children’s sports matches and attending parent meetings and school functions.

**Racism** is not tolerated at the school and is an offense that is regarded in a serious light. I observed very little incidents of racism at the school and I honestly believe that it is because this generation of children have been growing up together and gone to the same school since Grade 1. The children of different races play together and many of them live in the same neighbourhood. The *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy*’s (2001) value of non-racism and its educational strategy of promoting anti-racism in schools are implemented effectively and successfully in this school (refer to Paragraph 2.5.1). The topic of cultural diversity is also covered and discussed in CAPS in the Intermediate Phase Life Skills subject (2012: 14) as well as in Grade 8 Life Orientation (2011b: 10).

The *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001: 43) suggested religious education as an educational strategy. Together with tolerance and respect among different races in the school, I observed the ability to understand and support different religious convictions. For example, often a child would bring cake or cupcakes to school when he has a birthday. The Jehovah Witnesses usually do not share in this class party, but I have never seen any child comment on it or make fun of such a child. During the month of Ramadan the Muslim children are respected for their traditions by the other children in the class, the classmates do not comment, for to them it is just a special time of the year for
their Muslim friends. There is a respect among the children for these religious differences, most probably because the community is so diverse in religions. The study of the major religions in South Africa is a part of the Intermediate Phase Life Skills curriculum (DoBE, 2012: 14) as well as of the Senior Phase Life Orientation (2011b: 10) as discussed in Paragraph 2.3.2.1. In my experience the learners find it a very enjoyable and interesting part of the curriculum each year.

As teachers we also often observe a caring among family members. There is a bond between brothers and sisters (and cousins, when they are living in the same house). The elder ones take care of and are responsible for their younger siblings. (Colleague 12 in the focus group interview with colleagues also mentioned this.) It often happens that family members have to take care of one another (brothers, sisters or cousins living in the same house). These children then see to each other at school as well.

I also observe negative behaviour by the children, driven by undesired skills. Colleagues 2, 3 (Group 2, individual interviews with colleagues), 5 and 9 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) agreed that there are children in the school who struggle so much to survive that they do not develop certain life skills. They develop coping skills necessary for their day to day conduct in the challenging environment where they grow up.

“I think the only skills that they do have, are coping skills. Because they have no choice. The skills they do have are very bad because they have that fight or flight skill, because of their circumstances and where they come from.” (Colleague 2, Group 2: individual interview with colleague)

Colleague 3 (Group 2, individual in interview with colleague) also thinks that the teachers do all they can to teach and reinforce life skills during the day, but when the child leaves the school premises in the afternoon and he enters his less desirable environment, he goes back to coping and surviving because it works for him there. I often noticed in class that there are children who almost act from a fight or flight attitude to difficult situations. It is difficult to talk to such a child, having him think about his emotions and why he does what he is doing, as it is the only way they know to cope with a difficult situation.
Together with the skills that accompany children returning home in the afternoon to less desirable circumstances, is their lack of motivation (Colleague 13, Group 3: focus group interview with colleagues), their lack of interest in their school work, poor co-operation and a bad self-esteem, not expecting much of themselves academically, as Colleague 4 (Group 2, individual interview with colleagues) observed. Colleague 4 adds to this that the children do not understand setting and working towards academic goals. They are not interested in improving themselves; they are satisfied with the minimum requirements.

When work is done, it is done. There is no need for them to see whether they can improve their work. I can confirm Colleague 4’s observation, as I have seen it very often in my own class over the past decade.

Colleague 2 (Group 2, individual interview with colleagues) and Participant 18 (Group 1, individual interviews with family members) agreed that the children do not know how to negotiate conflict constructively, and will respond to conflict with aggression. I was once in a class where two girls started fighting, verbally at first, but soon enough the one girl grabbed a pair of scissors to stab the other girl. When I reprimanded her, I asked her whether this was what she saw at home, expecting a ‘no’ answer. Both girls answered affirmatively. Even though self management skills and dealing with conflict are in the teaching plan of CAPS Life Skills of the Intermediate Phase (2012: 14), and that the learners are taught different ways of handling conflict and dealing with anger, there are still children who haven’t developed this skill yet.

Something that goes hand in hand with conflict resolution is the children’s egoism. They don’t consider the people around them. As a teacher I often observe the children’s self-centeredness. They still have to learn that they are members of a society where it is necessary to be considering others.

“Children are coming in today as like ‘I am the most important, you will listen to what I say’ and they’re being almost taught that at home.”

( Participant 14, parent)
“I must only see to myself. I can date your ex-boyfriend because it’s me me me. I can take this money because it’s me me me. They wrap themselves up in themselves.” (Participant 6, parent)

According to Colleague 3 (Group 2, individual interview with colleagues) this egoism leads to bullying and destructive friendships, because everything revolves around the individual child. Only the child’s own opinion is important, he/she bullies because it is about what is important to him/her, and some children dominate other children so that they can feel better about themselves by making somebody else feel bad. Children laugh at each other in class when somebody makes a mistake. Participant 4 (Group 1, individual interview with a grandmother) told me how her grandchild had to pay friends R15 and R20 to be allowed to play with them. This is yet another example of egoism, exploiting another child for my own good. Addressing this social issue, the school has a very definite policy regarding harassment, bullying and victimisation. The document makes it clear what the responsibilities of the staff lie where incidents of harassment, bullying or victimization occur. It provides guidance to staff members on how to handle these situations, as well as the formal and informal procedures that can be followed by the complainant and alleged perpetrator. Bullying is also addressed in the teaching plan of CAPS’ Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase (2012: 14) under the heading “Social Responsibility” (refer to Paragraph 2.5.2.3), but as I have written regarding conflict management, although the topic is discussed in the class and learners are taught ways to handle bullies, it remains a big problem in the school.

Lastly, there are children at this school who make bad decisions, as they lack the skills to make constructive and respectful choices. According to Colleague 1 (Group 2, individual interview with colleagues) some children do not value their own lives enough, as there are children at the age of thirteen who are already sexually active, drinking and smoking. This observation by a colleague is confirmed by the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001: 65): “A national survey of teenagers has found that one third of all youths between the ages of 12 and 17 have had sex.” Participant 13 (Group 1, individual interview with a caregiver) confirms this by telling how the younger children she helps with homework in the afternoons talk about pornography, make suggestive movements and
steal. She sees young girls walking around in their neighbourhood with a cigarette in the mouth. She describes an incident where a Grade 1 boy had a cool drink bottle and straw in his school bag. He told her that he used it to smoke the ‘green stuff’, which apparently is dagga. Participant 1 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) also complained about ‘small children’ in their neighbourhood smoking and swearing. And Participant 19 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) complained about her own Grade 3 child stealing:

“He go to the room and take my wallet and took my money.”

The file for social support (Anon., 2016) has an example of a six year-old child who lives with her mother and aunt during the week and goes to her biological father every second weekend. The child steals and lies, but neither of the parents knows how to handle or discipline her. There was another example of a 12 year-old girl who bunked school with her friends to go to a shebeen\textsuperscript{14} for the day. Once again the mother was aware of it but did not know how to handle the situation as the child would not listen to her. There is also the example of a Grade 2 child in the school who is smoking already. Participant 16 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) showed me during an interview at a children’s park how young girls stood there waiting for drugs. It is not even done secretly; it is in the open for everybody, including young children, to see.

These skills (negative skills and absence of skills) have to be addressed in the suggestions on how to improve parental involvement in life skills development.

\textsuperscript{14} Shebeens are bars in South Africa where liquor is sold without a liquor license.
5.5.3 Unsafe neighbourhood

Another theme that surfaced repeatedly throughout the interviews, documents and observations, was the unsafe and undesirable circumstances some of the children have to go home to in the afternoon. One of the subquestions is: What are the barriers that prevent families from involvement in the life skills development at school? (Paragraph 1.5) I regard the unsafe neighbourhoods that some of our children have to go home to in the afternoon as one of the barriers that prevent life skills development as done at school.

Participant 9 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) advised me to have our conversation somewhere else, as it was too dangerous for me to come to her house. According to her, shooting in the community happens on a daily basis and the gangs are present everywhere. Her problem is that her ten year-old son sees these gangsters as role models and that he wants to be like them.

Participant 13 and Participant 16 (Group 1, individual interviews with family members) informed me that drug users and drug dealers were common in the block of flats where they live. Participant 13 sees parents who sit using alcohol and drugs with their friends,
leaving their children alone under these circumstances. I have had children in my class with family members who were drug dealers and/or gangsters. In 2016 there were two children in my class whose fathers were involved in drug dealings. What upset me the most was the one child that seemed unaffected by the situation. The child was so used to the drug dealings and violence in the household that he became almost apathetic. I already referred to the small section in the CAPS Life Skills Intermediate Phase and Life Orientation Senior Phase documents on substance abuse in Paragraph 5.5.1. Comparing this with the reality of substance abuse in the school where I teach, I realise that learners need much more information on different types of substances, how to avoid getting involved, the effects of different types of substances on the body (especially the body of a child who is still maturing), where to get help if you are already involved, addiction and the consequences for drug users and drug dealers.

In past years there were children in my class who told me that they had to be indoors from a specific time of day because of shooting in the streets, and children who told me that the “police were at (our block of flats) again last night” for a drug-related case. To them it was no new experience. Participant 12 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) told me that her eldest son’s friend was shot dead in front of him when he was 16 years old. The influence of this kind of violence on children is explained by Affouneh (2007: 344): “...conflicts affect children not only physically and socially but also in terms of their moral development. Schools may be unable to provide positive experiences ... which would reinforce normal development and co-operative relationships.” This is what Colleague 3 (Group 2 individual interview with colleague) meant when he said that teachers teach the children all the positive life skills at school, but when these children go home in the afternoons, they have to cope and survive again, which requires a different set of skills (refer to Paragraph 5.5.2.). When these observations are compared to Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of Paragraph 3.2, it explains why the learners’ experiences in their microsystem (the home and neighbourhood) impact so heavily on the development of their life skills. It also explains why it is difficult for the school alone to change the life skills that learners have to acquire in their immediate environment.

The circumstances in which some of the children grow up is a barrier for parental
involvement in life skills development, as the children are confronted daily by situations that require different skills from those the school and their parents are trying to teach them. Participant 9 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) describes such an environment, saying that the gangsters recruit the children who are too young to go to jail. These children do the work for them, like stealing and drugs. The parents are so poor that the gangsters pay the parents (money for electricity and food) for the ‘availability’ of their children, and they are only too glad to accept it.

5.5.4 Poor domestic circumstances

A possible reason for some families not being involved in the life skills development of the learners (the third subquestion), is domestic violence by a spouse or family member.

Some children see violence only in the newspaper and on television; others are less fortunate and have to grow up in the reality of violent households. The documents in the social support file (Anon., 2016) tell a sad story of children who suffer under parents and caregivers abusing alcohol and/or drugs, including the example of an eleven year-old child who came to school crying in the morning, struggling to focus on school work, until it was discovered that the father was an alcohol and dagga user. There is also the incident of a ten year-old child who did not want to stay with the mother, as the mother used the child’s social grant for alcohol and the elder brother smoked dagga.

More examples from the social support file, of which some of the learners were in my class,
include: A twelve year-old child was threatened by the father with a gun. The mother had to apply for a constraint order. There was a ten year-old child who came to our school, covered with scars from old beatings, stab wounds and burns. The child could not communicate in English, and the guardians did not respond to communication from the school when there was an attempt from the school to intervene and help. The matter had to be escalated. And there was the ten year-old boy whose father tied his mother to a chair and beat her. The boy and his mother were afraid of the father and wanted to move to another house, but did not have the money to do so and had to stay in this abusive household.

Comparing these circumstances to Maslow’s motivation theory, it becomes clear that these children’s safety needs are not met (Paragraph 3.3). The implication is that the children who are exposed to violent situations at home or in the community will not be motivated to develop those life skills accompanying belongingness needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation. It is of little use to teach a child to do his best at school, while the child sits in class worrying about the safety of his mother, or worrying what will happen to him when he gets home in the afternoon.

Participant 17 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) highlighted another side of the problem of domestic violence when he said:

\[ Maybe \text{ the problem start at home sometimes. Maybe at home there’s fighting and the children is catching up the thing. Then you bring that thing to school to other children also. } \]

One of the strategies suggested by the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001: 27 – 29) as described in Paragraph 2.5.1 is role modelling. The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy reiterates that the example that parents and teachers set are more important that what they say. The unfortunate reality is that it does not help that teachers set the right example, infusing positive life skills in daily learning and teaching, and then the child goes home in the afternoons to circumstances that undo everything he was taught at school.
5.5.5 Financial difficulties

Financial difficulties form a barrier that prevents families from involvement in life skills development at school (fourth subquestion). Families that struggle financially are a big problem in the community. There are families with limited financial means and then there are the very poor families.

Families with limited financial means are those families who find it difficult to attend parent evenings or school functions, because there is not enough money for transport (many of the school’s parents are dependent on public transport), as mentioned by Colleague 2 (Group 2, individual interview with colleagues). Other families with limited financial means are the families who do not have enough money to pay for aftercare services while they are at work, like Participant 21 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) said. These parents already find it difficult to be involved in school-based activities, as their financial situation is an obstacle. Adding to this, I observe very often in my class that the families with limited finances cannot afford to buy their children the necessary stationery. These children often cannot complete their work (especially at home), as they do not have colouring pencils, scissors or glue. These children are often in trouble because of homework not being done, and this impacts negatively on their life skills development. In Paragraph 2.3.3.1 I describe the model by Hornby and LaFaele (2011) for barriers to parental involvement. They also acknowledge financial hardship as one of the barriers that hampers parental involvement. Epstein (2010: 85) suggests family support programmes that can assist families who need it with health, nutrition and other services (refer to Paragraph 2.3.2.1).
The effect of poverty on the children and life skills development as recorded in documents in the school’s social support file (Anon., 2016), include an eleven year-old child who comes to school without food, unwashed, crying easily and unable to handle conflict. Two children were reported for begin absent often, and it was discovered that they didn’t have the money to pay the taxi fare; they couldn’t afford to come to school. In Paragraph 2.4 I quote Bender (2002: 25): “Poverty, migratory labour, poor or no housing and long distances from the workplace are a few of the destructive forces that have affected the family life ... (i)t is the school, rather than their parents, that is now responsible for helping these children to develop and learn life skills.” This is exactly the situation we are facing with some of the learners in our school.

Some children come to school poorly clothed and hungry. A year ago I did a quick survey in the school and found that there were 60 children who came to school in the mornings without having had breakfast or having a lunch box. There are children who really need the support of a feeding and clothing project at the school, as children who are properly clothed and fed are more susceptible to teaching and learning.

In Paragraph 5.5.8 I will refer to poverty again when I discuss the challenges faced by some immigrant parents. I saw poverty when I visited those two immigrant families. I saw a mother and daughter living in one room. The mothers were without a job and could not afford the school fees. And I realised that poverty is sometimes hidden under pride, that I cannot always see when a child comes from a poor household because some parents are too proud to ask for help.

![Figure 5.5 Financial difficulties](image-url)

Figure 5.5 Financial difficulties
5.5.6 The need for parental guidance

Another answer to the subquestion regarding barriers that prevent families from involvement in life skills development at school (Paragraph 1.5) is that some parents need guidance in parenting skills. In her model for school/family/community partnerships (Paragraph 2.3.2.1), Epstein (2010: 85) also suggests family support and parent education.

There are two types of guidance needed to support them in being better equipped parents who can become involved in life skills development. There are parents who need parental guidance in the form of an information session where a specialist in certain aspects of law, health and raising children come to the school to speak to parents and help in those specific areas where the parents need information. Then there are parents who need formal parental guidance classes by a qualified person.

Member 2 of the SGB went to parental guidance classes to understand her special-needs child better and said afterwards that she experienced it very positively, encouraging other parents to go as well. The documents in the social support file (Anon., 2016) contains a whole lot of information on parents in need of parental guidance: a parent who hits the child with a shoe to discipline him; parents in the process of divorce and not knowing how to handle the child while dealing with the divorce; a mother being afraid of her own child, and parents who are manipulated by their children.

Colleague 2 (Group 2, individual interview with a colleague) mentions another group of parents who need parental guidance, namely the parents who grew up socially deprived, and now have to raise children of their own:

“I don’t think they themselves know what they (life skills) are. I don’t think they’ve grown up with them. It’s dysfunctional families. They come from dysfunctional homes. They don’t have the interest or time in their children to teach them... They didn’t grow up with it, so they don’t know how to instil it in their children...”
Colleague 10 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) agrees that there are parents who grow up without developing the necessary knowledge and skills, and when they become parents themselves, they do not have the skills to equip their own children. These parents need parental guidance to become better equipped, so that they can become involved in the life skills development of their children.

Then there are parents who do not need parental guidance classes, but who need to be informed on parenting skills. For example: It happens that children complain about their parents being on the phone the whole time, not interacting with them. Both Colleagues 11 and 12 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) reported that the children in their classes complain about their mother being on the phone and not listening to them when they want to talk to them, sending them to make coffee so that they can spent some more time on the phone. Going hand in hand with this is what Participant 14 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) reports:

"Parents are not wanting (sic) to spend time with their children; they’re not wanting to communicate with their children. They’re not teaching them boundaries; they’re not teaching them discipline."

Some of the parents of the school are still very young, as mentioned by Colleague 9 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues), and it happens that they themselves do not always have the knowledge and skills to convey to their children (according to Colleagues 4 and 10). Then there are some parents who struggle to manage their own children and they become so discouraged that they just let the children do whatever they want to do, as Participant 13 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) remarked. They have given up hope. There is no discipline any more. Participant 13 regularly sees these parents’ children in the block of flats where they live, walking around on a Sunday afternoon still with their primary school uniform from Friday, sometimes even dirty and torn.
5.5.7 Parents in need of support

Something that have to be taken into consideration for guidelines that can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the school (the final subquestion, Paragraph 1.5), is the support needed by parents.

There is a definite need among the parents I spoke to, to be helped and supported. The society we live in and the demands it makes on households seem to make parents more dependent on help from the school and from one another, so that they can have time and energy to spend on the development of their children’s life skills.

Some parents need help in the form of support from friends. Epstein (2010: 85) suggests in Paragraph 2.3.2.1 that meetings should be held in the neighbourhood so that families and schools can get to know one another better. Participants 13 and 14 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) suggested something similar to Epstein’s idea, namely that parents come together at school once a term just to talk and share their experiences with their children.

“...sometimes you might mention something stupid to somebody else and they’re like: Oh, when this happened to me this is what I did and I found it worked quite well” (Participant 14).

Another group of parents who need support are the single parents. Both Participant 6 and 9 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) said that they as single mothers need
other adults to help them as they find it difficult combining the responsibilities of work during the day and taking care of children on their own. Colleague 6 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) also mentioned that there are single parents who do not see their children very often due to working hours. She also said that those parents often are not involved in school activities because they do not have the time to come to school. Hornby and Lafaele’s model of barriers to parental involvement regards societal factors (Paragraph 2.3.3.4) as a barrier, as parents have to cope with more stress and less time, confirming what Participant 6 says:

“There’s stress of traffic, then I must work whole day, then I come home and because I’m a single parent I must cook. It becomes too much. You deal with so much conflict on the road, in your work, with your relationships at work, with your relationships at home... sometimes it just get too much” (Participant 6, parent).

Participants 11, 14, 15, and 21 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) also noticed how single parents found it challenging to meet all their responsibilities single-handedly, and they suggested that support groups should be formed for these parents. They suggested that the school facilitate occasions where the parents of different grade groups can get to know one another, forming groups or forums on WhatsApp or Facebook from where they can support one another. Parents have a need to talk to other parents about their concerns regarding their children; they need somebody to help out when they cannot fetch a child from school or need somebody to look after a child for a while. Hornby and Lafaele (2011:41) also admit that solo parents find it difficult to become more involved in school activities due to their caretaking responsibilities (refer to Paragraph 2.3.3.4)

“I think that by parents helping each other the parents help the school as well. Because sometimes parents know among themselves friends going through difficult times. The school doesn’t always know about these” (Participant 11, parent).
A third group of parents who need support, are the **grandparents** who raise their grandchildren. Some children live with their grandparents because their biological parents gave them to the grandparents to raise so that they could “move on”, according to Member 4 of the SGB. Others are raised by the grandmother or both grandparents due to the biological parents having a drug or alcohol addiction (as I had many examples of in my class over the past few years), and then there are children whose mother stays with the grandparents and the children are raised by both the mother and grandparents. Participant 23 (grandmother in Group 1, individual interview with family member) mentioned that they are a group of grandmothers raising their grandchildren alone, and she said that she spoke on their behalf as well when she asked for assistance with the children’s school work. Participant 23 said that it was difficult for her to help her grandchild with the school work, as they did it differently when she was still at school. The curriculum, the names of the different subjects and the contents have changed so much over the decades that she struggled to keep up and help her grandchild, although she really wanted to give all the necessary support. She asked for opportunities where the grandparents could be taught how the assignments of the term and the school work should be done, in order to help her to help her grandchild. I believe it is safe to say that there are parents who will also use opportunities like these, as I experienced quite often during a parent discussion that the parents also complained that they didn’t know how to support their children with the school work.

*Figure 5.7 Parents in need of support*
5.5.8 Immigrant parents

Immigrant parents can also experience barriers that prevent them from getting involved in the life skills development at school (the fourth subquestion, Paragraph 1.5), namely a language barrier and financial difficulties.

I spoke to two immigrant parents, Participants 1 and 20 (Group 1, individual interview with family member). Both women live in a room they rent in a bigger house and they share certain difficulties. Both women are single parents (one is in a polygamous marriage, but her husband is not in South Africa). To both women language is very problematic – we had to use an interpreter to communicate in both interviews. Another implication of the language barrier is their inability to help their children with homework – both women have to ask other people for help.

The information in the weekly newsletters (and any other letters) is probably difficult to understand. The children of both these mothers were fluent in English and they could answer my questions, which means that the roles are reversed: the child is more in control of school matters that the parent who is supposed to be the caregiver. These parents need support to help them become involved parents in the life skills development taught by the school.

There are immigrant children in our school who are not financially suffering like these two mothers, but the one common denominator is language. These children come to school with the language of learning and teaching different to their mother tongue. To them and their parents, English is an additional language. I once had to discuss a child’s progress with his mother, who’s English was so poor that she had to put her cell phone on speaker so that her husband could “sit in” on the conversation, acting as interpreter. The parent-school relationship needs some extra care to function optimally in a situation like this.

These two ladies are both without work, very poor and cannot afford school fees. Financial help was what they regarded as being support from the school. I realised that life skills development and parental involvement in the school’s life skills development might
be quite a different issue to these parents (and possibly other immigrant families in the same situation) from what we expect from the other parents at the school. Financial difficulties make it almost impossible to attend school functions, and communication with the school is limited due to the language barrier.

**Immigrant parents**

![Diagram showing Language and Financial difficulties](image)

*Figure 5.8 Immigrant parents*

### 5.5.9 Parents without a sense of responsibility

A sad reality and answer to the subquestion why some families are not involved in the life skills development of the learners in the school, as well as to the subquestion about the nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills development of the learners in the school, are that some families are not involved because they simply do not take responsibility for their own children.

There are parents, according to Colleague 2 (Group 2, individual interview with colleague), and Participants 13 and 16 (Group 1, individual interview with family member), who do **not want to accept responsibility** for their own children. These are the parents whom we read about in the social support file (Anon., 2016) who leave their primary school children alone at home in the evening so that they can go out with friends; the parents who are admonished by the principal because they leave their foundation phase child waiting after school from 12:00 to 14:00 (this particular child had to wait daily – unsupervised) before they pick him up, and the parents who are reported by the social services liaison teacher because their children have been absent for extensive periods of time without a valid reason (examples of children being absent 18 out of 38 school days, 29 days from January to September, 43 days of absenteeism and another child who missed 3 months of school). Hoover-Dempsey developed a model for parental involvement (Paragraph 2.3.2.2)
focusing on why parents become involved in their children’s education and how parents’ involvement makes a difference in the children’s educational outcome. But with parents who don’t want to be involved in their children’s education, the school and community’s hands are tied.

Another way of not taking responsibility is when a parent does not co-operate with the school when we want to discuss a problem regarding their child. Colleague 3 (Group 2, individual interview with colleague) mentioned the communication between the school and the child which sometimes does not take place. He said that the school’s diaries serve as a means of communication between the school and parents, but most of the parents in our school do not even sign these school diaries, being unaware of the homework that their child has. Sometimes when there is a letter in the school diary the parent will not respond. It also happens that a parent will respond to a teacher’s letter by attacking the teacher instead of trying to solve the problem, like it happened with me more than once. Once I confronted a mother with her child’s high absence rate, pointing out the negative influence it had on the child’s academic work. The mother wrote me a letter:

“I do not hold the key as to when she falls ill .. the school would not appreciate me sending a sick child to school.”

Although there were other issues, the mother chose to handle the situation in this way, undermining the school’s authority and not taking responsibility for helping to find a solution to the real problem. Another grandmother was informed in writing about her grandson being involved in a fight at school. Her reply:

“I’m sick and tired of complains (sic) against my grandson, if you got a problem with him make an appointment so that I can come see you.”

The problem was not solved, but I had sympathy with the grandmother, as (like Member 4 said) grandparents are not supposed to raise their grandchildren.

Colleague 13 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) noticed that there are
parents who are not committed to support their children in doing their school work, and Colleague 4 (Group 2, individual interview with colleague) mentioned the example of a mother who is a teacher herself, but did not help her child, as she expected the school to support the child with the work the child struggles with.

The social support file (Anon., 2016) showed the example of an eleven year-old whose parents were divorced, with the mother being suicidal and the father being violent. It affected the child negatively, but all the communication from the school and the social worker to make an appointment so that the situation could be addressed, were ignored. Neither of the parents responded or was willing to come to the school. There was also the example of a ten year-old child with low self-esteem and certain learning difficulties. The mother was given a letter of permission to have her child tested and helped, but the letter was never returned to school. The child was absent for 29 days within the first three terms of the year. Both examples show how parents did not take responsibility for their children.

Participant 13 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) lives in a block of flats where there are drugs and gangsters. She observed that children as young as three years old are left outside to play, unsupervised. She often sees children of seven or eight years old playing outside after seven o’clock, without anybody calling them to come in to eat. These children are not taught the skills of discipline, as the parents do not take responsibility for them. It also happens, as Member 4 of the SGB reports, that when a baby is born out of a relationship, but the relationship doesn’t work out, then the mother leaves the baby with the grandparents to raise while she moves on to another relationship, not willing to carry the responsibility of being a parent.

Colleague 4 (Group 2, individual interview with colleague), Colleague 5 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) and Member 5 of the SGB agree that some parents like shifting responsibility. Some families are not involved in life skills development, as they feel that it is the school’s responsibility. As a mother of a gangster told me a few years ago, if the school has a problem with her child, it is the school’s responsibility to fix it. In Paragraph 2.3.3.1 Hornby and Lafaele regard it as a barrier that there are parents who believe it is their responsibility to get the children to school, but thereafter the educational
responsibility becomes that of the school.

The parents who do not take responsibility and who do not co-operate with the school in educating their children, have to be named, as it was a theme that surfaced repeatedly in the collection of data. It is something that we as teachers, other parents or the community cannot do anything about and we have to accept it as an unfortunate reality.

![Figure 5.9 Parents without a sense of responsibility](image)

5.5.10 Community involvement

Suggestions made by participants about community involvement can also be included in the answer to the subquestion regarding which guidelines can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school. Epstein’s model of parental involvement (Paragraph 2.3.2.1) strongly suggests that resources and services from the community should be integrated into the school (2010:85).

Participant 9 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) and Colleague 10 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) think that more has to be done to get the community involved in the development of our children’s life skills. As Colleague 10 said, the children connect with ‘real people’. Instead of teachers telling the children about drugs, the police or rehabilitated drug addicts should rather come to school. Their testimony will be more credible. Participant 9’s concern was that the gangsters lie to the children in their community about the real situation in jail, making it sound less serious than it is. She
suggested that jailbirds should come to the school to tell the children the truth about how hard it really is to be in jail.

Colleague 9 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) mentioned that there are parents who need legal advice, or any other specialised advice. She suggested that **experts from the community** offer their service to the school to speak to the parents who need medical, legal or educational advice. The topic of parental support was mentioned in Paragraph 5.5.7, but it has to be mentioned in this context again, as the community can play an important role here. There are knowledgeable people among the parent community of the school who can assist parents needing guidance.

Participant 3 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) mentioned that, during holidays when some working parents cannot look after their children, the community should organise and inform the parents about **vacation programmes** that keep the children safe and out of trouble. This would include programmes presented by churches and the library in the community.

There were also parents who suggested that the **children reach out to the community** from their side as well. The children (and the school as the facilitator) take part in small groups by doing something special for an old-age home, giving toys to a children’s home or supporting any other good cause. The children have to be personally involved to teach them to give, so that they can learn from a young age to become involved in the community they are part of. In Paragraph 2.3.2.1 where I discussed Epstein’s model of parental involvement, she described collaboration with the community as the 6th type of involvement among the school, families and community. To Epstein involvement in and from the community is beneficial to the education of the learners.
5.5.11 The role of the school

One problem that the school is facing is that the school community is not restricted to the boundaries of the neighbourhood in which the school is situated. I already mentioned that children from different neighbourhoods attend the school (Paragraph 5.3.1), so the school community includes more than one geographical community. I referred to the practical implications of transport that is a problem to some parents due to the distance and due to the restrictions of public transport. It is sometimes difficult for these parents to be involved in school-based activities, so the school has to facilitate opportunities for home-based involvement for those parents.

Colleague 7 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) noticed that some parents view the teachers as superior to them. They do not have much self-confidence. This influences parent-teacher communication negatively. I had an interview with Participant 22 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) who was one of these parents who view everything the school and the teachers do as sufficient and right. These parents will not make an appointment to see the teacher or come to speak to the teacher when something is bothering them. Like Participant 19 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) who was worried about her child, but said: “I don’t know. I wish I could get help.” It did not even cross her mind to go to the teacher and discuss her concerns. The school has to reach out to these parents to involve them, as these parents will not offer any help
out of their own although they are willing to get involved in school activities.

Colleague 12 (Group 3, focus group interview with colleagues) mentioned another important aspect of parent-teacher communication, namely honesty from the parents’ side. The teachers at school need to know when something happens at home, or if there are difficult circumstances. Often parents are either in denial, or they are ashamed about their situation, and they don’t inform the school. If a parent has a gambling problem, or there is substance abuse, or there is domestic violence, the teachers handle the child affected by the situation with more understanding and compassion, provided that the teacher is aware of the situation.

There are also parents who disagree with a teacher’s conduct towards their children. Participant 7 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) was unhappy about the way a teacher reprimanded his son after an alleged transgression. According to him his child was in tears when he was picked up after school because he had been humiliated. This matter had to be handled by the principal to restore the parent-teacher relationship. Participant 10 (Group 1, individual interview with family member) was also upset about a teacher’s way of handling a situation, claiming that she broke down the work he and his wife do at home in building their children’s confidence. The school staff and communication channels have to be open to respond to situations like these so that these matters can be resolved, thus restoring the school-parent relationship. Hornby and Lafaele (Paragraph 2.3.3.2) also write in their model of barriers to parental involvement that disagreement between the school and parents can have a negative influence on parental involvement.

During the interviews, I experienced that the interviewees regarded the school as a binding factor between all the parents. They asked for the school to facilitate parent information sessions where parents’ educational and legal questions could be answered. They saw the school as the culmination point from where a network of caring parents can be formed to support each other. And they regarded the school as the home base from where food and clothes can be distributed among children who really need it. It seemed as if the more complicated society become, the more important the role of the school become.
So the school should embrace this responsibility, as this can only enhance parental involvement.

**Role of the school**

- Parent-teacher communication
- School as binding factor

*Figure 5.11 The role of the school*

For a summary of the many themes discussed in Paragraph 5.5, I will provide a schematic overview of the discussion (Figure 5.12). A categorised list of the participants’ responses and the emerging themes of the data analysis is presented in a matrix in Addendum K. In Paragraph 5.6 I will link the emerging themes to the subquestions of the main research question asked in Paragraph 1.5 to provide the answers to these questions as they emerged during the data analysis. These themes present an overview of the data I collected, and they are important when moving on to Chapter 6 and the suggested guidelines to improve parental involvement in the life skills development of learners in a primary school.
Figure 5.12 Emerging themes of data analysis
5.6 SUBQUESTIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND EMERGING THEMES OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

The themes identified in the data analysis, answered the subquestions of the research question. I will provide an overview of the themes (the more comprehensive discussion is done in Paragraph 5.5), showing how each of them helped in answering the subquestions. There are themes that can answer more than one subquestion, but in this paragraph I will keep it simple, linking each group of themes to one subquestion only.

5.6.1 The kind of life skills displayed by the learners in their current behaviour at school.

In Paragraph 5.5.2 I wrote that our children display both positive and negative life skills at school.

On the positive side, I observe it almost daily that there are few incidents of racism at the school. Apart from racism being against the school rules, I notice that the children grow up together, go to school together and choose their friends without any regard for racial differences. Hand in hand with non-racism I also observe the ability among the learners of the school to understand, accept and support the diversity of religious convictions among one another. Another positive life skill that we as teachers observe, is the caring among family members in the school.

On a negative side, the themes that emerged included that there are children who display coping skills necessary to survive daily, rather than positive life skills. A lack of motivation is also observed and mentioned by interviewees. Another example of negative life skills displayed by the learners is the inability to handle conflict constructively. Conflict resolution therefore often end up in verbal and physical fights. Egoism is another theme that emerged, as the children sometimes only consider themselves in their dealing with conflict, but also in the way they deal with the children around them. Therefore egoism is seen by some of the interviewees as the reason for bullying (another theme on the learners’ skills they display daily). A last skill that needs to develop is the learners’ decision-making skills,
as the interviewees observe bad decisions made by the children daily. The negative skills displayed should be addressed to see whether they can be changed into the positive options for life skills.

Figure 5.13 Learners’ current display of life skills

5.6.2 The nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills development of the learners in the school.

I wrote in Paragraph 5.5.7 that there are parents who need the support from friends, the community and the school. When I spoke to these parents/caregivers/grandparents I quoted in Paragraph 5.5.7, I understood that they are parents who are already involved in the life skills development of their children, trying to teach their children relationship skills, taking responsibility and to display self-management skills. These are the families where parents are involved in life skills development, but just need the assurance and support from friends and other families who experience the same difficulties with their children. There are single parents who try their best to teach their children all the right skills, but who don’t have enough time to combine the responsibilities of work and being a parent. These parents asked for support groups that could help them out when they could not handle all their responsibilities. The last group was the group of grandparents who are trying to teach their grandchildren about the dangers of drugs, sex and bad friends. The grandparents I interviewed helped their grandchildren to do their school work, as they view this as an important responsibility. They just needed help with the curriculum, as the curriculum today is different from what they were taught.
In Paragraph 5.5.9 I discussed the other scenario, namely that there are parents who don’t want to accept responsibility for their children or the development of their children’s life skills, as reported by a group of interviewees. There are also parents whom the teachers deal with regularly who don’t want to co-operate with the school or support the school in applying the school rules consistently to all the learners of the school. In addition to this the teachers experience daily that parents shift their responsibilities as primary caregivers over to the school, expecting from the teachers to supply clothes, stationery and food for their children, as well as to take full responsibility for the learners’ life skills development.

5.6.3 Possible reasons why some families are not involved in the life skills development of the learners in the school.

I mentioned that some families shift their responsibility as primary caregivers over to the school, expecting the school to take care of the learners’ life skills development. This reluctance to become involved in the life skills development of their children can also be one of the reasons why some families are not involved in their children’s life skills
Another reason why some families are not involved is described in Paragraph 5.5.4. Poor domestic circumstances, especially domestic violence and/or substance abuse, are some of the reasons why parents do not become involved in their children’s life skills development. I have observed often how all-consuming these circumstances are to the parent suffering in a destructive relationship or marriage. Member 3 of the SGB mentioned that these parents are so busy with their own problems that they have no energy left to worry about their child/ren.

![Figure 5.16 Poor domestic circumstances](image)

5.6.4 Barriers that prevent families from getting involved in the life skills development at school.

One of the barriers that prevent parents getting involved in the learners’ life skills development is living in an unsafe neighbourhood (as I explained in Paragraph 5.5.3). Some children have family members who are using or dealing in drugs, others are living in a neighbourhood where violence is almost a daily occurrence, and there are those children who are growing up surrounded by gangsterism and, as Participant 9 (Group 1, individual interviews with family members) mentioned, these children view the gangsters as role models. I also observe it often that there are learners in the school who imitate the gangsters’ way of talking, walking, and even the way they are wearing their clothes.
Another barrier is described in Paragraph 5.5.5, namely financial difficulties. There are parents who want to supply their children with the necessary stationery to do their work at school, but cannot afford it. As a class teacher I often receive a letter from a parent asking whether I can help providing what the child needs, some of the parents offering to pay back the money when they are paid at the end of the week or the month. There are also parents who want to become involved in their children’s school work, but cannot afford to come to school for parent-teacher discussions. I distinguished in Paragraph 5.5.5 between those parents who have limited financial means and struggle to supply everything the child needs, and those parents who are so poor that they cannot even supply their children with the proper school clothes or food to eat.

Immigrant parents also face barriers in their children’s life skills development as taught at school. One of the barriers I discussed in Paragraph 5.5.8 was the language barrier, as those parents I interviewed found it difficult to have a conversation in English. Those parents speak another language from the English their children has as the language of learning and teaching at school, and therefore struggle to understand any communication from the school and struggle to help their children with their school work. Finance was
also a problem with the immigrant parents I interviewed. They were often without an income and found it difficult to pay the school fees and provide for their children.

5.6.5 Guidelines that can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school.

The first guideline necessary to improve the families’ involvement in the life skills development of their children, is to ensure that the families and the school have the same understanding of what life skills are. In Paragraph 5.5.1 I wrote down the interviewees’ answers as to what they regard as life skills. The participants viewed life skills as relationship skills (respect, living with others, citizenship and conflict resolution) and decision-making skills (making the right choices, time management, financial management and knowledge necessary to make the right choices). By knowing what families view as life skills, the school knows that the families do not know exactly what life skills entail (compared to the definition in Paragraph 2.2.1.4), and can provide parent education in what life skills are. This will have to be a guideline to improve family involvement.
Support for parents also emerged as a theme necessary for parental involvement. In Paragraph 5.6.4, I described the barriers that prevent parents from getting involved. Support for those parents will have to be taken into account when suggesting guidelines in Chapter 6. Another form of support needed by parents that will have to become a part of the suggested guidelines to improve parental involvement is parental guidance. I describe in Paragraph 5.5.6 that there are parents who need formal guidance by specialised people. But there are also parents who need guidance in the form of help and information provided by the school (whether it is written information that accompany the weekly newsletter or whether it is a specialist person on certain topics that visit the school to talk to parents).

![Figure 5.21 Need for parental guidance](image)

Community involvement is also a guideline to improve parental involvement. In Paragraph 5.5.10 I wrote that interviewees suggested that people from the community (policemen, a rehabilitated drug addict, doctor) talk to the learners. Participants also asked for members of the community who have specialist knowledge (including a dietician, educationist or lawyer) to share it with other parents at information evenings. Vacation programmes offered by the community should also be communicated to the learners of the school so that they can become involved, and the learners themselves should also be encouraged to become involved in community projects so that they can get used to serving the community that they are a part of.

![Figure 5.22 Community involvement](image)
The last guideline that emerged as a theme in the data analysis is that the school has to play a prominent role in the involvement of parents in the learners’ life skills development (refer to Paragraph 5.5.11). The interviewees regarded communication between the school and parents, as well as communication from the school to keep families informed, as important. I also observed that parents regard the school as the stable, never-changing factor in the parent-school relationship. Therefore the school has to be the binding factor between the school, families and community, taking initiative, driving the life skills development of the learners of the school and keeping on inviting families to become more involved in the process of life skills development.

![Role of the school](image)

Figure 5.23 Role of the school

5.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I started by describing the features of the school within which the study was conducted, to create a better understanding of the microsystem within which the families of our school live, and to explain the context of the families I interviewed (refer to Paragraph 3.2). Then I discussed the participants of the study for the purpose of describing and create an understanding of the people I interviewed.

Next I analysed the data I had collected during my research. I tried to understand the different factors affecting parental involvement in life skills development of this specific school and I tried to describe the complexity of the problems that the community is facing. I identified eleven emerging themes of the data analysis which supplied a synopsis of problem areas that needed to be addressed in order to improve parental involvement of the life skills development of learners in a primary school. With this information as backdrop I will make suggestions in Chapter 6 on how I think parental involvement in life skills development at this school can be improved.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Early one morning, an old man was walking along the beach after a big storm had passed. He found the beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see. In the distance, the old man noticed a small boy walking, occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throws it into the sea. When the boy came closer still the man called out, “Good morning! What is that you are doing?” The young boy looked up and replied, “I’m throwing starfish back into the ocean. They can’t return to the sea by themselves and when the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water.” The old man replied, “But there must be thousands of starfish on this beach. I’m afraid you won’t really be able to make much of a difference.” The boy picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned and said, “I made a difference to that one!”

(Straube, 2011)
6.1 INTRODUCTION

When I first undertook this study, I knew it would be difficult to find workable solutions for families to become more involved in the school’s life skills development. But I believed that I would somehow discover the panacea that had been eluding us at the school for so many years. While I conducted interviews and I took note of the circumstances under which some families had to live, I started thinking that I might have been a little bit optimistic. By the time I had collected the data, analysed it, described how I understood the phenomenon of life skills development in a community with serious challenges, I was daunted, almost overwhelmed. How do I help parents to become more involved in life skills development if some of them are immigrant families who are constantly worrying about money (like Participant 1 and Participant 20)? How do I involve parents whose biggest concern is the dangers of the neighbourhood in which they live and the hold that the gangsters have over their children, like Participant 9? When I read the school’s social support file (Anon., 2016) and I saw cases where parents neglected and abused their children, how do I involve such parents in life skills development? I had to make a mind shift, accepting that I had to be satisfied with giving small steps at a time. If I could make a difference in one child’s life with my suggestions, if I could make one educator aware of all the factors influencing life skills development and parental involvement in life skills development (Paragraph 1.9.1), I would have achieved something with my research, although we as educators will always mourn for those learners whose situation cannot be reversed.

In this chapter I will discuss the emerging themes I discovered in Chapter 5, after I analysed the data I had collected during my research. By linking the emerging themes to the subaims of the main research question (how can families become more involved in life skills development of learners in a primary school?), I want to identify the various needs that have to be addressed in Paragraph 6.3 where I will present guidelines to help families become more involved in life skills development of learners in a primary school.
6.2 FINDINGS WITH REGARDS TO THE SUBAIMS OF THE MAIN RESEARCH AIM

In Paragraph 5.6 I discussed how the emerging themes answered the five subquestions of my main research question (Paragraph 1.5). I will now discuss how these emerging themes reached the aim and subaims of the research as described in Paragraph 1.6, as well as the implications they have for suggested guidelines on how families can become more involved in the life skills development of learners in a primary school.

6.2.1 The kind of life skills displayed by the learners in their current behaviour at school.

In Paragraph 5.5.2, I wrote that the children at the school displayed the positive skills of caring for family members, and the skills of understanding and supporting racial and religious differences among them.

The negative skills that the children display, include coping skills (rather than positive life skills) necessary to survive each day, a lack of motivation to improve themselves and their academic achievements, egoism that is demonstrated by bullying behaviour and bad decision-making skills regarding the choice to smoke, drink and be sexually active. These skills often reflect the environment in which the learners grow up. Coping skills in stead of positive life skills are often observed by children who grow up in a less desired household or neighbourhood. The same can be said of a lack of motivation, bad decision making and bullying. This implicates the necessity of involving social services and, where necessary, the police when a learner grows up in poor living conditions. Maslow (1943: 372 – 382) states that safety needs have to be met before a learner will be motivated to learn the life skills that enables him to succeed in everyday life and in different environments (Paragraph 3.3). Another negative skill displayed by the learners, as described by the participants in Paragraph 5.5.2, is the inability to handle conflict. I often observe this inability in learners who grow up in a challenging environment. Once again the help of social services might be necessary, as the three most important exosystems influencing the development of children, are the parents’ workplace, family social networks and the context of the neighbourhood and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:40).
6.2.2 The nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills development of the learners in the school.

When I conducted interviews I observed devoted parents who were involved in the life skills development of their children. These parents included parents from stable households, single parents, grandparents, and parents who live in an unsafe neighbourhood.

Some of the parents who were involved in their children’s life skills development expressed the need for assurance and support from friends with whom they could discuss their observations and worries about their children. There were also single parents who asked for support groups which they could contact when they couldn’t manage their responsibilities at work, at home and with the children all at the same time. This need for parent support groups is not mentioned in the models of Epstein (2010), Hoover-Dempsey (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey, et al, 2005) or Hornby and Lafaele (2011) that I discussed in Chapter 2, but in the context of the school’s parental community it was expressed as a need among certain parents.

I interviewed grandparents who take care of their grandchildren. These grandparents tried their best to instil and develop life skills in their grandchildren, but they struggle with problem-solving skills, creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills (Paragraph 2.2.1.4) when helping their grandchildren with school work. The grandparents said that they needed help with the modern curriculum as they themselves did not always understand the work they have to help their grandchildren with when doing homework (Paragraph 5.6.2). They asked for academic support in the form of academic help to parents (provided by the teachers on regular basis) in the contents of their grandchildren’s work to enable them to support them in doing homework (Paragraph 5.5.7). Academic help to parents will have to be followed up by academic support where these grandparents will be helped by a volunteer parent willing to assist during the term when more help is needed with the grandchild’s homework. This will be a parent whom the grandparent can contact any time she needs assistance with her grandchild’s homework, and this will support the sustainability of academic help for grandparents (or any other parent who finds it
necessary). Once again, academic help and support for parents or caregivers are not mentioned in the parental involvement models I discussed in Chapter 2, but they are a definite need among a group of grandparents in our school community.

Unfortunately there are parents who do not want to accept responsibility for their children and the development of their children’s life skills, parents who shift their responsibility as primary caregivers over to the school, and parents who do not want to co-operate with the school (Paragraph 5.5.9). These are parents who need parental guidance (formal classes) on being a parent, the associated responsibilities, and where to look for help. The deliberate choice not to take responsibility for their own children was a new concept for me, and I did not come across it in the literature I studied. But it was mentioned by Colleague 2 (Group 2), Participants 13 and 16 (Group 1) as well as Member 4 of the SGB. In suggested guidelines on involving parents in their children’s life skills development, these parents will have to be helped to understand their role as parents first, before they will be willing to become involved in life skills development.

6.2.3 Possible reasons why some families are not involved in the life skills development of the learners in the school.

Apart from parents shifting their responsibility, another reason why some families are not involved in the life skills development of their children, as done in school, are poor domestic circumstances. I described in Paragraph 5.5.4 how violence and/or substance abuse are a reality in some households and that parents become so consumed in their own difficulties that the life skills development of their children sometimes becomes less important to them. Bronfenbrenner (1977:527) writes that in this microsystem within which the child develops, child abuse/maltreatment was found to be associated with mothers who had no support systems for parenting. Maslow’s (1943) motivation theory, as described in Paragraph 3.3, also postulates that any person (child or adult) needs security and safety before they will be motivated to develop new life skills (esteem needs and self-actualisation with the corresponding life skills). These parents might need the support of social services, the police and possible counselling before their safety needs are met to such an extent that they will be motivated to become involved in their children’s life skills.
6.2.4 Barriers that prevent some families from involvement in the life skills development at school

In paragraph 5.6.4, I describe the barrier of unsafe neighbourhoods within which some of the school’s learners grow up, and refer to the coping skills displayed by some of these learners in Paragraph 6.2.1. In these neighbourhoods there is a daily presence of drugs, gangsterism and violence, as described by Participants 9, 13 and 16 of Group 1. Learners and families from these neighbourhoods sometimes need the help of social services and support by the community. Learners from unsafe neighbourhoods need to be informed about available programmes during holidays, which are aimed at keeping the learners busy in a safe environment while their parents are at work (one of Epstein’s (2010: 87) suggestions for community involvement in Paragraph 2.3.2). Parents from unsafe communities also need the support of school visits by policemen, rehabilitated drug addicts, social workers, role models or counsellors to motivate their children, warn their children and teach their children where to find help when necessary. These life skills taught by community members, who visited the school, can then be enforced at home by the family.

Another barrier that prevent parents from involvement in the life skills development of their children, are financial difficulties (limited financial means or poverty) as described in Paragraphs 5.5.5 and 5.6.4. Epstein (2010:85) suggests family support programmes to help these families with health and nutrition. This calls for a food and clothing project at school. If the learners are properly fed and clothed, they can work better, focusing on critical and creative thinking skills, and their parents can teach them the relationship skills that are even more of a reality to them.

Immigrant parents also face barriers, especially language barriers and, as I observed during interviews, also financial barriers. These families need support in the form of another family who is prepared to adopt a family. Another family that “adopts” an immigrant family can stay in contact with this family, explain communication from the
school and help when the immigrant parents want to communicate with the school or the learner’s class teacher, and help with the learner’s homework, which is difficult for the parent due to the language barrier (refer to Paragraph 5.5.8, Participants 1 and 20 of Group 1). Epstein (2010:85) suggests language translators as a sample practice for involvement by communicating, but in our school community it will be necessary to take it a step further and find a volunteer family that will take care of each immigrant family in need.

### 6.2.5 Guidelines that can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school

In Paragraph 5.6.5, I elaborated on suggestions made by the participants in the study about how parental involvement in life skills education can be improved. The first suggestion made by Participants 7, 17 and 18 of Group 1, was that the families should be informed in what the school does for life skills development, so that the families can reinforce the same skills at home. The suggestion was made for programmes for home use to educate the parents on the Essential 55 (Clark, 2003) done at our school (refer to Paragraph 3.7).

There was also a remark by Colleagues 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (Group 3) that some parents need to be informed on what parenting skills involve (Paragraph 5.5.6). These parents do not need formal parental guidance classes, but they need information sessions on different aspects of parenting. When their parental skills improve, they will become more positive role models for their children, which will have a positive effect on the development of the life skills of the learners. These information sessions will include how to understand your child at each developmental stage, how to handle conflict with your child, legal help for parents in difficult situations, hygiene and nutrition.

Epstein (2010: 85 – 87) singles community involvement out as one of her six types of involvements, as described in Paragraph 2.3.2.1. But she also suggests that the learners should take part in community projects. By having children undertake projects and become involved in existing community projects, the learners will learn not only to receive...
but also to give. Parents should also be active in setting the example of involvement in community projects, as well as encouraging their children to develop their social skills by becoming involved in projects in the community.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model (1995; 1997) as described in Paragraph 2.3.2.2, focus on the reasons why parents become involved in their children’s school activities. In their revised Level 1, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005: 88) write that parents become involved when they are invited by the school or by their children. The school therefore has the responsibility to involve parents by inviting them to become involved in school activities. Their model also suggests that parents become involved when they view themselves as able and talented to do what is asked of them. Once again the school has to involve parents with talents to become involved, whether it is to lead a parent information session (as suggested by Participant 3 of Group 1) on a specific field of knowledge, to accompany the choir or to help with sport.

The role of the school was important to the parents I interviewed. Participants 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17 and 23 viewed communication between the school and parents as important. They wanted to know what is happening at school (academically, but also in developing the learners’ life skills). Epstein (2010:85) also values parent-school communication, suggesting a few sample practices on how to improve the communication between school and families. Then I also observed that the school is regarded as the coordinator for events taking place between the school and families. Many of the interviewees’ suggestions implied that the school should be the organiser, for example: the school has to organise events where parents can come together to organise themselves into support groups; the school can invite people from the community to talk to the learners; the school should help the grandparents to understand the school work that their grandchildren are doing, and the school should invite specialist people on certain areas (including education, legal help, nutrition and hygiene) to talk to the parents. In Epstein’s model (2010) it can also be deduced that in the school/family/community partnership, the school functions as coordinator of activities.

When the answers to the subaims of the main research aim are put together, they can be
organised as follows:

- Support to families in need: social services, police, counselling, food and clothing project;
- Parental guidance: formal classes, information sessions, academic help to parents;
- Parental support: parent support groups, adopt a family (immigrants), academic support;
- Community involvement: school visits, available programmes, children undertaking projects, parents with talents;
- School: coordinator, involving parents, programmes for home use, communicating.

In the next paragraph I will explain how these answers can be used to provide guidelines for improving parental involvement in learners' life skills development.

### 6.3 GUIDELINES FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A 5-STEP PLAN

In the previous paragraph I provided the answers to the subaims of the research's main aim, which I received when I did the data analysis in Chapter 5. I organised the answers into five groups, namely support to families in need, parental guidance, parental support, community involvement and school. These groups progress from a lot of support to parents who need it (support to families in need), to the level where the parents are able to act on their own in developing their children's life skills, with a little help from the school. I want to suggest the following 5-step plan for this school on parental involvement in the life skills development of the learners.

The suggestions are not new individually, but the success of this plan will lie in the execution of all the suggested actions. If the school can implement all five stages, it can assist those parents who have other needs preventing them from becoming involved in life skills development, even if these needs include providing their children with food or clothes. It can easily be said that some of the activities have been done in the past, but the strength of the 5-step plan lies in the different activities that complement and support one
another. To me it is important that the 5-step plan will be viewed as a unit consisting of different activities building on one another, sharing one purpose: helping parents to become more independent, thus becoming more involved in the life skills development of our primary school's children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</th>
<th>PARENTAL SUPPORT</th>
<th>PARENTAL GUIDANCE</th>
<th>SUPPORT TO FAMILIES IN NEED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COORDINATOR</td>
<td>INVOLVE PARENTS</td>
<td>PROGRAMMES for HOME USE</td>
<td>COMMUNICATE</td>
<td>SCHOOL VISITS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig 6.1 5-step plan for parental involvement in life skills development*
6.3.1 Step 1: Support to families in need

It became clear in the data analysis that there are families whose basic needs are not met. These are the families who suffer from poverty, whose children are mentioned in the school’s support file as those who come to school hungry, not properly dressed, those children who come to school in the winter without warm enough school clothes, and the families suffering from violence. These families are described in Paragraph 5.5.3 as those who grow up in unsafe neighbourhoods and the children who grow up in bad domestic circumstances, as described in Paragraph 5.5.4. Maslow’s motivation theory (1943) teaches us that these families need the support of social services. Those children in my class and in our school who grow up in dire conditions are cannot be “thrown away”, but need to be helped so that they can also function like the rest of the children growing up under more favourable circumstances. Here we can learn from the Head Start programme, as described in Paragraph 3.6, which is a preschool programme used as an educational weapon in the war against poverty. Apart from educational assistance, the children are also helped with health services, social services, psychological services, nutrition and parent-participation programmes.

Social services: Each education district has social workers to whom social cases have to be reported. These are the cases that I referred to: children whose parents smoke dagga and abuse alcohol, parents who assault their children, and the cases of domestic violence. The social workers will either help the children and families, or they will refer them to other agencies that can help. The school’s social workers consult with the families on topics like parenting skills, nutrition and dealing with problems like substance abuse. Cases where children are neglected, like those children mentioned by Participant 13 who are left alone over weekends while the parents drink with their friends, can be referred to BADISA (the amalgamated charity services of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Western and Southern Cape, and the Uniting Reformed Church, also in the Cape). BADISA (2016) is also the social welfare organisation that can authorise the removal of neglected children.

Police: When a teacher suspects that a child is assaulted or sexually abused, it has to be reported to the police. The CPF (Community Police Forum) deals with cases where
physical or sexual harm is done to a child. I had a girl in my class who was sexually abused by her mother’s boyfriend. The mother was aware of the situation but was dependent on the boyfriend for financial support, so she chose to ignore the situation. There was also a case where a girl told me that her friend’s grandfather “touched them” when she went to play there. Cases like these had to be reported to the CPF of the district where the school is situated.

Counselling: Counselling to families and children is done by the school social worker, but also by the TygerBear Foundation at Tygerberg Hospital (TygerBear Foundation, 2016). The TygerBear Foundation serves children who are traumatised by (amongst others) neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or violence in the family or community. The foundation also serves families of traumatised children and the community in general. Participant 12 told me about her eldest son who was 16 when he witnessed how his friend was shot dead in front of him. That was also a case for TygerBear.

Food and clothing project: The last subsection of support to families in need is where the school will have to start projects for children who come to school without food or the necessary clothing. The school needs a clothing project where old (but still neat) school clothes are donated for redistribution among those who are too poor to afford it. A liaison teacher will have to receive and distribute the clothes. A food project is just as important. I mentioned in Paragraph 5.5.5 that there were 60 children in our school in 2015 that came to school without anything to eat. The community will have to become involved by donating bread, butter and something to put on the bread to the school. Volunteer parents are needed to come to school in the mornings to prepare the sandwiches for the children before first break. The school is dependent on community and parent involvement to make this project work. Epstein (2010: 85) mentions “(r)ecruit and organize parent help and support” as volunteering involvement by parents. And by involving one group of parents, another group of parents is being helped.

The school social workers, BADISA, CPF, the TygerBear Foundation and volunteers who help at school with a food and clothing project, are all people who help to support families in need. We rely on those helpers to support children and parents, so that life skills
development can become a priority (or, as Maslow calls it, a “need”) and a possibility to those families as well.

6.3.2 Step 2: Parental guidance

Formal classes: There are different levels of parental guidance needed at our school. There are those parents who need professional parental guidance classes to learn parenting skills in raising their children. One of the interviewees (Member 2 of the School Governing Body) told me how much she learned from these classes, that she experienced them very positively and that she would recommend it to any parent to attend parental guidance classes. Participant 14 also said:

“The parents don’t know any better. They’re not going to know how to teach it to their children. So they might not have been taught that and in essence, it’s why they’re not carrying it forward.”

“Unfortunately I think the target group is the parents. You can show the kids as much as possible, but that’s not the ones that need education. It’s the parents and those are the ones we don’t get here.” (Colleague 2)

Information sessions: There are also parents who need specific guidance, for example legal guidance, medical guidance, guidance in health and nutrition or guidance on educational matters. Both Colleagues 9 and 13 agreed that we should have information evenings at school where parents can listen to a knowledgeable person giving them information on these topics. As time and transport are factors influencing parents’ attendance of school functions, it will be necessary to communicate with the parents to ensure that the topics presented are those that the parents really want to know more about. Tear-off slips at the bottom of the newsletter or a Suggestion Box at school are possible ways of communication where parents can indicate which topics or questions they want information on. Talks at school can be alternated with written information sheets attached to the weekly newsletter once or twice a term, in order to give parents information about their questions without having to come to school each time. Members 1, 3 and 5 of the
SGB agreed that our parents do not want to be overwhelmed with meetings and information sessions. Time is precious. If we can keep these information sessions something special and hold them not too often, parents will attend those evenings more willingly.

**Academic help to parents:** During the interview Participant 4 complained that she, as well as other grandmothers who also raised their grandchildren, could not keep up with school work as it is done today. These grandparents raise their grandchildren, but they cannot help the children with their school work as they do not have the knowledge. As we want to teach the children the life skills of problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and motivating themselves to perform, it is important that the families at home are able to help the children with their homework. And by helping the children to do their homework, the parents support the school in teaching these children the skills of creative thinking, problem solving, self-motivation and so forth. Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005: 108) calls this the first level of parental involvement when a parent becomes involved in the child’s education because the parent views it as his role in the educational process. A system where parents are informed about the contents of the term’s school work and assignments seems necessary to help them do that. Epstein (2010:85) calls this form of involvement ‘learning at home’, and she describes it as “(i)nformation on how to assist learners to improve skills on various class and school assessments”. I even experienced it during parent interviews that the younger parents asked me how they could support their children with their school work. Therefore I suggest that once a term, on the same evening as the school’s parent evening, there will be half an hour set aside for discussing the children’s assignments: what the teachers expect from the children and what the contents of the assignments will be. Another problem area that will have to be addressed is Mathematics. Parents need guidance on how the children do Maths in the new curriculum.

6.3.3 **Step 3: Parental support**

I see parental support as support to the parents among the parents themselves. I regard this as support in the parent community where the school is the facilitator, but once the structures are set, the system of parental support can operate on its own and the school
becomes redundant.

**Parent support groups:** The suggestion was made by Participants 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15 and 21 that parents should form support groups. Especially the divorced and single parents want to be there for their children, but find it very difficult due to time constraints. Hornby and Lafaele (2011: 41) also mention solo parents and parents’ work situation as barriers, preventing parents from becoming involved. So these parents suggested that they, in the different grade groups, have a social meeting at school at the beginning of the year. The aim of this meeting is for the parents to form support groups where they can help one another, e.g. fetching children from school and taking turns to look after the children when one of the group members is in a difficult situation and need a reliable person to look after her children for a short while.

Another purpose of a parent support group is to ensure the safety of the children. A phrase that came up repeatedly during the interviews was “*I want to know who my child’s friend’s parents are*” (Participant 6, 15 and 17). Most parents are very concerned about their children’s safety, and rightly so. Therefore they need a circle of parents who know that they can trust one another with their children. I refer back to Paragraph 5.5.1 where I wrote that many parents regarded knowledge about the dangers of society as a life skill, and I commented that to me it was a reflection of how unsafe these parents viewed society.

**Adopt a family (Immigrants):** During my interviews with the immigrant parents I realised how difficult it has to be for those who struggle, not only financially, but also with language. Participant 1 and Participant 20 found it difficult to communicate with me in English, and I was thinking that communication from the school and support with their children’s school work also have to be extremely challenging for them. Participant 20 said to me:

> “The problem is the French. He have some friends. The friends help him to make homework (sic).”

> “Sometime when he’s coming from school I asking about the school. I said I don’t know English, but I try to explain.” (Participant 1, parent)
Therefore I suggest an “adopt a family” programme as part of parental support. In the beginning of the year, when the parents have their social meeting to form their support groups, the parents can volunteer to support an immigrant family. They stay in contact with the immigrant family, offering help with the children’s school work, explaining the contents of the newsletters and other communication, and being available when the immigrant family needs help or guidance due to language constraints.

**Academic support:** Similar to the “adopt a family” I see the need for academic support. I mentioned in the Parental Guidance section that there are grandparents who need help to help their grandchildren with their school work. I felt so sorry for these people who have been put in a difficult situation, and now they are really trying to make the best of it. Hornby and Lafaele (2011: 40) warns that this situation can become a barrier in parental involvement, as a “(l)ack of confidence may also come from parents taking the view that they have not developed sufficient academic competence to effectively help their children”. It will help these grandparents (and other parents who also find it necessary) enormously if they have somebody they can contact when struggling with the work. Participant 23 told me how they ended up with her being frustrated and the child in tears because they could not do the work and the child was afraid of getting into trouble the following day if the work was not done. So I suggest an academic support backup person who will be available to help a parent in situations like these. The grandparent then has the contact details of somebody (preferably the parent of a classmate) whom they can contact when they get into a situation where they need academic help.

### 6.3.4 Step 4: Community involvement

I mentioned character education as the programme that emphasises the equal importance of family, school and community in the education of our children (Paragraph 3.5). The teaching strategies of character education also rely heavily on the narrative (stories, legends and so forth), moral reflection where children can discuss and debate values (or life skills) they have chosen, and on community involvement (Lickona, 1996: 95 – 99). This means that community members visiting the school is a valuable method for teaching
our children life skills (somebody else to listen to, something they can discuss in class afterwards, or a topic that can be communicated with the parents to support the school’s effort in life skills teaching).

**School visits:** Community involvement includes school visits from people who can make a difference in the children’s lives. This might include people who have overcome drug abuse or other obstacles in their lives. It also has to include visits from the police, as Participant 9 said, to tell the children what it really is like to be locked up in jail, to inform and warn them against drugs and gangsters, and to talk about child safety. Colleague 10 said that it will be more credible to children and they will connect better with these people when a person from the community, who has really experienced what he or she is talking about, addresses them. The story of Ashwin Willemse, successful Springbok rugby player, confirms the importance of community involvement in the school. Willemse’s story is one of a child who grew up in an impoverished area where drugs and crime were the order of the day. He himself was a drug addict, a drug dealer, involved in gangsterism, and he had already tried to commit suicide, when Breyton Paulse, another successful Springbok rugby player, visited their school in the Cape Flats. That was the turning point in Ashwin Willemse’s life (Jackson, 2007). Social workers or people from TygerBear Foundation can also talk to the children about what they can do when they are abused, whom they can contact and where they can get help.

**Available programmes:** Parents are concerned about their children’s safety, especially during holidays when they cannot be there to look after their children. Community programmes like those presented by the local libraries and the churches should be brought under the attention of both children and parents (as suggested by Participant 3), and which Epstein (2010: 85) regards as an important type of parental involvement: “Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services.”

**Children undertaking projects:** The school’s children have to be actively involved in the community themselves. They have to learn the social skills to receive, but also to give. Jim Fouché High School in Bloemfontein started with a “Character for Life” programme in 2013,
and in an email to me (Hoërskool Jim Fouche, 2016) they wrote that after two years they realised that the children became bored with posters for the conveying of information. That is when they decided to start getting involved in existing community projects, and also in creating their own projects. One year later they launched a huge school-based project to reach out to the community. Community involvement can be seen as what the community can do for the children, but also as what the children can give back to the community (Spamer 2007: 107). The school can set the example by getting the children involved in diverse community projects, asking the parents to do this as home as well in order to get involved in community projects. Our school will have to start by finding out which projects are currently running and where they can become involved. The school can launch a project where shoe boxes with toiletries for elderly people in need can be collected over an extensive period of time, packed and delivered for Christmas, or a project where cake is delivered to the hospital ... any project where the children can be actively involved in the collecting and delivering of the goods. This will have to be done as a class or a grade group, otherwise the group will be too large for logistical purposes.

Parents with talents: Then there are parents with skills that should be incorporated in the school. It can be the parent with the talent of singing who come to perform to the children, but it can also be a person with the skill of storytelling who can visit the smaller children once a week. At our school we have parents with sports skills that help as coaches in the afternoons. One parent I interviewed (Participant 2) is a wrestling coach. I can just imagine how the younger ones will enjoy wrestling lessons at school if the parent is willing to share his talents (and the life skills taught via sport) with our school’s children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (Walker, et al. 2005: 88) view this as revised Level 1 parental involvement.

Community involvement also includes donations for a food and clothing project, volunteers who are willing to come to school in the mornings to prepare sandwiches before break, specialised people from the community who offer their services to the school as counsellors for the children or will be willing to talk to parents who need the information, ex-pupils from the school who come back to help with coaching the sport teams in the afternoons, or people from the community who offer their help with the school’s choirs or assist the teachers in preparing children for participation in the Eisteddfod.
6.3.5 Step 5: The role of the school

Davies (1994:73) writes that “we must stop pointing fingers and blaming and start building new partnerships between schools and ... the families and the communities they serve”. During the interviews the parents had a lot of ideas about how the school could help them, while the teachers thought they did a lot to help parents, involve parents, communicate to parents and be available to parents. The teachers, on the other hand, felt that it was the parents’ responsibility to ask what they could do to assist the school in the education and in the life skills development per se, of the children as they themselves were already doing more than their share. As Colleagues 1 and 3 said, the teachers do a lot for parental involvement and for the children; they really cannot do any more. Colleague 2 put the teachers’ feelings into words when she said:

“I think we’re doing everything we can. We already are nurses, psychologists, mothers, teachers, policemen, social workers. I think we’re doing the best we can by implementing the Essential 55 and by being examples to the kids of what is acceptable and what is not socially acceptable.”

Davies says that both parties have to look for opportunities to make this school-parent partnership work; it is not the responsibility of only the parents or only the school.

**Coordinator:** The role of the school in the life skills development of the children is firstly to be the coordinator of the actions that promote life skills development. I mentioned the organising of support groups, help for immigrant families and community projects in which the children can take part. The school keeps the three pillars, namely the school, parents and community, together. Therefore initiatives and coordination have to be the school’s responsibility.

**Involving parents:** The school as coordinator has the responsibility to invite parents to become a part of school projects like the Parent Teacher Association or the School Governing Body. Epstein (2010: 84) writes: “Single parents, parents who are employed
outside the home, parents who live far from the school, and fathers are less involved, on average, at the school building, unless the school organizes opportunities for families to volunteer at various times and in various places to support the school and their children.”

There are parents who are willing to help, but they need to be asked (Hoover-Dempsey, Paragraph 2.3.2.2). Some parents feel that they are not good enough and that there are other, more capable parents. Those parents have to be invited personally to become involved in voluntary projects (like the feeding programme), but also to be part of the decision-making at school by serving on the Parent Teacher Association or the School Governing Body (SGB). During the interviews Participant 5 wanted to know how she could become involved in the School Governing Body, but she would not offer her services if she was not invited, as she was just not that kind of person. But it does not mean that she is not capable of being a good member of the SGB once she is chosen as a member. In Paragraph 2.3.2.3 I described Singh, Mbokodi and Msila’s (2004) framework to enhance parental involvement in South Africa. Their model is aimed at black parents, but the principles of the model can be applied to any of our school’s parents. Their framework starts by making parents aware that every parent can contribute to the school and to education done at the school. It is the school’s responsibility to reach out to those parents.

Programmes for home use: Parents have to be actively involved in the school’s life skills programme. Living Values: An Educational Program offers guidelines and supporting material in the implementation of the programmes. Like LVEP, the school also needs to offer guidelines and supporting materials and activities on life skills development. The parents are aware of the Essential 55 that is done at the school, but the success of life skills development in a school-parent partnership will lie in the guidance given by the school on how to teach those life skills at home. This can include games (Essential 55 Rule 2: Make eye contact. Let us make a game of it this week by touching the shoulder of the family member I am talking to, to remind me to look him in the eyes), stories (Essential 55 Rule 5: Do not brag. You can use the story of the three little pigs, giving the wolf an interesting twist as a bragger. Aesop’s fables are also valuable, as they are written with the purpose of teaching a lesson), asking the families to create a credo for Essential 55 Rule 50: Be positive and enjoy life ... the winning credo can become part of the school’s credo
for the next year. These are a few examples of how the school can involve parents in the life skills development in a fun way.

**Communicate:** Together with the school as coordinator and implementer of projects and facilitator of activities to promote life skills development, comes the school’s role to communicate. The school is in the centre of life skills development by the school-parent partnership. Therefore all relevant information should be communicated clearly to the parents. With communication as a type of involvement, Epstein (2010:85) includes “(l)anguage translators to assist families as needed”. I already mentioned the communication barrier among some families in our school, especially the immigrant families (Participants 1 and 20).

The definition of life skills should be communicated to the families at least once a year, in order to include families that have joined the school during the course of a year, and to refresh the memory of the joint venture that the teacher-parent partnership is busy with. UNICEF’s (2012) compilation of definitions (as described in Paragraph 2.2.1.4) is comprehensive enough to explain to families all the skills that are included in life skills. The school has to communicate this definition of life skills to the parents to ensure that both the school and the families are working towards the same goal with life skills development.

In Paragraph 2.5.2.2, I mentioned the general aims in the CAPS curriculum (DoBE, 2011a:5; DoBE, 2011b:5 and DoBE, 2012:5). Those general aims represent life skills that should be taught throughout all the academic subjects in the CAPS document. And in our school, those general aims should be taught together with the Essential 55.

Communication between the school and families also includes opportunities for parents to give their opinion or to ask questions without feeling inferior or feeling that they are not important to the school. After all, the children and parents are the clients, and the school is the business that serves them. The communication between school and family should be so open and inviting for the parents that they will feel free to contact the school or any member of the staff when they find it necessary. At the end we work together for the benefit of our children.
6.4 POSSIBLE BARRIERS IN THE EXECUTION OF THE 5-STEP PLAN

As much as I would like to think that these five steps will make a huge difference in parental involvement in life skills development, I have to admit that there are barriers that can inhibit the flawless execution of the 5-step plan.

When I made appointments with the parents for the interviews, they truly appreciated it that I came to see them at their homes (which I did as far as possible) and the opportunity that was created for open communication. Epstein (2010: 85) also views home visits as important to promote parental involvement. But the reality in our school is that some of the children live in dangerous areas that will not be safe for teachers (especially a woman on her own) to visit alone. Another problem is the distance. From the school is it approximately 20 km to Mitchells Plain and 24 km to Khayelitsha. Other homes are closer. So as valuable as home visits could be for the parent-teacher partnership, helping the teachers to get to know the families and the circumstances they live in as well as possible barriers, it is not feasible for a class of 30 and more children.

I had to include Paragraph 5.5.9 (Parents without sense of responsibility) because those families are the reality. There will always be parents who do not cooperate. There will always be parents who shift the responsibility for their child’s education to the school. There will always be children who suffer from violence at home or violence in the community. It is necessary to keep this in mind; otherwise the reality of these families can dishearten a dedicated educator who wants to make a change.

The heavy work load of the CAPS curriculum (especially on the teachers) will have a negative impact on teachers’ willingness to cooperate with this 5-step plan. In Paragraph 6.3.5, I referred to three teachers who said that they thought the school and teachers did enough; it is the parents’ turn to volunteer to become more involved. We as teachers carry a huge load of teaching-related work, together with administrative work, as well as extracurricular activities. Teachers feel overwhelmed. It will take quite a bit of convincing to get them to spend more time by organising parents into support groups, preparing life skills worksheets or activities for home-based involvement, sitting by the phone calling
parents individually to invite them to become part of projects, doing the administration of a food or clothing project. I wrote that it would take convincing; I did not say it would be impossible, though.

Then there are the supportive social services. There are a limited number of places available (houses of safety) where children can go once they have been removed from their parents’ homes. At BADISA the staff has too much work and not enough manpower. And the school social workers are also working under a lot of pressure with more cases than they can handle. There are families who need help desperately, but the available services struggle to make ends meet.

Communication between parents and teachers is important for parental involvement. But the society we serve makes it difficult for us to give the parents our personal contact details. It is the school’s policy that parents do not have access to the teacher’s contact details, but I have always given mine to the parents of the children in my class. Until one year when I was sexually harassed by a group of children who got hold of my number. Another colleague of mine was pestered by a parent who phoned at the most inappropriate times and not always when it was really necessary. So now parents have to contact me (like the rest of the staff) via the child’s diary or via the school’s secretary, which is not the ideal way of promoting parental involvement.

These are the possible barriers I see when I take my eye off the purpose of this research: How can families become more involved in the life skills development of primary school children? I found a combination of activities that would most definitely make a difference in the life of a few families and children. I need to stop counting all barriers, feeling overwhelmed by the seemingly impossibility of the task that lies ahead, and just start making a difference in the lives of families and children, one by one.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In Paragraph 1.8.10, I wrote that this study was conveyed at one school in one province, and that the results cannot be transferable to other schools in different contexts. Other
schools in the same province might have a different demography or socio-economic situation, resulting in different challenges than those I have described in our school.

Another limitation was language. There were parents who did not understand the letters I sent out to invite parents to take part in the research (Addendum E). Some of the parents did not understand what it was about, and just signed the letter and sent it back to school. When I phoned these parents to arrange an interview, I had to explain to them what the interview was about and a few of them then said that they were not willing to take part. Other parents agreed to take part in the interviews, but English was not their home language, thus resulting in a conversation that was difficult to follow. Even when I transcribed those interviews afterwards, I had to listen to some parts of the conversation more than once to understand what the person was saying. This situation limited the quality of the interview, as it was difficult for both me and the interviewee to understand each other.

I also experienced that some interviewees were careful not to say something that might cause them trouble afterwards. Although I explained the whole process, the anonymity of the interviewees and their right to have any part of the interview deleted (Addendum G), some of the interviewees were still cautious of what they were saying. When the interview was over and the recording had stopped, they would start talking and giving me valuable information for the purpose of the study. They felt more at ease when they were not recorded. Although I wrote down what these interviewees said afterwards, I suspect that some information went lost in the process.

Another limitation was some of the parents’ working hours. There were interviews I would really like to do, but between the parent and myself we could not find a suitable time for the interview. Some parents come home very late in the evening, or worked on Saturdays, making it difficult to fit in an interview. In the end these interviews did not take place.

Then there were parents whom I wanted to interview, but it was not safe to enter their neighbourhood. I had to rely on the parents who were willing to meet me in a central spot, like a coffee shop. But there were many parents I wanted to interview, but I was too scared
to visit them in their homes, as I was advised by other parents rather not to go there.

6.6 SUMMARY OF STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate how families can become more involved in the life skills development of learners in a primary school (Paragraph 1.5). This qualitative study was conveyed at a primary school in the Western Cape. I chose to do the research at one school only, as the school has its own unique characteristics and challenges which will not necessarily be exactly the same as in other schools.

In Chapter 1, I posed the problem that I wanted to research, namely that there were families in the school who did not support the life skills we teach their children at the school. I pointed out that I was aware of families who were facing challenging situations at home or in their communities. I conveyed the study by focusing on the subquestions of the main research question:

- What kind of life skills do the learners show in their current behaviour in the school? The children’s current behaviour would be an indication of which life skills they found necessary in their daily life due to circumstances. I saw that there were children with survival skills rather than life skills, due to their daily circumstances.
- What is the nature of the families’ current involvement in the life skills development of the learners in the school? There are parents who do everything a teacher can wish for in a parent-teacher partnership, and on the other side of the continuum we have parents who have no responsibility towards their children. Once again, circumstances were part of some parents’ absence of involvement.
- Why are some families not involved in the life skills development of the learners in the school? The main problem that I gathered from the interviews, was that parents are overworked, tired and struggling to keep a balance between their work and their families. Then there were also parents who gave their children to foster parents or grandparents to raise and chose not to be involved in their education.
- What are the barriers that prevent families from involvement in the life skills development at school? Barriers, to me, indicated more serious matters than simply
practical problems. The biggest problems seemed to be solo parents, poverty, societal problems like substance abuse and violence, and parents who really needed guidance on how to handle and raise their children.

- Which guidelines can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the life skills development at school? After analysing the data, I tried to understand and describe the situation revolving around parental involvement in the school, and made suggestions that I believe can improve the involvement of parents in the life skills development of the children at this school. I saw that guidelines that improved parental involvement had to include supportive guidelines, as parents are a part of the whole system as described by Bronfenbrenner. Guidelines had to help them feed and clothe their children, they needed help to know how to help and support their children with school work, they had to feel open to communicate with the school, and they needed support from the community. Then only can parents become more involved in the life skills development of their children.

Chapter 2 is a literature study on life skills in different concepts. Life skills as a concept among related concepts had to be clarified. Models of parental involvement, focusing on parental involvement from different angles, were discussed, barriers to parental involvement were studied, and life skills as a subject in the National CAPS curriculum was discussed.

Chapter 3 is an extension of Chapter 2, being a literature study that starts with Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory and Maslow’s motivation theory. Then I provided an overview of different programmes of life skills development, as well as of character education. This chapter, together with Chapter 2, supplied valuable information, which was used in Chapter 6 to draw up guidelines for parental involvement in life skills development.

Chapter 4 is a detailed explanation of how the study was conveyed. It made it clear that I chose to work from the qualitative research design, therefore choosing autoethnography as method of study. Autoethnography (specifically analytic autoethnography) gave me as researcher the opportunity to be part of the school I am working at, describing and analysing my personal experiences while doing the research. Data was generated by
doing observations, interviews (semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews) and by analysing documents relating to the subject of parental involvement and life skills development. Triangulation was used to ensure validity. Thick description was also used when the findings were conveyed.

Chapter 5 is the discussion of the qualitative data that was gathered by empirical study. The main issues, as they presented themselves, were explained in this chapter, leading to Chapter 6 where I could finally make suggestions applicable to parental involvement in life skills development in the school from where I conveyed the study.

Suggestion for further study: I became aware of the huge responsibility of the police and the various social services that support the school. Some of the services are swamped with too many cases and not always enough manpower to address all the needs. I would suggest that further study can be conducted in investigating the circumstances under which these services have to work, and possible solutions to address their need of manpower.

6.7 CONCLUSION

In this final chapter I discussed the themes emerging in the data analysis of Chapter 5. I compared how the emerging themes answered the subaims of the main research aim, organising into groups the answers of various levels of parental support, starting by a lot of support to parents and ending at Level 5 where parents did not need any support, only help and information from the school. To me it was quite overwhelming to discover that I could not start by suggesting guidelines to improve parental involvement in life skills development. I had to start with support to the parents first, parents who are finding themselves on Maslow's first two levels of needs. Before the parents can be helped to become more involved in the life skills development of the learners, they have their own needs to be met. It was an unexpected surprise in my study. I also realised the enormous task faced by each educator, as we have to take care of some of our parents first, in order to reach and teach our children, facilitating their life skills development. It can be daunting, but...
The old man replied, “But there must be thousands of starfish on this beach. I’m afraid you won’t really be able to make much of a difference.” The boy picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned and said, “I made a difference to that one!”
REFERENCES


Anon.  2016.  Social support file.  [A confidential file of the school containing information on the learners who are referred to the social support liaison teacher.]


Bochner, A. 2012. On first-person narrative scholarship: autoethnography as acts of


Ellis, C. 2004. The ethnographic I: a methodological novel about autoethnography. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press.


Fersch, B. 2013. Meaning: lost, found or ‘made’ in translation? A hermeneutical approach


Hodgkinson, C. 2001. Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow: a post-postmodern

Hoërskool Jim Fouché. 2016. Waardes verslag. [Correspondence.] [Email from the school to the author.] Bloemfontein, 21 July.


enjoys-life-drugs-crime.html  Date of access: 30 September 2016.


Lickona, T. and Davidson, M. 2005. Smart and good high schools: integrating excellence and ethics for success in school, work, and beyond. Cortland, N.Y.: Centre for the 4th and 5th R’s. (Respect and Responsibility.)


Nieuwenhuis, J. 2007a. Introducing qualitative research. (In Maree, K., ed. First steps in


Ravitch, S.M. and Wirth, K. 2007. Developing pedagogy of opportunity for students and


ADDENDUM A

Ethics approval certificate

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom,
South Africa, 2520
Tel: (018) 290-4900
Fax: (018) 290-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za
Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee
Tel: 018 299 4849
Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences (ESREC) at the meeting held on 14/11/2013, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IREC) hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IREC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study title: Family involvement in Life Skills development of learners in a primary school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Leader/Supervisor: Dr JA Rens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJS Spamer &amp; Dr C Botha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics number: NWU-0016613-A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Type: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commencement date: 2013-11-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expiry date: 2018-11-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk: N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the ESREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the ESREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The study leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IREC via ESREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the study, and upon completion of the project
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these changes at the ESREC. Would there be deviation from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IREC via ESREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IREC and ESREC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
  - to seek further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected;
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the ESREC or that information has been false or misrepresented, the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately, new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

ESREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Ethics@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 4849.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or ESREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA Du Plessis

Digitally signed by
Prof LA Du Plessis
Date: 2017-04-03
08:13:02 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis
Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (I.REC)
ADDENDUM B

Letters for permission to conduct research at a school
(Western Cape Education Department)

Dear dr Cornelissen

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a registered PhD student in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, with dr Julialet Rens as my promoter. The title of my thesis is: Family involvement in Life Skills development of learners in a primary school.

The actual research will entail that voluntary parents and teachers the primary school will be requested to participate in regular meetings to discuss family involvement in life skills education of the schools’ learners. In these meetings the parents and teachers will discuss barriers that prevent families to provide learners with life skills education and possible strategies to involve the community in providing those learners with life skills education. This research might result in a working support structure in the school for the implementation of guidelines and strategies to involve families in life skills education.

Meetings with teachers will be held outside school contact time so as not to interfere with actual teaching and assessment processes. The meetings will be negotiated with them at times and places that suit them.
Teachers will participate voluntarily in the meetings. The identity of the teachers and the school will be kept confidential and teachers will remain anonymous.

I humbly request the necessary permission to conduct the above-mentioned research. I will appreciate it if you will kindly supply me with your written permission. Kindly mail it to tspamer@telkom.net, or I will come and collect it personally from your office. My cell number is 082 775 9024. You may also contact my promoter if you want more information, at 018 299 1893, or by e-mail: julialet.rens@nwu.ac.za

Yours sincerely
APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN THE WESTERN CAPE

Note

- This application has been designed with students in mind.
- If a question does not apply to you indicate with a N/A
- The information is stored in our database to keep track of all studies that have been conducted on the WCED. It is therefore important to provide as much information as is possible

APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1 Personal Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title (Prof / Dr / Mr/ Mrs/Ms)</th>
<th>Mrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Surname</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spamer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 Name(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Christina Johanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.4 Student Number (If applicable)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23796952</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Contact Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Postal Address</th>
<th>19 Richter Avenue Wellington 7655</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Telephone number</td>
<td></td>
<td>021 873 3925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Cell number</td>
<td></td>
<td>082 775 9024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Fax number</td>
<td></td>
<td>021 939 8861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.4 E-mail Address</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:tspamer@telkomsa.net">tspamer@telkomsa.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.5 Year of registration</td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### DETAILS OF THE STUDY

#### 2.1 Details of the degree or project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name of the institution</th>
<th>North-West University Potchefstroom Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Degree / Qualification registered for</td>
<td>Ph.D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3</td>
<td>Faculty and Discipline / Area of study</td>
<td>Faculty of Education Sciences Community Based Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4</td>
<td>Name of Supervisor / Promoter / Project leader</td>
<td>Dr Julialet Rens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.5</td>
<td>Telephone number of Supervisor / Promoter</td>
<td>018 299 1893 (w) 082 235 2359 (cell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.6</td>
<td>E-mail address of Supervisor / Promoter</td>
<td><a href="mailto:julialet.rens@nwu.ac.za">julialet.rens@nwu.ac.za</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.1.7 Title of the study

Family involvement in Life Skills development of learners in a primary school

#### 2.1.8 What is the research question, aim and objectives of the study

Research Question: How can families become more involved in life skills education of learners in a primary school?
Research Aim: I want to investigate how families can be involved in the life skills education of learners in a primary school.
Objective: I want to establish the barriers that prevent families from involvement in life skills education and to propose guidelines that can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the children's life skills education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1.9</th>
<th>Name (s) of education institutions (schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1.10</th>
<th>Research period in education institutions (Schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.11</td>
<td>Start date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.12</td>
<td>End date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDENDUM C

Permission to conduct research at a primary school in the Western Cape
(Western Cape Education Department)

REFERENCE: 20150108-41901
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Christina Spamer
19 Richter Avenue
Wellington
7655

Dear Mrs Christina Spamer

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

- Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
- Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
- You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
- Educators’ programmes are not to be interrupted.
- The Study is to be conducted from 22 January 2015 till 30 September 2016
- No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
- Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
- A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
- Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
- A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
- The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 09 January 2015
ADDENDUM D
Letter for permission to conduct research at the school (Principal)

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am a registered PhD student in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, with dr Julialet Rens as my promoter. The title of my thesis is:

Family involvement in Life Skills development of learners in a primary school.

Herewith I request your permission to perform my research in your school. Permission has already been granted by the Western Cape Department of Education (letter attached).

The actual research will entail that the teachers in and parents of your school will be requested to participate in regular meetings to discuss family involvement in life skills education of the schools’ learners. In these (separate) meetings the parents and teachers will discuss barriers that prevent families to provide learners with life skills education and possible strategies to involve the community in providing those learners with life skills education. You as the principal will also be requested to participate in the planning if you are willing. This research might result in a working support structure in your school for the implementation of guidelines and strategies to involve families in life skills education.
Meetings with teachers will be held outside school contact time so as not to interfere with actual teaching and assessment processes. The meetings will be negotiated with them at times and places that suit them.

The teachers’ participation in the meetings will be voluntary. The identity of your school and of the teachers will be kept confidential and you and the teachers will remain anonymous.

Hence I humbly request your permission to conduct this research in your school. I will appreciate it if you will kindly supply me with your written permission. Kindly mail it to my address above, or I will come and collect it personally from your office. My cell number is 082 775 9024. You may also contact my promoter if you want more information, at 018 2991893, or by e-mail: julialet.rens@nwu.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Ms C. J. Spamer
ADDENDUM E

Invitation to parents to take part in research

20 June 2016

Dear Parents

I am currently a registered student at North West University (Potchefstroom Campus) where I am busy studying for my PhD. This involves the role and involvement of parents in teaching their children certain Life skills. I would like the opportunity of conducting an interview with some of our parents to obtain their opinions on what they consider Life skills to be, the importance of these skills and what problems/challenges they may encounter, as well as how they think the school can assist them on this journey.

Please take note that these interviews are highly confidential. No parent will be identified, recognised or mentioned in the submitted findings that arise from the interview.

Should you be willing to participate, kindly complete the tear-off slip and return it to the school before the June holidays.

Your participation and time will be greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Mrs CJ Spamer

I, ................................................................., parent of ........................................ in Grade ......................, am willing to participate in the
interview process and can be contacted for an appointment at the following telephone number: .................................................................
Dear Participant

I am a registered PhD student in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, with Dr Julialet Rens as my supervisor and Dr Carolien Botha as my co-supervisor. The title of my thesis is:

**Family involvement in Life Skills development of learners in a primary school.**

In separate meetings with the parents and teachers I will discuss barriers that prevent families to provide learners with life skills education and possible strategies to involve the community in providing those learners with life skills education.

Meetings with teachers will be held outside school contact time so as not to interfere with actual teaching and assessment processes. The meetings will be negotiated with them at times and places that suit them. The teachers’ participation in the meetings will be voluntary. The identity of the school and of the teachers will be kept confidential and the Principal, school, parents and teachers will remain anonymous.

You are most welcome to contact me, should you have any questions regarding the interview or the nature of my studies. My cell number is 082 775 9024. You may also contact my supervisor if you want more information, at 018 2991893, or by e-mail: julialet.rens@nwu.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Ms C. J. Spamer
VOLUNTARY Informed consent for: Family involvement in Life skills education of learners in a primary school - study

If you agree, please place an “X” in the ‘yes’ boxes to show that you understand and agree with each statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes, I understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I understand the information about the study in the Information Letter. Any questions I had were answered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I realize that participation is completely voluntary and that I can stop the study at any time. If I am uncomfortable answering any question, I may choose not to answer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I understand that my full name will not be used, nor will specific details of where I live be shared, when information from the interviews is used by researchers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I understand that what I say may be quoted at great length in publications, presentations and the final report. If I become concerned with anything I said, I can ask for parts, or all, of what I said not to be quoted. I may also have deleted any parts of the interview I want deleted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I understand that if something troubles me while participating, the researcher will provide me with information about service providers in my community that might help me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I agree to take part in this study.

(Research Participant’s Signature)  (Date)

The study has been explained to the participant and this form signed voluntarily

(Researcher’s Signature)  (Date)
ADDENDUM H
Declaration: Editing

MARIANNE STRYDOM

Taalpraktisyn / Language Practitioner
Engels – Afrikaans / Afrikaans – Engels / Nederlands – Afrikaans; Engels

082 677 4364
mail@mariannestrydom.co.za
oudeweelde@gmail.com

VERKLARING

2016-11-29

Hiermee verklaar ek dat ek verantwoordelik was vir die taalversorging van die proefskrif:

*Family involvement in Life Skills development of learners in a primary school*

deur C J Spamer.

S M Strydom
BA (Univ. Stellenbosch)
BA Tale (Afrikaans/Nederlands; Duits)
Geakkrediteerde lid van die Suid-Afrikaanse Vertalersinstituut (SAVI)
Lidmaatskapsnommer: 10000253
ADDENDUM I

Declaration: References

1 Gerrit Dekker Street
POTCHEFSTROOM
2531
24 November 2016

Ms C J Spamer
NWU (Potchefstroom Campus)
POTCHEFSTROOM

CHECKING OF BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hereby I declare that I have checked the technical correctness of the PhD Bibliography of Ms C J Spamer according to the prescribed format of the Senate of the North-West University.

Yours sincerely

Prof CJH LESSING
ADDENDUM J

Questions discussed in the interviews

Questions discussed with colleagues:

- What do you regard as life skills?
- What kind of life skills do learners need to cope in modern society?
- What kind of life skills do learners show in their current behaviour at school?
- Why are some families not involved in the life skills education of learners at school?
- Why are some families more involved in the life skills education of learners at school?
- What can families do to help the school with life skills education?
- How can the school help families to get more involved in the life skills education of learners?
- What guidelines can be implemented to improve the involvement of families in the school?

Questions discussed with parents:

- What do you regard as life skills?
- What kind of life skills do learners need to cope in modern society?
- What kind of life skills do the learners show in their current behaviour at home?
- Why are some families not involved in the life skills education of learners at school?
- Why are some families more involved in the life skills education of learners at school?
- What are the barriers that prevent families from involvement in the life skills education at school?
• How can the school help families to get more involved in life skills education of the learners?
• How can families get involved in helping other families with life skills education?
• What do parents expect from the school regarding life skills education?
• What kind of support do families expect (need) from the school to help with life skills education at home?
## ADDENDUM K

Matrix of participants’ responses and emerging themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participants’ views of life skills</th>
<th>Learners’ current display of life skills</th>
<th>Unsafe neighbourhoods</th>
<th>Poor domestic circumstances</th>
<th>Financial difficulties</th>
<th>Need for parental guidance</th>
<th>Parents in need of support</th>
<th>Immigrant parents</th>
<th>Parents without a sense of responsibility</th>
<th>Community involvement</th>
<th>Role of the school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect, good behaviour, good manners, knowing how to keep yourself safe</td>
<td>Seeing young children smoking and swearing</td>
<td>Not having a permanent work; struggling to keep up financially; unable to pay school fees</td>
<td>Need other people to help with child’s homework because of parents’ language barrier</td>
<td>Difficult to help with homework because parent cannot speak English; financial problems</td>
<td>The school and parents must stay in contact regarding child’s progress.</td>
<td>Parents don’t teach their children to finish what they started.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Education, respect</td>
<td>Community forums are necessary. The police must educate children to be aware of the dangers of crime.</td>
<td>Parents must help each other in raising our children.</td>
<td>Educational experts talk to the parents who need it. School holiday programmes are organised.</td>
<td>The school must provide guidance for parents who need it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Unacceptable sexual behaviour, bullying</td>
<td>The grandmother raises a grandchild, but is not computer literate. She can help with schoolwork up to a point, but then also needs help.</td>
<td>Some parents are not interested in their children’s schoolwork at all – they don’t know what is going on at school and in the child’s schoolwork.</td>
<td>There should be an open relationship where parents and teachers feel free to discuss anything that worries them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Education, the do’s and don’ts in life</td>
<td>Children easily losing interest in</td>
<td>Community members should discuss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Looking people in the eyes, honesty, treating people the way you want to be treated, responsible decision making</td>
<td>Children feeling entitled to what they view as their rights (&quot;Whatever I want, I can get.&quot;)., being self-centred</td>
<td>I am a single parent. They (the children) must understand there isn’t money to waste.</td>
<td>For a single parent the responsibilities become too much. Parents should form groups that can support each other.</td>
<td>Parents helping each other... that’s what community is about.</td>
<td>The school must co-ordinate parent support groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Being equipped for your life, handling certain situations, discipline</td>
<td>Today’s children are born with technology.</td>
<td>This child’s biological father killed the biological mother, so this family adopted him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADDENDA
| Participant 8 | Practical skills like making a sandwich, cleaning your room after playing | Parents and teachers must regularly discuss the child’s progress and behaviour. |
| Participant 9 | Discipline | Living in a neighbourhood with gangs, drugs and shooting (Our interview could not take place at her house due to unsafe) | The child wants to be like the gangsters; the mother doesn’t know how to handle it | A single mother needs the support of other single parents with the same problems. | Parents are divorced. Fathers do not accept responsibility for their children. | Police and rehabilitated gangsters must talk to the children, telling them about the reality of life in jail and being a drug addict. | The school must facilitate programme where parents and children can do fun things together. |
| Participant | 10 | Respect, taking responsibility, financial planning, facing the consequences for your actions | Different cultures and racial groups in one school getting along together | Parents are tired after a stressful day at work. They do not always have the time or energy to spend with their children. | Parents must help each other. Friends know and support each other. In this way they are helping the school as well. | There should be an opportunity for discussion with the school when a parent is unhappy with a teacher's actions. |
| Participant | 11 | Communication, dressing yourself, cooking, bathing yourself properly, time management, conflict management, decision-making skills, working with | Use community members to perform plays about life skills and different scenarios in the community to convey lessons. | Teachers must be aware of children’s domestic circumstances and follow up where there is a problem. |
**Participant 12**

How to talk to people, respect, knowledge of drugs and drug usage

Violence

Her son witnessed his friend being shot dead in front of him.

A parent came to school and hit another parent's child for what she believed the child did to her daughter. No cooperation with the school.

**Participant 13**

Honesty, being hard-working, hygiene, cleanliness, grooming, using the toilet, making your own sandwich, looking after yourself, knowledge of

Porno-graphy, using drugs, inappropriate sexual behaviour, smoking, stealing

The neighbourhood has a lot of drug users.

Some of the parents in the neighbourhood are alcoholics and drug addicts.

Parents are too tired after a day's work to spend time with their children. They need a support group.

Some parents have no responsibility towards their children – children as young as 3 years old are left unsupervised, children at the age of 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>money</th>
<th>Participant 12</th>
<th>Violence</th>
<th>Her son witnessed his friend being shot dead in front of him.</th>
<th>A parent came to school and hit another parent’s child for what she believed the child did to her daughter. No cooperation with the school.</th>
<th>A parent came to school and hit another parent’s child for what she believed the child did to her daughter. No cooperation with the school.</th>
<th>Parents and teachers must work together. Frequent parent-teacher communication.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>money</td>
<td>Participant 13</td>
<td>Honesty, being hard-working, hygiene, cleanliness, grooming, using the toilet, making your own sandwich, looking after yourself, knowledge of</td>
<td>Porno-graphy, using drugs, inappropriate sexual behaviour, smoking, stealing</td>
<td>The neighbourhood has a lot of drug users.</td>
<td>Some of the parents in the neighbourhood are alcoholics and drug addicts.</td>
<td>Some parents become disheartened and then stop trying to raise their children properly. There are parents who need a support group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 14</td>
<td>Cleanliness, hygiene, grooming, manners, office skills, internet skills</td>
<td>Children falling behind because parents don't spend time with them, becoming egocentric</td>
<td>Parents are not spending time with their children, not communicating, not teaching children boundaries and discipline. They need parental guidance classes.</td>
<td>Parents can form groups where they have a support system. This can include WhatsApp or Facebook groups.</td>
<td>The school should organise parental guidance classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 15</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Rudeness, foul language</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents can help and support each other, maybe have meetings</td>
<td>The school does more than enough. “The way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
where they come together, talking about their children and the challenges they face with their children.

you are doing is the way you should continue.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Leadership, social skills, conflict management, knowledge of drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancies</th>
<th>Drugs. Sometimes children bully. A Grade 8 girl moved into a flat with her boyfriend and her parents allow it.</th>
<th>The block of flats is unsafe for raising children. The parent escorts the children to and from school and they are not allowed to play with friends from the other flats.</th>
<th>Mothers setting a bad example to their daughters regarding what to wear; children copying it although it is not appropriate for their age.</th>
<th>There are parents who don’t care about their children. Young children are left on their own until late at night. There is no routine or discipline.</th>
<th>Parents want to stay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 16</td>
<td>Respect, conflict</td>
<td>Children shouting at</td>
<td>When there is fighting at</td>
<td>When one parent is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

283

ADDENDA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Management, knowing how to be safe</th>
<th>their mother, hitting the mother</th>
<th>home the children do the same at school.</th>
<th>struggling with his or her child, another parent can help.</th>
<th>informed by teachers about their children (about good and bad things).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 18</td>
<td>Respect, hygiene</td>
<td>No respect for their parents, fighting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some parents do not go to parent-teacher meetings. No co-operation with the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 19</td>
<td>Discipline, conflict management</td>
<td>Stealing, older friends bullying younger children, no respect for parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent struggles with English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 20</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Poor; no money to pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The school must help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Poor; no money to pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The school must help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Poor; no money to pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The school must help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for school; living in a single room.

speak English, so the child's friends have to help with the homework.

the mother financially.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 21</th>
<th>Respect, knowing how to stay safe</th>
<th>Some parents cannot afford aftercare, so their children are without supervision in the afternoons.</th>
<th>Single parents have to work hard, and are not able to spend enough time with children. Friends and family have to help each other looking after their children.</th>
<th>Various activities at school are needed to keep children busy when their parents cannot look after them.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 22</td>
<td>Good manners, respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school does more than enough for our children. Nothing else is
| Participant 23 | Knowledge of drugs, sex education | The grandmother raises a grandchild in an area where drugs, gangs and poverty are rife. | This grandmother needs support with the school work. She cannot help her grandchild properly, as she herself does not always understand the work. | necessary. |
| Colleague 1 | Being a good citizen, making the right choices, responsible decision making | Some children are sexually active, already drinking and smoking at the age of 13. | Parents and the school should teach the same discipline and values to support each other. They must work together. |
| Colleague 2 | Manners, how to conduct yourself, how to treat others, Coping skills, the fight or flight skill | We can teach the children what is acceptable | Some parents don't have enough money for | Some parents grew up in dysfunction- |
| | | | They just don't care or they don't have time. | |
| Colleague 3 | Self-respect, choosing the right friends, conflict management, respecting others, managing different situations | Children are egocentric. They are bullying, dominating, fighting, using bad language. Some of the above are coping and surviving skills. | Children have to go home to an environment that requires a different set of skills than those we teach them at school. | Some parents don't want to hear that their children have broken the rules. They choose to undermine the teachers' authority with negative comments. | Parents do not always respond to communication from the school, nor do they sign the children's school diaries to acknowledge the children's homework. |
| Colleague 4 | Working with time and money | Lack of interest in school work, not expecting much of | | Some parents do not always have the knowledge and skills to | Parents are shifting their responsibility onto the teachers. |

being an asset to society, decision making and what not, but I think the real target group is the parents. transport to attend parent evenings or school functions. at homes. They don't have life skills, so they don't instil them in their children. It's a total lack of interest.
<p>| Colleague 5 | themselves, not setting goals for themselves, just surviving | convey life skills to their children. Parents don’t spend enough time with their children. |  |
| Colleague 6 |  | Single parents who do not see children often (long working hours) |  |
| Colleague 7 | Skills | Parents without clear values | Parents with little confidence in their own parenting skills | Community members can help teach our children skills | Some parents view teachers as superior to them. Invite |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleague 8</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Parents struggling to make ends meet; too tired to support their children.</th>
<th>(knitting, baking) but also provide academic help.</th>
<th>parents to become involved.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 9</td>
<td>What you need to be able to cope in modern society</td>
<td>Streetwise</td>
<td>“Absent” parents</td>
<td>Experts from the community can help parents who need specialised advice.</td>
<td>Organise workshops for parents who need guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 10</td>
<td>Knowing a lot about HIV/AIDS and drugs</td>
<td>Exposed to HIV/AIDS and drugs, parents working long hours</td>
<td>Parents who work as car guards (no fixed income)</td>
<td>Some parents do not have the knowledge and skills for raising children.</td>
<td>Invite policemen, rehabilitated drug users and other community members to talk to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 11</td>
<td>Problem solving, creativity, time management, financial planning</td>
<td>Some parents are too busy with their cell phones to listen to their children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 12</td>
<td>Showing responsibility towards younger siblings</td>
<td>There is a generation of parents who spend more time on their cell phones than with their children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparents who have to raise their grandchildren</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents must be honest with teachers regarding domestic problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague 13</td>
<td>Independence, honesty</td>
<td>No motivation, lack of interest, limited cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents need workshops to help and support them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some parents are not committed to support their children with schoolwork.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 1</td>
<td>Respect, not</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 2</td>
<td>Being a good citizen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Went to parental guidance classes, experienced them positively, will recommend them to other parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 3</td>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>Children are without</td>
<td>Parents are so busy</td>
<td>Parents swearing at</td>
<td>Parents do not co-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 4</td>
<td>Being a good citizen, discipline, displaying good values</td>
<td>There are learners who display positive life skills, but also learners with no sense of responsibility.</td>
<td>Difficult socio-economic circumstances affect parents’ responsibility towards their children negatively.</td>
<td>Some parents view and treat their children as equals and/or friends. They do not understand the responsibilities a parent has to set boundaries.</td>
<td>There are many grandparents in our community who have to act as parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 5</td>
<td>Time management, financial</td>
<td>Shifting responsibility when</td>
<td>Some parents do not</td>
<td>Parents will shift responsibility</td>
<td>Our parents need experts from the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning</td>
<td>they are wrong, bad time management</td>
<td>understand that children need boundaries.</td>
<td>ability, rather than take responsibility.</td>
<td>community with legal and medical skills to speak to and advise the children.</td>
<td>information sessions where teachers discuss their children with them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**ADDENDA**