

**THE PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS WITH REGARDS
TO FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION**

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DECLARATION

I declare that, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this dissertation is the result of my own work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Science (Educational Psychology) in the School of Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal – Pietermaritzburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.



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14th day of December 2004

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ABSTRACT

In general, a particularly complicated and difficult relationship has existed between parents and educators, due in part, to the fact that educators have always been seen as the experts and proverbial holders of knowledge in the educational process while parents have been seen to be peripheral to this process. This inequality is seen to be problematic as a child's significant learning is increasingly understood to occur in both the home and school contexts. This study explored the perceptions of a selection of parents and educators across the three levels of the educational process with the aim of facilitating a dialogue amongst all the participants in order to establish partnerships that would assist in the integration of the formal and informal learning processes. Using the Dialogue Game as a research tool, the participants in this study revealed many of the dilemmas that inhibit the establishment of partnerships between the two contexts. While the educators appeared resistant to the idea of a partnership as they perceived themselves to be 'experts' in the area of education, parents were aware that significant learning occurs in many contexts, but felt unconfident in their abilities to educate children. Some of the findings from the current study mirror those of two earlier studies (Van der Riet, 1997 and Danckwerts, 2002) conducted in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, respectively. Although all three samples were drawn from different socio-economic and cultural groups, the findings would suggest that the parents and educators of South Africa have essentially similar perceptions regarding formal and informal education.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH TOPIC

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will give an introduction to the topic and research problem underlying this study by outlining the background to the study, the research rationale, the key issues to be addressed, i.e. the research aims, the hypotheses and main research questions.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study is an extension of studies undertaken in the past (Van der Riet, 1997; Danckwerts, 2002). Findings of these previous studies highlight both the need for a partnership between educators and parents and the inherently problematic nature of this partnership. These studies also revealed that educators and parents have fundamentally different perceptions of the content and site of education. These discrepancies between parents' and educators' perceptions seem to mirror the gap between the formal and informal learning contexts (Van der Riet, 1997).

1.3 RESEARCH RATIONALE

The main rationale for this study is to replicate the previous studies mentioned above and explore whether there are different findings in terms of the three phases of the schooling process. Thus, this study will explore whether the relationship between parents and educators changes across the three phases of the schooling process. In addition, it is hoped that this study will contribute to research aimed at creating an active partnership between parents and educators through the medium of genuine dialogue. In part, this echoes both Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) goals in their studies.

1.4 KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE STUDY

1.4.1 RESEARCH AIM

The research aims of this study include the following:

1. To investigate and analyse the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that parents and educators have around formal and informal education.
2. To investigate whether these beliefs differ across the different phases in the schooling process, i.e. Junior Primary, Senior Primary and High School.
3. To investigate the nature of the communication between parents and educators in

schools in the Pietermaritzburg and Durban area.

4. To investigate how this communication has a bearing on perceptions, attitudes and beliefs around formal and informal education or vice versa.
5. To explore the extent of involvement of parents in schools.
6. To explore this involvement in relation to beliefs and the nature of communication between parents and educators.

1.4.2 HYPOTHESES

At present there are six hypotheses to this study, namely:

1. Educators and parents have vastly different views from each other with regards to when, what, the range of skills, knowledge and attitudes should be taught to children, and where these should be taught – i.e. at home, at school or in both environments.
2. These views change across the various levels of schooling.
3. Parents are more involved in the school process in the lower grades.
4. The communication between parents and educators is weak.
5. The nature of the communication between parents and educators is related to perceptions, attitudes and beliefs and does not facilitate a partnership between the parents and schools.
6. The dynamics of the parent/educator communication relationship change as one moves through the levels of schooling – i.e. the relationship will be much more important in the earlier years of the schooling process than later on.

1.4.3 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are a list of the main research questions of this study:

- ? What are the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of parents and educators with regards to formal and informal education?
- ? Do these perceptions differ across the different levels of the schooling process, i.e. in Junior Primary, Senior Primary or High School?
- ? What are the communication processes between parents and educators at present?
- ? Are there links between the communication patterns of parents and educators and the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs they hold?
- ? How are parents involved in schools?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will consist of a review of the literature on formal and informal educational contexts. This review will include discussions on the following: the different cognitive skills that develop in each educational context; an overview of Vygotskian theory and how it impacts on formal and informal education; how parents and educators see education; the role of parents in education; the social changes that take place in formal and informal education; a look at existing partnerships between educators and parents; a brief overview of the Dialogue Game and how it is used as a research instrument; a brief overview of current research; and finally, the focal point of this research study, a look at the changes that take place across the three phases of the educational process. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion of the research implications and a short summary of the pertinent points.

Through this project and the use of the Dialogue Game, it is hoped that this study will contribute to research aimed at creating active partnerships between parents and educators through the medium of authentic and genuine dialogue. It is hoped that the research will expose the disparity between the perceptions, held by educators and parents, of their educative responsibilities, in a particular socio-cultural context. It will explore what the respective parties consider to be important learning content for a child and who is considered to be responsible for his/her instruction in relation to that content. A parallel thrust of the project will expose value-laden, formal educative content while revealing the "... informal curriculum of the home" (Macbeth, 1996, p. 7) and in so doing will explore areas of potential overlap. Ideally, parents and educators will be identified as co-educators with a common understanding and purpose – the comprehensive education of the child.

2.2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In general, a particularly complicated and difficult relationship exists between parents and educators. This may be due, in part, to the fact that educators have always been seen to be superior – the expert and proverbial holders of the knowledge children are required to know and learn in order to be successful in the world. However, numerous researchers have challenged these notions of such clearly defined roles and have questioned the

assumptions that formal education is the only site of a child's learning (Scribner and Cole, 1973; Donaldson, 1978; Macbeth, 1996; Van der Riet, 1997). These explorations of the assumptions about formal and informal educational processes have revealed numerous differences between parent and educator views.

Historically, parents have been seen to be the primary and initial educators of children, providing learning of an informal nature in the home environment. But once the child becomes of school going age, the type of learning that occurs, moves from being informal to formal and the responsibilities for its instruction shifts from predominantly the parent to the educator. When this takes place, the school is seen to possess power and authority in the area of education because of the specialist knowledge and expertise it possesses. It would appear that the parental role as educator is relinquished and communication between the two contexts kept to a bare minimum (Van der Riet, 1997). Van der Riet (1997) refers to these efforts at communication between parent and educator as a "dialogue between aliens" (p. 27), indirectly implying that parents and educators are unable to fully understand, trust or appreciate each other, nor their respective roles, responsibilities and intentions in the education of the child.

Generally, educators have tended to be dismissive of parental roles in the educative process while parents have perceived educators to be the experts in possession of specialist skills and knowledge, which they are obliged to impart to the children in their care. The split between the respective roles of parents and educators is seen to be problematic for the child, since essential learning is increasingly understood to occur in both contexts.

According to Scribner and Cole (1973) the content and practices espoused by the traditional schooling system have been researched, and their relevance and practical applicability for children in their daily life, have come under much criticism. Donaldson (1973) describes the formal learning content as 'disembedded', far from actual experiences children have and of little lasting relevance. If, as Macbeth and Ravn (1994) suggest, the goal of education is to prepare the child as fully as possible for the adult world, then the division between formal and informal learning systems should, by implication, ultimately be disadvantageous for the child.

Current research explores the very rigid parent/educator and formal/informal dichotomy that has resulted in the field of learning (Macbeth, 1996). According to Macbeth (1996), research into these issues faces numerous constraints, particularly in the area of gaining access to researching the informal context, i.e. home learning. As Henze (1992) observes, learning in the informal context takes place in a myriad of daily child/adult interactions that are “both fleeting and commonplace” (p. 4), which makes it incredibly difficult to research. Macbeth (1996) suggests, however, that it is essential to research children’s home lives and activities, despite the fact that this is a complex and time-consuming process, which as well as being potentially intrusive, may also not be broad enough to be truly representative. Furthermore, it is necessary to investigate attitudes and values, which are troublesome to access and measure. Another constraint that hinders research into the informal learning of education concerns the relative shortage of funding compared to research into formal learning. Macbeth (1996) proposes that it is nonetheless necessary to rectify the paucity of information available on informal learning and parent/teacher perceptions through a renewed research thrust.

Because of the increasing awareness of the importance of the role of parents in the education of children, some countries have legislated parental involvement in the formal educative process. In South Africa, such legislation is seen to exist in the South African Schools Act No. 84 (1996). This Act, as Van der Riet (1997) shows, emphasises, amongst other things, the parent’s primary responsibility for the education of their children, their inalienable right to choose the form of education that best suits their children and their central role in school governance.

According to Weiss and Edwards (1992), legislation has possibly arisen out of research findings, which correlate parental support for their children’s formal schooling with improved academic achievement. Despite this, however, parental involvement is restricted within the South African context – unless the child fails to perform adequately, in which case blame is often assigned to the parent. Within South Africa, parental involvement in the school remains peripheral to the educative process and takes the form of activities such as fundraising or attending school meetings and functions. According to Van der Riet (1998), what this ultimately means is that these practices merely endorse existing school systems rather than making unique contributions to the educative process.

In response to the great need to address the gap between the formal and informal learning contexts, the Danish National Parent's Association decided to actively address this problem. They argue that parents are alienated from the everyday work of the school and that educators are not aware of, or interested in, the perspectives of parents about their work in the school. They designed a game called the Dialogue Game, which seeks to explore parent and educator perspectives of what knowledge is important for children and who should take responsibility for that knowledge (Van der Riet, 1998). Through the process of playing the game, the parent/educator dynamic is explored and communication facilitated. Van der Riet (1997) has used this game as a research tool in the South Africa context. With the aid of the Dialogue Game, access will be gained to the learning activities of the home environment and the values, beliefs and assumptions of the players regarding the content and site of valid learning. In addition, Macbeth (1996) asserts that this technique may allow for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to research into what are not yet fully understood areas of the educative process. He reiterates the hope of Mary Killeen, President of the European Parent's Association, that "... more researchers will be encouraged to devote their attention and energies to that part of education which happens at home and to the field of parent-educator partnership in educating children" (in Macbeth, 1996, p. 10).

2.3 FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COGNITIVE SKILLS

According to Scribner and Cole (1973) and Macbeth (1996), there are two kinds of learning contexts in which a child's learning and cognitive development takes place, namely the formal and informal learning contexts. Scribner and Cole (1973) refer to informal education as that which "occurs in the course of mundane adult activities in which the young take part according to their abilities" (pp. 554 – 555). There is no activity set aside to solely "educate the child" (p. 555). Social processes and institutions are structured to permit the child's acquisition of the basic skills, values, attitudes and customs, which define appropriate adult behaviour in a particular culture. Formal education, on the other hand, is what Scribner and Cole (1973) argue "... represents a specialized set of education experiences which are discontinuous from those encountered in everyday life and that it requires and promotes ways of learning and thinking which often run counter to those nurtured in practical daily activities" (p. 553). They refer to it as a process of cultural transmission that is organised, based on daily life and the

responsibility of society at large. For them, the contrasting features of school learning and everyday learning are in fact constantly intermingled.

Macbeth (1996) suggests that much of the child's 'significant learning' actually occurs in the informal environment, via the parent, and that learning which occurs in the formal arena, i.e. school, may be too abstract and decontextualised to be of any real or enduring relevance to the child. To support this claim, Donaldson (1978) maintains that formal educational contexts, e.g. schools, are bastions of abstract, decontextualised, 'disembedded' knowledge.

According to Vygotsky (1978), a child's learning begins long before s/he attends school and any learning that a child encounters in school always has a previous history. It therefore follows that parents, guardians and caregivers should retain a primary educational role in their children's lives. Yet, research indicates that this is not the case. It would appear that parents lack confidence and hand educative responsibilities over to educators, who unfortunately under-acknowledged this parental role in education (Macbeth, 1996).

2.3.1 CONTRASTS BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

The debate that exists around the formal and informal learning contexts has received much attention and research, as mentioned above, suggests that these learning systems develop different types of cognitive skills (Scribner and Cole, 1973; Donaldson, 1978). Some have argued that the learning taking place in schools is too abstract and decontextualised to be of any real or enduring relevance (Donaldson, 1978; Macbeth, 1996; Van der Riet, 1997). Furthermore, research suggests that in reality, much of a child's 'significant learning' – i.e. that which is retained by and has an effect on the child, occurs in the informal environment (Macbeth, 1996).

According to Scribner and Cole (1973) when looking at schools, the evidence seems much clearer that its demands are not continuous with those of everyday informal learning. Having gone through numerous achievement and evaluation studies, which constitute the bulk of research on schools, they found very few penetrating analyses of the learning and teaching processes actually going on in the school environment. Because of this, Scribner and Cole (1973) select and discuss certain characteristics of school that

they speculate are of special significance to the development of functional intellectual skills and which are pertinent to this discussion. It is important to note that they make no claim that these are characteristics uniquely to be found in schools. It is more likely that there are some informal, everyday learning situations showing one or another feature of school learning, but they think that it is the combination of these features and the frequency of their occurrence that bring about a learning environment that is qualitatively new.

The major differences between formal and informal education are revealed on closer inspection. Whereas informal education rests upon a system of person-orientated values, the essence of formal education is "... that one of its principal emphases is on universalistic values, criteria and standards of performance" (Cohen, 1971, cited in Scribner and Cole, 1973, p. 556). What is being taught, instead of who is doing the teaching, becomes of paramount importance in the formal educational context. Children are expected to learn by relating solely to the subject matter and by disregarding the relationship with an educator. This is due in part, to the fact that they are likely to see a new educator each semester, if not every hour (Scribner and Cole, 1973). Scribner and Cole (1973) point out that when schools introduce these universalistic values into traditional societies where particularistic, person-orientated values dominate, the resulting value discrepancy may create obstacles to learning.

When comparing school learning to informal learning, anthropologists and psychologists most commonly emphasise differences in content. Textbooks and material that do not reflect the child's actual living circumstances have been justifiably criticised. But the conflict between the knowledge that the school seeks to impart and the knowledge most children bring to school, runs much deeper than this. In some subject matter, the information dispensed by the school contradicts commonly accepted knowledge and beliefs. In addition, school introduces new subjects, such as grammar, mathematics and the sciences, which may have no cultural counterparts at all. Not only the content but also the basic organizing concepts of these fields of knowledge may conflict with the traditional culture's way of understanding the interpreting the world (Scribner and Cole, 1973).

Scribner and Cole (1973) also outline a disjuncture between formal and informal

education and note that it becomes evident when different cultural contexts are introduced into Western educational institutions. Like Donaldson (1978), Scribner and Cole (1973) argue that school represents ways of learning that are discontinuous with practical daily activities and they refer to schooling as a process of cultural transmission that is organised, based on daily life and the responsibility of society at large. They echo the argument of Donaldson (1978) when they say that the difference between the informal (home) and formal (school) learning contexts is one of the key contributors to failure of children in schools. This difference is about the type of knowledge dealt with in each context.

Informal learning, on the other hand, is that which occurs outside of the school and which is embedded within the practices of everyday life. Donaldson (1978) claims that children, if provided with enough meaningful background and associations to the problem, are capable of remarkably sophisticated reasoning. She questions an educational system that promotes the development of decontextualised cognitive skills, which are essentially meaningless to the child and suggests that the "... attempt to become skilled in the dis-embedded modes of intellectual activity is for most of us defeating or repugnant" (p. 85).

Donaldson (1978) also criticizes the process of formal learning and asserts that the nature of this learning does not match the natural or informal cognitive learning styles of children. She suggests that this is the reason why "... we end up with a small number of educational successes and a dismayingly large crop of failures" (p. 82). Formal learning is school-based and necessitates mastery of abstract knowledge and skills, which, to Donaldson (1978) are "disembedded" (p. 82) or removed from any meaningful context. She maintains that one cannot master any formal system unless you have learned to take at least some steps beyond the bounds of human sense. She argues that the problem of helping children to begin to do this in the early stages of their schooling has not been properly recognised and is not usually tackled in an adequate way.

2.4 VYGOTSKY AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL CONTEXTS

As with Donaldson (1978) and Scribner and Cole (1973), Vygotsky (1978) also drew distinctions between formal and informal learning. The current conceptions of the

relation between development and learning in children can be reduced to three major theoretical positions (James, 1958; Koffka, 1914; Piaget, 1914; Thorndike, 1914; cited in Vygotsky, 1978). The first centres on the assumption that processes of child development are independent of learning. Learning is considered a purely external process that is not actively involved in development. It merely utilises the achievements of development rather than providing an impetus for modifying its course. The second major theoretical position is that learning is development. Whether reading, writing or arithmetic is being considered, development is viewed as the mastery of conditioned reflexes; that is, the process of learning is completely and inseparably blended with the process of development. The third theoretical position on the relation between learning and development attempts to overcome the extremes of the other two by simply combining them. A clear example of this approach is Koffka's theory (cited in Vygotsky, 1978), in which development is based on two inherently different but related processes, each of which influences the other. On the one hand is maturation, which depends directly on the development of the nervous system; on the other hand is learning, which itself is also a developmental process.

Vygotsky (1978) however, rejects all of these theoretical positions and provides an analysis of the relationship between learning and development. The questions that Vygotsky (1978) frames in arriving at a solution are complex and consists of two separate issues: first, the general relationship between learning and development and second, the specific features of this relationship when children reach school going age. According to Vygotsky (1978) children's learning begins long before they attend school and any learning that a child encounters in school always has a previous history. For example, a child begins to study arithmetic in school, but long before that they have had some experience with quantity – they have had to deal with operations of division, addition, subtraction and determination of size in their everyday life. Consequently, because of this, children have a pre-school knowledge base around arithmetic. And to put this Vygotskian concept into the context of this study, the pre-school knowledge that Vygotsky (1978) suggests a child has, is what Scribner and Cole (1973), Donaldson (1978), Macbeth (1996) and Van der Riet (1997) all refer to as that information which is derived from the informal learning context, i.e. the home.

According to Vygotsky (1978) an essential feature of learning is that it creates, what he

refers to as a zone of proximal development, where learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his/her environment and in co-operation with his/her peers. Once these processes are internalised, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. From this point of view, learning is not development. However, properly organised learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. Thus, learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organised, specifically human, psychological functions. As Vygotsky (1978) points out, although learning is directly related to the course of child development, the two are never accomplished in equal measure or in parallel. Development in children never follows school learning the way a shadow follows the object that casts it. In actuality, there are highly complex dynamic relations between developmental and learning processes that cannot be encompassed by an unchanging hypothetical formulation. Essentially what Vygotsky (1978) argues is that learning and development are interrelated and spontaneous from the child's very first day of life. Learning is not dependent on development and development is not dependent on learning. Learning and development do not follow a sequential order in which the child is only able to learn a particular concept once they reach a particular developmental age, like Piaget's stages of cognitive development, for example, where development is broken down into four clearly defined stages and where learning should only take place once the child has reached a particular stage (Bukatko and Daehler, 1998).

If, as Vygotsky (1978) argues, learning and development are intermingled and presuppose each other, then the implications for formal and informal education are numerous. The major consequence of this is to show that the initial mastery of, for example the four arithmetic operations, provides the basis for the subsequent development of a variety of highly complex internal processes of children's thinking and that learning in the formal and informal contexts are interrelated.

Both Donaldson (1978) and Scribner and Cole (1973) propose that some attempt should be made to integrate these disparate realities through grounding formal learning processes within the context of the child's recognisable, practical, everyday reality or by combining disembedded thinking with relevant activity, or "doing" in order to render it

more accessible and meaningful. They, together with Vygotsky (1978), argue that the contrasting features of school learning and everyday learning are constantly intermingled and that the cognitive skills learned in each context, although different, are not isolated from each other. What arises is a need for the disjuncture between the parental context, i.e. informal learning, and the educative context, i.e. formal learning, to be overcome or bridged and acknowledged in the educative process of the child. Essentially what is called for is a workable relationship between parents and educators. This, however, is not as easy as it sounds, as will be shown.

2.5 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTS AND EDUCATORS IN EDUCATION

A troubled relationship exists between parents and educators, both in South Africa and across the world. Van der Riet (1997) comments on this when she says that "... parents tend to avoid schools and teachers tend to avoid parents" (p. 76). It would appear that in schools today, the dominant type of relationship between parents and educators is that they make little or no contact with each. There also appears to be numerous contrasts between the values, attitudes and content transmitted by the informal context and by the formal context of education (Scribner and Cole, 1973). One can, and should, ask what the possible reasons are for this – what makes the one so alien from the other (Van der Riet, 1997) and what are the reasons for the disjuncture that appears to have resulted between the two educational contexts? In answering these questions, it becomes essential to examine the nature of the formal and informal learning contexts as well as the relationships that exist between parents and educators and the communication that takes place between these two groups.

According to Macbeth (1996), schools have typically been seen as the centre of a child's learning. Governments devote most of their educational budgets to schools rather than in assisting children's education outside of school. The home element of the child's learning – both actual and potential – is usually ignored, implying that schools can provide the child's whole education (Macbeth, 1996). As indicated before, this is not the case. As Vygotsky (1978) argues, a child's informal learning is just as important, if not more important, than what is learned at school, because children start to learn from the time they are born. In addition to this, Van der Riet (1997) points out that an examination of the ways in which parents are engaged in the school context is somewhat revealing. Parents are increasingly regarded as consumers of the formal education system – taking

the form of information giving about schooling, choice of schools, positions on school management boards and mechanisms by which parents can support the schools (Macbeth, 1996). As Macbeth (1996) points out, these are proper functions in a democracy, but parents tend to be regarded as peripheral to the educational processes except when things go wrong, e.g. bad behaviour, truancy, school failure, etc., at which point their influence is recognised and summoned to reinforce school aims. But at no point are parents consulted about the content of the educational curriculum or about what their responsibilities should be with regards to the informal education of their children – these aspects seem to be ignored.

2.6 THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN EDUCATION

2.6.1 A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

As Van der Riet (1994) points out, parents are educators in the informal home environment. And in most societies, different forms of formal education build on this parenting. In societies, which are relatively stable, parents have the knowledge and experience to educate their children in preparation for the world beyond the home (Mead, 1978, cited in Van der Riet, 1994). However, in societies where there is rapid social change, such as in parts of South Africa, parents experience a lack of certainty about the content of their own childhood and feel that it “is no longer applicable to the rapidly changing environment into which their children have to move” (Van der Riet, 1994, p. 1). Because of this, they entrust the responsibility for their children’s education to school and their input is diminished. Van der Riet (1994) notes that because of the rapid social change that is taking place in many parts of South Africa, children are being forced to move between the disparate and disconnected realities of home and school, while the gap between parents and educators grows wider. She mentions that it is necessary to restructure these crucial relationships to allow for a better integration of the formal and informal learning environments of the child.

Van der Riet (1996) points out that although the new Constitution has provided a framework for changing many aspects of the content, structure and management of education, many South African schools are still struggling to overcome the legacy of the past which has taken the form of an absence of a “culture of learning and teaching” (p. 1). The learning and teaching culture of a particular school is affected by the resources and physical infrastructure in schools as well as the attitudes, qualifications and practices

of the actors within the school, i.e. principals, educators and learners. A fundamental building block of the culture of learning and teaching is the relationship between key stakeholders in the schools: parents, educators and learners. This encapsulates the link between the home, school and broader community (Van der Riet, 1996).

In reaction to the growing body of research into the importance of the parental role in education, the empowerment of parents is addressed in The South African Schools Act No. 84 (1996), as mentioned above, through the re-structuring and democratization of the system of governance in schools. But even though the Act incorporates issues relating to parental involvement in education, Van der Riet (1996) points to some of the problems in the implementation of such legislation. In the Act, there is an assumption that parents are ready, and willing, to govern. This is not necessarily the case as parents may be unwilling or unable to take an active part in the governance of a system they do not understand or from which they feel excluded. Van der Riet (1996) argues that an appropriate culture of learning and teaching is dependent on parents' understanding of governance, and their willingness to take this on as a responsibility. Many parents, perhaps because of their lack of familiarity with the system of formal education, tend to transfer responsibility for education to the institution such as the school (Van der Riet, 1996).

Another factor that is problematic in the implementation of such legislation is that educators and the school, as an institution, need to acknowledge the value of parental input. Educators still tend to fear parental interference in an attempt to protect their professional, specialist status as the "experts" (Van der Riet, 1996, p. 8). The result of this being that parents' input is restricted to non-professional areas, i.e. the involvement in extra-curricular activities, which are outside of the classroom and the curriculum.

According to Van der Riet (1996), formal education is a fundamental advantage in today's world. However, it must be remembered that parents are often very alienated from this process and schools reinforce this belief by generally only calling on parents for financial assistance or other issues, like school maintenance. She therefore argues that the reason why parents hand over the responsibility of educating their children to the school needs to be examined further as the level of involvement of parents in schooling is critical in mediating the link between the formal and informal educational contexts.

2.6.2 A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

As within the South African context, the European educational system has also had political developments take place that have had repercussions on the relationship of parents to schools.

According to Macbeth and Ravn (1994), European policy makers too often assume that schools provide the whole of a child's education. As a result, their policies concentrate on schools and tend to neglect the learning that a child acquires outside of school. They argue that there is a need to get policy makers to recognise that much of a child's learning is gained outside of the school, i.e. in the home and in non-school institutions such as sports clubs and the wider community, and need to make them aware that, although schooling is an important part of education, that it is not the whole of it (Macbeth and Ravn, 1994).

Developmental psychology indicates that children, like adults, develop in a socio-psychological "interaction with other people" (Macbeth and Ravn, 1994, p. 6). Macbeth and Ravn (1994) point out that a social-constructivist theory of learning argues that individuals build up understanding and knowledge on the basis of previous experiences. These and other conceptual approaches suggest strongly that out-of-school learning is as important, if not more important than, what is learnt in school; or, at the very least, that it provides a fundamental basis for in-school advance. These views would seem to legitimize expectations about parents taking part in an educational partnership with educators and with the children themselves (Macbeth and Ravn, 1994). Macbeth and Ravn (1994) declare that if the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in the home plays a crucial part in children's overall development, then there would seem "to be a *professional* obligation upon teachers to harness and use the influence of home-learning or to adapt teaching methods to allow for it" (p. 6). Both environments should thus be considered to be equally valid educational contexts.

2.7 FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

According to Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1992), school is a powerful socio-economic force that is linked to social change. Dominant Western educational traditions and methods have been seen to have profound influences on the structure and identity of traditional societies (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo, 1992). The content, i.e. knowledge,

offered at school and the form in which it is offered, i.e. how it is taught, is foreign to the children of traditional societies and rather than education being a door into a wider world, schooling for these children all too often becomes limited access to esoteric knowledge, knowledge entirely separate from their experience yet held out as superior to what they know. This presentation of knowledge as 'superior' results in the denigration and erosion of traditional knowledge, with parents feeling ignorant and ill-equipped to get involved in their children's education. A consequence of this being that parents relinquish their roles as educators when the child reaches school going age and hand over responsibility for education to the school (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo, 1992).

Just as South African researchers do, Macbeth and Ravn (1994) comment on the effects of rapid social change on education. According to Macbeth and Ravn (1994), rates of change in society will always be, to some extent, ahead of the generality of school and family practice. While at times, school practice will be in advance of the understanding and practice of the family, some individual parents may, at times, have attitudes or knowledge in advance of the thinking of some schools. If both family and school have significant parts to play in each child's learning, then a productive relationship between the parents and the school may help ensure that the child does not suffer what Macbeth and Ravn (1994) refer to as "culture-lags" (p. 5). This assertion represents a shift away from earlier beliefs that the school was responsible for all of the child's education and that schooling represented education in its entirety (Macbeth and Ravn, 1994).

Macbeth and Ravn (1994) note that changes have occurred in the degree to which schools are seen to be accountable to parents. According to them, the government is increasingly viewing parents as 'clients' or customers of schools, and they are being used as the instruments of making schools more accountable for an expected level of excellence in the education of children. Macbeth and Ravn (1994) admit that the term "parents in education" (p. 3) embraces a wide range of concepts and factors which turn a simple-seeming idea into a complex web of philosophical, sociological, cultural, political, administrative and educational strands, but they believe it to be essential in the development of parent/educator partnerships.

As with the South African School Act No. 84 (1996), Macbeth and Ravn (1994), propose that Article 126 of the Treaty on European Union (Council of the European Communities

and Commission of the European Communities, 1992, cited in Macbeth and Ravn, 1994), known as the Maastricht Treaty, be a possible catalyst for increasing recognition of the part that parents play in their children's education. The Article states that:

The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member State for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity (p. 11).

Macbeth and Ravn (1994) point out that if education for children is more than schooling, then this undertaking should be interpreted as having significant implications for education in the family and for parent-educator partnerships. Furthermore, if, as Macbeth and Ravn (1994) state, the two basic educational establishments for any child are the family and the school, and the Community is to pursue "co-operation between educational establishments" (Macbeth and Ravn, 1994 p. 12), then co-operation between the two establishments is a crucial component.

According to Macbeth and Ravn (1994), more research into the informal learning environment of home, in which parents are defined as the primary educators, needs to be conducted. They state that it is important to explore expectations and perceptions of parents in education, because ultimately, expectations guide behaviour and parental behaviour has a profound and enduring influence on a child.

Macbeth and Ravn (1994) point out that there are a number of general trends in European education and although clear legislation exists regarding the contribution of the 'community', in practice the partnership between parents and educators is far from ideal. Krumm (1994) writes about expectations of parents in Austria, Germany and Switzerland and notes that while parents do acknowledge that parental input influences the child's socialization, there is nonetheless a clear distinction of the roles of parents. Educators are seen to rule in the school and parents at home.

According to Krumm (1994), the school structures in Austria, Germany and Switzerland enable educators to "keep parents at arms length" (p. 23). Educators appear to relinquish

responsibility to parents only when things are seen to be going wrong in the school environment and it becomes a case of only when they have a need for parents do they take more interest in their needs. Krumm (1994) argues that parents need to have more of a “voice” (p. 22) in education but the only way this will happen is if, as Hirschman (1970, cited in Krumm, 1994) states, they have more choice. Only then, when parents have more choice, will the pre-dominance of the educators hold over parents change into a relationship based on partnership. He calls for a more liberal school constitution and for schools that compete for parents and pupils as oppose to fighting against them.

Scaparro (1994) writes about expectations of parents in Italy and acknowledges that there appears to be a greater recognition of the role of the family in Italy than is the case in Germanic countries. This is due, in part, to the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church and the fact that the educational role of the family had been accepted as part of Italian culture. Scaparro (1994) notes that in comparison with the seventies, the mediating influence of the family, especially of parents, in the education of their children, is receiving renewed recognition and attention and expectations about parents in education are shifting. The family is being respected once again as having the capacity for transmitting values, social productivity and creativity and is regaining much more credibility.

Despite the family being the centre unit of Italian culture, there is still, unfortunately, a shortage of active communication between schools and parents. Because of this, Scaparro (1994) emphasises that research and experimentation to try out creative relations between parents, educators and the community should be encouraged and supported. If, as Scaparro (1994) points out, the construction of identity begins in the family and if the family mediates between the individual and society, then the family needs constant reinforcement from social agencies, including the school. It also requires the continuous example of those adults who are significant to the child. And these, again, point to partnerships between school and family (Scaparro, 1994).

2.8 THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

Weiss and Edwards (1992) define family-school collaboration or parent-educator partnerships as “a co-operative process of planning and problem solving involving school staff, parents, children and significant others used to maximize resources for student’s

academic achievement and social-emotional development” (p. 215). They identify numerous roles parents can carry out in the educational process, including minor activities such as the supervision of homework and supporting school functions, such as sporting activities or fundraisers, as well as more active roles, such involvement in school policy-making and governance. They suggest that in order to create a collaborative climate between families and schools, schools need to recognise parents as a major resource for improving educational outcomes. According to them, the benefits of this resource will become available when family-school relations are addressed as a major factor in the educational achievement of children.

2.8.1 THE GOALS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

According to Henderson (1989, cited in Weiss and Edwards, 1992), research in Europe over the past 15 years has explicitly demonstrated that when parents are involved in their children’s education, these children have higher educational achievement, better attendance records and more positive attitudes about education. Therefore it becomes essential that parent/educator partnerships be developed. Safran (1997) echoes Henderson’s (1989, cited in Weiss and Edwards, 1992) statement when he states that the most frequently cited goal for focusing on educational partnerships is improving student success. The message is clear – “when families are involved, children do better” (p. 1). Safran (1997) also believes that schools play an essential role in integrating children into the larger society and involvement in the discussion and analysis of educational issues and in school governance helps families understand and appreciate their rights and responsibilities. For many people, schools are the most accessible and essential representation of their government. When parents participate in the processes of problem solving and decision-making on a subject as important as their children’s education, they are engaged in the practice of democracy (Safran, 1997).

2.8.2 FACTORS INHIBITING THE PARTNERSHIP

Communication between parents and educators faces many problems. Weiss and Edwards (1992) identify three major barriers to collaborative relationships between families and schools. Firstly, they suggest that schools and families rarely establish ongoing routine vehicles for sharing information in a two-way dialogue, for the development of educational plans and for solving problems. A possible reason for this is that activities in which these types of communications could take place are not typically

part of the school calendar and because school staff often lack the skills needed to elicit and constructively incorporate input from parents and children. As a result of this, there is a certain degree of alienation between families and schools and some expectations that interaction will be adversarial. Another problem with the communication is that discussions about a problem often take place without the full participation of all concerned persons at the same time. The child is most frequently left out of these conferences (Weiss and Edwards, 1992). Secondly, cultural, socio-economic and racial differences between school staff and families create either real or assumed barriers to communication and partnership. And thirdly, conceptions of the roles that parents could play in the school are unnecessarily limited. As a result, parents are often channeled into the roles of supporters and rarely looked upon as partners or co-decision makers (Weiss and Edwards, 1992).

Safran (1996) comments that, if educators, parents and policy makers want to increase parent involvement in education, they need to understand the extra-ordinary complexity of family-school relationships. Despite an almost universal agreement on the desirability of strengthening partnerships between homes and schools, there are certain factors, which are psychological and political in nature, that make this collaboration very difficult to achieve. Since educators and parents tend to have different perspectives on the child and on education, they tend to misunderstand and distrust each other. To parents, the central concern is their child; to educators, the central concern is a classroom full of other people's children (Waller, 1932, cited in Safran, 1994).

Safran (1996) concludes that to realize effective communication between parents and educators, the psychological and political factors inhibiting partnerships need to be discussed sufficiently. According to him, establishing effective communication might be a first step in building an active, healthy educational partnership.

2.9 THE DIALOGUE GAME

The Danish National Parents' Association argues that parents are alienated from the everyday work of the school and that educators are not aware of, or interested in, the perspectives of parents about their work in the school. Because of this, they designed the Dialogue Game, which seeks to explore parent and educator perspectives of what knowledge is important for children and who should take responsibility for that

knowledge (cited in Van der Riet, 1998). As a critical tool for accessing the learning and teaching activities of both the home and school environments, it starts to expose what parents and educators think is valuable knowledge and why and enables a critical examination to take place (Macbeth, 1996; Van der Riet, 1998).

According to Macbeth (1996), the Dialogue Game challenges players to decide which range of skills, knowledge and attitudes should be taught to children, and where these should be taught – at home, at school or both (refer to Appendices 3 – 6). This game achieves two things. Firstly, it creates the environment necessary for the interaction of stakeholders in education. This is because its content – i.e. what is important for the child to learn through a focus on content – differs from that of the usual interaction between parents and educators. Secondly, it can access the values, beliefs and customs of the participants (Van der Riet, 1998). Researching this game also accesses stakeholder's attitudes to their responsibilities about learning and reveals the dynamics underlying the lack of communication between parents and teachers, parental marginalisation and teachers' defensiveness about engagement of parents in the school (Safran, 1996, cited in Van der Riet, 1997).

The Dialogue Game is in the process of being adapted to a format applicable to the South African context by Van der Riet (1997) and, according to Macbeth (1996), with the use of the Dialogue Game, systematic research will be made possible into the under-researched areas of formal and informal education. The original Dialogue Game was developed for reference to be made to 12 and 18 year old children. For the purpose of this research, the Dialogue Game will be adapted slightly and played with parents and educators from Junior Primary, Senior Primary and High Schools.

The Dialogue Game is played with educators and parents. Its purpose is to uncover the perceptions of these parties regarding what knowledge and skills should be imparted to a child and who should be responsible for its instruction (Van der Riet, 1997). As noted by Van der Riet (1997), the game creates a unique setting in which it is possible to investigate the elements of a relationship normally hidden within the common rituals of parent/educator interaction, which are normally strained and superficial. The quality of interaction is more direct and authentic and encourages both parties to perceive and understand their respective expectations and attitudes towards education and each other

(Macbeth, 1994). Through the process of the game, it is possible to address the problems of communication outlined by Weiss and Edwards (1992) through encouraging an easy flow of dialogue under the guise of playing a game.

2.9.1 THE DIALOGUE GAME AS A RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Although the game was developed as a means of facilitating organizational development, it has been shown to have efficacy as a research tool (Van der Riet, 1997). Although it has its origins in Denmark, it has been translated into English by Scottish researchers and has been adapted to include relevant items from the British and Scottish National Curricula (Macbeth, 1996; Van der Riet, 1997; Danckwerts, 2001). According to Macbeth (1996), with the Dialogue Game, systematic research should be possible into these under-researched areas.

Van der Riet (1997) has been the primary innovator in using the game as a research tool in the context of South African educational research. As Van der Riet (1997) points out, it is relatively inexpensive to run and allows for the collection of data from the players who are able to participate in a relaxed, unthreatening environment. By playing the game, it is possible to unpack the perceptions of both educators and parents regarding their respective teaching responsibilities in both formal and non-formal contexts and reveals what they consider to be important knowledge (Danckwerts, 2001). The game also permits an exploration into the activities of home learning, therefore addressing some of the problems of research into informal learning (Van der Riet, 1997).

2.10 CURRENT RESEARCH

Using the Dialogue Game as her research tool, Van der Riet (1997) recruited educator and parent participants from two schools in a small Eastern Cape town, one a former Model C school and the other a former DET school. The game was played twice with parents and educators from each of the schools respectively. Using the Dialogue Game as her research tool and Van der Riet' (1997) findings of the abovementioned study as a basis for comparison, Danckwerts (2002) recruited educator and parent participants from a private school in a KwaZulu Natal town. The game was played once with these participants. The general trends in the research findings will be briefly noted, within the categories outlined by Van der Riet (1997).

2.10.1 WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT?

From the data analysis, it became evident from Van der Riet's (1997) study, that both parents and educators valued knowledge according to its perceived usefulness, appropriateness and relevance to a child, although they demonstrated different sets of criteria for valuing the knowledge. The educators in the group tended to value knowledge that was relevant to the child in the framework of the school context. Perhaps, as Van der Riet (1997) points out, for them, learning and education equal schooling, as argued by Macbeth (1996). The fact that the educators saw knowledge predominantly in the framework of the school context, possibly accounts for why they tended to adopt full responsibility for the education process as opposed to seeing it as a partnership. The parents, on the other hand, tended to value knowledge that was seen to be important to the child in the everyday, informal and practical context, which goes beyond the school and in which the child is seen in relation to other siblings, the family and the broader community. They tended to construct learning as a continuous process with the child as a multi-dimensional, pro-active learner, embedded in a reality encompassing both formal and informal contexts. Van der Riet (1997) points out that it was interesting to note that both educators and parents valued formal education.

According to Danckwerts' (2002) study, the educators valued formal, abstract knowledge over informal knowledge. They saw the child as a passive learner within the confines of the classroom and reasoned that the development of cognitive skills was an essential part of mastering the educational system (Scribner and Cole, 1973). They were aware that this kind of learning tended to make children rote learn knowledge, but did not question whether this tendency was related to the decontextualised nature of learning that Donaldson (1978) refers to. According to Danckwerts (2002), the educator's perceptions generally illustrated the context-bound nature of formal learning that Scribner and Cole (1973) refer to.

Danckwerts (2002) points out that the parents in this study tended to place a high value on formal knowledge, thus illustrating the theory of Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1992) that formal education is generally perceived as 'superior'. The rationale they provided for this was that career opportunities would be limited without a formal education.

Danckwerts (2002) points out that, in a broad sense, this value illustrates the dominance of Western culture's traditions and practices in education and society that Van der Riet

(1994) refers to. In this study, parents also tended to value informal knowledge if it was seen to be of relevance to the child in everyday life beyond the school context. According to Danckwerts (2002) these findings reflected a general understanding of learning as a complex, continuous process with multiple applications in both informal and formal contexts, with the child seen as a multi-faceted, proactive learner within these contexts (Van der Riet, 1997).

2.10.2 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR KNOWLEDGE

2.10.2.1 WHERE SHOULD KNOWLEDGE BE TAUGHT?

a) THE HOME IS RESPONSIBLE BECAUSE . . .

Van der Riet (1997) points out that the most interesting finding in this section was that parents recognised that the school is not the only source of education. Parents recognised that education is a broad process and some knowledge is only appropriate in certain contexts. They also recognised that schools do not always have the capacity to teach all types of knowledge, e.g. important aspects of culture. Parents were also aware of the deficiencies and constraints of the school environment and commented that it sometimes lacks resources for teaching certain subjects. They also asserted that not all significant activities occur in the school environment – that some of these activities take place in the community. Educators, on the other hand, seemed to view the responsibility of the home (parents) and the school (educators) in the form of a time-line. In this approach they seemed to restrict parental responsibility to a particular time period, i.e. before the child entered school.

b) THE SCHOOL IS RESPONSIBLE BECAUSE . . .

Van der Riet (1997) points out that the reasoning patterns in this section were not too surprising. Most of the responses of both parents and educators seemed to reinforce the belief of the formal education environment as the “purveyor of expert knowledge in possession of technological resources and skills” (Van der Riet, 1997, p. 85). From the data analysis, it became evident that schools were seen to have the necessary resources, knowledge and skills (especially on a technological level) which parents lacked at home. Parents were also seen as handing over (or in some way neglecting) their responsibilities to the school, thereby forcing the school to assume these responsibilities. The assumption that the school should assume a greater responsibility in managing the educative process than the home is problematic and this view merely serves to strengthen the perception

that education is equal to schooling (Van der Riet, 1997).

c) BOTH ARE RESPONSIBLE BECAUSE . . .

According to Van der Riet (1997), the most interesting finding in this section was that the differences between parents and educators in criteria for valuing knowledge seemed to influence their attitude towards the idea of a partnership between home and school. The overwhelming argument from the educator perspective for joint responsibility was that parents were neglecting their responsibilities. Van der Riet (1997) points out that in a sense, this view is no different from the parent-educator interaction in which the parent's role is marginal and the main focus of their engagement with the school is to reinforce the ideas and programmes of the school. This support is clearly on the school's terms.

Parents on the other hand, demonstrated a completely different approach to the whole process of educating. For the parents, learning seemed to be seen as a continuous process, not bound by any particular context. From this point of view, children were seen largely as social beings, and the knowledge being taught was seen as complex with many applications, which could be followed up in any context. They acknowledged that their own relationships with their children differed from their child's relationship with their educator and that this was important because not all topics could be discussed with parents, but could be discussed with educators, e.g. basic sex and reproduction (Van der Riet, 1997).

The one point that educators and parents seemed to agree on is that a partnership between the home and the school is necessitated by historical inequalities in access to resources (Van der Riet, 1997).

According to Danckwerts' (2002) study, educators tended to claim sole responsibility for the instruction of formal learning and appeared to be dismissive of both the content and site of informal learning. As Danckwerts (2002) points out, this assumption supports Macbeth's (1996) claim that in general, education is equated with what happens at school. Danckwerts (2002) points out that the findings of this study depart from this theory in the area of parental perspectives on the site of learning responsibilities. The findings revealed that parents are aware that significant learning and activities occur in both the formal and informal contexts and that they do not equate education entirely with

schooling (Danckwerts, 2002).

According to Danckwerts (2002), the parents in the study, who were all literate and well-educated, despite their awareness of the multiple sites of learning, expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities to take on an educative responsibility. For her, the practices of the modern, formal Westernised education system appeared to have convinced the parents of the study that they were ill-equipped to play an active, co-operative role in the education of their children. It appeared that they also felt unable to help their children cope with the demands of a rapidly changing society and thought that the school should compensate for this in some way (Macbeth, 1994; Van der Riet, 1994).

According to the study, the parental role was seen to be peripheral and reserved for the child's early years and to activities that were supportive of school-based practices. Parents, who failed to support the activities of school (in particular by way of disciplinary matters), were seen by educators to be shirking their responsibilities. Danckwerts (2002) points out that these trends support the general theories about the marginalisation of parental educational roles mentioned by numerous authors (Krumm, 1994; Macbeth and Ravn, 1994; Scaparro, 1994; Van der Riet, 1994).

2.10.3 PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNERSHIP

From the data analysis of Van der Riet's (1997) study, it became evident that the perceptions of a partnership were seen to relate to the different criteria used by parents and educators for valuing knowledge. Educators seemed to see less partnership possibilities in the construction and imparting of knowledge than parents did and the educators' perceptions only coincided when the partnership was deemed necessary to supplement a deficiency in resources, either in the home or the school context. At the very most, the role of the parent was acknowledged as being in the years *before* the child entered school. It appeared that educators were resistant to the idea of a partnership since they saw themselves as specialists in education and understood their roles to be of primary importance (Van der Riet, 1997).

Parents, on the other hand, with their more complex conceptions of children and their learning, were more open to the idea of a partnerships being established between home and school. They were inclined to accept the educator role as superior to their own

informal areas but nonetheless believed that the child's informal learning activities were significant and seemed to see knowledge development as a continuous process, and partnership as a possibility. The perceptions of a partnership were seen to relate to the different criteria used by parents and teachers for valuing knowledge (Van der Riet, 1997).

According to Danckwerts' (2002) study, educators were generally resistant to the concept of a partnership in education. This was due, largely to the fact that they valued the formal education of which they perceived themselves to be the trained specialists. Parents on the other hand, valued both formal and informal knowledge and saw it occurring in both the school and home contexts. Because of this, they were more open to the possibilities of a partnership. Danckwerts (2002) points out that the parents did, however, lack the confidence in their own abilities to contribute to these partnerships, as stated by Van der Riet's (1997) study.

In Danckwerts' (2002) study, both parents and educators expressed concerns about the problematic nature of the development of partnerships. Although both parties saw communication to be a crucial element of a working partnership, they perceived it to be highly problematic, as Weiss and Edwards (1992) pointed out. They both believed, as Safran (1996) mentions, that a degree of distrust is innate to this type of relationship. Danckwerts' (2002) study showed that the parents recognised that communication with educators may be inhibited by their own perceptions of the educator as a specialist whose expertise could not be questioned. The educators, on the other hand, expressed concerns that parents generally have unrealistic expectations of educators and that they are unable to put their child into the context of a larger class (Safran, 1996). The educators were particularly concerned about the perceived threats to the authority structure of the parent/school dynamic posed by an increase in parental participation in the educative process (Safran, 1996).

According to Danckwerts (2002), a further complication expressed by this sample of teachers related to the client status of parents in private schools. Parents, by virtue of the fact that they are paying clients, have what educators considered to be undue influence over the functioning of the school – most particularly in the area of discipline (Macbeth and Ravn, 1994).

According to Danckwerts (2002), educators' distrust of partnerships that include parental participation is the result of several things. Educators have a specialist status, which they want to safeguard. Educators were trained to impart knowledge, which they assume to be important, within the confines of the school. And learning is understood to travel one way – from educator to child – which is seen to be part of the traditional authority structure. Because of these factors, it would appear that educators tend to feel more comfortable with parental participation remaining strictly marginal.

According to Danckwerts (2002), parental inhibition, on the other hand, seemed to have its roots in shared assumptions and beliefs. Notwithstanding their broader construction of the content and site of education and the child, they assumed that formal knowledge was 'better' because without it the child would be limited for choices and opportunities as an adult. Parents also tended to feel inadequate in the face of educator expertise, they felt dis-empowered and, ultimately, unable to contribute meaningfully to an active, co-operative partnership between themselves and the educators.

2.11 RESEARCH ACROSS THE THREE PHASES OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

From the current research outlined above, Van der Riet (1997) concludes that the functional partnership between educators and parents is indeed limited, particularly because the roles of the parent in the informal context are misunderstood and undervalued by educators. She argues that at present, there seems to be a mismatch between the operating of education systems and the multi-sourced learning patterns of children and reiterates the need for the perspectives of parents and educators about knowledge, its value, construction and development to be further explored. These perspectives need to be revealed to the stakeholders in schools so that they can be heard and appreciated.

Because very little research has taken place in the field of formal and informal education and educator/parent partnerships, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the small body of research that has already taken place and which has been aimed at creating active partnerships between parents and educators through the medium of authentic and genuine dialogue. While Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies focused on only one of the educational phases, this study will explore what parents and educators across

the three educational phases, i.e. Junior Primary, Senior Primary and High School, consider to be important learning content for a child of school going age, who is considered to be responsible for its instruction and if there is a shift in these perceptions as one moves through the educational phases.

2.12 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Macbeth (1996) argues that while accepting the value of a partnership between parents and educators, such a partnership should encompass all the child's significant learning and not only school-centered objectives. He also argues that research about children's significant learning should switch emphasis from the school as a learning centre to the home/family as a learning centre, with parents seen as key educators. Both Macbeth (1996) and Van der Riet (1994; 1996; 1997) suggest that the informal context, i.e. the home, is as important in the overall education of a child as the formal context, i.e. the school, is. By implication this makes the parental role in the educational process as significant as that of the teacher's role. Macbeth (1996) suggests that in order to address the mismatch between formal learning and a child's "multi-sourced learning patterns" (p. 4) a degree of functional overlap between the formal and informal divide needs to be achieved. Scribner and Cole (1973) point out that the better the fit between these two contexts, the more effective learning will be. Van der Riet (1997) however, points out that at present, the situation in South African schools does not allow for this functional overlap between the formal and informal processes to take place, due to the fact that many parents are in a marginalized position. She argues that this capacity needs to be built and attitudes about the relevance of knowledge need to change. Schools need to see parents as important assets in this process and not as worthless. More importantly than this, however, is that parents must see themselves as important in the knowledge production of the school, as Van der Riet (1997) emphasizes. One step towards this is to make explicit what it is that parents and educators believe about knowledge; what they value and why; and who they think should be responsible for the management of this knowledge. It is important to remember that this type of process necessitates a working partnership between parents and educators and that fundamental to an effective relationship is communication in which parents and educators are able to hear each other and appreciate their respective points of view. Without communication, nothing can ever be achieved.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research design will be explained. A discussion of the research approaches and methodology, as well as data collection and analysis procedures will be outlined, concluding with a note on the ethical procedures used in research.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Given the nature of this research, which relied upon the researcher's analysis and evaluation of verbal information given by participants by way of focus groups, an interpretive (qualitative) paradigm was adopted. This method was chosen as it provides relevant and useful information to the researcher about the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action (Durrheim, 1999). A qualitative approach to this study was useful because it was important to get the actor's accounts of their beliefs about education and to explore the values, which underpin these beliefs.

This research project also adopted an exploratory research approach, which aims to add its findings to the research implemented by Van der Riet (1997) and Danckwerts (2002).

3.3 THE SAMPLE

In order to access educator and parent views across the three levels of education, i.e. Grade 3 (\pm age 9/10), Grade 7 (\pm age 12/13), Grade 10 (\pm age 15/16), two schools in the Pietermaritzburg area – i.e. a junior primary and a senior primary school, and one school in the Pinetown area – i.e. a high school, were approached (initially via a letter, attached in Appendix 1, and then through an interview with the Principal) and were willing to engage in the activity. These were all former Model C schools. As with Van der Riet's (1997) study, it was intended that parents from these schools would come from a wide range of socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, and therefore provide some diversity in the groups.

The schools selected by Van der Riet's (1997) study were a former Model C and former Model D school that served a less privileged socio-economic group. The school selected by Danckwerts' (2002) study was a private school that served a higher socio-economic group. The schools selected in this study, as mentioned above, were all former Model C

schools that had children from different cultural and economic backgrounds. The difference with this study was that schools from all three of the educational phases were used. This was considered important so as to explore to what degree their findings would apply across the phases of the educational process.

The research and its purposes were explained to the three Principals and it was agreed that they would approach a selection of educators and parents (on the researcher's behalf) and give an explanation of what would be required. All those parents and educators approached by the Principals professed interest. As with the studies undertaken by Van der Riet (1997) and Danckwerts (2002), it can again be argued that those participants who were approached already have an attitude of partnership towards the schools and therefore the sample was biased. This bias is duly acknowledged.

Six focus groups, comprising 17 educators and 16 parents were created on the basis of availability of the participants and a time and venue were arranged for the proposed meetings. Even though these schools, as mentioned above, were all multi-cultural, all the participants in the parent and educator focus groups were white, with the exception of two Indian parent participants. Because of this imbalance in the racial/cultural make up of the focus groups, it can be argued that the sample, and the information extracted from the participants, will be biased. This bias is duly acknowledged, but was unfortunately unavoidable, due to the process of sample selection, detailed below.

Table 1 (a) & (b) below gives the breakdown of the participants in each focus group:

TABLE 1: SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

a) EDUCATOR FOCUS GROUPS

	No. of participants	Category	Race Group				Male	Female
			White	Black	Indian	Coloured		
	6	Junior Primary	6	0	0	0	0	6
	6	Senior Primary	6	0	0	0	0	6
	5	High School	5	0	0	0	1	4
Totals	17		17	0	0	0	1	16

b) PARENT FOCUS GROUPS

	No. of participants	Category	Race Group				Male	Female
			White	Black	Indian	Coloured		
	5	Junior Primary	4	0	1	0	3	2
	5	Senior Primary	4	0	1	0	2	3
	6	High School	6	0	0	0	3	3
Totals	16		14	0	2	0	8	8

3.3.1 THE AVAILABILITY OF THE SAMPLE

The availability of schools to participate in this research study became problematic when it came to the High School. The first Junior Primary School and the first Senior Primary School approached for permission to conduct research in their schools were willing to participate in this study. They were very willing to help in anyway they could and it was a pleasure to run the focus groups with educators and parents of their schools. This was, however, not the case with a High School and a number of High Schools in Pietermaritzburg had to be approached before a school in the Pinetown area was willing to participate in the study. Reasons for non-participation included: “The educators are too busy and will not be able to give up time to be in a focus group”, “the Governing Body does not think that the research will work in their school”; and “We don’t think that the parents will be willing to participate in this study”.

The fact that these schools did not want to participate in this research study is symptomatic of their view on parent’s participation, i.e. that as educators, they have more important things to worry about than looking at ways of establishing partnerships with parents, and that parents are already not ‘normally’ participative. One wonders whether the results would have been different with these “not available” schools?

3.3.2 SAMPLING METHODS

3.3.2.1 NON-PROBABILITY, PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

In accordance with Miles and Huberman’s (1994) description of qualitative sampling methods, the selection of the sample used in this study was ‘theory-driven’, or specifically chosen to fit the conceptual framework and purpose of the study, which was to explore parent and educator perceptions of education. Non-probability sampling

involves not knowing the probability that a person will be chosen to be part of the sample (Bailey, 1987). It is much less complicated, much less expensive and may be done on a spur-of-the-moment basis to take advantage of available (and perhaps unanticipated) respondents without the statistical complexity of probability sampling (Bailey, 1987). A non-probability sample may prove adequate if the researcher has no desire to generalise the findings beyond the sample to the greater population, as is the case with this research, or if the study is merely a trial run for a larger study (Bailey, 1987).

When dealing with focus groups, sampling is often purposive, in that one is looking for particular types of participants, according to what one already knows about the field, so as to include a range of perspectives. The researcher will ask targeted individuals to participate, if necessary providing some kind of incentive (Kelly, 1999).

The sampling procedure was thus non-probability purposive sampling, which, according to Kerlinger (1986) is characterized by the use of judgement and a deliberate effort to obtain representative samples by including presumably typical areas or groups within the sample – i.e. the participants were deliberately selected to fit the roles of parent or educator.

3.3.2.2 CRITERION-BASED SAMPLING

Given that the key data collection procedure was that of focus groups and that it was necessary to stimulate discussion and debate around specific foci of the study, the sample was also criterion-based since participants were chosen for anticipated personal characteristics such as confidence and verbal eloquence (Danckwerts, 2002). This would, however, be problematic if the participants chosen did not meet these anticipated characteristics. A potential bias with choosing individual participants in this manner could be that the researcher excludes a person because of a perception that they may not meet the criteria laid out for selection.

As the study only comprised 6 small focus groups, the data was information rich in an attempt to compensate for its small size (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Because of the sample's considerably small size and non-randomness, the findings of this study are descriptive and informative rather than representative (Kerlinger, 1986; Durrheim, 1999).

3.3.2.3 CONVENIENCE SAMPLING

Besides the sampling being non-probability, purposive and criterion-based, it is also convenience sampling. According to Kelly (1999) convenience sampling refers to taking one's sample on the basis of the availability of participants. As with Danckwerts' (2002) study, this was the greatest weakness in the sampling frame used for this study. It is therefore noted that the procedures may have skewed the findings, simply because the participants may not represent the views of the 'average' person. Because of this, it is noted that the generalisability of this project is limited (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1998). Given the nature of this sample, it was anticipated that the results might differ in some respects from those already in existence (Van der Riet, 1997; Danckwerts, 2002). Since this area of interest is relatively under-researched, it is hoped that these findings will nonetheless both reinforce and add to current hypotheses and generate further investigation (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1998).

3.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

3.4.1 FOCUS GROUPS

Using the Dialogue Game as the research tool, the structure and process of the game required the use of a focus group methodology (Morgan, 1992). 'Focus group' is a general term given to a research interview conducted with a group. A focus group is typically a group of people who share a similar type of experience, but who are not 'naturally' constituted as an existing social group. Focus groups are often selected so as to reflect a heterogeneous cross section of interests and attitudes within the parameters of whatever main criterion qualifies them for membership (Kelly, 1999).

3.4.2 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

3.4.2.1 THE DIALOGUE GAME

The Dialogue Game is the primary research tool of this study (see Literature Review).

3.4.2.2 THE PROCESS OF THE DIALOGUE GAME

The quintessence of the Dialogue Game is for the players to decide what knowledge is important for children to learn and where it should be taught. This 'knowledge' is contained on packs of 80 cards and is best played in small groups of 5 to 10 people. The game is essentially played in two parts, with a facilitator, i.e. the researcher, and group of participants. The first part of the game requires the researcher to work through the pack

of cards with the players – allowing them to decide whether or not a particular aged child (in the case of this study, a Gr. 3 [Junior Primary], Gr. 7 [Senior Primary] and Gr. 10 [High School] child) should know about the subject matter indicated on each card. Each card contains a unit of knowledge such as *“able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer”*, *“know that some waste produces are bio-degradable and some are non-biodegradable”*, *“able to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc.)”* or *“understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle – e.g. KFC, McDonalds”*. If it is decided that the child should know about what is on the card, it is placed in a “yes” pile, and if not, on a “no” pile on the board.

The second part of the process requires the players to use only the cards in the “yes” pile to decide whether educators, parents or both are responsible for the instruction of this knowledge. The cards are then placed in the corresponding category on the board: “educator”, “parent” or “both”. The role of the researcher is to promote and guide discussion around the choice of card. The players are prompted to express the rationale for their decisions and encouraged to explore their own deeper belief systems and practices (Van der Riet, 1997).

3.4.2.3 SAMPLING THE ITEMS OF THE DIALOGUE GAME

Each pack of cards comprises 80 cards with different types of knowledge on them. Since it was predicted that all 80 cards could not be covered in a single session, 20 cards were selected.

In order to select these cards, the sampling of items was broken down into 3 stages. The first stage consisted of choosing all cards containing the same knowledge in the two versions of the Dialogue Game, i.e. the Primary and Secondary versions. Once all the same cards had been taken out, the second stage consisted of choosing cards that had similar meanings on them – i.e. cards that reflected a slight variation in the wording. The third stage was to choose cards that had the same category of knowledge on them, even if they did not necessarily contain the exact same knowledge. Table 2 depicts the stages in the sampling process, as described above.

TABLE 2: CARDS CHOSEN AT THE THREE STAGES OF THE SAMPLING PROCESS

STAGE 1: Same cards	STAGE 2: Variation in wording	STAGE 3: Same knowledge category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to plan a simple household budget. • Able to recognise common trees. • Have respect for other people's property. • Have respect for other people's religious views. • Be conscientious about not dropping litter. • Understand that smoking can endanger health. • Able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to co-operate with others in a team activity; & Able to co-operate with others in a joint activity. • Able to plan a simple house-hold budget; & Able to plan a basic household budget. • Have discussed questions about death; & Have discussed death and mourning. • Able to swim; & Able to swim 200 metres. • Have taken part regularly in at least one sport or hobby; & To have been an active voluntary participant in at least one sport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer; & Able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer. • Have visited a museum; & Know about the art movements Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism. • Know that some waste materials can be recycled; & Know that some waste products are biodegradable and some are non-biodegradable. • Able to sew a button on a garment; & Able to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc.). • Have a basic knowledge of how laws are made; & Understand what are meant by legislative, executive and judicial powers. • Know standard symbols on traffic signs; & Be familiar with the rules of the road. • Ability to assess television commercials; & Capacity to assess television programmes critically. • Basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans; & Be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship. • Understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle - e.g. McDonalds, KFC; & Understand the elements of a "balanced diet".

Once this was done, the cards were sorted into the six 'knowledge categories' constructed by Van der Riet (1997). These categories include:

1. Life Skills/Body;
2. Language/Communication;
3. Science/Mathematics/Technology;
4. Biology/Natural Sciences;
5. General Knowledge/Sport/Other;
6. Values.

It is important to note that not all the categories of knowledge are equally represented, as

in the studies conducted by Van der Riet (1997) and Danckwerts (2002) because of the method of item sampling used. The categorisation of knowledge and cards used are shown in Appendices 3 – 6.

3.4.2.3 ADMINISTRATION OF THE DIALOGUE GAME

During the process of playing the game, the focus group sessions were recorded on audio-cassette and the researcher took notes, so that all relevant information could be collected for analysis purposes. As Van der Riet (1997) points out, in essence the game is not meant to be ‘researched’; therefore the need to record all the information constrains the process of engagement with the task. However, in researching the game, it reveals significant issues in parent-educator interactions and is therefore necessary.

3.4.2.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The research data was collected through the process of actually playing the Dialogue Game. Data was generated in two main forms. Firstly, as with Van der Riet’s (1997) and Danckwerts’ (2002) studies, the content of what knowledge was thought to be important, and where it should be taught, was recorded. This was done through noting the positioning of the cards on the board. Reasons for this step in the procedure was to find out what knowledge was important and why. The apportioning of teaching responsibility to the “school”, “home” or “both” pile was likewise noted. Reasons for this step in the procedure was to find out who was responsible for the teaching of knowledge and why.

The second component of data collection consisted of recording the players’ reasons about the importance of a card or the responsibility of teaching that knowledge on audiocassette. This occurred through the researcher facilitating discussion within the game, as one would do in a focus group. The players were encouraged to explore their own perceptions and rationale behind the apportioning of each card to its pile on the board. Once the focus groups had been run, the audiocassettes and researcher’s notes were transcribed and analysed in the manner described below.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.5.1 DATA MAKING

As with Danckwerts’ (2002) study and in accordance with the steps outlined by Stewart and Shamdasani (1998), the raw data was first transformed into units of information that

would render it meaningful for analysis. This was done through a three-step process called 'data making'. The process of data categorisation, on a descriptive level, was guided by Van der Riet's (1997) study. The first step involved organising the data into three broad categories, i.e. "what knowledge is important"; "responsibility for knowledge" and "perceptions of partnerships". Each of these categories was then further divided into sections which Stewart and Shamdasani (1998) call recording units. These recording units comprised parent and educator opinions, beliefs and rationales, which were examined within the context of knowledge on each card as it was presented to the participants.

3.5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The basic unit of analysis is 'words' which are interpreted by the researcher. Typically the focus of qualitative research is complex and broad, as opposed to the concise and narrow focus of tightly controlled quantitative research; in fact the researcher and subject are part of a two-way process during which understanding develops (Wilson, 1985; Burns and Grove, 1987; Webb and Askham, 1987).

As with Van der Riet (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies, the data was analysed using a basic content analysis approach (Morgan, 1992; Stewart and Shamdasani, 1998). This process occurred after the data had been collected. Van der Riet's (1997) study guided the process of placing the data into the various the categories mentioned above, i.e. life skills/body; language/communication; general knowledge/sport/other; science/mathematics/ technology; biology/natural sciences; and values.

The process of data analysis included the following 4 steps (Van der Riet, 1997):

1. Organising the data into the following groups:
 - a. what cards were chosen or rejected;
 - b. which categories the cards fell into; and
 - c. who chose or rejected the cards.

This information was recorded in tabular form and analysed for similarities and differences across the three phases of schooling as well as across the parent and educator groups in each school.

2. The verbal interaction relating to the selection of cards was analysed to access the

participant's criteria for valuing or rejecting knowledge.

3. Organising the cards into the following groups:

- a. what cards were chosen;
- b. in which categories were the cards placed – i.e. in which site (home/ school/ both); and
- c. by whom.

This information was also recorded in tabular form and analysed for similarities and differences across the three phases of schooling as well as across the parent and educator groups in each school.

4. The verbal interaction related to the placing of cards and who provided what reasons for placing the cards in particular sites was analysed. This analysis of the player's reasoning patterns accessed their perception of the role of the home and school, and their perspectives of partnership between the two contexts.

3.5.3 DATA INTERPRETATION

As with Danckwerts' (2002) study, the analysed data was interpreted within a conceptual framework informed by existing research and theory. Common themes regarding educator/parent perceptions and assumptions were identified across the categories and compared with the theories and findings described in the Literature Review of this study.

3.6 ETHICAL PROCEDURES USED IN RESEARCH

According to Burns (2000) ethics should be the foundation of any research being undertaken. Due to the fact that human subjects are involved in research, ethical problems are likely to occur. Therefore, researchers must be aware of ethical considerations involved in voluntary participation, deception, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality and the right to discontinue (Burns, 2000). One must also take into consideration fairness, honesty, openness of intent, disclosure of methods and an informed willingness on the part of the subject to participate voluntarily in the research activity (Burns, 2000). Furthermore, no individual should be asked to co-operate in any research that will result in a sense of self-denigration, embarrassment or a violation of ethical or moral standards or principles (Burns, 2000).

In this research project, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. No participants' names or specific information that could be linked to any particular individual participant were used. Participants were fully aware that research was being conducted and were not misled or exposed to embarrassment in any form. This was ensured through the careful explanation of the procedure and purpose of the research project beforehand and the use of informed consent forms, which allowed the participants to withhold information if they wished or leave the process at any time. Each participant was requested to sign an informed consent form, (attached in Appendix 5).

All the taped focus groups were replayed in private and no reference to the name of the speaker was made. Anonymity was preserved by naming teachers as "T1, T2, T3, T4" and so forth and parents as 'P1, P2, P3, P4' and so forth. These tapes were then destroyed once the transcription process was completed.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data collected from the six focus groups will be analysed and the results presented. The results are presented within the three phases of the educational process, i.e. Junior Primary, Senior Primary and High School, under the following three categories: what knowledge is important, responsibility for knowledge and perceptions of partnerships.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACCEPTED AND REJECTED KNOWLEDGE

The main reason for rejecting a particular card was because the various focus groups did not feel that children at a particular educational level, i.e. Grade 3 (\pm age 9/10), Grade 7 (\pm 12/13), Grade 10 (\pm 15/16), should necessarily be exposed to or need to know this type of knowledge at this age. The main reason for placing cards in either the home or school column was because the various focus groups felt that this knowledge should be taught exclusively at home or at school and that there are no overlaps between the two environments. The main reason for placing cards in the both column was because it was agreed by the various focus groups that it was essential to expose the child to this knowledge in both the home and the school environments – i.e. there are overlaps between the two environments. This knowledge was however, rated with differing degrees of importance and different rationale were given for their acceptance of it.

Table 3 below, provides an illustration of what knowledge was accepted or rejected by the various focus groups, according to the categories of knowledge outlined in the previous chapter, including where the knowledge was placed if it was accepted, i.e. home, school or both. ['b' indicates knowledge that was perceived to be taught at both home and school; 'x' indicates rejected knowledge; 'h' indicates knowledge that was perceived to be taught only at home; and 's' indicates knowledge that was perceived to be taught only at school.

TABLE 3: KNOWLEDGE ACCEPTED AND REJECTED BY THE EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

Knowledge Category	Educators			Parents		
	JP	SP	HS	JP	SP	HS
Life Skills/Body						
Have discussed questions about death / Have discussed death & mourning	b	b	b	h	b	b
Able to plan a simple household budget	x	h	b	b	x	b
Have a basic knowledge of how laws are made / Understand what are meant by legislative, executive & judicial powers	b	b	x	x	x	s
Able to sew a button on a garment / Ability to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc.)	b	h	h	b	b	h
Understand that smoking can endanger health / Understand that smoking can damage health	b	b	b	b	b	b
Understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle - e.g. KFC, McDonalds / Understand the elements of a balanced diet	b	h	h	b	b	b
Language/Communication						
Ability to criticise television commercials / Capacity to assess television programmes critically	b	b	b	b	h	b
Science/Mathematics/Technology						
Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer / Able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer	s	s	b	b	s	b
Biology/Natural Sciences						
Able to recognise common trees	b	x	x	s	x	b
Basic knowledge of sex & reproduction in humans / Be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship	b	b	b	h	b	b
Know that some waste materials can be recycled / Know that some waste materials are bio-degradable & some are non-biodegradable	h	b	b	s	h	b
Sport/General Knowledge/Other						
Able to swim / Able to swim 200 metres	b	s	b	x	h	b
Have taken part regularly in at least one sport or hobby / To have been a voluntary participant in at least one sport	b	b	h	b	b	b
Have visited a museum / Know about the art movements Impressionism, Cubism & Expressionism	b	x	x	s	b	x
Know standard symbols on traffic signs / Be familiar with the rules of the road	b	b	h	b	b	b
Values						
Have respect for other people's religious views	b	b	b	b	h	b
Have respect for other people's property	b	s	b	b	h	b
Able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion	b	b	b	b	h	b
Ability to co-operate with others in a team activity / Able to co-operate with others in a joint activity	b	b	b	b	b	b
Be conscientious about not dropping litter	b	b	b	b	b	b

4.2.2 REASONS FOR REJECTING KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge was rejected because it was perceived not to relate to the world of the child and was therefore seen to be of no use to the child, e.g. "have a basic knowledge of how

laws are made / understand what are meant by legislative, executive & judicial powers"; *"able to recognise common trees"*; and *"have visited a museum / know about the art movements Impressionism, Cubism & Expressionism"*. What was significant here was that the parents used this reason more than the educators did, indicating perhaps that they had different criteria for valuing knowledge.

Knowledge was rejected or placed in the school category if the resources were seen to be unavailable to actualise that knowledge, e.g. *"able to select and retrieve texts stored on a computer / able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer"*; and *"able to swim / able to swim 200 metres"*. Even though the game required the participants to indicate what they thought *should* take place, the educators and parents had a particularly difficult time doing this and tended to state what *actually* took place.

Knowledge was rejected because it was perceived to be inappropriate, useless or irrelevant to the child or because it placed too many demands on the child for a particular level or age, i.e. Grade 3 (\pm age 9/10), Grade 7 (\pm age 12/13) and Grade 10 (\pm age 15/16), e.g. *"able to plan a simple household budget"*; *"basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans"*; *"able to recognise common trees"*; and *"have visited a museum / know about the art movements Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism"*. Educators and parents rejected knowledge that placed too many demands on the child or was deemed inappropriate for the age of the child.

The age of the child was also used as a criterion to value knowledge. The child's level of ability and interest in certain types of knowledge was also used as a criterion. The parents, as opposed to the educators gave this as a reason. This might be an indication of the way in which parents see the child as a person, whereas educators tend to focus on the child as learner, or, as a pupil, where affective issues are not primary.

4.3 CATEGORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

The results that follow will be presented in three categories: i.e. what knowledge is important; responsibilities for knowledge; and perceptions of partnerships. As with Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies, the general themes within these categories will serve as the framework for the analysis. These general themes comprise the perceptions, beliefs and underlying assumptions of the educators and parents and

quotes from the raw data will be used to illustrate major points. In the interests of anonymity, the letters E1, E2, E3 ... and P1, P2, P3 ... will be used in the extracts to represent educators and parents, respectively. Each notation represents what a particular speaker said. Data differing from existing findings and current theory will be discussed in Chapter 5: Discussion of Results.

4.3.1 WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT?

This part of the analysis consists of a comparison of the three phases of the educational process and the analysis focuses on the educator's and parent's perceptions of knowledge and which criteria were used in the acceptance or rejection of this knowledge. Both the parents and the educators selected cards on the basis of their perceived usefulness or relevance to a child at a particular level, i.e. Grade 3 (\pm age 9/10), Grade 7 (\pm age 12/13) and Grade 10 (\pm age 15/16).

4.3.1.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE KNOWLEDGE CATEGORIES

Even though the educators and parents in all three phases of the educational process believed that different knowledge cards in the various categories were important, essentially they believed that all of the 6 knowledge categories were important for children across the three phases to learn in some manner or form. They appeared to agree that knowledge from the Values category included essential life skills that taught children respect, tolerance and socially acceptable and appropriate ways of relating to each their peers and others. The educators and parents also tended to believe that knowledge from the Life Skills/Body; Sport/General Knowledge/Other; and Science/Mathematics/Technology categories prepared the child for the "real" world and encouraged them to develop independent thinking, responsible acting and commitment. They also alluded to the fact that this type of knowledge tended to equip the child with life skills for the future and made them aware of the possible dangers in the world. The educators and parents also appeared to reason that the knowledge from the Biology/Natural Sciences category made children aware that the environment was precious and that they needed to be taught that they have to try and do everything in their power to preserve it. They reasoned that knowledge from the Language/ Communication category was important for children as they are highly influenced by what appears on television and therefore need the skills of being able to assess what they are watching in order to make sound judgements and

decisions in life.

It is important to note, however, that a belief in the importance of these knowledge categories could be context specific to the schools that participated in this research and can therefore not be generalised to the greater population.

4.3.1.2 THE THREE PHASES COMPARED

The following section is discussed using the main trends found throughout the focus groups.

a) FORMAL KNOWLEDGE vs INFORMAL KNOWLEDGE

From the focus groups held with the various educator groups across the three phases, it became evident that the Junior and Senior Primary educators placed a different emphasis on what they regarded as important knowledge for a 9/10 year old and a 12/13 year old child than the High School educators placed on what they regarded as important knowledge for a 15/16 year old child.

The High School educators tended to rate cards containing abstract knowledge and skills, such as *“able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer”*; and *“capacity to assess television programmes critically”*, as more important in the education of a child than the Junior and Senior Primary educators did. It appeared that the High School educators valued knowledge that was curriculum focused and rejected knowledge that was seen to have no relevance to the child in a school context, such as *“understand what are meant by legislative, executive and judicial powers”*; *“able to recognise common trees”*; *“ability to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc)”*; *“understand the elements of a balanced diet”*; *“to have been a voluntary participant in at least one sport”*; and *“be familiar with the rules of the road”*. The Matriculation examination at the end of the academic year appeared to be the motivating factor for the High School educators’ valuing of knowledge, which begs the question, what happens to a child at the end of their Matric year when they finish school and have only learned predominantly curriculum focused knowledge?

For the Junior and Senior Primary educators, on the other hand, the motivating factor in assessing the importance or relevance of knowledge appeared to be more about age

appropriateness than curriculum. They appeared to be more open minded and tended to ask themselves if a particular card contained knowledge that was age appropriate for a child or not? For the Junior and Senior Primary educators, almost all the cards were rated as important, with the exception of *“able to plan a simple household budget”*; *“basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans”*; *“able to recognise common trees”*; and *“have visited a museum”*, which the educators rated as not being age appropriate for a child of either 9/10 and 12/13 years old. It is important to note that both Junior and Senior Primary educators did rate knowledge which required certain resources they felt schools would have easier access to, such as *“able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer”*; and *“able to swim”*, as important.

Unlike the High School educators, the Junior and Senior Primary parents appeared to value all types of knowledge equally and relate it to the relevance and importance of knowledge to a child’s everyday reality, both in and out of the educational context. These parents tended to rate abstract knowledge such as *“ability to criticise television commercials”* and *“able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer”*, which had been rated highly by the High School educators, as highly as they rated informal knowledge like *“understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle – e.g. KFC, MacDonald’s”*; *“know standard symbols on traffic signs”*; and *“be conscientious about not dropping litter”*.

Unlike the Junior and Senior Primary parents, the High School parents had more difficulty deciding on what they regarded as important knowledge. This was because they tended, as a group, to lean towards the same direction as the High School educators, i.e. that abstract knowledge was more important to know than informal knowledge. This is illustrated in Extract 1 below, around the knowledge card *“ability to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc.)”*. Despite all P2’s efforts to try and convince his fellow parents that children need to learn a wide variety of knowledge and practical skills and not just that which is taught in school, the parents decide that a life skill like sewing a hem was not as important in the educational process of a child, as learning formal, academic knowledge, like computers or art.

Extract 1:

High School Parents

P1: As a parent, I don’t want to be paying school fees for my son to be taught how to sew a hem.

- There are far more important things that he needs to be taught at school.
- P2: That's such a gender biased statement that you have just made.
- P1: No it isn't. Yes, I may have said 'son' unconsciously, but it applies to my daughter as well.
- P2: Why though?
- P1: No, for the very argument - it's got nothing to do with gender. She's got more important things to learn at school.
- P2: Like what?
- P1: Well - lots of things!
- P2: Oh, for goodness sake!
- P1: O.k. - she's got to learn the difference between legislative judicial and executive power!
- P2: Oh, so she's going to learn stuff that is of no value! Because that's what school largely teaches you. About 90% of no value!
- It's kind of weird when you put it like that. You want your daughter to learn the difference between legislative, judicial and executive power but you don't want your child to learn an actual craft?
- But it is an important agenda - it's a creative outlet. So what do you want school - to just be academic? There's an aspect of child's schooling that's got to be creative and sewing is creative.
- P1: Yes, but you can be creative without knowing or learning how to sew a hem.
- P2: So let's take Art!
- P3: Stunning!
- P2: Should they be learning art at school?
- P3: Yes, most definitely?
- P2: So then why is this not an art issue? This is a creative outlet - you're working with your hands and you're sewing.
- P1: Yes, but it's not sewing - it's sewing a *hem* and you don't need to know how to do it to be creative.
- P2: So when we are looking at the development of children, we're talking about fine and gross motor skills. What is a better thing to develop these skills than working with your hands? Why does this not fall under the development of fine and gross motor skills?
- P1: O.k. so let's back track a little. I've got in my mind, a 16-year-old. Maybe if you take school ... We're saying by 16 should they know and if they should know by 16 who should have had a role to play in it? Should it have just been parents or should it just be school.
- P4: O.k. so if we re-frame it to include pre-primary or junior primary, then I would agree - but I'm looking at a 16-year-old.
- P2: Yes, but children don't just go from 0 - 16 - there's a process that they have to go through! We're saying by 16 should they know and if they should know by 16 who should have had a role to play in it? Should it have just been parents or should it just be school?

The above extract is one of many examples of the lengthy discussions of the High School parents during their focus group. Almost all other knowledge cards caused much of the same sort of debate.

It is important to note that although the researched provided facilitation amongst the participants in each of the focus groups, and did probe into what the participants were saying, it must be acknowledged that the facilitation and probing could have been utilised better and been more effective in extracting information from the participants. The ineffective facilitation and lack of probing therefore hindered the amount of information that the participants gave and this oversight is duly acknowledged.

b) DISCUSSION AND DEBATE BY EDUCATORS

In most of the discussions around what knowledge cards were considered important by educators and parents, it was interesting to note that for most of the knowledge cards, the educators across the three phases, i.e. Junior Primary, Senior Primary and High School,

appeared unwilling to debate or discuss, at length, their reasonings behind their given answers. They appeared to have made up their minds about whether the knowledge card was important/appropriate or not for a certain aged child even before it had been completely read out and this resulted in their answers being as short as “yes”; “no”; “both”; “definitely”; “home”; and “school”. One of many examples of this lack of discussion or debate appeared in the knowledge category: Values, with the card “*be conscientious about not dropping litter*”. No debate or conversation took place around this card and none of the educators gave any substantial reasons to why it was important for a child to be conscientious about not dropping litter; they merely said that it was. The process of deciding whether a child should know a particular piece of knowledge appeared to be an easy task for the educators to do.

A pertinent question that needs to be raised at this point is why this lack of discussion between the educators took place? Why were the educators so quick to decide about what a child was expected to know at a particular age and why did they think they were the ones who should decide? This lack of willingness by the educators to discuss or debate the cards could possibly strengthen the argument that they see themselves as being knowledgeable, “expert” and knowing what children should and should not know or learn at a certain age.

Unlike the educators, all the parents across the three phases appeared more willing to debate and discuss the knowledge cards at greater length. They did not appear to think that all the knowledge cards were as straight forward as the educators did and therefore had to discuss and debate around them in a circuitous manner, before they came up with their final answers. This may be indicative of a more intuitive, open-minded, but less confident approach to decisions regarding education, perhaps stemming from their unfamiliarity with its processes. This could also have been because the parents did not only see the knowledge learned at school as being important or because they had probably not discussed it before, or because they are more individualised in ideas because they have not had training in the curriculum or syllabus.

Table 4 below illustrates the cards that were debated and those that were not debated by the various focus groups. [‘x’ indicates those cards where a lack of discussion took place and ‘d’ indicates those cards where discussion took place.]

TABLE 4: KNOWLEDGE CARDS DECIDED ON WITH/WITHOUT DISCUSSION OR DEBATE

Knowledge Categories & Cards	Educators			Parents		
	JP	SP	HS	JP	SP	HS
Life Skills/Body						
Have discussed questions about death / Have discussed death & mourning	x	x	d	d	x	d
Able to plan a simple household budget	d	d	d	d	d	x
Have a basic knowledge of how laws are made / Understand what are meant by legislative, executive & judicial powers	x	d	d	x	d	d
Able to sew a button on a garment / Ability to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc.)	d	x	d	d	d	d
Understand that smoking can endanger health / Understand that smoking can damage health	x	x	x	x	x	x
Understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle, e.g. KFC, McDonalds / Understand the elements of a balanced diet	x	x	d	d	d	x
Language/Communication						
Ability to criticise television commercials / Capacity to assess television programmes critically	d	x	x	d	d	d
Science/Mathematics/Technology						
Able to select and retrieve texts stored on a computer / Able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer	d	x	x	x	d	d
Biology/Natural Sciences						
Able to recognise common trees	x	d	x	x	d	x
Basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans / Be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship	d	x	d	d	d	d
Know that some waste materials can be recycled / Know that some waste materials are bio-degradable & some are non-biodegradable	x	x	x	x	d	d
Sport/General Knowledge/Other						
Able to swim / Able to swim 200 metres	x	x	x	x	d	x
Have taken part regularly in at least one sport or hobby / To have been a voluntary participant in at least one sport	d	x	d	x	d	x
Have visited a museum / Know about the art movements Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism	x	x	x	x	d	d
Know standard symbols on traffic signs / Be familiar with the rules of the road	x	x	d	x	d	d
Values						
Have respect for other people's religious views	d	x	d	x	d	d
Have respect for other people's property	x	d	d	x	d	x
Able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ability to co-operate with others in a team activity / Able to co-operate with others in a joint activity	x	x	x	x	d	x
Be conscientious about not dropping litter	x	x	x	x	x	x

In conclusion, from the above results, it can be seen that all educators and parents essentially believed that all 6 knowledge categories were important for children to learn across the three phases of the educational process. They did, however, believe that different knowledge cards and categories were important.

The High School educators and parents tended to rate cards containing abstract knowledge and skills, i.e. knowledge that was curriculum focused, as important, while the Junior and Senior Primary educators and parents tended to value all types of knowledge as important – with the educators assessing importance or relevance according to age appropriateness rather than the curriculum and the parents relating importance and relevance to a child's everyday reality, both in and out of the educational context.

In most of the discussions around the importance of knowledge cards, it was interesting to note that all the educators across the three phases appeared unwilling to debate or discuss, at length, their reasonings behind their given answers. All the parents across the three phases, on the other hand, appeared more willing to debate and discuss the knowledge cards at greater length.

4.3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR KNOWLEDGE

This section deals with the perceptions that parents and educators in the various phases of the educational process have as to who is or who should be responsible for the education of knowledge deemed important to a child at a particular level, i.e. Grade 3 (\pm age 9/10), Grade 7 (\pm age 12/13) and Grade 10 (\pm age 15/16).

4.3.2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE KNOWLEDGE CATEGORIES

According to all the educators and parents across the three phases, it was generally agreed that the majority of the cards were the responsibility of both the home and the school environments to teach to children, with the exception of the cards depicted in Table 5.

TABLE 5: KNOWLEDGE REJECTED OR PLACED IN THE HOME OR SCHOOL CATEGORIES

		Reject	Home	School
Educators	JP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to plan a simple household budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer
	SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to recognise common trees • Have visited a museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to plan a simple household budget • Able to sew a button on a garment • Understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle – e.g. KFC, McDonalds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer • Able to swim • Have respect for other people's property
	HS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to recognise common trees • Know about the art movements Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism • Understand what are meant by legislative, executive and judicial powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc) • To have been a voluntary participant in at least one sport • Understand the elements of a balanced diet • Be familiar with the rules of the road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to swim 200 meters • Able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer
Parents	JP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a basic knowledge of how laws are made • Able to swim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have discussed questions about death • Basic knowledge of sex & reproduction in humans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to recognise common trees • Know that some waste materials can be recycled
	SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to plan a simple household budget • Have basic knowledge of how laws are made • Able to recognise common trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to criticise television commercials • Know that some waste materials are recycled • Able to swim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer
	HS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know about the art movements Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand what are meant by legislative, executive and judicial powers

The knowledge cards that were deemed the responsibility of both the home and the school environments will be discussed in more detail in the paragraphs to follow.

4.3.2.2 THE THREE PHASES COMPARED

The following section is discussed using the main trends found throughout the focus groups.

a) FORMAL LEARNING HAPPENS AT SCHOOL

In the majority of discussions around who should teach the knowledge depicted on the various knowledge cards, all the educators and parents across the three phases appeared in agreement that the school context should teach knowledge which was perceived as

technological and abstract in nature, such as the cards *“ability to criticise television commercials / capacity to assess television programmes critically”*; and *“able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer / able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer”* – the underlying assumption being that educators had the specialist training to do this.

In some cases, formal learning was also understood to comprise the use of certain resources which parents did not necessarily have access to. This lack of resources was a great motivating factor in deciding who should teach a particular piece of knowledge, and all the educators and parents believed that resources like computers and swimming pools would not necessarily be as readily available in all home environments for parents to be able to teach their children, therefore these types of knowledge would have to be the responsibility of the school with the home providing more of a supporting role than an educative role. To add to this fact, all the educators and parents agreed that even if the resources like computers and swimming pools were more readily available in homes in the South African context, that because of what appeared to be a ‘generation gap’, the parents would possibly not be able to operate the computers or be able to swim, therefore it would be of no use in teaching their children this knowledge, therefore it was the responsibility of the educators to deal with these knowledge cards. The Junior and Senior Primary and High School educators and parents illustrate these points quite aptly in Extracts 2 and 3 below.

Note: These extracts come from different parts of the focus groups and are therefore not necessarily a continuous discussion.

Extract 2:

Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer/Able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer

Junior Primary Educators

E: In this day and age, in Grade 3 I do think it should come from both but very often it would need to come from the school because there are many families who haven’t computers. So, yes, certainly at Grade 3 level, the school should be doing a great deal there.

E: I’m sure the Grade 3s must be able to.

Junior Primary Parents

P: I would say yes and I would say school in view of the fact that many children don’t have computers at home and many parents don’t know how a computer functions and I think in our modern times schools must play a very active part in getting the children computer literate. So I would say yes for school.

P: The majority of people possibly can’t afford computers so the majority of the population don’t have computers.

Senior Primary Educators

- E: I think that it should actually end up in the school pile because a lot of families at home do not have technology, do not have computers, so it's not going to come from home for a lot of people.

Senior Primary Parents

- P: I think in reality there's more chance of the school having the facility than the home having it. If you have to put it in one of those categories, for me it would be the school. – Simply for that reason. However I think the people that really teach the kid are their peers. That's where the real learning comes from.

High School Educators

- E: That's not necessarily going to happen in the home because not all homes are going to have access to computers.

High School Parents

- P: ... again in the context of South Africa, there are a lot of families who do not have computers at home because they cannot afford them.
P: ... in reality most parents can't. We talk about this in generation theory. In most communities parents don't even know how to switch on a computer so how can they teach their children that?

Extract 3:

Able to swim/Able to swim 200 metres

High School Educators

- E: It's going to happen at school, because, in a South African context, a large majority of parents aren't going to be able to swim, they don't have pools and ...
E: That's going to come back to like the computer one. The parents who have got pools at home and have money are going to teach their children.

High School Parents

- P: Yes, you should be able to and I think personally it's a home issue, but in reality, 80% of the population don't have home pools or access to public pools so therefore it has to be a school as well.

Because the Junior and Senior Primary parents either rejected or placed the card “*able to swim*” in the home pile, there was obviously no discussion around the responsibility of the teaching of this knowledge to children.

b) SCHOOL IS NOT THE ONLY SITE FOR SIGNIFICANT LEARNING

All the parents across the three phases appeared to be in agreement that the school environment is not necessarily the only site for significant learning to take place. A reason for this could be that their construction of the child is one of a multi-dimensional being, rooted in a reality consisting of both formal and informal contexts. And if this is the case, then learning would be a broad, complex and continuous process, resulting in the school not having all the resources to teach everything a child needs to learn.

As with all the parents, this was seen to be the case with all the educators across the three phases, but only when it related to issues they considered irrelevant to the school context, such as “*have a basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans / be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship*”; “*able to plan a simple household budget*”; “*able to sew a button on a garment / ability to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt,*

etc)”; “*understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle – e.g. KFC, McDonalds / understand the elements of a balanced diet*”; “*have taken part regularly in at least one sport or hobby / to have been a voluntary participant in at least one sport*”; and “*know standard symbols on traffic signs / be familiar with the rules of the road*”. This could possibly be a reflection of the educator’s view of learning only being significant in the school environment.

c) THE SCHOOL CONTEXT SHOULD SUPPLEMENT THE HOME CONTEXT

Despite an awareness by all the parents across the three phases that significant learning occurs in the home context, they still tended to believe that the school environment should supplement home learning when parental skills and attitudes were perceived to be lacking. This was particularly important in matters concerning potentially life-threatening matters such as sexuality. The school was required to fill the gaps by providing supplementary knowledge. Extract 4 provides an illustration of the views of most of the parents across the three phases.

Extract 4:

High School Parents

Be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship

- P1: Because I just took it as a parent – it’s your responsibility to create an openness to be able to talk about it – an awareness – it must become as natural as having the next slice of bread. And so it must be as easy to talk and create that sense of awareness and responsibility and it’s not a tabooed subject. So I wouldn’t even want school to be involved.
- P2: But you see ...
- MD: But what about all those parents that are completely opposite to you?
- P3: Yes, and that’s what [parent’s name] just said, and for that reason, school will provide something that ...
- P4: And maybe the channels are more open at school for a child to discuss something – and although she has a responsible home environment – she would not be able to discuss it at home.
- P5: And when you start to think of schools taking responsibility for life skills, what could be a more important life skill than the ability to work on a relationship.

As with the parents, all the educators across the three phases appeared to be in agreement that the school context should supplement knowledge taught in the home environment because of attitudes, a lack of openness and an absence of parental figures.

d) SCHOOL AS EDUCATOR, PARENT AS SUPPORTER

According to the majority of educators across the three phases, it was the responsibility of the school to educate and for the parents to enforce what the educators had said. The underlying assumption was that the educators were responsible for the imparting of

knowledge and the parents had the duty to support this process through endorsing the school's practices. Perhaps this was because the educators believed that the parents were unable to impart this knowledge to their children. This perception was very aptly put by one of the Junior Primary educators, when she said that she believed that the parents "just did not have the "know how" of dealing with certain issues.

e) EDUCATORS PERCEIVE THEMSELVES AS "EXPERTS"

It appeared that all the educators across the three phases regarded themselves as "experts" and the main source of teaching knowledge to children, even when it was not regarded as being formal or curriculum based knowledge. There appeared to be an air of superiority amongst the educators that they were "better than the parents" at teaching children knowledge. The extracts that follow provide a glimpse of why the Junior and Senior Primary and High School educators perceived themselves to be "experts". These extracts do not necessarily relate to the same knowledge cards for all the educator focus groups, therefore it is indicated beforehand which knowledge cards each extract is pertaining to.

Extract 5:

Junior Primary Educators

Have discussed questions about death

- E: Absolutely. I think sometimes the school if it has, like we have, a school counsellor and perceptive caring teachers, perhaps the school is better equipped to discuss death with children. I think sometimes parents might say things that are not really appropriate for that particular age level. I think parents very often just don't have the know-how, how to cope with that kind of thing. And so in that case I would say the school and home could - especially it was very appropriate for a particular child - but definitely both home and school. I think school is sometimes better equipped with the knowledge that they have in dealing with that kind of thing.

Senior Primary Educators

Have a basic knowledge of how laws are made

- E1: I don't know, are we not then making the assumption that teachers are better than adults. Why if some adults don't understand it, do teachers suddenly understand it?
 E2: No, because, if you're going to teach it, I'd like to think that most teachers would make it their business to get some sort of basic grasp of...
 E3: Whereas a lot of people at home, parents at home, they don't have any idea themselves ofhow are they actually going to pass that on?

Basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans

- E: Listen, you start talking to those kids. You find out what they've learnt at home. It's a jolly good thing that there are teachers here who can tell them what's true.
 E: You see, like [educator's name] says, in some instances - thank goodness there is a relatively sensible person who is discussing it and handling it at school because it is quite frightening what children do know and what they're exposed to but then you, on the other hand, have very concerned, very interested parents who might be offended by the fact that the teacher is taking on that role. I mean, as a mum of daughters myself, I would prefer to handle that with my children. I think if I knew the teacher and if I trusted the teacher I would be more comfortable if it was discussed generally, you know, at school.

Be able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion

- E: In any case I think the swing has gone totally, I think the teachers are expected to do a lot more

- than really fits in, in what the teacher's job is.
- E: And you'll often hear the parents saying "But that's the teacher's job."
- E: It's your job.
- E: Thank goodness it's your job to do that.
- E: And also culturally - I don't know if other teachers have found this - but with mixed schools now that we have, certainly many of the black parents almost opt out completely in terms of discipline and that sort of thing. I mean if you write a letter home to say the child has misbehaved or it behaved inappropriately, they will write back and say beat him, smack him. It's like they say we've given you this child now. You educate him and you get on and do whatever, you know.

From the above extract, it can be seen that the educators believed the parents to be irresponsible, dangerous, inexperienced and unskilled in the areas that were needed to educate children.

f) EDUCATORS ARE OFTEN EASIER TO TALK TO THAN PARENTS

It appeared to be the general consensus amongst the Senior Primary educators and High School parents that older children did not generally like to discuss topics of a sensitive nature with their parents, such as the knowledge cards "*have discussed questions about death / have discussed death and mourning*" and "*basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans / be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship*" for example. They tended to believe that these were often topics that were easier to talk to with strangers than parents and felt that they, as educators, could be facilitators in discussions around these topics in the classroom environment.

The Junior Primary educators did not mention that they were easier to talk to than parents therefore it is not possible to compare this issue across the three phases. Despite the fact that it appeared to be the general consensus amongst all the parents across the three phases that different relationships occur between children and a parent or an educator, and that different types of learning are possible within these relationships, most of the parents (although not all of them) tended to believe that sensitive issues like the knowledge cards "*have discussed questions about death / have discussed death and mourning*" and "*basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans / be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship*" were the responsibility of themselves as they were emotionally closer to their child and shared a more intimate relationship. This would suggest that the younger child is more the responsibility of the parent than the school.

g) THE GENERATION GAP

In each of the parent focus groups there was at least one or more incident of parents trying to remember back to when they were at school and seeing if things were still the same as 15 – 20 years ago. The question that needs to be raised here is why the parents would still want things to be the same as when they were at school, considering the fast pace that the world is changing at nowadays. The fact that a certain amount of ‘reminiscing’ did occur could be indicative of the fact that the parents are aware of the differences in formal and informal education and are afraid of the changes that are happening in the ‘formal’ side of their children’s lives, as the Senior Primary parent in the extract below points out.

Extract 6:

Senior Primary Parents

- P: Yes, but I think it’s also got a lot to do with fear though! I mean, take for instance the Maths syllabus! It has changed phenomenally since I went to school and to now sit down with your child and you’re a little bit nervous about what’s going on here yourself and then to try and get it across to the little ones! I think its fear on the part of parents ...

Alternatively, their thinking could be because they are not trained and do not deal with these issues on a daily basis, that they had to find some way of thinking about it. Unlike the parents, none of the educators mentioned the years when they were at school.

In conclusion, from the above results, it can be seen that in general, all the educators and parents across the three phases tended to believe that the majority of cards were the responsibility of both the home and the school environments. They were also in agreement that the school context should teach knowledge which was perceived as technological and abstract in nature. All the parties involved were also in agreement that the school environment is not necessarily the only site for significant learning to take place, although the educators assumed this only when it related to issues they considered irrelevant to the school context. The lack of resources by parents, i.e. computers and swimming pools, to actualise particular knowledge cards was also deemed the responsibility of the school context by all groups concerned.

Despite their awareness that significant learning occurs in the home context, all parties were in agreement that the school environment should supplement home learning when

parental skills and attitudes were perceived to be lacking. In addition, the majority of educators believed that educators were responsible for the imparting of knowledge, while the parents had the duty to support this process through endorsing the school's practices. Parents who failed to control their child's behaviour at home were seen by the educators (particularly the High School educators) as neglecting their parental responsibilities. Throughout the focus groups, it appeared that educators tended to perceive themselves as "experts", even when the knowledge was not regarded as being formal or curriculum based knowledge. It was the perceptions of the Senior Primary educators and High School parents that older children did not generally like to discuss topics of a sensitive nature with their parents therefore it was the responsibility of the school context to provide the children with knowledge in these knowledge areas. It is important to remember that this may be developmentally appropriate. The rest of the parent and educators groups tended to believe that sensitive issues were the responsibility of parents as they were emotionally closer to their child and shared a more intimate relationship.

4.3.3 PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNERSHIPS

This section deals with how parents and educators across the three phases of the educational process, i.e. Junior Primary, Senior Primary and High School, perceived and valued the notion of partnerships between the home and school environments. This section relates to the findings of the previous two sections. Depending on the criteria used by each focus group to evaluate the knowledge on each card, this influenced their corresponding perceptions of the home/school partnership. The analysis will be divided into how educators perceived and valued the notion of a partnership and then how it was perceived and valued by parents. It will then be concluded with a section outlining both groups' perceptions of the constraints to this relationship.

4.3.3.1 THE THREE PHASES COMPARED

The following section is discussed using the main trends found throughout the focus groups.

a) SHOULD PARTNERSHIPS BE FORMED?

According to all educators and parents across the three phases, partnerships can and should be formed between the home and school environments. Despite this, however,

they tended to feel that this would be extremely difficult to do. Reasons for not being able to establish partnerships will be explored in section 4.3.3.2 Constraints to the Partnership, below.

b) PARTNERSHIPS ARE EASIER TO ESTABLISH AT LOWER LEVELS

According to all the educators across the three phases, partnerships are easier to establish at the lower levels of the educational process, i.e. Junior and Senior Primary. The Junior Primary and High School educators in particular, felt strongly that the parents are much more motivated at the junior levels and want to be drawn in to participate in their children's lives. They also felt that the levels of interest of the parents were good and the lines of communication open between parents and educators. When questioned as to the reasons for this, the educators felt that in the junior levels, parents drop off their children at school in the mornings and have daily contact with the educators in the classroom setting, there is daily communication between educators and parents via the homework books and the children are smaller/younger and much more dependant on their parents and educators than older children.

As with the educators, the High School parents tended to believe that partnerships happened naturally at the junior levels of the educational process, i.e. Junior and Senior Primary, whereas things went 'horribly wrong' when their children went to High School. The High School parents felt particularly strongly about this and when questioned as to the reasons why this happened, they felt that parents tended to step away from the school and educational process because they got the impression from schools that they did not want them there anymore. This message did not come by way of overt messages send out by the schools but was conveyed in more subtle ways, such as indirect messages like "Please drop off your children in the mornings and then exit the premises immediately". They also felt that at the lower levels, parental involvement was still a novelty, as the parents were willing to drop their children off at the classroom and interact with the educator on a daily basis. Because of this, the High School parents felt it was easier to establish partnerships out of these daily dealings.

In Extract 7 below, P4 cannot believe that schools would rather not have parents involved in their children's schooling, while P1, P2 & P3 provide some insight into why they think this is the case.

Extract 7:**High School Parents**

- P1: I don't know what breaks down – but I just know that things go horribly wrong when your children get to High School.”
- P2: I think it's because at that age children don't want their parents around – they're telling their parents they don't want them to watch them play sport – even though they may – it's that push pull thing that children do when they reach adolescence – that 'I don't care' attitude!
- P3: I don't know if parents get busier at that time in their children's lives and they just don't have time to spend at school?
- P4: ... at my daughter's school, at the beginning of the year they sent home a letter that made it very clear that the girls are now at High School so you drop them off and you leave. Once the children are at school they are basically on the 'teacher's turf' and the parents have no business being there. I couldn't believe that the school had a problem with parents wanting to be a part of their children's schooling.
- P1: It's almost like the teachers are the experts and the parents must leave it up to them to get on with their jobs.

P1's comment that educators are seen to be the experts and the parents must leave them to do their jobs is significant as it appears to confirm what the educators tended to believe in the previous section, i.e. paragraph e) Educators perceive themselves as “experts”.

Extract 8 further illustrates why the High School parents believe partnerships do not work at this level of the educational process:

Extract 8:

- P1: ... we're talking about partnerships that don't work here. We're dreaming on every single thing that we have spoken about here [all the cards discussed] because none of it actually happens. But the reality is it's a culture and why aren't we doing it?
- P2: It does not happen at high school!
- P4: Yes, but my question still remains, why doesn't it happen at high school?
- P3: Because it happens in primary school and then it fizzles out! We spoke about this earlier.
- P5: Primary schools are wonderful because the children come along and the parents are involved and, and, and.
- P6: Here's maybe what's happening, teachers and parents don't understand some of the changes that ... you see, in primary school children are still so much dependent and so we're both going to pull together. Children get to high school and its cowboys don't cry and your child needs to be independent and don't drop lunch off and all that.
- P4: And so the relationship is not developing – that's what we're saying!
- P2: It's deteriorating!
- P3: But in high school why do we have to drop a relationship between teachers and parents? Why – just because the children don't want the parents around? That surely doesn't mean we can't still have one!
- P1: But we don't know how to adjust the relationship from primary school to high school!

From the above extracts, it becomes evident that the High School parents agree that partnerships in the lower levels of the educational process are much easier to establish than in the higher levels of the educational process. They appear to try and reason why this is the case and it seems that they want it to be the case – i.e. an inevitable fact of life, which should just be accepted, as it “lets them off the hook” so to speak.

Because the Junior and Senior Primary parents did not mention that they felt partnerships were easier to establish at the junior levels of the educational process, it becomes particularly difficult to compare this across the three phases and cannot be conclusively said that this is the case. It is important to note that this point was not probed by the researcher and the lack of information is therefore attributed to this fact.

c) SCHOOLS CARRY A GREATER RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

As mentioned earlier, the educators across all three phases were aware that partnerships can and should occur between the home and school environments, but they tended to believe that they have a greater role to play in the partnership process than the parents. They appeared to see parents as playing a lesser role in establishing partnerships between the two environments and relegated parental involvement and partnership to the role of supporter or enforcer of school practices. Educators seemed to believe that they were the ones who had to take the initiative in setting up these partnerships and make sure that parents gave their consent for whatever it is they wanted to do. Reasons for this are unfortunately unclear.

It is interesting to note that even though all the educators were not necessarily looking at the same knowledge cards when they stated that they had a greater role to play in the establishment of partnerships, they nonetheless perceived their input into the process as being far superior to that of the parents. This statement potentially speaks volumes about how educators perceive themselves in the educational setting, i.e. as the “expert” with much more to give than parents, who they appear to see as the supporter or enforcer of school practices, or a “minor” in the relationship.

The use of newsletters by the Junior and Senior Primary educators to parents, sent home in homework books, and letters with consent forms attached, by the High School educators, appeared to be a popular means of conveying what educators were doing at school and all educators believed that it was a system that worked well in the establishment of partnerships, but *only* with the necessary parental support of what was being done at school. One needs to ask what this sort of partnership says about the current nature of communication between parents and educators in the schools. How

does this set up communication? As it is depicted here, communication appears to be very one-sided and the power differential is very unbalanced. Another interesting point to note is that no debate or discussion seemed to have occurred between the educators and parents, and the “letter” or “consent form” partnership appeared to be on the school and educator’s terms *only*. Again, could this be indicative of what is already taking place in schools and thinking about new ways of establishing partnerships was not a very easy task for educators because of these very strong perceptions of being the “expert”? A question that needs to be raised at this point is why the educators are so “set” in their ways, appearing to be inflexible and staying with partnerships *they* feel are working, when potentially this is not necessarily the case? Perhaps it is because to assume the role of expert is less threatening and the power resides with them? The following extracts illustrate the fact that educators perceive parents as supporters and enforcers of school practices.

Note: These extracts come from different parts of the focus groups and are therefore not a continuous discussion.

Extract 9:

Junior Primary Educators

- E: So it's like soliciting the parent's help to support the teachers ...
- E: You know, it's the same in most things - it's a matter of informing parents what one is doing and communicating with parents and asking them to reinforce, to reiterate, and to talk about these things at home."
- E: ... we should make the parents aware of what we consider is suitable material."
- E: Send home lots of information ...
- E: I think we can make suggestions like we send out that sport letter saying please would you encourage your child ...
- E: You just need to send home one emotive letter saying how dangerous it is at this level if children still cannot swim and how essential it is for them to learn to swim.
- E: I think it's quite important to make them aware ...

Senior Primary Educators

- E: So it's like soliciting the parents to help support the teachers ...
- E: So really your question is 'How can we involve the parents?'
- E: ... I don't see it so much as sending home information to people ... but on setting some very simple but very clear ground rules and letting the parents know, possibly like you know when we have that information evening at the beginning of the year ...
- E: I mean, this is a way of enlisting the parents.
- E: And you need co-operation with the parents to do this so it's definitely a link.
- E: And also making sure that the parents support them.
- E: Support them at their matches or whatever.
- E: By encouraging them and asking them to lift children to different games.
- E: And also for kids that don't want to do support. Actually you're going to contact the parents and say, listen, it's important that your child actually participates in something. Please encourage them.
- E: It's more of an expectation. We expect our parents to ...

High School Educators

- E: ... I think the partnership would have to be the school getting the parents consent and the parents allowing them [the school] to do their part.
- E: ... yes, I think that making them aware of like a talk that's going to happen, you know, that's

going to ... at least then the parents are ... it gives the parents an opportunity to talk to their children, if they were looking for one.

- E: ... I think that partnerships would have to be through projects and the school would need to say to parents, 'Please be aware that you will be getting these things brought home and we are going to need your support as it is going to assist your child! And yes sure, you're going to get the parents who won't give a damn, and we'll have to deal with them as they come up.
- E: ... You could get parental permission and then get people to come in and talk to the children.

From the above extracts, the fact that the educators use words like *"soliciting the parent's help"*, *"informing"*, *"reinforce"*, *"reiterate"*, *"make the parents aware of what we consider is suitable material"*, *"support"*, *"setting very simple but clear ground rules and letting the parents know"*, *"enlisting the parents"*, *"co-operation"*, *"we expect our parents to ..."*, *"parental consent"*, *"parents allowing the school to do their part"*, *"make the parents aware of what's going to happen"* and *"parental permission"*, suggests that they perceive the parents to lack certain knowledge, making it the responsibility and role of the educator to tell them what is right for their children. It almost appears that the educators are setting the parameters by which partnerships can and should be established, without consulting the parents as to whether it suits them or not. These extracts even goes as far as suggesting that the educators perceive themselves to be "educators of the parents" as they have to make the parents "aware" of certain things that take place in the school environment. The parents are even perceived to be irresponsible and almost "incapable" of doing what the educators are able to do. The fact that no dialogue appears to take place between the educators and parents serves to strengthen the argument that the educators perceive themselves to be 'experts'.

Despite an awareness by all the parents across the three phases that education can and should occur in partnership between the home and school environments, they were inclined to dismiss their responsibilities or underplay/undervalue their contribution to the partnership process. As with the educators, the parents tended to perceive the educators as assuming a greater responsibility in establishing partnerships between the two environments. The parents appeared to believe that the educators should take the initiative in setting up the partnerships and then provide the opportunities for parental involvement. The Junior Primary and High School parents appeared to believe that schools are not doing enough in the partnership process and felt that they could, and should do more than what they are doing in establishing partnerships. The question that arises here is who determines what "more" is and what is enough? Is this indicative of the fact that parents don't have a big enough say in what happens to their children at

school, or lack confidence in their skills, abilities and views or is it a sign that they do not really understand the concept of partnerships? The fact that the parents suggested that the educators play a larger role in the establishment of partnerships could be an indicator that this is the way partnerships currently occur at schools in these areas. The following extracts illustrate the fact that, just like the educators, parents perceive themselves to be supporters and enforcers of school practices.

Note: These extracts come from different parts of the focus groups and are therefore not a continuous discussion.

Extract 10:

Junior Primary Parents

- P: ... some schools could and should do more.
- P: Well I think [name of school] deals with it the right way, in terms of newsletters they send out concerning what the kids have in their lunchboxes and maybe that's the way to do it.
- P: I'm wondering whether here one could, again using the newsletters system, if the school teaches the children it's not acceptable to throw paper out of the car window and, and, and, and to send this list home and say to the parents this is what ... we're trying to keep our school clean and this is what we are teaching our children and we'd appreciate it if you could uphold similar values at home.

Senior Primary Parents

- P1: I think that the only way you can really get a partnership of sorts going is if the parents know what's going to be discussed in the lessons the next week, so that one can discuss with the kids at home. I mean, when the kids get only they don't always come home and tell you what they've been doing at school - you almost have to drag it out of them because they're not interested in sharing with you. But then you give the parents who are interested an opportunity to be involved. I get frustrated sometimes, and wish that sometimes I had known what was going on so that I could have reinforced at home what is going on at school.
- P2: But almost that the school is providing the leading role in it.
- P3: Yes!
- P4: I think that it's probably the only way that it could work because the school is the educational - I don't know - body, if I could say that, that has the understanding to guide the other.

High School Parents

- P: ... the school could take initiatives to foster that education or the awareness of why sport is so important, um ... and then create the opportunities for parental involvement - like father/son games, mother/ daughter games or mixed games.
- P: You [the school] write a letter to the parents at the beginning ... telling them what you [the school] are doing. Easy!
- P: I think parents only have a really tiny role to play when it comes to school.
- P: Partnership just really needs to be the way the school would enthuse you as parents to get involved.
- P: I think that it's easy for an enthusiastic child to enthuse a parent and then for a partnership to grow out of that.
- P: Parents come in by way of encouragement and feedback.
- P: Does partnership mean that the parents have to physically be there? No!
- P: Your involvement as a parent can just be creative encouragement. Parents don't have to be there for it to happen.

The fact that one of the Junior Primary parents used a phrase like, *"newsletters being sent out concerning what the kids have in their lunchboxes"*, and commenting on an issue that is not strictly in the curriculum, seems to suggest that parents would like to see the educators take responsibility for more than just what is in the curriculum. Is this not giving the power to the educators and negating their value and judgement about what is good nutritional value for their own children? This would certainly reiterate any perceptions that educators have around being "experts".

While parents still tended to perceive partnerships to be largely the responsibility of the school, a phrase like *"uphold similar values at home"*, used by one parent and supported by the others, appears to suggest that they still wanted some kind of connection between the home and school, even if it means that the school decides on what that connection will entail. There appeared to be a *need* or *want* to know what was going on in the school environment so that they were able to carry that knowledge over at home.

The fact that the Senior Primary parents believed that it was important to know what was going on at school so that they could reinforce this knowledge at home, shows that they feel much more comfortable being the supporter of school practices than the ones that actually take the initiative in setting up partnerships. This could also be indicative of the parents feeling less confident in themselves to define what knowledge is important.

The High School parents also tended to believe that the school should *"enthuse"* the children, who would in turn *"enthuse"* their parents, ultimately leading to the establishment of a partnership between the two environments that was the result of a knock-on or domino effect. The parents also believed that they do not necessarily have to be physically present in order for a partnership to be established – all they were required to do was encourage their children.

d) CERTAIN PARTNERSHIPS ARE EASIER TO ESTABLISH THAN OTHERS

As all the parents and educators across the three phases pointed out, certain partnerships are easier to form than others. It was interesting to note that all the educators tended to dismiss knowledge cards that dealt with emotional issues, like death, sex, religion and the like, as much harder to establish partnerships than issues like recycling waste materials, sport, rules of the road, and so on. Could this possibly be because these issues deal with

emotions, feelings and values that are often taboo, volatile, private and not as easily controlled as other issues like recycling waste products, sport and the rules of the road. The latter issues have not grey areas. There is either a right or a wrong answer with no grey areas in between. The parents across the three phases, on the other hand, tended to feel that even though they felt the partnership would be potentially difficult to establish, that the two environments needed to make an effort to try and work something out.

e) THE USE OF SCHOOL RESOURCES BY COMMUNITIES

The Junior Primary and High School parents tended to agree that it would be a good idea to establish partnerships between schools and local communities. In this way, the communities would be able to make use of well-resourced schools, which they felt had facilities that were being under utilised in the evenings and on week-ends. In this way, schools, together with their parents and local communities, could develop meaningful partnerships that could assist less fortunate or under-privileged communities by allowing them access to facilities such as swimming pools, halls, soccer fields and so on. The extract below illustrates the Junior Primary parents' feelings:

Extract 11:

Junior Primary Parents

- P: I mean if you look at the facilities that schools have – some schools have excellent facilities, swimming pool facilities and things, and I think it's a waste that at weekends they get locked up and closed. ... And, as I was saying, ... allow the parents to be available, obviously not just willy nilly, obviously responsible people to be able to use it. I mean, look at [school name], it's got a lovely hall – over the weekends it's not being utilised. It's a lovely hall, over weekends they could play table tennis; the school could play table tennis. You don't hear of it ... and you could put in, for example, I would say 8 table-tennis boards there, that could be utilised instead of the kids going down the road smoking, doing whatever it is. Something like that or there's soccer fields there, or whatever it is, swimming pools ...
- P: ...I have a strong sense that the facilities at a well resourced school like this are under-utilised and, yes, there's a bigger community out there that don't have access ... there are schools that don't have those resources. I'd love to see intense use of the resources by other schools – partnerships. But in some ways the way the game is set up, you're kind of locked into the homes of the kids who are at the school. But I think in our context, I really do think schools like ours should be a lot more active. Think it through – share these resources with schools, for a start, which don't have the resources.

Although the High School parents were in agreement with the Junior Primary parents with regards to the use of schools by communities, they tended to take it a step further by suggesting the establishment of partnerships between schools and local communities in order to generate funds for schools. In this way, schools, together with their parents and the local communities, could be turned into business opportunities that would ultimately aid the schools and help them to upgrade facilities and become better equipped for the

education of children. The parents (with the exception of the educator among them) all agreed that in theory this was an excellent and viable way of forming a partnership, but could not see schools buying into the idea. The extract below illustrates the fact that the High School parents believed that this was a viable partnership.

Extract 12:

High School Parents

- P1: Now there's a general partnership that lacks in this country ...
- P2: What's that?
- P1: The use of school facilities by the community.
- P3: Yes, absolutely. Saturday's and Sunday's – using the school hall for all kinds of other needs.
- P4: And school classrooms in the evenings.
- P5: The school library. I remember having this conversation with a school I did some consulting with. I asked the Principal what if we turned the school into a kind of community centre.
- P6: But who's going to do it?
- P1: It's not the teachers and that's the partnership issue that's there. You can bring a private company in that can make enough money to help fund a school, because you are talking about different issues here, and that's the problem, is that schools can't see beyond this ...
- P3: That's exactly it.
- P1: ... there's an issue of control, and an issue of ...
- P3: Yes, we don't want other children messing up blah, blah, blah ... but when you think of the Youth for Christ's out there that are desperate for resources and schools who are locked up over weekends and who could provide those resources.
- P6: But I can understand the hesitance on the part of the schools. I mean, [name of parent], would you be prepared to open up your computer classroom up for others to use over weekends or in the evenings?
- P2: Absolutely not – unless I was there, never – no way! I won't even let kids be in there at break.
- P3: But what about with someone you can trust?
- P1: But hold on – what if there was a contract? What if there was a contract with me as a business and I came in and you knew, number 1, you were making extra money off me.
- P4: You could buy new computers next year.
- P1: It's a partnership issue and so that's exactly ... so I mean, and you're a good example in terms of what you've just said now – “as a teacher ...” If you, as a teacher, battle to conceptualise the idea of a business partnership, how on earth are teachers ever going to do parenting partnerships?
- P3: Yes, I agree.
- P1: ... and that's what we are talking about here. Schools have never ever ... I have never seen schools do this whole partnership issue! It's an issue of control and area and ...
- P4: Yes, yes!
- P2: Yes, but teachers are control freaks – 99% of them are control freaks. The other problem is that ... is the whole ... I mean just for example – we had someone come and ask us if they could use our school hall for a wedding? And the very question was “Well who's going to lock up?” And because of the alarm company and you have to go down to the main office and it's all the main codes, eventually the answer was ‘No’ because no teacher, who has all the codes and the master keys, was going to come in at midnight to lock up!
- P1: Yes, but if a company is doing that they will be liable for locking up and ensuring that everything is under control.
- P2: I'm not sure that schools are willing to see that though!
- Continuation of discussion not pertinent to the extract ...**
- P2: Yes, but just to defend the schools, I mean teachers work so hard on fundraising that the thought of seeing your stage broken – yes it might get repaired or ... So for example the computer room – if the computer's get broken – it could take a week to fix – so that's children's education and time and everything else ...
- P1: But that's a mindset [name of parent] – that's what it is! And those are the reasons why they don't do it – instead of seeing what are benefits. The benefits are ... and it's just lateral thinking. The benefits outweigh those little issues big time ...
- P2: And there are going to be risks!
- P1: Of course there're risks but it's a partnership and we work those things out.

The Senior Primary parents did not discuss the use of school facilities by communities therefore it is impossible to compare this issue across the three phases.

None of the educators in the three phases discussed the possibility of school facilities being used by communities and “outsiders”. Could this be an indication that the educators are not as open minded as the parents and feel the need to protect what they see as “their property” to be used only as they see fit? It could be argued that this point is illustrated by the High School parent who was a Senior Primary educator, who conveyed particularly strong feelings that the school that she taught at would not allow “outsiders” in to use their school facilities. The extract above shows how the educator parent reinforced the views of the parents that schools would not buy into this idea.

It is important to note that the use of school resources by communities is not directly related to establishing partnerships between schools and parents and one therefore has to ask the question of whether this is truly the establishment of partnerships, as defined in this study, or is it not just resource sharing among communities?

f) SKILLS, ABILITIES, TIME AND CONTACTS

It was the opinion of the all the parents in the three phases of the educational process that partnerships should be formed between themselves and educators, especially in areas where the educators were seen to potentially not have the skills or abilities parents perhaps had. Parents alluded to the fact that in this way, it did not particularly matter who was educating the child, because at the end of the day, the child would benefit because they have learned from the best person with the best skills or ability. The parents also believed that they may have outside contacts, which they could ask to come in and hold talks with the children and so on, which would also be beneficial to the child’s education. It appeared that the parents were at ease with admitting that they were perhaps not as well equipped at doing something and then seeking external help, instead of trying to do it and potentially giving wrong information and the like which would not be beneficial to the children.

These views were particularly noticeable in the knowledge categories of Sport/ General Knowledge/Other; Values; Life Skills/Body and Biology/Natural Sciences. It is interesting to note that these categories are not all directly related to the school curriculum and perhaps the parents did not feel that they could get involved because they would be seen to be interfering with the educator’s role at school.

As with the parents above, the Junior and Senior Primary educators believed that partnerships should be formed between themselves and the parents, especially in areas where they felt they did not necessarily have the skills, ability or the time parents perhaps had. These views were particularly noticeable in the knowledge categories of Sport/General Knowledge/Other and Values, where the educators thought the parents could get involved in activities such as coaching sport, giving talks about different religions and so on. It is interesting to note that, as with the parents above, these categories are not directly related to the school curriculum and therefore do the educators possibly feel that they can let the parents get involved because they would not really be interfering with the “real” work that educators do at school?

g) COMMUNICATION

For the Senior Primary educators, communication was deemed essential in the establishment of partnerships between the school and home environments. They alluded to the fact that if communication did not run smoothly, partnerships would firstly not be established, and secondly not work. These views were particularly evident in the following knowledge cards: *“have respect for other people’s property”*; *“be able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion”*; *“have respect for other people’s religious views”*; *“have discussed questions about death”*; and *“be conscientious about not dropping litter”*. Extract 13 illustrates their views on this topic.

Note: These extracts come from different parts of the focus groups and are therefore not a continuous discussion.

Extract 13:

Senior Primary Educators

- E: ... communication is essential for the partnership between school and home to work.
- E: No. It's not a partnership as such but there is communication when it is needed.
- E: ... I personally communicate with the parent via the children. The children go home and say what they did in school and then come back and say, 'my mum said this, that and the other thing.' But very little direct contact.
- E: There's always letters in homework books. I think we all do that quite a lot, problems or not problems.

Although they did not refer to communication directly, the Junior Primary and High School educators as well as the Junior and Senior Primary and High School parents did allude to the fact that communication is essential in the establishment of partnerships. The fact that they use newsletters via the homework books is a clear indication that they

believe communication is important. It is essential to point out that even though the educators believe that communication is important, what form does it take? It takes the form of newsletters via the homework book, which is unfortunately not on an equal footing as it is very one-sided, with no dialogue.

h) CONTACT WITH PARENTS IS A RESULT OF PROBLEMS

The Senior Primary educators and parents tended to believe that often, partnerships are the result of problems arising at school and then educators having to call in the parents to sort them out. This was particularly evident with the knowledge cards *“have respect for other people’s property”*; *“have respect for other people’s religious views”*; and *“be able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion”*. The extracts below illustrate this point.

Note: These extracts come from different parts of the focus groups and are therefore not a continuous discussion.

Extract 14:

Senior Primary Educators

- E: And also if a situation does arise where a child is perhaps disrespectful to someone of a different nationality or of a different culture or religion, the process of correcting that situation, the parent is often called in and involved in, you know, saying this is what the child did.
- E: We get a partnership going the minute there’s a problem.
- E: If there’s a situation where a child isn’t doing it at school, then you will contact the parents and say, ‘Hey, listen, there’s a problem here’.

Senior Primary Parents

- P: ... For many parents, like for me, I don’t have a particularly heavy relationship with either of the schools that my daughters go to. I have a ‘sometimes’ relationship with them. It’s almost like a need situation – if a need occurs or arises, I will go to school and the teacher will ask questions or something like that. If they need me, then it’s bad news ...

The fact that the Senior Primary educators used phrases like, *“correcting the situation”*; *“we get a partnership going the minute there’s a problem”*; and *“as soon as the child isn’t doing [something], then we contact the parents”* seems to suggest that they, the educators, are the ones who have defined what the problem is and have then been forced to take action. This action appears to be in the form of contacting the parents because they feel that the child is obstructing what the school is trying to do in the educational process. This gives the parents very little say in what is going on.

The fact that the one Senior Primary parent used phrases like “a ‘sometimes’ relationship”; “a need situation”; and “if they need me, then it’s bad news” seems to suggest that parents and educators don’t have an ongoing relationship. This only serves to reiterate the lack of communication and partnership between parents and educators.

None of the other educator or parent groups across the three phases made mention of the fact that partnerships arise out of problems therefore it is impossible to compare this issue across the three phases.

i) PARENTS MUST ASK FOR PERMISSION OR HELP IF NEEDED

It was a general feeling amongst the High School educators that they were doing enough for children at school and that if the parents wanted them to do something extra or out of the ordinary, that it was up to the parents to ask the school for permission or help if they needed it. For example, with the knowledge card “*have respect for other people’s religious views*”, one of the educators gave an example of how the parents at a particular school in the Durban area had approached the Principal with a proposal to allow the Muslim children to use a room at the school as a ‘Mosque’ so that they could pray on a Friday at 12:00, instead of having to be picked up and taken to the local Mosque and then dropped off again afterwards by their parents. In this educator’s opinion, the school would not have thought of this by themselves and therefore a partnership was established out of the initiative of the parents. Another example of this was with the knowledge card “*have discussed death and mourning*”. One of the educators believed that if the parents did not feel they were equipped enough to deal with a particular issue, that they were able to ask the school for the necessary help and intervention. An example of this was when a pupil at their school committed suicide. The parents requested help from the school and the school then brought in psychologists to give the boys grief counselling.

The fact that the educators believed they were doing *enough* for the children at school is very one-sided and could be debated, considering they, the educators, were the ones who defined and evaluated what enough was.

None of the other focus groups discussed parents asking for help from the school.

j) DISCREPANCIES IN VALUING KNOWLEDGE

From the High School educators' discussion, it became evident that they tended to feel that there were discrepancies with what they and the parents regarded as important in the education of children, which ultimately influenced whether or not a partnership could be established. This was particularly evident in the knowledge cards "*understand that smoking can endanger health*"; and "*be conscientious about not dropping litter*". The educators believed that parents did not feel that these were important issues to educate their children on and because of this discrepancy, they ultimately felt that it was impossible to establish partnerships with the parents on these grounds and they felt it would be a difficult task to do.

None of the other focus groups discussed discrepancies in the importance of knowledge therefore it was not possible to compare this issue across the three phases.

In conclusion, from the above results, it became evident that all the educators and parents across the three phases, believed that partnerships can and should be formed between the home and school environments, although it would be extremely difficult to do. Having said this, from all the educators' points of view, they appeared to believe that they have a greater responsibility to play in initiating and managing the partnership process – through for example the use of newsletters and consent forms, which required the support of parents. This type of partnership was very one-sided. As with the educators, the parent groups were inclined to dismiss their responsibilities or underplay/under-value their contribution to the partnership process and agreed that the educators should assume greater responsibility in establishing such partnerships. All the educators and High School parents tended to believe that partnerships are easier to establish at the lower levels of the educational process, i.e. Junior and Senior Primary.

The establishment of partnerships between schools and communities was highlighted by the Junior Primary and High School as a good idea, thereby utilising well-resourced schools in the evenings and on week-ends. In this way, less fortunate or under-privileged communities could be assisted by providing access to facilities such as swimming pools, halls, soccer fields and so on. It is important to mention that a partnership between the school and a community is not the same kind of partnership between educators and parents. This type of partnership involves outside influences which do not come into play

in a partnership between parents and educators. Because of this, it is interesting to observe that the educators and parents talked much more about establishing community partnerships and tended to avoid discussing ways of establishing partnerships between the home and school environments.

What was interesting to note was that all the parents and the Junior and Senior Primary educators believed that partnerships should be formed in areas where educators were seen to potentially not have the skills or abilities parents perhaps had. All the educators and parents deemed communication an essential element in the establishment of partnerships between the home and school environments. It was the opinion of the Senior Primary educators and parents that often, partnerships result out of problems arising at school and then having to call in the parents to sort them out.

4.3.3.2 CONSTRAINTS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

As mentioned earlier, *all* the educators and parents in the three phases believed that partnerships can and should be formed between the home and school environments. But despite this fact, the educators and parents believed this would be difficult to do for the reasons outlined below. It must be said that the Junior Primary educators and parents did not experience as much trouble as the Senior Primary and High School educators and parents in explaining the reasons for the difficulties in establishing partnerships, but nonetheless, they did express some concerns about this.

a) PARENTS ARE NOT INVOLVED ENOUGH IN THEIR CHILDRENS' LIVES

As will be evidenced in the extracts below, all the educators and parents across the three phases saw a lack of parental involvement in children's lives and in schools as being one of the main reasons why partnerships could not be established between the home and school environments. It is interesting to note that although the parents and educators all agreed on this point; the two groups gave vastly different reasons for their perceptions of the lack of involvement by parents. The educators appeared to be both patronising and sympathetic in their reasoning for the lack of involvement, while the parents appeared to try and justify why the parent body was uninvolved in schools.

As mentioned above, although the educators did feel that parents are not involved enough in schools they were compassionate towards the plight of parents and did try and come

up with possible reasons for their lack of involvement. All the educators tended to feel that parents were *"too busy holding down full time jobs"*, that had resulted in them being only too happy to hand over the educational responsibilities of their children to educators.

Many of the educators also felt that the structure of the family had changed in the last 20 years, resulting in far more single-parent families or families where both parents were forced to work due to financial constraints. Because of this, parents were unable to give their children their necessary time or attention and were not able to give their time to schools either. The High School educators in particular also felt that there were a group of parents who, no matter what anyone did, would never be interested in their children's lives. This is particularly evident in Extract 16 below, in light of E2's comment about the parent who told her that she had given birth to her child so what more did the educator want her to do? This extract comes from a general discussion about partnerships held at the end of the High School educators' focus group, once all the cards had been discussed. It clearly outlines the reasons and constraints around parental involvement they felt were impeding on the establishment of partnerships between the home and school environments.

Extract 15:

High School

- E1: I think that partnerships are important but if you don't have the support of the parents it becomes quite an issue.
- E2: Yes, and I think that's where the school system is falling down now! It's because we're not getting as much support from the parents anymore. Most of the time they don't care what their children are doing. I mean, I had a mother tell me, *'I gave birth to him, what more must I do?'*
- E3: I think parents are also so snowed under and so busy and so stressed ... that they are battling. So I think they're having a tougher job than parents had 20 years ago!
- E4: Yes, and there was at least one parent who wasn't working and was able to stay at home with the children and provide all that extra information and support. Now, realistically both parents pretty much have to go out and work.
- E3: If there are 2 parents at all!
- E1: But then again, if they want to be parents, they must be a bit more responsible and realise that they need to pull their weight.
- E4: Realistically, the biggest problems at school are directly related to the home situation.
- E2: Yes! You can spot in a class who the boys are without fathers.
- E4: And then you have the boys who come from broken families.
- E1: Yes, and in broken families the parents can't even work together to help the children, so how are they going to work together with a third party? I think that with those sorts of families, partnerships are not going to work.
- E2: But it's not only with broken families! You can't even get hold of the parents of intact families to come in for interviews. I have this one boy who hasn't been to school for the whole of the 2nd term and I couldn't get hold of his parents - mother or father. Eventually I got hold of her, set up an appointment and then she doesn't arrive! You send letters home, but it doesn't work. I've just sent his report and a letter home, registered mail.
- E1: I've sent 2 letters home saying, *'If you don't get hold of me and set up a meeting, your son will be suspended!'* He's been absent for 32 days this year.
- E4: But the parents don't get these letters either.
- E3: But that's nothing, I've got a 80, a 62, a 35!

Continuation of discussion not pertinent to the extract ...

- E2: There are children, who get dressed in the morning and then don't make it to school, and you

- send home letters to the parents time after time after time, and nothing gets done about it.
- E1: These are just some of the issues that we deal with on a day-to-day basis and it's a difficult thing. I mean realistically, if we don't have the support of the parents, it becomes very difficult. When you've got that support of parents, partnerships will work. But unfortunately you only have that with some of the parents and when you don't have the support from the rest of the parents, the school just becomes very isolated and it's like fighting an uphill battle.

The above perceptions of the educators that parents are too busy with their own lives to worry about their children's lives appeared to be quite judgemental of the educators. Is this indicative of the educators' perception that they are better equipped than the parents to educate children? It would appear that the educators are not giving parents the necessary acknowledgement that they are able to keep a job and take care of their children at the same time.

As with the educators, the Senior Primary and High School parents believed that there is not enough parental involvement in schools for partnerships to be established. Unlike the educators, however, the Senior Primary parents tended to believe that parent involvement was lacking because of a mindset, i.e. parents pay school fees therefore it's up to the educators to do their jobs. For the High School parents, the lack of parental involvement was because they perceived the schools as not wanting them there. The extracts below illustrate some of the reasons why the Senior Primary and High School parents felt partnerships were failing between home and school in the High School.

Note: These extracts come from different parts of the focus groups and are therefore not a continuous discussion.

Extract 16:

Senior Primary Parents

- P: You know parental involvement is actually quite RARE. A lot of parents are quite happy to just say, "You do it" and hand it over to the teachers.
- P: Yes, but I just think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A lot of parents are just on the very bottom rung. Nowadays a lot of parents are just trying to deal with things on a day-to-day basis.
- P: Yes, they cannot get involved with their children's schools as well, because they are barely coping with everything else in their lives - like earning enough money to put a roof over their children's heads, to feed them, clothe them etc., they have enough to worry about! ...
- P: And the fact that they are actually paying school fees is an indication for these parents that it's the teacher's problem!!! ...

High School Parents

- P: I think it [partnership] is possible, but because of the lack of parental involvement in children's school life ... It's so difficult because the parental support is not there!
- P: It breaks down because parents step away from the school and education.
- P: I mean, it's exactly the same as the father / daughter relationship - where you most need the physical contact, you withdraw from it ...
- P: And then that breaks down from the parents side and the parent doesn't take initiative or step forward because the teacher puts that kind of barrier that says 'Out of my space'.
- P: It's almost like the teachers are the experts and the parents must leave it up to them to get on

with their jobs.

After a lengthy discussion with the High School parents, it became clear that they felt they were stepping back because, as mentioned earlier, they perceived the school as not wanting them there and also because they felt that educators were the experts and that they would just be in the way.

The Junior Primary parents did not mention that they felt that the parents are not involved enough with the school therefore it is not possible to compare the three phases.

b) PARTNERSHIPS ARE NOT ALWAYS SEEN AS POSSIBLE

The Senior Primary and High School educators tended to feel that certain of the knowledge cards, i.e. those cards that depicted knowledge from the categories of “Values” and “Life Skills/Body”, did not lend themselves to the establishment of partnerships between the two environments. This is particularly interesting, as it can be said that these knowledge categories fall into informal knowledge, i.e. knowledge that is not directly related to the school curriculum, which reiterates the fact that educators are only interested in what is more valuable and can be taught by them at school. This was, however, not true of the Junior Primary educators, who felt that partnerships could be established with all the knowledge categories, even if it was on the terms of the educators only, as illustrated in the previous section. The extract below illustrates the educator’s feelings about this.

Extract 18:

Senior Primary Educators

- E: I can say what I think the parents should do and what the teachers should do but I can’t see how there’d be a partnership.
 E: I think it should happen at home and at school but I cannot tie the two together.
 E: I don’t see why there has to be this sort of link. Why can’t parents do their own dealing with death, and teachers do – why must there be a specific joining factor?
 E: And, again, I can’t see how to involve the parents. ... I’ve no idea what to do ...
 E: I don’t really see how you can be in partnership with that one. I mean it’s a totally personal thing and you cannot force that on parents. They will do what they believe and you cannot change that.
 E: We can’t have a partnership, it must be separate ... It must be school and home ...
 E: And how would we actually put that into a partnership? I can’t see how.

High School Educators

Understand that smoking can endanger health

- MD: So, can you develop a partnership with this one?
 E1: No!
 E2: Look, I think ... remember when we caught those boys smoking – the parents didn’t see it as a serious thing *at all*. I think there, because there are far more serious things happening at school, like the drugs and the stealing, that smoking is almost seen as ...

- E3: Oh, they were only smoking ... what a relief!
 E4: Yes.
 E1: I had a parent tell me that they let their son smoke because then he doesn't want to smoke other things. Little do they know that he is smoking other things!
 E2: It's seen as a bad thing but not as a ...
 E3: Yes, it's seen as a bad thing but 'If you really, really need to smoke and you come and tell me then I'll let you smoke' type of thing!
 E4: They are not worry about it at all!
 E1: I don't think you can really have a partnership with this one.

Be conscientious about not dropping litter

- E1: The parents need to be made aware that the children will have to stay in after school if the school is dirty.
 E2: Yes, but I don't think they're going to go home and say, 'Now dear, you must pick up the mess in the school!
 E3: No, they're going to say, 'Do you realise how late I am not because I had to wait for you!
 E4: They'll see it as the school's problem.
 E2: Yes!
 E1: That's a very ... I don't think the parents give a damn about that one, except how it affects them.
 MD: So you don't see any way that you could form a partnership between home and school on this one?
 E4: Absolutely no partnership!
 E1: No!

A question that needs to be raised at this point is why educators are not willing to establish partnerships with parents? Is this indicative of a rigid and inflexible nature of educators who feel they are the only ones who are able to teach children in a school environment?

Unlike the Senior Primary and High School educators, all the parents of the three phases believed that partnerships can be established for all the knowledge categories they discussed. Is this possibly because parents are more open to the idea of partnerships that encompass the actual processes of knowledge production and instruction and recognise that learning is a continuous, flexible process with many possible applications in both the formal and informal contexts?

c) PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT SEEN AS A THREAT

According to the High School parents, educators often felt inferior and threatened by parental involvement in the school environment and this negatively affected the establishment of partnerships. They felt quite strongly that this was one of the main reasons why educators appeared to put up barriers when it came to parents, and why parents stepped aside and left the education of their children up to the educators. As illustrated in the extract below, the parents felt that the educators tended to become arrogant because of their perceived levels of inferiority, which ultimately had a negative impact on the relationship that was established between educators and parents.

Extract 19:**High School Parents**

- P1: I think teachers often feel very inferior ...
 P2: Yes very inferior!
 P3: ... and very threatened ...
 P4: I tend to agree with that and I think that teachers do feel like that - and it drives me nuts that they do feel like that but I ...
 P6: And their inferiority comes across as arrogance ...
 P2: And then that [arrogance] breaks it down from the parent's side and the parent doesn't take initiative or step forward because the teacher puts up that kind of barrier that says "out of my space".
 P4: Can I tell you - that barrier is so big with teachers, that the day I walked into the staff room to do a locum at [school's name] and some of the staff heard that I was also parent; the shutters came down almost instantly.
 P3: Were they looking at you as a parent as opposed to looking at you as a teacher and a colleague?
 P4: Yes - it was significant - o.k. not to the point that I didn't fit in. I mean within time I had a nice relationship with most of the members of the staff and there were other teachers who had daughters at the school, so I wouldn't say that it was a policy, but I just think I walked in as a locum and they were threatened!

This issue was not discussed by the Junior or Senior Primary parents.

In conclusion, from the above results, it became evident that the general impression of all educators and parents across the three phases was that a lack of parental involvement in children's' lives and in schools was one of the main reasons why partnerships could not be established between the home and school environments. Reasons for these perceptions included parents being *"too busy holding down full time jobs"*; a change in the structure of the family in the last 20 years; and a group of parents who, no matter what anyone did, would never be interested in their children's' lives. The Senior Primary and High School educators tended to believe that certain of the knowledge cards did not lend themselves to the establishment of partnerships between the two environments although the Junior Primary educators felt that partnerships could be established with all the knowledge categories. Unlike the educators, all the parents believed that partnerships can be established for all the knowledge categories they discussed. It was also the opinion of the High School parents that educators often felt inferior and threatened by parental involvement in the school environment and therefore partnerships were not being established between the two environments because of this.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study will be interpreted using both the conceptual framework of the literature review and previous research done in South Africa, i.e. Van der Riet (1997) and Danckwerts (2002). But because the variation of this study, i.e. a comparison across the three educational phases, has never been undertaken previously and very little research exists around it, it becomes difficult to draw comparisons between the general themes of the three studies and those within the conceptual framework. Therefore, comparisons will be drawn as far as possible and the remainder of the discussion will take place across the three phases of the educational process.

5.2 CATEGORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

The discussion of the results will be structured around the three broad issues addressed in Chapter 4, i.e. what knowledge is important; responsibilities for knowledge; and perceptions of partnerships.

5.2.1 WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT?

5.2.1.1 REJECTED KNOWLEDGE

Even though The Dialogue Game has been played on three different occasions, i.e. Van der Riet (1997), Danckwerts (2002) and the current study, all the groups of parents and educators from all three studies accepted most of the cards played. The knowledge cards and categories rejected in this study are outlined in Table 3 and 6 in the previous chapter.

a) REASONS FOR REJECTING KNOWLEDGE

In the current study, the main reasons for rejecting or placing knowledge in the home or school categories are outlined below.

As with Van der Riet's (1997) study, knowledge was rejected because it was not perceived to relate to the world of the child and was therefore seen to be of no use to the child. Knowledge was rejected or placed in the school category if the resources were seen to be unavailable to actualise that knowledge. As with Van der Riet's (1997) study, even though the game required the participants to indicate what they thought *should* take place, the educators and parents had a particularly difficult time doing this and tended to

state what *actually* took place. According to Van der Riet (1997), these types of responses could be indicative of the educators' and parents vision of education being constrained by a lack of material resources.

Knowledge was rejected because it was perceived to be inappropriate, useless or irrelevant to the child or because it placed too many demands on the child for a particular level or age, i.e. Grade 3 (\pm age 9/10), Grade 7 (\pm age 12/13) and Grade 10 (\pm age 15/16). This appeared to be the case in Van der Riet's (1997) study as well. Educators and parents rejected knowledge that placed too many demands on the child or was deemed inappropriate for the age of the child. Van der Riet (1997) points out that the educators in this study appeared to focus on the cognitive capacity of the child, while the parents were more connected to the real life context in which the child lived.

In addition to what has been mentioned above, the parents and educators in both the current study and Van der Riet's (1997) study also rejected knowledge if it was not seen to be relevant to a particular school context. Van der Riet (1997) points out that this may have been the case because the fact that schools might have different value systems was not necessarily recognised. The age of the child was also used as a criterion to value knowledge. The child's level of ability and interest in certain types of knowledge was also used as a criterion. The parents, as opposed to the educators gave this as a reason. This might be an indication of the way in which parents see the child as a person, whereas educators tend to focus on the child as learner, or, as a pupil, where affective issues are not primary.

No discussion of the knowledge cards that were rejected in Danckwerts' (2002) study took place therefore no comparison can take place.

As with Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies more, cards were accepted than rejected in this study. Because of this, as Van der Riet (1997) points out, it becomes more significant in the analysis of the process to provide an explanation for the reasonings of educators and parents for their decisions. Therefore, the main criteria for selecting the knowledge are outlined below, under the main headings used in previous chapters, i.e. what knowledge is important, responsibilities for knowledge and perceptions of partnerships.

5.2.1.2 REASONS FOR PERCEIVING KNOWLEDGE AS IMPORTANT

a) FORMAL KNOWLEDGE vs INFORMAL KNOWLEDGE

The findings of the current study revealed noticeably different results to those of Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies. While all the educators and parents in the previous two studies valued formal, abstract knowledge over informal knowledge, only the High School educators and parents in the current study appeared to value abstract knowledge and skills as being important in the education of a child. This could be related to the fact that they place more focus and value on Matric as the end result of school. By acknowledging that formal, abstract knowledge is more important than informal knowledge, the High School educators and parents illustrated Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo's (1992) theory that formal education is generally perceived as 'superior'. The Junior and Senior Primary educators and parents, on the other hand, tended to be more open-minded and regarded most knowledge cards as important, thus possibly reflecting their general understanding that learning is a complex, continuous process with numerous applications in both the formal and informal contexts. This could also be because they are not focussed on the Matric examination as the end result. Their construction of the child was thus as a multi-faceted, pro-active learner (Van der Riet, 1997). This is in accordance with Scribner and Cole (1973); Donaldson (1978) and Vygotsky (1978). They all argue that the contrasting features of school learning and everyday learning are constantly intermingled and the cognitive skills learned in each context, although different, are not isolated from each other. According to Vygotsky (1978), children's learning begins long before they attend school and any learning that they encounter in school always has a previous history. It therefore follows that parents, guardians and caregivers should retain a primary educational role in their children's lives. From all three studies, i.e. Van der Riet (1997); Danckwerts (2002) and the current study, there is evidence that this is not necessarily the case.

The fact that the Junior and Senior Primary parents also tended to relate the relevance and importance of knowledge to a child's everyday reality in the school and home contexts, was in line with the findings of Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts (2002) studies.

b) DISCUSSION AND DEBATE BY EDUCATORS

In the current study, educators across all three phases showed little or no willingness to

engage in discussion or debate around what knowledge cards they considered important. They chose relevant knowledge items quickly, decisively and without much discussion, and appeared to have been made up their minds even before the knowledge card had been fully read out. As mentioned earlier, this lack of discussion or debate by educators only seems to strengthen the argument that they see the school environment as the “purveyor of expert knowledge ...” (Van der Riet, 1997, p. 85), knowing exactly what children should and should not know or learn at a certain age. It could be said that these perceptions illustrate what Scribner and Cole (1973) describe as the context-bound nature of formal learning and relative training.

Unlike the educators in the current study, all the parents across the three phases appeared more willing to debate and discuss the knowledge cards at greater length. They appeared to believe that not all the knowledge cards were straight forward and therefore engaged in more discussion before deciding on an answer. The parents seemed to be more intuitive and open-minded, possibly indicating their awareness that not only knowledge learned at school was important. They were, however, less confident in their approach to decision making regarding education, which could stem from their unfamiliarity with the processes of education or a general tendency for parents to undervalue and feel unconfident about their abilities (Van der Riet, 1994; Gregory and Williams, 2000).

The current study revealed similar findings to that of Van der Riet’ (1997) and Danckwerts’ (2002) studies in that the educators in both studies displayed their familiarity with the process of formal education by choosing relevant knowledge items or rejecting those they considered irrelevant to the child in the school context, quickly, decisively and without much discussion. According to Danckwerts (2002), the parents in her study were also slower and more hesitant in their selection of cards and more inclined to engage in long discussions around the selection process.

5.2.2 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR KNOWLEDGE

5.2.2.1 WHERE SHOULD KNOWLEDGE BE TAUGHT?

As with Van der Riet’s (1997) study, Table 6 provides a generalised view of where knowledge cards from the six categories were placed by the parents and educators.

TABLE 6: AREAS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF KNOWLEDGE

		Home ← → Both ← → School ← → Reject
Educators	JP	Life Skills/Body Language & Communication Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other Values
	SP	Life Skills / Body Language & Communication Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other Values Biology/Natural Sciences
	H S	Life Skills/Body Language & Communication Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other Values Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other
Parents	JP	Life Skills/Body Language & Communication Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other Values Sport/General Knowledge/Other
	SP	Life Skills/Body Language & Communication Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other Values Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences
	H S	Life Skills/Body Language & Communication Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other Values Science/Maths/Technology Biology/Natural Sciences Sport/General Knowledge/Other

a) THE EDUCATORS

In general, most of the educators saw the responsibilities of conveying knowledge to children as being that of the “both” category, i.e. the home and school environments. This did, however, change depending on the age of the child.

The Junior Primary educators placed certain of the Life Skills/Body cards in the “reject” pile while others were placed in the “both” pile. The Senior Primary educators placed their cards in either the “home” or “both” piles, while the High School educators appeared a little more divided and placed their cards in the “home”, “both” and “reject” piles. The Language and Communication cards were placed in the “both” pile by all the educators across the three phases. The Science/Mathematics/Technology cards were

placed in the “school” pile by the Junior and Senior Primary educators, and in the “both” pile by the High School educators. The Junior Primary educators placed certain of the Biology/Natural Sciences cards in the “home” pile while others were placed in the “both” pile, while the Senior Primary and High School educators placed their cards in either the “both” or “reject” piles. For the Sport/General Knowledge/Other category, the Junior Primary educators placed all their cards in the “both” pile. The Senior Primary educators placed their cards into the “both” and “school” piles. The High School educators appeared a little more divided on this category and placed their cards in the “reject”, “home” and “both” piles. The Values cards were placed in the “both” pile by the Junior Primary and High School educators while the Senior Primary educators placed these cards in the “both” and “school” piles.

b) THE PARENTS

As with the educators, it was the general consensus of most of the parents, that the responsibilities of conveying knowledge to children was that of the “both” category, i.e. the home and school environments. This did, however, also change depending on the age of the child.

The Junior Primary parents appeared to be divided on the Life Skills/Body cards as they placed some in the “home” pile, some in the “both” pile and the rest in the “reject” pile. The Senior Primary and High School parents placed their cards in either the “both” or the “reject” piles. The Language and Communication cards were placed in the “both” piles by the Junior Primary and High School parents and the “home” pile by the Senior Primary parents. The Science/Mathematics/Technology cards were placed in the “both” pile by the Junior Primary parents. The Senior Primary parents appeared to be divided on this category and placed cards in the “home”, “both”, “school” and “reject” piles. The High School parents placed their cards in the “both” and “reject” piles. The Junior Primary parents place the Biology/Natural Sciences cards in the “both” pile, while the Senior Primary parents placed their cards in either the “home” or “both” piles or “rejected” the cards. The High School parents placed their cards in the “both” or “reject” piles. For the Sport/General Knowledge/Other category, the Junior Primary parents placed their cards in the “both”, “school” and “reject” piles. The Senior Primary parents placed their cards into the “home” and “both” piles and the High School parents placed their cards in the “both” and “reject” piles. The Values cards were placed in the “both”

pile by the Junior Primary and High School parents while the Senior Primary educators placed these cards in the “home” and “both” piles.

5.2.2.2 REASONS FOR PLACING KNOWLEDGE IN “HOME”, “SCHOOL” OR “BOTH” CATEGORIES

The knowledge cards and categories that were placed in the home, school or both categories by the various educator and parent groups in this study are outlined in Table 3 in the previous chapter. The reasons for these placements are outlined below.

a) SCHOOL IS NOT THE ONLY SITE FOR SIGNIFICANT LEARNING

As with Van der Riet’s (1997) and Danckwerts’ (2002) studies, the current study revealed that all the parents across the three phases appeared to see the school environment as not necessarily being the only site for significant learning to take place. The findings of this study, and those of Van der Riet (1997) and Danckwerts (2002), suggest that parents believe that significant learning occurs in both formal and informal contexts and that they do not equate education entirely with schooling. These findings depart from Macbeth’s (1996) claim that in general education is equated with what happens at school.

These findings also support Scribner and Cole’s (1973) definitions of informal education, i.e. that informal education is that which “occurs in the course of mundane adult activities in which the young take part according to their abilities”, and that “there are no activities set aside to solely ‘educate the child’ ” (p. 554 – 555). They also support Macbeth’s (1996) claim that in reality, much of a child’s ‘significant learning’ – i.e. that which is retained by and has an effect on the child, occurs in the informal environment.

The fact that the parents see significant learning occurring in both formal and informal contexts and they do not equate education entirely with schooling supports the fact that Vygotsky (1978) believes children’s learning begins long before they attend school and any learning that a child encounters in school always has a previous history. This only strengthens Vygotsky’s (1978) belief that learning and development are intermingled and presuppose each other, with initial mastery providing the basis for the subsequent development of a variety of highly complex internal processes of children’s thinking,

which makes it essential for the learning in the formal and informal contexts to be interrelated.

As with all the parents in the current study, all the educators appeared to be in agreement with the view that the school context is not necessarily the only site for significant learning to take place, but *only* when it related to issues they considered irrelevant to the school context. This is a direct contradiction and could possibly be a reflection of the educator's understanding of education being a narrower, more context-bound nature of learning (Scribner and Cole, 1973). These findings support those obtained in Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies, where the educators claimed sole responsibility for the instruction of formal learning and tended to be dismissive of both the content and site of informal learning. Unlike the parent groups above, these findings support Macbeth's (1996) claim that in general education is equated with what happens at school.

b) FORMAL LEARNING HAPPENS AT SCHOOL

As Van der Riet (1997) points out in her study, the reasoning patterns in the current study are also not too surprising. As with Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies all the educators across the three phases in the current study claimed responsibility for the instruction of formal learning, as well as that which they considered to be technological and abstract in nature – the underlying assumption being that educators have the specialist training to do this. Again, this supports Macbeth's (1996) claim that education is equated to what happens at school.

These findings depart from Donaldson (1973); Scribner and Cole (1978) and Vygotsky (1978), who believe that that some attempt should be made to integrate these disparate realities through grounding formal learning processes within the context of the child's recognisable, practical, everyday reality or by combining disembedded thinking with relevant activity, or “doing” in order to render it more accessible and meaningful.

Interestingly enough, despite an awareness by all the parents across the three phases in the current study, that the school context is not the only site of significant learning, as was shown above, the parents across all three studies, i.e. current, Van der Riet (1997)

and Danckwerts (2002), supported educator claims of being responsible for the instruction of formal learning. This supports the claim by Van der Riet (1997) that the formal educational environment is seen to be “the purveyor of expert knowledge” (p. 85).

c) THE SCHOOL CONTEXT SHOULD SUPPLEMENT THE HOME CONTEXT

As with Van der Riet’s (1997) and Danckwerts’ (2002) studies, the current study revealed that all the educators and parents across the three phases were of the belief that the school environment should supplement home learning when parental resources were perceived to be lacking and all groups appeared happy that the school fill the gaps by providing supplementary knowledge. Again these findings only serve to strengthen Macbeth’s (1996) claim that education is equated with what happens at school.

d) SCHOOL AS EDUCATOR, PARENT AS SUPPORTER

As with Van der Riet’s (1997) and Danckwerts’ (2002) studies, the educators across the three phases of the current study believed that it was the responsibility of the parents to support the school in all its educational endeavours. The parental role was perceived to be peripheral, relegated to a supportive role that endorsed all school-based practices. Parents who failed to control their child’s behaviour at home were seen by the educators (particularly the High School educators in the current study) as neglecting their parental responsibilities, thereby forcing the school to assume these responsibilities. These findings support general theory about the marginalisation of parental educational roles (Van der Riet, 1994; Macbeth and Ravn, 1994; Krumm, 1994; Scaparro, 1994).

Like all the educators across all three studies, the parents across the three phases of the current study and those in Van der Riet’s (1997) and Danckwerts’ (2002) study, also tended to perceive their educative role as supportive, despite their awareness of the multiple sites of learning. They tended to believe that they lack confidence in their abilities to take on an educative responsibility, which could stem from their unfamiliarity with the processes of education or a general tendency for parents to undervalue their contribution to the educative process and feeling unconfident in their abilities (Van der Riet, 1994; Gregory and Williams, 2000).

e) EDUCATORS ARE OFTEN EASIER TO TALK TO THAN PARENTS

Because it appeared to be the general consensus amongst the Senior Primary educators and High School parents of the current study that older children did not generally like to discuss topics of a sensitive nature with their parents, they tended to believe that these topics should be taught in the school environment, where the educators could play the role of a facilitator in discussions around these topics in the classroom environment. This illustrates a recognition by both these sets of parents and educators of the different developmental needs of children, which is highlighted in the current study.

This is in accordance with what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as the zone of proximal development, where learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his/her environment and in co-operation with his/her peers. Once these processes are internalised, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. Essentially what Vygotsky (1978) argues is that learning and development are interrelated and spontaneous from the child's very first day of life. Learning is not dependent on development and development is not dependent on learning. Learning and development do not follow a sequential order, in which the child is only able to learn a particular concept once they reach a particular developmental age.

Unlike the educators, all the parents and the Junior Primary educators across the three phases in the current study believed that sensitive issues were the responsibility of the parents, as they were emotionally closer to their children and shared a more intimate relationship with them than the educators. These findings departed from the findings of Van der Riet's (1997) study. Her study was in line with what the current study's Senior Primary educators and High School parents alluded to, i.e. that their relationships with their children differed from their children's' relationship with their educator. Van der Riet's (1997) study showed that this was important because not all topics could be discussed with parents, but could be discussed with educators, e.g. basic sex and reproduction.

f) PARENTS NEGLECT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

As with Van der Riet's (1997) study, the current study revealed that educator beliefs that

the home and school contexts should assume joint responsibility for imparting knowledge stemmed from the educators' perceptions that parents were neglecting their responsibilities. Van der Riet (1997) points out that in a sense, this view is no different from parent-educator interaction where the parent's role is marginal and the main focus of their engagement with the school is to reinforce the ideas and programmes of the school. This is illustrated in point (iv) above, where parents are perceived as supporters of the educational process.

5.2.3 PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNERSHIPS

It is important to note that because Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies did not involve an analysis of the three educational phases, a comparison of the three studies is not always possible. Drawing on literature also becomes difficult because of the lack of literature on this topic.

a) COMMUNICATION

In the current study, all the educators and parents in the three phases deemed communication an essential element in the establishment of partnerships between the home and school environments. The Senior Primary educators went as far as saying that if communication did not run smoothly, partnerships would firstly not be established, and secondly not work. But if one takes a closer look at the means of communication used by all the educators in the three schools with their respective parents, it becomes evident that it is very 'one-sided' and ultimately quite problematic. Newsletters and consent forms sent home to parents informing them of what is happening at school does not, in many instances, constitute a partnership, but rather a way of informing the parents what the school is doing and subtly telling the parents to support the educators in their educational endeavours.

This echoes what Weiss and Edwards (1992) believe to be a barrier to the establishment of partnerships, i.e. that schools and parents rarely establish ongoing routine communication channels for sharing information in a two-way dialogue. As a result, they believe that there is a certain degree of alienation of parents from educators and a level of expectation that these interactions will be adversarial. Weiss and Edwards (1992) offer a possible reason for this, i.e. the activities in which these types of communications could take place are not typically part of the school calendar because the school staff often lack

the skills needed to elicit and constructively incorporate input from parents and children.

As mentioned earlier, no debate or discussion seemed to have occurred between the two parties and the “letter” or “consent form” partnership appeared to be on the school and educator’s terms *only*, thus relegating the parent to the periphery of the educational process with little or no say in what happens in the school environment. Again this echoes what Weiss and Edwards (1992) believe to be problematic with the establishment of partnerships, i.e. that discussions of problems and the like, often take place without the full and equal participation of all concerned persons at the same time and that invariably, one party is left out. And as Macbeth (1996) points out, at no point are parents consulted about the content of the educational curriculum or about what their responsibilities should be with regards to the informal education of their children – these aspects seem to be ignored by the school and its educators.

As with this study, Danckwerts’ (2002) study revealed similar findings with regards to communication. Both parents and educators in Danckwerts’ (1992) study recognised that, while communication was a crucial element of a working partnership, it was, as Weiss and Edwards (1992) pointed out, nonetheless problematic for the establishment of partnerships.

No discussion on communication took place in Van der Riet’s (1997) study; therefore no comparison can take place.

b) RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTNERHIPS

According to all the educators and parents across the three phases in the current study, educators have a greater role and responsibility to play in the partnership process. The educators appeared to believe that they were the ones who had to take the initiative in setting up partnerships and make sure that parents gave their consent for whatever it was they wanted to do. They also tended to relegate parental involvement and partnership to the role of supporter or enforcer of school practices. The parents, on the other hand, tended to dismiss their responsibilities or downplay or undervalue their contribution to the partnership process by handing over their responsibility to the educators. The parents appeared to believe that educators should take the initiative in setting up the partnerships

and then provide the opportunities for parental involvement. As Van der Riet (1996) points out, possible reasons for parents dismissing their responsibilities or downplaying or undervaluing their responsibilities in the partnership process could perhaps be because of their lack of familiarity with the system of formal education and their reluctance of getting involved for fear of failure. Therefore, they perceived educators to have little faith and believe in their ability.

The current study differed somewhat from that of Van der Riet's (1997) study. The educators from School C tended to divide the responsibility for knowledge more definitively into either the home or the school contexts and did not see the point of partnerships. The parents from School C, on the other hand, tended to put more cards into the both pile, thus illustrating their belief that things should be developed in partnership. The educators from School D placed more emphasis on the partnerships, expecting parents, rather unusually as Van der Riet (1997) points out, to assume joint responsibility for certain of the knowledge categories.

No discussion on the responsibility for the establishment of partnerships took place in Danckwerts' (2002) study; therefore no comparison can take place.

c) CONTACT WITH PARENTS AS A RESULT OF PROBLEMS

As mentioned earlier, the Senior Primary educators and parents tended to believe that contact often only result out of problems arising at school and then the school having to call in the parents to sort them out. This echoes what Macbeth (1996) points out, i.e. that parents tend to be regarded as peripheral to the educational processes by educators, *except* when things go wrong, e.g. bad behaviour, truancy, school failure, etc., at which point their influence is recognised and summoned to reinforce school aims.

This point cannot be compared across the three phases of the educational process as only the Senior Primary educators and parents mentioned it.

No discussion around partnerships resulting out of problems took place in Van der Riet's (1997) or Danckwerts' (2002) study; therefore no comparison can take place.

d) SCHOOL AS EDUCATOR, PARENT AS SUPPORTER

The majority of educators across the three phases in this study tended to believe that it was the responsibility of the school to inform, i.e. impart or teach knowledge, and for the parents to enforce the knowledge and educational process, i.e. support this teaching process through endorsing what the educators were saying and the practices of the school. In addition to this, the nature of parental participation within the formal educative context is often restricted to non-professional areas, i.e. the involvement in extra-curricular activities, which are outside of the classroom and the curriculum, thereby relegating parents to the role of supporter (Van der Riet, 1998). As Weiss and Edwards (1992) point out, parents are rarely looked upon as partners or co-decision makers, particularly in the 'real' context of education.

As with this study, Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies revealed similar findings. The educators in Van der Riet's (1997) study appeared to be judgmental of parental behaviour. Parents were seen to be lacking in resources and expertise or to have failed in their duties. Parents on the other hand, seemed to be more open to view partnerships as more likely and possible than educators. The educators in Danckwerts' (2002) study saw parental involvement in education as necessary but peripheral. They believed that the educators are responsible for the imparting of knowledge and it was the parent's duty to support this process through endorsing the practices of the school.

e) PARTNERSHIPS ARE EASIER TO ESTABLISH AT THE LOWER LEVELS

According to all the educators across the three phases and the High School parents in the current study, partnerships are easier to establish at the lower levels of the educational process because of motivated and interested parents who want to participate in their children's lives. They also felt that at the lower levels, parental involvement was still a novelty. They felt that parents wanted to be involved in their children's lives, wanted to drop them off at school in the morning and talk to the educator and wanted to do everything that they could to make their child's life at school as comfortable, easy and enjoyable as possible because the children are smaller/younger and much more dependant on their parents and educators than older children. The High School parents in particular, felt very strongly that partnerships break down at the higher levels because of perceptions that schools do not want them there.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Junior and Senior Primary parents did not comment on the ease of establishing partnerships, therefore a comparison cannot be made across the three phases.

No discussion on partnerships across the three phases of the educational process took place in Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) study because of the nature of these studies. It is therefore important to emphasise the current study's strength and contribution to the body of knowledge on this topic, i.e. the differentiation across the three levels of the educational process.

f) CERTAIN PARTNERSHIPS ARE EASIER TO ESTABLISH THAN OTHERS

All the parents and educators across the three phases in the current study believed that partnerships are easier to form on some issues than others. The educators tended to dismiss knowledge cards that dealt with emotional issues, like death, sex, religion and the like, as much harder to establish partnerships than issues like recycling waste materials, sport, rules of the road, and so on, while the parents tended to feel that even though the partnership would be potentially difficult to establish, the two environments needed to make an effort to try and work something out.

No discussion on ease of establishing partnerships took place in Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) study; therefore no comparison can take place.

g) THE USE OF SCHOOL RESOURCES BY COMMUNITIES

The discussion held by parents and educators with regards to using school resources by communities was discussed in Chapter 4. It is important to note that discussing partnerships with outside sources may have been an avoidance tactic – a way of avoiding talking about the topic at hand, i.e. ways of discussing how to establish partnerships between parents and educators within the school and home context.

No discussion on using school resources by communities took place in Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) study; therefore no comparison can take place.

h) SKILLS, ABILITIES, TIME AND CONTACTS

In the current study, it was the opinion of all the parents and the majority of educators across the three phases of the educational process that partnerships should be formed between parents and educators, especially in areas where the educators were seen not to have the skills or abilities parents perhaps had. According to the parents, it did not particularly matter who was educating the child, as long as the child was being educated. They also believed that they (the parents) may have outside contacts, whom they could ask to come in and hold talks with the children, which would also be beneficial to the child's education. These findings depart from what Cohen (1971, cited in Scribner and Cole, 1973) maintains about the formal educational context, i.e. that what is being taught, instead of who is doing the teaching, becomes of paramount importance. As mentioned earlier, it appeared that the parents were happy to admit their lack of skill or ability at doing something and will to then seeking external help to assist in giving their children the correct information, which would ultimately benefit the children. It is interesting to note that the educators were not willing to admit that they may be lacking in certain skills or abilities needed to educate children. Could this be indicative of the educators' perception of being "the purveyor[s] of expert knowledge ..." (Van der Riet, 1997, p. 85).

It is interesting to note that as with all the parents of this study, the Junior and Senior Primary educators also believed that partnerships should be formed between themselves and the parents, especially in areas where they felt they did not necessarily have the skills, ability or the time parents perhaps had. As mentioned earlier, these views were particularly noticeable in knowledge categories that were not directly related to the curriculum. This raises the questions of whether the educators were happy with "letting parents get involved" because they would not really be interfering with the "real" work that they do at school.

5.2.4. CONSTRAINTS TO PARTNERSHIPS

As mentioned earlier, *all* the educators and parents in the three phases believed that partnerships can and should be formed between the home and school environments. But despite this fact, both parties believed that this would be difficult to do for the reasons outlined below. It must be said that the Junior Primary educators and parents did

not experience as much difficulty as the Senior Primary and High School educators and parents in explaining the reasons for the difficulties in establishing partnerships, but nonetheless, they did express some concerns about this.

The perceptions of parents and educators of partnerships being viable and a good idea in theory showed marked similarities to the educators and parents in Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies. As with the educators from this study, the educators in the two previous studies were generally resistant to the concept of partnerships in education. The parents, on the other hand, were more open to the possibilities of partnerships.

a) PARENTS ARE NOT INVOLVED ENOUGH IN THEIR CHILDRENS' LIVES

It is surprising to note in the current study, that *all* the educators and parents across the three phases saw a lack of parental involvement in children's' lives and in schools as being one of the main reasons why partnerships could not be established between the home and school environments. They did, however, give vastly different reasons for their perceptions of the lack of involvement by parents. The educators appeared patronising and sympathetic, while the parents tried to justify the reasons for this. The educators gave a number of reasons for the lack of involvement, including parents being too busy; the changing structure of the family over the last 20 years; and parents who were just not interested. The parents on the other hand, perceived the school as not wanting them there and also because they felt that educators were the experts and that they would just be in the way. Because of this, the parents tend to believe that to hand over responsibility to the educators is the best possible solution. These parent perceptions echo what Van der Riet (1994) and Macbeth (1996) note, i.e. that parents feel inadequate and lack confidence in the face of educator expertise and therefore hand over responsibility to the educators, who, are unfortunately dismissive of and under-acknowledge parental involvement in education.

No discussion on parents not being involved enough with their children's lives took place in Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) study; therefore no comparison can take place.

b) PARTNERSHIPS ARE NOT ALWAYS SEEN AS POSSIBLE

It is interesting to note that certain of the knowledge cards were perceived by the Senior Primary and High School educators as not lending themselves to the establishment of partnerships at all. These knowledge cards were not part of the curriculum and could therefore be said to constitute informal knowledge. This would appear to be indicative of the fact that these educators are only concerned with knowledge that is curriculum based. It is important to note that the Junior Primary educators felt that partnerships could be established with all the knowledge categories. They did, however, tend to believe that these partnerships should be established on their terms only, as illustrated in the previous section. This only reiterates that, as Macbeth (1996) points out, the home element of the child's learning – both actual and potential – is usually ignored (Macbeth, 1996), or not taken as seriously as the school element. Unlike the educators in this study, all the parents across the three phases believed that partnerships can be established for all the knowledge categories.

c) EDUCATORS FEEL THREATENED BY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

According to the High School parents of the current study, educators often felt inferior and threatened by parental involvement in the school environment, perhaps illustrating the need of educators to protect their professional status. Because of this, the High School parents tended to believe that partnerships were not established as educators put up barriers to parents, and parents stepped aside and left the education of their children up to the educators. The High School parents also felt that the educators tended to become arrogant because of their perceived levels of inferiority, which ultimately had a negative impact on the relationship that was established between educators and parents. Again, this could be that educators need to protect their professional status.

This issue cannot be compared across the three phases of the educational process as it was not the opinion of either the Junior or Senior Primary parents or any of the educator groups that educators came across as feeling inferior or threatened by parental involvement in the school environment.

Danckwerts' (2002) study revealed similar findings with regards to educators feeling threatened by parental involvement in school. The educators in her study were reluctant

to conceptualise a partnership in with both educators and parents assume joint responsibility for the child's education because they saw the parents as lacking in the necessary resources and training.

5.3 CONCLUSION

From the outset of this study, it was anticipated that the results would differ slightly from those recorded by Van der Riet (1997) and Danckwerts (2002), simply because the nature of the study was different. The only differences were that the perceptions of educators and parents did appear to change across the three phases of the educational process.

The six hypotheses formulated at the outset of this study all appear to have been confirmed. Hypothesis number one claimed that educators and parents have vastly different views from each other with regards to when certain types of knowledge should be taught to a child, what knowledge should be taught to a child and the range of skills, knowledge and attitudes that should be taught to a child, and where these should be taught – i.e. at home, at school or in both environments. This was confirmed on numerous occasions by both educators and parents across all three phases of the educational process. All the educators and parents had vastly different views on some of the knowledge cards and categories that were discussed. The second hypothesis claimed that the views of education change across the various levels of schooling. This was certainly the case with all educators and parents, as it was evidenced by what knowledge was rejected or accepted and placed in either the home, school or both categories. The third hypothesis claimed that parents are more involved in the school process in the lower grades. This was clearly stated by all the educators and parents, with the High School parents going as far as saying that High Schools “do not want parents around”. Once the child has been dropped off at school, the parent must leave because the parents have not business being on the “educator’s turf”. Hypothesis number four claimed that parents and educators have poor communication. This was evidenced throughout all the educator and parent focus groups. The fact that communication is so one-sided, in favour of the educators, is hugely problematic as the parents seldom get to air their views. The fifth hypothesis claimed that the nature of the communication between parents and educators is related to perceptions, attitudes and beliefs and does not facilitate a partnership between the parents and schools. This was particularly true for the parents who tended to downplay or undervalue their contributions to the educational process because they felt

ill-equipped to deal with knowledge. The final hypothesis claimed that the dynamics of parent/educator communication relationship change as one moves through the levels of schooling – i.e. the relationship will be much more important in the earlier years of the schooling process than later on. This hypothesis was strongly supported by the Junior Primary educators and the High School educators and parents.

Despite the differences shown above, it is interesting to note that the perceptions of the parents and educators of the current study revealed similar findings to those of the previous studies. Because the parent sample selected for this study was more in line with the parent sample selected in Danckwerts' (1997) study, i.e. it appeared to be more educated and in possession of more material means, it was also assumed that there would be less of a disjuncture between the home and school contexts than was noted in Van der Riet's (1997) study. This was certainly the case, but despite the higher degree of parental involvement in the school context, they still remained marginal in the actual educational process (Macbeth, 1994).

As with Van der Riet's (1997) study, the interactions between the parent and educator groups highlighted several problems. The parents in both Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies as well as the current study were aware that they had an educative responsibility but felt that they lacked the knowledge required to do this and appeared to be reluctant to encroach on what they perceived as areas of formal knowledge. The educators, on the other hand, believed that their knowledge was far superior and better than the knowledge children received from the informal, home environment and were protective of their authority.

The present study appears to confirm the findings of Van der Riet's (1997) study in that there still appears to be a mismatch between the operating of educational systems and the multi-sourced learning patterns of children.

As Danckwerts (2002) indicates, the findings appeared to indicate that the structures of formal schooling in South African are, at present, inflexible and should not be questioned by parents, as well as the dialogue between educators and parents remains fraught with the differences in perceptions and expectations of education.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The current educational system is not perfect and numerous problem areas exist within it. The current study's findings highlight some of these problem areas, which will be discussed and recommendations made.

Firstly, there is a lack of communication between parents and educators in the educational process. Parents and educators do not seem to talk to each other in open and free, two-way dialogue. As shown earlier, dialogue is very one-sided and generally only allows one of the parties, usually the educators, to have their say. This one-sided dialogue does not allow for discussion and debate between parents and educators about important issues in a child's education, such as the curriculum and communication is generally reserved for informing parents as to what the school is doing or for any disciplinary matters that arise. Because this lack of communication does exist between parents and educators, it is imperative that a means of bridging this gap be found so that educators and parents can be brought onto the same level playing field. After all, every story has two sides, therefore for effective communication to work, one needs to be able to hear from both sides in order to assess what is going right and what is going wrong.

Secondly, the perceptions of parents and educators change from junior primary to high school as they each tend to value different kinds of knowledge. The fact that these two parties do value different kinds of knowledge and have such different perceptions has an impact on what each party ultimately thinks. Because of this, both the parents and the educators should strive to make each other aware of what they are thinking and believing at any one time. This could be achieved quite nicely if there were better communication channels between the two parties.

Thirdly, parents feel unwelcome at the higher levels of the educational process. This was particularly evidenced by the High School parents, who felt isolated from their children at school because, as mentioned early, they tended to feel that the educators did not want them interfering with what was happening at school. A question that needs to be asked here is whether the schools knew that their parents felt so unwelcome and isolated? If they were not aware of this fact, this problem could be easily remedied by making the

schools aware of how their parent body were being made to feel by the educators. This could be done through the effective use of communication. If the schools knew that their parents felt like this and chose to do nothing, then that would be a very delicate issue that would need a great deal of discussion and debate around, so that a mutual agreement could be reached as to what could be done about it.

The fourth issue involves the educators feeling that the parents are not involved enough with their children at high school. As with the previous issue, discussion and debate around this delicate issue needs to take place so that each party can get their grievances out in the open and come to some sort of mutual agreement as to what needs to be done about the problem.

And finally, different kinds of partnerships are formed and established at the different levels of the educational process. It would appear that the parents and educators in the junior levels of the educational process are of the impression that partnerships of tolerance, mutual respect and working together are for the good of the child, but when they reach the higher levels of the educational process, both parties become estranged and view the one as getting in the way of the other. The fact that these perceptions around partnership change so drastically from junior school to high school is quite astounding considering the communication lines at the junior levels appear to be working. One needs to ask what changes from one phase to the next and then to try and divert this from happening by collaboratively attempting to think creatively and laterally of ways of encouraging and engaging both the parents and the educators in the educational process of children. After all, education is not a destination – it's a journey with *all* the significant people in a child's life being involved from start to finish.

It is important to note that in general, all the problem areas highlighted above have one common denominator, i.e. communication. For parents and educators to work together in partnership and to bridge the gap that currently exists between the formal and informal learning contexts, they need to learn how to communicate and work together effectively with one other.

6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As with Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies, the limitations of the

current study lie largely in the size of the sample used and the general disadvantages of a focus group methodology (Steward and Shamdasani, 1998). The small numbers of participants in each focus group limits the generalisability of these findings to the general population. It is, however, interesting to note that, despite the small sample sizes, it would appear that South African parents and educators have essentially the same perceptions about formal and informal education. As Danckwerts (2002) points out, this has important implications for future research of this nature as it will further enrich and validates current educational theory.

6.3 AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

6.3.1 INFORMAL EDUCATION AND THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

As shown by Van der Riet's (1997) and Danckwerts' (2002) studies, as well as the current study, a great amount of emphasis was placed on formal education and the school context. But because informal education and the home context have been considered to be as important as formal education and the school context by numerous researchers (Scribner and Cole, 1973; Donaldson, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978; Macbeth, 1996, Van der Riet, 1997), the need has arisen for research to shift its emphasis from the school context being regarded as the sole learning centre of children to the home context being just as important, as well as acknowledging parents as key educators (Macbeth, 1996).

This has, to date, not been achieved because, as observed by Henze (1992), learning in the informal context takes place via a multitude of daily child/adult interactions that are "both fleeting and commonplace" (p. 4), which makes it incredibly difficult to research. But, if one is to accept the value of partnerships between the formal and informal contexts and educators and parents to incorporate all of a child's significant learning areas and not only the school context, it becomes imperative to find ways of researching this very difficult informal, home context (Macbeth, 1996).

Macbeth (1996) calls for a degree of functional overlap between the formal and informal divides to be achieved, because the better the fit between the two contexts, the more effective the child's learning will likely to be (Scribner and Cole, 1973). This functional overlap is, unfortunately difficult to achieve in South African schools, because, as Van der Riet (1997) points out, schools do not allow for an overlap between the formal and informal contexts. This is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, parents tend to be

marginalised when it comes to education. This is due, in part, to Apartheid and the political situation that has been prevalent in South African history. Secondly, parents do not perceive themselves to be as competent as the educator in the classroom situation and tend to look upon educators as “experts”. Thirdly, educators do not generally give parents the opportunity to voice their concerns, beliefs, and the like and are often seen to be in the way of their educational endeavours. The communication lines between educators and parents can therefore be said to be inadequate for partnerships to be established.

For this to change, Van der Riet (1997) proposes that schools need to see parents as important assets in the educational process and not as worthless. At the same time though, the parents also have to see themselves as important otherwise the two contexts cannot interact. To conclude, Van der Riet (1997) reminds one that in order for this working partnership between parents and educators to work, the most fundamental ingredient to an effective relationship is communication in which parents and educators are able to hear each other and appreciate their respective points of view. After all, without communication, nothing can ever be achieved.

Despite the numerous constraints that face researching the informal context, it is imperative to rectify the paucity of information available on this context and to explore and examine the perceptions parents and educators have on this (Macbeth, 1996).

6.3.2 THE THREE PHASES OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Because the nature of the current study was that of an investigation into perceptions across the three phases of the educational process, which had never been investigated before, it stands to reason that more research into the different levels of the educational process needs to take place in order to draw convincing conclusions. The information obtained from this study is just the humble beginnings of a wealth of information that could be obtained, if further research into this topic could take place.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

As with Van der Riet’s (1997) and Danckwerts’ (2002) studies, the findings of the current study emphasize and highlight the need for partnerships to be established between educators and parents and the home and the school contexts. These partnerships

need to be more than just administrative, financial or managerial in nature (Van der Riet, 1997). Unfortunately however, these studies also point to the numerous fundamental differences between the perspectives parents and educators have on knowledge and education, which makes the establishment of these partnerships particularly difficult, as these differences affect the ways in which partnerships are perceived and practised by parents and educators alike (Van der Riet, 1997).

As Van der Riet (1997) points out, the systems and structures within the educational body need to be changed and transformed. At the same time, these changes need to be revealed to the necessary stakeholders in schools because, if a child is to reach his/her full potential, then it stands to reason that the gaps evidenced here, i.e. between the formal and informal context, the school and home context and between parents and educators, need to be addressed in order to establish a workable dialogue between these parties. As has been established by the various studies in this area, The Dialogue Game appears to be the means through which stakeholders could hear each other. And as Van der Riet (1997) points out, perhaps if integrated into the process of Governing Bodies, this will lead to the necessary parties listening to the different views of parents and educators, as outlined in this study.

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APPENDIX 1:**LETTER TO SCHOOLS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT**

Dear Sir / Madam

PARTICIPATION OF YOUR SCHOOL IN RESEARCH FOR A MASTERS THESIS ON PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

I am currently doing Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of KwaZulu Natal – Pietermaritzburg, and part of the course requirements are that I undertake a research project resulting in the completion of a thesis at the end of the year.

My area of interest lies in the perceptions parents and educators hold with regards to formal and informal education and whom each group thinks is responsible for what type of education. The Danish National Parents' Association designed a game called the Dialogue Game, which seeks to explore parent and educator perspectives, of what knowledge is important for children and who should take responsibility for that knowledge.

It is through the utilisation of this game that I would like to collect the data for this research project, but in order for me to do this I need to have contact with both parent and educator groups who would be willing to participate in playing the Dialogue Game with me as the facilitator. I acknowledge that this will require educators to take time out of their already busy schedules and for willing parents to be contacted. However, I believe that this research is crucial to the smooth running of any school as it will identify areas of potential conflict of interests between its staff and parent body, which can then be addressed and thereby improve the relationship that exists between parents and educators. Participating in the game would involve one 2-hour workshop at a place most convenient for the group.

As I realise that you are very busy, I ask only that I may use your school as a vehicle for obtaining participants. Once the participants have been obtained, you will not be required to do anything else, as I will contact the individuals and set up a suitable time for running the workshops. If you are interested in assisting me with this research project, I ask your permission to meet with you to provide you with the finer details of the research project. We could then discuss what you think would be the best way to recruit participants, for example through me approaching selected members of your staff and asking them if they would be prepared to participate, and the parents through, for example the letter attached.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would give this matter your necessary attention and look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

Yours sincerely

MELANIE DUNN
RESEARCHER

MARY VAN DER RIET
RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

Dear Parents

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT ON PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

I am currently doing Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of KwaZulu Natal – Pietermaritzburg, and part of the course requirements are that I undertake a research project resulting in the completion of a thesis at the end of the year.

My project is about what parents and educators think is important for children to learn, and who should be responsible for imparting that knowledge. I would like to run a workshop with parents, and another with educators. In these workshops, I will use a game called DIALOGUE (which originates from Denmark). This involves groups of parents, and groups of educators, discussing items on cards in terms of what they think. There are no right or wrong answers in this activity and I am interested in opinions of different parents and educators.

I would like to invite you to participate in a workshop (of about 2 hours), where you discuss your ideas with other parents or educators.

If you are interested in assisting me with this research project, I ask that you return the reply slip as soon as possible and I will contact you with further details with regards to suitable times at which to run the workshops. If you would like to know more about the process, please contact me on 083 277 9306 or 031 – 266 3859.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would give this matter your necessary attention and look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

Yours sincerely

MELANIE DUNN
RESEARCHER

MARY VAN DER RIET
RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

PRINCIPAL

REPLY SLIP

I/We _____ parent/s
of _____ in Gr _____ am/are interested in the workshop on
Partnerships in Education and would like more information.

My / Our contact details are as follows:

Telephone No: (h) _____ (w) _____
(c) _____

Please indicate if there are any particular times when you would NOT be available.

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM**WORKSHOP ON PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION****CONSENT FORM**

In agreeing to participate in this workshop, I understand that:

1. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any concerns about the workshop and am satisfied with the answers I received.
2. This workshop session will be recorded onto audiocassette tape and then used to provide the bulk of the information for writing up of a thesis at the end of the year. Once the data has been used, the audiocassette tape will be destroyed and the transcription copies stored in a safe place.
3. Confidentiality is of primary concern and anything I say will be kept in the strictest of confidence. In addition, no names (of participants or the school) will be revealed in any way, whether verbally or written. If necessary, the school and participants will be given pseudonyms.
4. Once the thesis has been marked and returned to Melanie Dunn, a written report of the findings and recommendations will be given to the Principal, who will make the report available to all those who participated in the workshop.

Having read the above conditions, I _____ hereby consent to participating in the workshop on partnerships in education.

PARTICIPANT

**MELANIE DUNN
RESEARCHER**

DATE

APPENDIX 3: JUNIOR AND SENIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL KNOWLEDGE CARDS

- "Able to plan a simple household budget"*
- "Have basic knowledge of how laws are made"*
- "Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer"*
- "Able to swim"*
- "Have respect for other people's religious views"*
- "Have respect for other people's property"*
- "Able to recognise common trees"*
- "Have discussed questions of death"*
- "Able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion"*
- "Basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans"*
- "Ability to criticise television commercials"*
- "Have take part regularly in at least one sport or hobby"*
- "Know that some waste materials can be recycled"*
- "Have visited a museum"*
- "Understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle – e.g. KFC, McDonalds"*
- "Able to sew a button on a garment"*
- "Know standard symbols on traffic signs"*
- "Be conscientious about not dropping litter"*
- "Understand that smoking can endanger health"*
- "Ability to co-operate with others in a team activity"*

APPENDIX 4: JUNIOR AND SENIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Life Skills/Body

- "Have discussed questions of death"*
- "Able to plan a simple household budget"*
- "Have basic knowledge of how laws are made"*
- "Able to sew a button on a garment"*
- "Understand that smoking can endanger health"*
- "Understand the effects of convenience foods on lifestyle – e.g. KFC, McDonalds"*

Language/Communication

- "Ability to criticise television commercials"*

Science/Mathematics/Technology

- "Able to select and retrieve text stored on a computer"*

Biology/Natural Sciences

- "Able to recognise common trees"*
- "Basic knowledge of sex and reproduction in humans"*
- "Know that some waste materials can be recycled"*

Sport/General Knowledge/Other

- "Able to swim"*
- "Have take part regularly in at least one sport or hobby"*
- "Have visited a museum"*
- "Know standard symbols on traffic signs"*

Values

- "Have respect for other people's religious views"*
- "Have respect for other people's property"*
- "Able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion"*
- "Ability to co-operate with others in a team activity"*
- "Be conscientious about not dropping litter"*

APPENDIX 5: HIGH SCHOOL KNOWLEDGE CARDS

- "Able to plan a basic household budget"*
- "Understand what are meant by legislative, executive and judicial powers"*
- "Able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer"*
- "Able to swim 200 metres"*
- "Have respect for other people's religious views"*
- "Have respect for other people's property"*
- "Able to recognise common trees"*
- "Have discussed death and mourning"*
- "Able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion"*
- "Be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship"*
- "Ability to assess television programmes critically"*
- "To have been an active voluntary participant in at least one sport or hobby"*
- "Know that some waste products are biodegradable and some are non-biodegradable"*
- "Know about the art movements of Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism"*
- "Understand the elements of a "balanced diet" "*
- "Able to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc.)"*
- "Be familiar with the rules of the road"*
- "Be conscientious about not dropping litter"*
- "Understand that smoking can endanger health"*
- "Ability to co-operate with others in a joint activity"*

APPENDIX 6: HIGH SCHOOL CATEGORISATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Life Skills/Body

- "Have discussed death and mourning"*
- "Able to plan a basic household budget"*
- "Understand what are meant by legislative, executive and judicial powers"*
- "Able to sew a hem (e.g. of trousers, skirt, etc.)"*
- "Understand that smoking can endanger health"*
- "Understand the elements of a "balanced diet" "*

Language/Communication

- "Ability to assess television programmes critically"*

Science/Mathematics/Technology

- "Able to carry out basic functions on at least one model of computer"*

Natural Sciences/Biology

- "Able to recognise common trees"*
- "Be aware of responsible behaviour in a sexual relationship"*
- "Know that some waste products are biodegradable and some are non-biodegradable"*

Sport/General Knowledge/Other

- "Able to swim 200 metres"*
- "To have been an active voluntary participant in at least one sport or hobby"*
- "Know about the art movements of Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism"*
- "Be familiar with the rules of the road"*

Values

- "Have respect for other people's religious views"*
- "Have respect for other people's property"*
- "Able to respect different viewpoints in a discussion"*
- "Ability to co-operate with others in a team activity"*
- "Be conscientious about not dropping litter"*