

DIFFICULTIES TO COMPLETING ENGLISH HOMEWORK: PERSPECTIVES

OF SIX GRADE SEVEN LEARNERS FROM A TOWNSHIP SCHOOL

BY

JOSEPH THEMBINKOSI ZONDO

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ABSTRACT

This small scale case study focused on the difficulties experienced by the six Grade seven learners from a selected township school when they were writing their English homework. Literature suggests a gap in findings on the perspectives of learners.

The study utilized six Grade seven learners who had failed to complete their English homework which they had been given the previous day by their English language educator. The participants had been given a comprehension test on the previous day that they had started in the classroom and they were expected to finish it at home as their homework. Three boys and three girls were chosen from three different Grade seven sections as participants for the study. The data for this study was obtained by the semi structured interviews. The semi structured interviews were informed by drawings which were used by the learners to help them remember some of the things that they might have forgotten if there were no drawings to broaden responses to the questions. These interviews were conducted in a secluded class to avoid disturbances by the other learners. The interviews took place during one week and they were conducted for thirty minutes after school. A tape recorder was used to record the data which was later to be transcribed and analyzed.

This study revealed through its findings that the learners experienced a number of difficulties when they were writing their English homework and as a result they could not finish it. Some of the findings that emerged from this study were amongst others, the lack of space at home to write homework, lack of someone to help with homework, and the house chores that have to be done by the learners when they come back from school.

Findings of this study suggest that as English educators we need to give our learners an opportunity to speak out about some of the challenges or difficulties they experience when they are writing their English homework. Moreover, we need to teach our learners to plan their time properly so that they have enough time to write their homework when they come back from school since there are things that they have to do when they come back from school which cannot take a backseat or be done by their parents like the house chores. Finally, findings in this study suggest the importance of the open lines of communication between the parents the educators. This open line of communication could help close the gap that is between the educators and the parents and it can also help everybody understand what is expected from them

when it comes to the issuing and the monitoring of schoolwork. This may help the educators communicate with the parents about their children's homework and what is expected from them.

CHAPTER ONE: **Overview of the study**

1. Background of the study

1.1 Introduction

Homework has been and is still continuing to be every educator's nightmare. In my experience as an educator when I give my learners English homework with the hope that they are going to do it at home, most of them come back the following day with unfinished homework. It does not end there because when you trying to establish where the problem was you get various responses that you sometimes find hard to understand or believe. Cooper (1989) defines homework as 'tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours.' This definition shows that as educators we give our learners schoolwork to do at home during their spare time for various reasons. Therefore, I believe it should be noted that when the learners do not do their homework it means they lose some or all the work that could have served different purposes when it comes to their learning and teaching.

This section of my study is going to discuss some of the educator's objectives or expectations that I for example as an educator expect when giving my learners homework. Learners have to understand that doing their homework has advantages that they might acquire as a result of doing their homework and by doing so they might improve their achievement in their schoolwork. As Paulu (1998) says student achievement rises significantly when teachers regularly assign homework and students conscientiously do it, and the academic benefits increase as children move into the upper grades. Some of the advantages of doing homework that I am going to discuss in this chapter are; the finishing of the schoolwork, the reinforcement of the work that was done in the class, developing skills to work as an individual, teaching learners to manage their own work and the enhancing of the positive achievement on the learners' schoolwork.

1.2 Homework as a means of finishing schoolwork

Some educators give their learners homework because they want them to finish the work that they had started or that they have been doing at school. This obviously helps the educators and the learners when they have to move to the different or new work the following day. According to Paulu (1998) one of the main purposes generally associated with homework is that it gives

students a chance to prepare for the next day's lesson. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) attest that teachers may assign homework to ensure that each student is ready for the next lesson. Obviously when some of the learners have not finished their homework they lose the work that they were supposed to do because the educators do not go back to that work on the following day but, they move on to something new or the work that they have planned for that particular day. If the work that has been given by the educator as homework had a link or overlaps to the new work to be done on that day, the learners who have not done their homework will struggle or be left out when the new work is done and as a result they will be left behind on their schoolwork. When it comes to the tests or examinations the learners who have been constantly not doing their homework will struggle and as a result fail their tests or examinations. The learners who have been continuously doing their homework will be able to use what they have gained when they were doing their homework together with the comments or corrections from the educator and this will make them stand a good chance of passing their tests or examinations.

1.3 Homework as reinforcement

Most of the educators like to give the learners the work that they have been doing at school as their homework as a form of reinforcement. Cooper (2001) indicates the main purpose of homework is to reinforce classroom learning. He further indicates that this is mainly done through increasing their knowledge acquisition, enhancing the motivation, developing good study skills for independent living and utilizing a greater diversity of resources. I believe this is somewhat true because when the learners have been given a task or tasks to do at home as their homework they tend to be motivated when they see that they are able to do it on their own or when they get good marks. Whilst this is happening learners also develop methods on how to do or approach the exercises they had been given. This work as a result stays in the learners' minds unlike the work that they are spoon-fed by the educators which might be lost at any given time because they had not find time to do it on their own. Obviously when the learners have taken time to look and do the schoolwork on their own that work is going to stay in their minds for a very long time and as a result they can be able to use it even when they had moved on to the next grades or even at a later stage in their schooling life. As Corno (2000) suggests children who do additional academic work outside school are likely to become acclimatized to academic rigor. He

further suggests that in the best of circumstances, students develop an aptitude for academic work through the extra practice and reinforcement of homework.

1.4 Homework and the development of skills as individuals

Besides the positive results or success in the tests or assessment work that is as a result of homework I believe it should also be noted that homework helps the learners with positive skills that they can use at a later stage in their schoolwork or education. As Bempechat (2004) claims, the singular focus on grades and test scores as the primary test of the homework's effectiveness is short-sighted. She further claims that if their goal is to prepare children for the demands of secondary schooling and beyond, they need to pay as much attention to the development of skills that help children take initiative in their learning and maintain or regain their motivation when it wanes. Therefore, I believe it is imperative for this study to identify the difficulties or the problems that the learners face or experience when doing their homework. This I believe can assist in coming up with some of the recommendations on how to handle or help those learners who are having difficulty in completing their homework so that they can be able to do their homework and at the same time gain the skills that are going to be of great help to their schoolwork or education. I believe that if the learners can be taught at an early stage to know how to manage their time or juggle their time at home between doing the house chores, playing, watching television and doing their schoolwork they can be able to do that even when they are doing higher classes or when they reach the university.

1.5 Homework teaches the learners to manage their own work

According to Paulu (1998), homework can teach children self-discipline and responsibility. She further argues that homework can help children develop good habits and attitudes. Learners who are disciplined know how to plan their time well and as a result they are able to juggle some of the activities that they have to do at home and the time set aside for homework. As educators we know that most of the learners that we teach have other things that they do at their homes when they come back from school other than homework. As Paulu (1998) concurs, students have more activities and options that compete for their time: jobs, sports activities, church choir, and television and family chores. Therefore, it is imperative for them to be able to plan their time for doing the other things that they are expected to do at home and at the same time be able to set

aside some time for them to do their schoolwork. Obviously this can be possible if they know how to manage their time well. However, if the learners are unable to plan or manage their time well they are going to find that they are going to struggle when they have to do their homework because they might over do some of the things that they are expected to do at home which will leave them with no time to do their homework. And that will impact negatively when it comes to their schoolwork. As Xu and Corno (1998) state, students may also need to learn to deal with distractions at home.

1.6 Homework and the enhancement of positive results

One of the reasons why I have decided to do this study is because, like many other educators I believe that homework plays a large role when it comes to the positive performance of our learners in the classroom or in their schoolwork. I believe that the learners who give themselves time after school to do their schoolwork are in a better position to perform better in their schoolwork than the learners who do not do their homework. Why I say this is because during this time learners reinforce what they had been learning at school at their own pace and at the same have time to try other methods that could make them recall or remember what they had been taught easily during tests or examinations. In a study conducted by Cooper and Valentine (2001) findings suggest that students who did their homework outperformed those who did not. However, I believe that the learners who do not do their homework should not be left in the cold. I believe that the views of the learners who are experiencing problems when it comes to the issuing and the monitoring of homework should be taken into consideration so that most if not all the learners can be able to get assistance that can help them do their homework. For this to happen, all the stakeholders concerned; the educators, the parents and the learners, should understand some of the issues that cause the learners to not finish their homework as well as the measures that can be taken to help these learners.

1.7 Purpose of the study

The reason why I have chosen to do this study is because of the problems I have experienced as an English educator over the years whereby some of the learners in my English classroom find difficulty in completing or finishing their homework. This has frustrated me as an English educator because, regardless of the various methods that I have tried to make all my learners do

their homework I still find that there are those learners who do not do or complete their homework. According to Killoran (2003), trying to get students to complete their homework is one of the most frequent and frustrating problems for teachers. From my experience as well as what I have observed over the years, learners who do their homework perform better than those learners that do not do their homework. As Cooper (1989) puts it, according to literature, time spent on homework is a good predictor and promoter of time spent on achievement. In addition to this Epstein and Voorhis (2001) claim homework is recognized as one indicator of successful students. Therefore, I believe it is imperative for this study to identify the difficulties or the problems that the learners face or experience when doing their homework. This I believe could assist in coming up with some of the recommendations on how to handle or help those learners who are having difficulty in completing their English homework.

Whilst we as educators give homework to our learners with the hope of extending what we have been teaching in the classroom, some of the learners find it difficult to do their homework for various reasons. Bang (2011) states homework is a means of extending the school day, as homework is schoolwork assigned to be done outside of class. This then shows that the learners who find difficulty in doing their homework lose out on some of the work that is designed to help or to benefit them. The difficulties of these learners is as a result of the various problems that these learners face and I believe that this study is going to reveal some of these problems from the learners' perspectives as well as what can be done to overcome them. Since this study is on the difficulties in doing English homework by the First Additional Language learners I believe it will come up with recommendations that are going to be of great help not to the researched school only, but also to all the schools in our area since the problem with the non-completion of homework is not found in my school only but is a problem facing most if not all the schools in our area.

Whilst most of the previous studies have been on the views of the other stakeholders on the difficulties facing the learners in doing their homework, this study is aimed at getting the views of the learners on the difficulties they face when doing their homework. It also requires the views of the learners on what they believe can be done to overcome the difficulties they face when they are doing their homework. As Hong, Wan and Peng (2011) reveal, for homework to help students improve school achievement and develop responsibility and autonomy in academic

endeavors in and out of school, the development of teachers' understanding of learners' views about homework and their homework behaviors is critical.

1.8 Problem statement

What are the difficulties to completing English homework according to the perspectives of six grade seven learners?

1.9 Research question

The questions that I have chosen to use in this study to address the problems outlined above are:

What do six Grade Seven learners in a township school reveal as reasons for failing to complete their English homework?

How do these six Grade Seven learners envisage overcoming these difficulties?

I am setting out to find out whether these questions are going to be able to bring to the fore the difficulties that the learners face or experience when they are given English homework as well as how they plan to overcome this problem of not completing their homework. To address the questions, I have decided to ask the learners to draw two drawings showing the space that they use at home when writing homework. The first drawing is supposed to show the things that disturb the learner when he/she is doing homework whereas the second drawing is to show the learner's space without the difficulties or obstacles that caused him/her not to finish his/her homework. The reason why I chose to ask the learners to do drawings was because I wanted the drawings to help them during the interviews when giving reasons why they did not finish their homework. Moreover, I thought that since these were the learners that I've never seen or worked with and, who are from the neighboring school they were going to find it hard sometimes to reveal to me some of the difficulties they've experienced when they were writing their homework. Therefore, as a researcher I felt that drawings were going to develop a rapport between myself as a researcher and the learners as participants and hence make the participants feel free to respond to the questions about their difficulties.

1.10 Theoretical framework

One of the things that I anticipate as a problem when it comes to the difficulties that our learners face when they are doing homework is the situation that they find themselves in when they are trying to do their homework at home. Examples in this instance would be parents who are sending their children to the shops, children who do not bother to try and do their homework as well as the lack of space where children could be able to do their homework to name a few. That is why I believe that some of the roles that are played by the school, peers and the neighborhood should not be left out when it comes to the negative contributory factors that might sometimes cause our learners not to do their homework. To reveal some of the negative factors that sometimes if not always prevent the learners from doing their homework should it be at home or at school in this study I have decided to be guided by Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) theoretical framework. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) study of the factors that might influence the learners' performance is guided by an ecological perspective which recognizes that academic performance is linked to various characteristics in student's family and school ecologies. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) the ecological systems and process that occur within each system are interrelated; the persons or characteristics of one ecological system can influence those found in another system.

Their model reminds us that the difficulties on the non-completion of English homework by the learners may not be blamed on one aspect, say the home only, but could also result from various factors found at school and the surroundings and that, these can be taken into consideration so that the difficulties faced or experienced by the learners can be identified and rectified by the learners, the parents or the educators. This model highlights a potential interconnection on the problems or the difficulties that are faced by the learners both at school and at home. This study is going to explore both the difficulties that are experienced at home as well as at school to see if there are any recommendations or solutions that can emerge in order to assist the learners who are experiencing the problems or the challenges with the writing or doing of their English homework. Inglis (2005) suggests the two environments are linked because she claims homework is impacted by and also has a significant impact upon students and their families. This model led me to encourage learners to reveal this interrelation by applying the techniques revealed in my methodology described in Chapter three.

1.11 Outline of chapters in this study

Having looked at some of the advantages that are as a result of homework I believe the following chapters are going to give clarity on the roles that can be played by the learners when it comes to the issuing of homework. This I believe can shed light on what the educators are expected to do so that the learners can be able to do their homework and at the same time enjoy the advantages that are enjoyed by all the learners who do their homework.

For guidance I have decided to write what the reader might expect on the next chapters. In chapter two I review literature that is related to the theoretical framework that informed my study. For this study I chose to use the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) as indicated or explained in chapter one since I thought or assumed that, the difficulties that the learners experience when they do their homework emanate either from the school or home environment. Besides the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner and Morris I have also looked at the different literature that is based on homework in general. The reason I have decided to use literature that is based on homework in general is because I couldn't find literature that was specifically aimed at the views of the learners when it comes to homework. This basically means that whilst there has been an extensive research on homework in general, research on the views of the learners when it comes to the difficulties that they experience when doing homework is very scarce.

Chapter three is about the various techniques or methods that I used to collect and analyze data. Chapter three contains the research stance that I chose to help me interpret the data that I had collected. Furthermore, in chapter three I also explained how the participants were selected, the consent letters that were sent to the various stakeholders, the research instrument and the types of interviews that were used.

In chapter four I report the findings from the study. Firstly I describe the participants that I used for this study and the drawings that were done by the participants to show the difficulties that they experience when they are doing their homework and how they anticipate overcoming those difficulties. This chapter contains the participants' descriptions, their drawings and their responses to the questions on the difficulties that they face when they are doing their English

homework. This chapter also contains some of the drawings and suggestions by the participants on how to overcome the difficulties that they experience when they are doing their homework.

In chapter five I have discussed the implications of the study. This section on implications has been divided into three sections based on the expectations from the learners, educators and schools and the parents and the caregivers. In this section I have discussed what the different stakeholders should do in order for the learners to be able to do their schoolwork at home.

Besides the implications I have also discussed some of the limitations for this study. Here I have discussed some of the issues like the gaps that might have been caused by using the number of participants that have been used. It further discusses some of the expectations that might have been achieved should parents of the learners or participants might have been involved in this study.

In this final chapter I have also suggested some of the recommendations that I feel could help further this study. In the recommendations I have suggested that there should be studies that should aim at revealing the views of the educators and the views of the parents in contrast to their learners' views.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Previous studies by various researchers on homework have revealed that homework can play a large role in our learners' tuition and the achievement of positive results provided they see the importance of homework. Cooper, Robinson and Patall (2006) argue many educators believe that homework contributes to the enhancement of learning and academic achievement and to the development of academic skills and responsibility. The purpose of this literature review is to examine some of these studies and discuss some of the arguments and findings that have been used or found by the different researchers in their studies to highlight the strengths and the weaknesses that are as a result of the difficulties that the learners face when doing homework. Since I did not find any South African study that is on the difficulties that are faced by the learners when doing English homework which is the focus of my study I have decided to use the studies that have the difficulties that are generally explored or experienced by all the learners when doing homework. Some of these studies that I have decided to use in this study have been conducted here in South Africa whereas the other studies have been conducted in other countries. The gap in South African literature suggests this is an area where research findings could make a contribution to an understanding of homework difficulties in this country.

Therefore, in this Chapter I am going review literature on the significance of homework in achieving good results in education. I will also review material on the strengths and limitations of the relationship between families and schools in relation to homework. Finally, I will address the whole issue of learners' voice on issues of homework. Findings from this study could be used by both the educators and the learners when planning and doing homework provided difficulties revealed in this study are similar to the difficulties they have in their school. Van Voorhis (2004) claims that the purposes of homework include: to practice basic skills taught in class; to prepare students for future lessons; to foster students' participation in learning; to foster students' personal development in areas such as time management, responsibility, perseverance, and self-confidence; to fulfill district homework policy requirements; to foster communication between parents and students; and as punishment.

However, it should be noted that the negative effects that can be caused by homework are also revealed in this study. Negative effects show that besides the notion that homework is for reinforcing work that has been done in class or at school, it should be noted that it also helps the learners with other skills that are important when it comes to homework. As Bempechat (2004) argues in her study, homework provides children with time and experience to develop positive beliefs about achievement, as well as strategies for coping with mistakes, difficulties, and setbacks.

2.2 Homework and families

The families of the learners that we as educators teach play a large role in the good performance as well as the poor performance of our learners in their schoolwork. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009), in their South African study of homework and families, argue that families exercise by far the most powerful and lasting influence upon the attitudes, behavior and academic performance of children and young people. Whilst families play a large role in the education of their children I believe that we as educators do not understand the dynamics that exist in the families of the learners that we teach and which cause our learners not to do their homework. In most cases as educators we take for granted that our learners come from stable families that consist of the father, the mother and children and hence if we give our learners homework they are going to get help from their parents. However, I believe it is about time that we as educators need to bear in mind that our learners' families are not the same. We need to know that, whilst there might be learners that come from families that have both parents, there might also be the learners who come from families where there is a single parent, whilst other learners might come from families where there are no parents at all. These learners you might find live with their grandparents, aunts, sisters, brothers or they are left in the hands of caregivers. Therefore, as educators we need to remember that these different types of families do exist in our communities and at the same time understand that this might impact negatively on our learners' positive school work and achievement. Why I say this is because even when the parents are not educated they might contribute positively in the sense that they can make sure that their children find enough time to write their homework without any disturbances. They could also with the assistance from the educators make sure that they check and sign their children's homework to make sure that they have done it.

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) state that, at present it is exceptional for the average South African school to organize parent involvement to accommodate the various family types, living arrangements and diverse caregivers. This then shows how important it is for us as educators to know the types of families our learners come from and the positive roles that these different types of families can play in their children's learning. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) say that if our schools are to partner effectively with families, we need to understand, accept and welcome different kinds of families into the life of the school. They further argue that the most important thing is that all families can contribute to their children's learning and welfare, no matter what they may look like. This concurs with Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) theory which suggests that families can play a large role in their children's education. This then may suggest that lack of parents' support can cause the learners not to do their homework.

Whilst the involvement of families might play a positive role in their children's homework, at times this involvement might play a negative role. Foster (2000) found that although many parents expect homework for their children and feel that it improves their children's academic performance, factors such as family and work pressures may make it difficult for parents to help their children with homework and/or monitor its completion. The voices of the learners may reveal what is the case for them.

2.3 The relationship between the school and the families

A good relationship between the learners' families and the school is very important when it comes to the learners' education. The school and the learners' families need to team up so that they can share the information on how the learners progress with their schoolwork as well as how they can assist with the school work. Van Voorhis (2004) states that like parents, teachers tend to believe that homework improves students' academic achievement; they also believe that homework serves to communicate with parents about their children's learning. Therefore, it would seem that for parents to be kept informed, schools need to have a program that is going to involve both the school and the families of the learners. This will obviously give the parents a report about each and every learner as well as the steps that need to be taken or followed to assist the learners when doing their homework. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) claim parents wish to be kept informed about a child's performance, progress and well-being in a school.

Having said that, I believe the families on the other-hand should make information about the child available to the school so that the school will know about the child and be able to come up with programs that are going to be helpful to the learner. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) suggest that schools have a responsibility to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress. They further suggest that the school needs the information that the family can share about the child, his or her physical, emotional and social development, learning and homework done at home and the way he or she experiences school life. I believe that information about the learners' families could also play a large role when it comes to the assistance the educators plan for the learners. Sometimes, if not always, the problems that our learners experience at home impact negatively on their schoolwork and as a result they perform badly. There are negative factors that are as a result of the families which in turn affect the abilities of our learners to perform positively in their schoolwork. Henceforth, it should be noted that for these problems that are affecting the learners' schoolwork to be reduced or eradicated, there should be a strong relationship between the learners' families and the school or educators. There should be programs designed by the learners' families and the school that are aimed at helping the learners. As Amoateng and Heaton (2007, p. 136) put it, the status well being and development of children are usually contextualized within the family, the school, and the relationship between family (home) and school. This obviously relates back to the interrelationship that is highlighted by Bronfenbrenner and Morris's ecological theory which stresses the importance of the link between families and school.

It is important for the school and the learners' families to understand that they have to work hand in glove to get the information about the learners that is going to help them design programs to be used to help the learner with schoolwork. In short it appears that there should be a two-way communication between the school and the learners' families. This means that it is not only the parents or the families' task to provide information about the learners. Educators should also provide information about the learners and their progress so that the gap between the school and the home can be reduced or closed. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) state that to make sure that the home and school continually share their respective information about the child on a regular basis, two-way communication must be established. Information about the learners' progress at school should be easily accessible to parents. Moreover, things in our schools that might cause the learners not to do their homework or perform badly in their schoolwork should be known by the

parents. This obviously will make the educators and parents work together in helping the learners.

Hoy and Sabo (1998) point out that many studies have shown that student engagement and achievement are increased in school environments that ensure safety, promote positive social norms, provide opportunities to develop skills within warm, supportive relationships, and convey high expectations for academic achievement. Obviously if the relationship is positive between parents and the school they will engage at all levels to challenge or reduce the learners' problems thus providing solutions that will enhance the achievement of the learners.

However, I believe it should be noted that if the relationship between the families and the school is not that strong or is non-existent, animosity between the school and the families of the learners can be created which might lead to the disruptions of our learners' families. This animosity can be as a result of too much homework given to the learners that would leave both the learners and the families not having time to spend together as a family. Kralovec and Buell (2000) claim that homework can disrupt families, as parent-child conflicts arise over homework, and too much homework often takes time away from family events, extra-curricular activities, leisure and rest. Too much homework can also cause the learners to hate doing it since it will become a burden to them. Bennett and Kalish (2007) contend that homework can be overwhelming for students, leading to frustration, disengagement from school, and low academic self-efficacy. In addition Corno and Xu (2004) also warn parents and teachers that homework can be a source of stress and burnout for children as well as their parents.

2.4 Learners' families and the socio-economic factors

A study conducted in USA by Bang (2012) has shown that some of the effects of socio-economic status on homework completion are due to poverty (e.g., limited educational resources, parents working long hours and children having to work in order to support the family), while others are particular to immigrant families. Learners from the families that have a poor socio-economic background do not have the necessary resources that are going to assist them at home when they are doing their schoolwork or homework. For these learners, when it is the time for them to do their homework they struggle since they don't have books or resources to help them to write their homework. Stern (2006) in her South African study reveals that one reason given for avoiding

homework is the inequality in resources available to pupils in different homes, especially dependent on social class and poverty. On the other hand learners from the well-to-do families do not experience the same problems of struggling with the resources since their parents are able to buy the relevant resource materials to help them with their homework.

Bang (2012) further claims that family socio economic status is among the most important demographic factor related to children's development and academic performance. It is true that some of our learners' parents work for long hours and as a result they don't get enough time to help their children with homework. In most cases learners from these families find themselves having to struggle on their own when it comes to the writing of homework since there is no older person available to help them with their homework. Therefore, these learners that are coming from poor families may be amongst those learners who have not finished their homework when their educators check homework the following day in the classroom, whilst learners who come from the well-to-do families may have finished their homework. Hence, learners from poor families may be more likely to achieve poor results in their schoolwork because of their parents who are always not there to help them whilst the learners from the well-to-do families may achieve better results since their parents come home early and make time to help their children with homework.

According to Singh, Mbokodi and Msila's (2004) findings, the problems that children experience in their homes have an impact on their performance in the classroom. This is seen when the learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds have to come back from school, change their school uniforms and go and fetch water from the community tap which is in most cases far away from their homes. Besides fetching water, these learners after fetching water may find that they have to go to the shops to buy food that they are going to eat on that particular day since their families don't have the money to buy grocery or food to last them for the whole month. A study conducted by Inglis (2005) with children from poor social backgrounds in New Zealand have found that students have obligations that outweighed homework such as looking after siblings or aging grandparents, doing housework or preparing dinner. Moreover, some of the participants said that it is not easy for them to do their homework since before doing their homework they have to help their younger sisters or brothers with their homework. Another negative factor according to these learners is that, they use candles to light their homes to do their homework

since some of them do not have electricity in their homes. Therefore, there is a great possibility that these candles might be finished even before these learners finish their homework and thus cannot finish their homework.

All these studies on homework suggest that if the educators do not know the dynamics of the families of the learners that they serve they will not be able to know why the learners are not doing their homework. Thus open lines of communication more especially from the educators as well as the parents should be encouraged so that there is clear understanding when it comes to the difficulties the learners face and these can be identified and rectified supportively or worked within.

2.5 Parental guidance of homework

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) describe parental involvement as the willing and active participation of parents in a wide range of school and home-based activities. Parental involvement when it comes to homework is very important since it tends to bear positive results more especially when it comes to the performance of learners at school. This involvement of parents in their children's school work is as a result of a number of things that parents believe will be helpful to their children as well as their educators when it comes to schoolwork. Findings by Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong and Jones (2001) suggest that parents involve themselves in student homework because they believe that they should be involved, believe that their involvement will make a positive difference, and perceive that their children or children's teachers want their involvement.

From my experience as an educator I believe that the involvement of parents in their children's schoolwork enhance or reflect positively in their children's schoolwork. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) assert that parental involvement in children's education is recognized as a positive force for homework completion, student learning, and success at school. This obviously does not only help the learner in the achievement of good marks or positive results, but it also helps the learner to acquire strategies to apply when doing his homework or school work alone, should it be at home or at school. Hoover-Dempsey et al (2001) suggest that parents' homework involvement activities give children multiple opportunities to observe and learn from their parents' modeling (of attitudes, knowledge and skills pertinent to learning), and to engage in

instructional interactions related to homework content and learning. Looking at the purposes of homework one can be able to see that besides the notion that homework helps with positive achievement when it comes to our learners and their results it can also be associated with the techniques or methods that can be used by our learners when doing their homework or schoolwork should it be on their own or when they are being helped by their parents. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) claim homework helps students develop their character (e.g., responsibility, perseverance, self-esteem), communicate with their parents about their schooling, and encourage students to work collaboratively.

Whilst learners who are helped by their parents when doing their homework perform better in their schoolwork, the learners who do not get help from their parents perform badly in their schoolwork. According to Singh et al (2004), parents who played little or no role in their children's homework and study programs contributed to the poor performance of their children in the classroom. Therefore, it is imperative for us as educators to know the importance of the positive results that are as a result of the involvement of parents in their children's schoolwork. As educators we have to encourage parents to help their children with schoolwork so that they will be able to perform better by coming up with strategies that are going to make parents enjoy helping their children with schoolwork. This obviously will make parents feel part of the school and at the same time enjoy the appreciation shown by their children as well as the educators. Cooper (1989) points out that homework can involve parents in the school process, enhancing their appreciation of education and allowing them to express positive attitude towards their children's achievement.

Besides the advantages that the learners who are helped by their parents enjoy, they can also learn other skills from their parents that can help them when it comes to homework or their schoolwork. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) argue that parental involvement in children's homework appears to influence student outcomes because it offers modeling, reinforcement, and instruction that support the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors associated with successful school performance. Another important factor that we have to take into consideration as educators is that our learners' parents play a pivotal role in their children's upbringing and teaching and they know their children very well. The fact that these children have spent most of the time with their parents indicates that they understand each other. Moreover, it should be

noted that during all this time it is our learners' parents who have been playing a role of the educators by teaching their children. Stern (2006) attests that parents know more than teachers about their children, and are likely to have taught them too. Felix, Dornbrack and Scheckle (2008) state in order to facilitate parental involvement many schools have put systems and practices in order. This according to the study helps to reduce the gap between the educators and the parents and at the same time help the learners do their homework. Kruger and van Schalkwyk (1997) suggested the involvement of parents in their children's learning.

The most important thing or factor that I believe we as educators need to know is that, we can not just involve the parents for the sake of involving them but, as educators, we need to give parents clear guidelines on what we need from them. Corno (2000) claims parents want to be involved, but they need guidance on how to help at home. Whilst this might reduce the gap that is between the parents and the educators it might also help to open the doors that would allow or open the discussions between the educators and the parents about the learners. This open discussion or interaction between the educators and the parents about the learners may help to reduce the problems or the difficulties that the learners are experiencing should it be at home or at school that might lead to the non-completion of the homework or the schoolwork. Henceforth, the problem of the learner that I observe at school as an educator might also be the problem that his parents have been observing at home. However, when there is a communication breakdown between the educators and the parents, the learners will suffer.

Evidence in literature suggests that the involvement of parents does not always bare positive results when it comes to the learners, parents, educators and the issuing of the homework. Corno's (1996) study found that for each potentially positive impact suggested by educators, there was a corresponding potentially negative effect. A study by Cooper et al (2000) revealed that educators said that while parental involvement in home study could be used to accelerate children's learning, involvement might also interfere with learning if parents were ill-equipped to take on the role of teacher or if parents used instructional techniques different from those being used at school. Obviously the learner here might find himself facing a dilemma caused by the different views from the educator on one hand and the parent on the other. Educators in this study further pointed out that while monitoring and assisting with homework by parents should be beneficial to students, overly involved parents might give assistance beyond tutoring, perhaps

by simply giving correct answers or completing assignments themselves. Obviously this would leave the learner blank thus failing the tests which he might have passed had it not been for his parents who has been doing the homework for him.

2.6 Parents and illiteracy

Whilst we as educators believe that the involvement of our learners' parents is important in our learners' schoolwork and their performance we also need to know that some of these parents are illiterate. Obviously learners who have literate parents will perform better than those learners who have illiterate parents because the parents who are literate will be able to help their children with their schoolwork or homework whereas those learners who have illiterate parents won't be able to get help from their parents with their schoolwork. As Felix, Dornbrack and Scheckle (2008) argue, if we are to achieve equity and justice in South African schooling we need to interrogate teachers' understandings of parents' ability to assist in homework. Therefore, it is imperative for us as educators to understand the level of education our learners' parents have so that we are able to assist the learners wherever we can when giving homework. Whilst some of the parents might be reluctant to tell the educators or the school the level of education they have, the school must stress that the issuing of this will be beneficial to them since the educators will know how to assist their learners before going home and that the parents' task is to check whether their learners have done or are doing their homework.

Whilst it is believed that the involvement of the literate parents might enhance their children's achievement at school as I have mentioned earlier on in this study, it should also be noted that this might impact negatively on the school's performance of a learner. In a study conducted by Cooper et al (2000) educators involved in the study suggested that direct involvement of parents in homework could lead to excessive pressure on children to complete assignments and do well, creating expectations inconsistent with the students' capabilities. This obviously could cause these learners to have a negative attitude when it comes to homework.

As educators we also need to understand that even though some of our learners' parents are illiterate, there are roles that they can play to help their children with schoolwork. This means that there are things that our learners' parents can do, like motivating their children to do homework even if they are illiterate to make their children see the importance of doing

homework. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) state research has shown that children are more successful learners if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home, regardless of the educational background or social class of the parents. For illiterate parents to be able to help their children do their homework they should be able to motivate their children and make them see that it is very important to do homework. In a study by Xu and Corno (2003) an illiterate father who did not understand English had used himself as an example to motivate his son to do his homework. This means that this father knew that he was going to be unable to help his child with homework since he didn't understand the language and as a result he decided to motivate his son to do homework so that he cannot be like him. This is an important point as it suggests even illiterate parents or caregivers can contribute by providing motivation and space to their children so that they can be able to do their homework.

Besides the motivation from parents, the interaction between the educator and the parent can help the learner do his homework even when his parent is illiterate. An example here would be the signature that the parents would be expected to write each and every day after he has checked whether his child has written his homework. This obviously will be helping parents to know exactly what to do which will help their children with their schoolwork even when they are illiterate. According to Van Wyk and Lemmer's (2009) parents listed their poor education as a reason for them not wanting to get involved with their children's education. However, they further put the blame on the educators whom they feel were the barriers when it comes to the assistance they have to offer in as far as their children's education is concerned.

Having said that, I believe the school needs to come up with clear programs that are going to involve the school and the illiterate parents on the things that they have to do to ensure their involvement as well as the positive assistance they have to offer to their children. I believe the simple things like checking and signing the learner's homework exercise book can make the learners do their homework everyday provided it has been given to them.

2.7 Homework and academic achievement

Cooper, Robinson and Patall (2006) in a study conducted in America to determine whether homework improve academic achievement reveal that, research on homework conducted during the past two decades has largely demonstrated that it has positive influence on achievement, as

measured by tests as well as class grades. This study has shown that most of the learners who do their homework perform better in their schoolwork than the learners who do not do their homework. Bang (2012) agrees that, homework has emerged as a potential vehicle to improve achievement. Therefore, I believe it should be noted that learners who do their homework will be more likely to achieve good marks whilst on the other hand the learners who do not do their homework will be less likely achieve good marks. As a result of the findings of these researchers I believe as educators we can suggest that for our learners to achieve good marks we have to make sure that we give them homework and at the same time try and make sure that they do it. Obviously when most of the learners do their homework they are going to achieve good marks and the school is going to get recognition because it will be regarded as a successful school. As Epstein and Voorhis (2001) put it homework is recognized as one indicator of successful schools and successful students. Furthermore, as an educator I have observed that the learners who are used to doing homework on their own will go a long way in as far as managing and doing their schoolwork. Therefore, according to my experience I can say, it is possible that the learners who are good at doing homework on their own don't find difficulty even when they go to the university. Usually when these learners go to the university they cope easily with their university work since they are used to doing schoolwork on their own and they usually succeed. This shows that whilst the learners might enjoy the benefits of getting good results as a result of doing their homework, they can also be rewarded at a later stage when they have to go to tertiary level since they will be able to plan and do their work on their own rather than relying on their lecturers. On the other hand the learners who are not used to doing their schoolwork or homework on their own will suffer since they will struggle when they have to do their schoolwork at a higher level of schooling.

Whilst Warton (2001) asserts that from an adult viewpoint, homework is largely an achievement-related activity, it should be noted that some of researchers refute this argument. Cooper, Lindsay, Nye and Greathouse (1998) for example claim that some educators point out that any activity can remain rewarding for so long. They further claim that if students are required to spend too much time on academic material, they are bound to grow bored with it, and achievement will decline. As an experienced educator I fail to understand this because I believe that the more the learner does his schoolwork or homework the more the schoolwork is reinforced which will in turn make it easy for the learner to remember it during the test or

assessment. Henderson (1996) in a study conducted in USA states that most educators believe that homework can be an important supplement to in school academic activities. However, the educators should know that for homework to be effective the learners' voices on the difficulties they experience when doing homework should be heard. Learners should be given a platform where they can be able to give their views on what they feel about homework as well as what they think can help them when given homework.

2.8 Homework as a means of extending schoolwork

Cosden, Morrison, Albanese and Macias (2001) in their study in America claim homework is seen as any assignment from the regular classroom teacher that is intended to occur outside of regular school hours, regardless of where that assignment is completed. Educators give homework because they want the learners to do the work they have been doing at school in the comfort of their homes. This obviously helps the learners to revisit the work they have done at school on that particular day or on a certain day and do it at their own pace. Rosario, Mourao and Perez (2006) assert that as a good way of extending the school day, homework gives students the opportunity to practice and learn the material studied at school with no time constraints and at their own pace. Besides the point that when the learners are given homework they are going to be able to learn or do their schoolwork at their own pace they might also learn on their own how to manage their time properly when doing homework. My understanding at present is that the learners that we teach in our schools usually spend their time after school by playing, watching television, doing house chores or homework. According to Cooper (1986) when the assignment goes home, several factors will affect how it is carried out including the student's other time commitments, the home environment, and the involvement of others. Therefore, adding homework to these already existing activities of a learner needs planning and time management which will help the learners when doing their schoolwork as well as at a later stage in life when they are planning and doing their schoolwork. According to Warton (2001) the educational policymakers, teachers or parents' homework has many purposes among which are the encouragement of academic learning and the development of skills and attributes such as student responsibility, learning autonomy, and time management.

Rosario et al (2006) in a study on homework, gender and grade effects state that many of our students especially those at risk fail to do homework because they lack either the appropriate

resources or the necessary self-discipline to complete homework. Therefore, I believe it is imperative for us as educators to help our learners learn to be self-disciplined when it comes to time management as well as on how to use that time fruitfully more especially when they have school work that they have to do at home. As Mourao (2004) argues, being unable to set daily goals and to manage time properly, our students' homework lacks quantity and quality. This according to some of the participants that I interviewed is as a result of our learners failing to plan their homework time properly and hence doing their homework haphazardly at school in the morning. Moreover, I know from experience at my school as well as the neighbouring schools that other learners do their homework haphazardly because they fear punishment since other educators still punish their learners for not doing their homework. Therefore, I believe that it is very important to teach our learners what to do at home, how to do it as well as when to do it. Our learners can only achieve this when we have taught them well about how to manage their time inside and outside school.

2.9 Lack of English proficiency

August and Hacuta (1997) in a study of improving schooling for language-minority children conducted in USA state that limited proficiency in English is a particular impediment to homework completion and the challenges are even greater for students with interrupted formal education, as they lack the basic academic skills needed to complete assignments and perform in school. Most of the learners in our schools struggle when it comes to doing their homework because they don't understand English. The reason why our learners struggle with their English homework is because, English to them is not their mother tongue or home language but they do it as a First Additional Language. In other countries like the United States of America learners and sometimes students do English as a foreign language. Therefore, when these learners are given English homework or any other homework that is in English they will find it hard to do it. However, it should be noted that whilst the learners who do not understand English will be struggling with their homework, the learners who have a good command of English will be able to do their homework with ease. Learners who know English will be more likely to submit completed homework whilst the learners who do not know English may struggle when it comes to the doing and the submission of homework or assignments. Because of this I believe the educators should come up with the methods that are going to assist the learners who do not

understand English so that they can be able to understand what is expected from them as well as how are they going to do their homework.

A study on homework conducted by Bang (2011) in USA has revealed that a major challenge newcomer immigrants experience in their efforts to complete homework is academic English language proficiency. Bang further argues that newcomers must not only adapt to the U.S. school system and culture, but also master English, as English language proficiency is critical in students' ability to carry out academic tasks.

2.10 Homework and punishment

Stern (2006) states homework is or is sometimes associated with punishment by otherwise amenable pupils. Most of the time educators as well as the learners associate homework with punishment. Usually the teachers feel that when the learners have not done homework it is because they don't want to do it forgetting that there are a lot of factors or barriers that can cause the learners not to do their homework. Moreover, the educators believe that when they have explained what is expected from their learners, the learners should be able to do their homework with ease forgetting that there might be learners who take time to understand the instructions or what is expected from them. This leads to some sort of punishment when the learners fail to do their homework or fail to do it because of some reasons that the educators do not take into consideration when they want their work. This in the long run makes the learners not afraid of punishment and as a result to prefer punishment instead of doing their school work or homework. Stern (2006) attest pupils may prefer the punishment to homework. Some of the learners in my school even go as far as asking the educators to punish them rather than explaining the reasons for not doing their homework. This I have noticed in my school where I would find that when I am checking homework, most of the learners would say I must punish them because they do not have their homework.

Therefore, as educators we need to understand our learners' challenges when it comes to the issuing and the monitoring of homework and to make sure that we go that extra mile of understanding our learners' challenges and helping them out by introducing programs that are going to be of great help to them. This will make us understand where our learners come from and also be able to help them with the problems they have when it comes to homework. I believe

in our schools we as educators can help these learners do their homework in our care because when they come to school with an incomplete homework that may mean they don't get the necessary assistance that they need at home to do their homework. This I think can help improve the number of learners who do their homework thus improving the performance of the learners in their schoolwork. Even though this form of assistance could take place at school, learners need to understand that it is as a result of the fact that the school wants to help them so that they can be able to do their schoolwork to improve their academic achievement. Bempechat (2004) argues that that as a pedagogical practice, homework plays a critical, long-term role in the development of children's achievement motivation. They need to be told that doing homework at school does not mean it is no longer homework, but they should understand that this is done to help them overcome their challenges that make them fail to do their homework at home. As Cosden et al (2001) put it, homework does not always occur at home.

2.11 How learners spend their time after school

Cosden et al (2001) conducting a study on after school programs for homework assistance argue that the number of children in America with caregivers working outside the home has increased, so has interest in how these children spend their time after school before their parents return from work. How learners spend this time is very important because I believe it is the suitable or the best time for them to take out their school books and do their homework before watching television, going outside to play or doing their house chores in the case of those who have house chores to do. However, this does not happen because when the parents are at work there is nobody to help supervise their children when doing their homework. This obviously leaves these learners with ample time to watch television or go and play outside with their friends. Posner and Vandell (1999) reveal that recent studies find TV watching and unstructured activities relatively common. Obviously when the learners come back from school and watch television, it is either because they are doing their homework for the sake of doing it or they are not going to do it at all. Therefore, the homework's purpose of reinforcing the work that has been done at school will be lost. This as a result will make these learners lose some or all the work that they have learned on that day at school and at the same time go to the next lesson unprepared since some of the homework is on the work to be done on the following day. Obviously these learners may be left behind when it comes to their schoolwork. This can eventually lead to these learners' poor

performance when it comes to tests or examinations. Posner and Vandell (1999) find that these activities are negatively correlated with school achievement.

Therefore, I believe it is imperative for us as educators as well as the parents to come up with some sort of support systems or programs that are going to help our learners in as far as their homework is concerned. Learner voices on homework can contribute to how these programs can be designed. As Cosden et al (2001) state given the number of parents who work outside the home, and the need for safe and structured after-school activities, after-school programs have become a venue for helping children. This I believe can be of great help to those learners who do not have any type of support system in place when they come back from school. Brewster and Fager (2000) believe homework policies, which function to define a standard set of expectations for and beliefs about homework, can be shared and reviewed with students, parents, and teachers at the beginning of each school year.

2.12 The effects of the amount of homework given to learners

Brewster and Fager (2000) argue that the first step in maximizing the effectiveness of homework is determining the appropriate amount of work to assign. Too much homework can cause the learners not to finish their homework. Besides, when the learners are given too much homework they might decide not to do it or they might develop a negative attitude towards homework. However, it should be understood that educators give their learners too much homework because of a number of reasons. One of the reasons why educators give too much homework is because of the number of homework that they have to give to the learners which emanates from the decisions that has been taken by the school management team or because of the number of homework areas that has been suggested by the subject advisors from the Department of Education. The new curriculum called CAPS requires the educators to cover a large amount of work within a stipulated short period of time. When the educators complain about this to the subject advisors they say they cannot do anything because it is an instruction from above. Therefore, this makes the educators to give the learners too much homework each and every day. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) state that teachers may make assignments to fulfill school or district policies for a prescribed amount of homework. Obviously this makes the educators burden the learners with too much homework which is not for the purpose of enriching the

learners but which is given in order to show the Departmental people that they are doing their work.

Stern (2006) in his study suggests schools are all supposed to have homework policies and procedures, with timetables usually arranged so that one year group will expect to have 20 minutes of homework set every Tuesday, and another will have 40 minutes every Friday. I believe for the homework policy to be functional all the stakeholders that are involved in the issuing and the monitoring of homework should work hand in glove in introducing the homework policy and adhering to it. Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Burrow (1995) attest that individual teachers, principals, the whole school staff, district superintendents or educator-parent teams may decide that students should receive a certain amount of homework each day or each week. Obviously this would lessen the burden that the learners might have in as far as the amount of homework that is given to them is concerned. Furthermore, the homework given to the learners will serve its purpose since the learners will find time to do it in a relaxed atmosphere rather than rushing to finish it which will give them enough time to understand it. To do this, thorough preparations at the beginning of each and every year by various stakeholders that are involved in the teaching and learning of our learners is needed to avoid cases where learners might find themselves having to complain because of too much homework. Brewster and Fager (2000) believe homework policies, which define a standard set of expectations for and beliefs about homework, can be shared and reviewed with students, parents, and teachers at the beginning of each school year.

As an educator I believe this planning can bear positive results more especially in as far as the planning and the issuing of homework since everybody can be able to know the amount of homework to be given as well as the type of assistance that is needed. Whilst we as educators can design a time table that is going to make us know when to give homework to our learners the parents will know the days set aside to monitor or to help their children with homework. Learners on the other hand will know the days that are set aside for homework and as a result they can be able to design their own homework timetable.

2.13 Homework and the views of the learners

Most of the studies that have been conducted on homework have put the emphasis on the roles that are played by the different members of the family, more especially the parents and the school or educators forgetting that the roles and the views of the learners are also important since they are the ones who write homework at the end of the day. Warton (2001) argues that in marked contrast to the adult views little is known about students' perceptions, ideas, and understandings about homework. I believe the exclusion of the learners on the decisions that involve them, leaves a gap that is not easy to close since the views that would have been helpful are not heard. Warton (2001) reveals that there has been little formal investigation of views of the third group of participants, namely the students. It is true that when schools like in my school are making their homework policies the learners are not involved.

The only time the learners would hear about homework is when their parents come from the parents' meeting at the beginning of the year. Usually in this meeting parents are told the importance or the purposes of homework and the roles that they have to play in order for their children to do it. The reason why parents and the school do this is because they believe the views of the learners are not important when it comes to the planning and issuing of homework. They take for granted that the only thing that the learners have to do is to write homework according to the instructions forgetting that there might be other elements that have to be taken into consideration that are experienced by the learners which in turn influence the outcome, which in this case is the writing of homework and learning from it. Frome and Eccles's (1998) theory argues that student beliefs about a task and student expectations for success on that task are directly related to their achievement behaviors: performance, task persistence, and task choice. This then shows that homework is not just about its completion but it is about a number of things that our learners consider or realize when they have to do it as well as the advantages that are as a result of doing homework. Warton (2001) attests that if we wish to understand homework behavior, it is insufficient to consider only the purpose and values of the task ascribed by teachers and parents. Schools need to know or consider the views of the learners when they are designing homework policy so that they can be able to hear their views and incorporate them into schools' homework policy. This can obviously give the learners an opportunity to air their views in as far as homework is concerned which in turn can be used by the educators when they are

issuing and marking their learners' homework. According to the study conducted in China by Hong et al (2011), when teachers design homework assignments, teachers' understanding of students' homework problems would help them develop assignments that meet each individual student's readiness and needs. They further argue that to generate homework more relevant to students, teachers need to have an understanding of homework difficulties that students are experiencing and the reasons students do not complete their assignments.

Knowing the views of the learners and considering them when homework policy is done can help the educators and the parents understand the position of the learners in as far as homework is concerned. Obviously this could make the educators and the parents know the fundamentals of issuing homework, the type of homework to be issued as well as the expected end results or objectives of the homework. Corno (1996) asserts that, policymakers, educators, and parents can all benefit from knowing more about the results of homework, the circumstances under which it may be beneficial, and what they can do to make the practice more effective. To make the practice of homework more effective the learners need to understand the importance of homework as well as how is it going to help them in their studies. Warton (2001) concurs it is time students also were encouraged to understand why they are required to complete a task that, for so many, is unpleasant. She further argues that they are unlikely to make the achievement-related choices relevant to homework if they do not hold these understandings. Hong et al (2011) claim teachers with a good understanding of students' homework experiences can improve the quality and relevance of homework and lessen the homework problems that students experience.

2.14 Conclusion

In this chapter the findings from literature written by national and international researchers have provided some of the views on the difficulties experienced in relation to homework. They reveal the challenges that are experienced when homework is done as well as how they believe these challenges can be solved. Whilst most of research has shown that for the learners to do their homework various stakeholders need to work together, they have further revealed that the learners' voices when it comes to the issuing of homework are not usually foregrounded. This obviously means that whilst the educators can plan on the programs to be followed when it comes to homework, learner voices are not evident although it is also important to give the learners an opportunity to say what they believe homework should be like. This means that a

study where learners are given an opportunity to say what they expect from homework and the educators should ensure that they listen to these suggestions and involve learners in the decisions that have been taken so that everybody can work towards helping the learners to achieve their dream perhaps of doing their homework in a quiet and peaceful place. According to Britten et al (1995) homework views ascribed by the teachers and parents exert important but more distal influences on student homework behavior than do children's views.

Most of the literature in this study concentrated on the findings that were as a result of the views of the parents, the researchers and the educators leaving out the important views of the learners. The reason the views of the learners are important is because it is the learners who write or do homework thus, they need to be involved when decisions about homework are to be taken. Therefore, in this study the views of the learners are investigated. The views of the learners that are going to emerge in this study are going to help the educators know the factors that have to be considered when it comes to the issuing and monitoring of homework. Educators should know that factors like the home of the learner, his/her friends at home and at school as well as the school environment to name a few can impact negatively when a learner has to do her homework. Besides, educators parents will also know how to assist their children with homework should the need arise.

CHAPTER THREE: Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

For this study to investigate the perceptions of the learners on the difficulties they experience when they are doing English homework, the question arises as to which methods or techniques will be helpful to gather the relevant data. With these techniques I believe that data from the participants who are learners in this study will help me as the researcher to answer the questions posed. Therefore, to do this I have to make sure that my study has a research design that is going to help me find or collect such data. As Stage and Manning (2003, p. 19) claim, the researcher's task in choosing a technique through which to answer a research question is one of the most important decisions of a research project. They further claim that in undertaking this task, the researcher needs to consider the topic, general and sub questions, and the paradigmatic basis upon which he or she bases the methodological choices.

3.2 The research frame and methodology

Whilst most of the previous studies on homework have been on the roles that are played by the teachers, parents and the purposes of homework to name a few, very few studies have allowed the learners to give their views on what they expect or want when it comes to homework. As Warton (2001) puts it, although literature on homework is extensive, the concerns of students, the principal participants, remain largely unheard of. Hong et al (2011) later revealed that for homework to help students improve school achievement and develop responsibility and autonomy in academic endeavors in and out of school, the development of teachers' understanding of students' views about homework and their homework behaviors is critical. This therefore suggests that the views of the learners are very crucial or important in order for the researchers to come up with the recommendations on what can be done to help these learners. Most of the learners that we teach in my school and the surrounding schools in my area come from poor families, they have illiterate parents, our schools and our learners do not have resources and they live in small houses that make the learners fail to do their schoolwork at home or find help to do their homework. Therefore, if our learners are not given the platform to inform their educators and their parents about these difficulties, the educators will not know about them and as a result there will not be programs or forms of assistance that can be introduced by the educators or schools to help them. As Hong et al (2011) claim, to generate homework more

relevant to students, teachers need to have an understanding of homework difficulties that students are experiencing and the reasons students do not complete their assignments. That is why in this study I have decided to use the learners' voices on the difficulties they experience when they are doing their English homework as well as how they see themselves overcoming the difficulties of not finishing their homework.

Besides the learners' voices this study is also going to give the learners an opportunity to use drawings that may help them explain the difficulties that they experience at home when they are doing homework and how they envisage overcoming these difficulties. The reason why I have asked the learners or the participants to use the drawings is because I wanted the drawings to make it easy for them to explain their experiences using the drawings. According to Theron, Mitchell, Smith and Stuart (2011, p.19) when drawing is used as a research method, it often entails participants' drawing and talking or drawing and writing about the meaning embedded in their drawing. Therefore each and every participant will be expected to do a drawing showing the space that he or she uses when doing homework. The first drawing have to show the things that cause the participants not to finish their homework whilst the second drawing have to show how the participants see the space they use for homework without the problems or the difficulties that cause them not to finish their homework.

According to Henning (2005, p. 12) research cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum, even though it may be exploratory. She further states that, when a researcher sets out to investigate an issue he/she does from this a position of knowledge and this knowledge can frame his/her inquiry. One of the reasons why this study was conducted was to get the voices of the learners on why they find it hard or difficult to finish or do their English homework. For me as a researcher to get the reasons why my participants experienced difficulty when they are doing their English homework I had to come up with the questions that were going to make them explain the difficulties that they experienced when doing their English homework as well as how they feel these difficulties can be overcome. As a researcher I had to choose a paradigm that was going to help me interpret the difficulties that my participants experience when they are writing their homework as well as how they anticipate overcoming those difficulties. For this study I decided to use an interpretive paradigm which I felt was going to help or allow me to interpret the ideas, views or perceptions of the learners and come up with findings or recommendations. The

recommendations or findings that emerge in this study should highlight the difficulties that the learners face when doing their English homework and how they anticipate overcoming these difficulties. Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 59-60) reveals that interpretative studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through meanings that people assign to them. Obviously in this research I aim to understand and interpret the difficulties the learners face from the responses that they would have given me using their drawings during the interviews. The interpretive paradigm therefore is appropriate to the study's intentions.

3.2.1 Qualitative research and a small scale case study

To get in-depth experiences or perspectives of my participants for this study I decided to conduct a qualitative research of a case study using a relatively small number of learners. I believe qualitative research will be relevant or helpful in this study because it will be used to get in-depth information on the difficulties or experiences from the participants' point of view. Britten, Jones, Murphy and Stacey (1995) argue that qualitative research can be multi-method in focus and, can involve an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter, which means, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Merriam (2009, p.13) concurs that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. Obviously in this study I will be looking at the difficulties that the learners identify when it comes to homework completion at their school and trying to find out from the learners' points of views from where might those difficulties be emanating and how they anticipate overcoming them.

A small scale case study will be used to get in-depth information on the difficulties that the learners face in completing their English homework. The study aims to get the views of six learners in Grade Seven who had not finished their English homework. Punch (2009) states the basic idea of a case study is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods and data seem appropriate. Rule and John (2011) claim a case study is systemic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge. In this study I have to investigate the difficulties that the learners face at school in doing or completing their English homework so that as a researcher I can come up with the findings or recommendations that can highlight some of the difficulties the six Grade Seven

learners face when they have to do their homework and also find out from them how they think these difficulties can be overcome. This obviously will help me as well as the other English educators to understand the difficulties our learners face when they are doing their English homework as well as how we can help them deal or overcome these difficulties.

3.3 The research setting and sampling

This study aims to find out why six of the Grade Seven learners of a selected township school fail to complete their English homework. I decided to use the Grade Seven learners from one of the neighboring senior secondary school in my area as my participants because when I told my lecturer that I was going to use the learners from my school he said I was going to be biased since I was too close to the topic. Therefore, I decided to use one of the senior secondary schools in my area. This school was built a long time ago by the missionaries and it is situated next to a primary school and a Roman Catholic Church. It has old buildings that were built a long time ago as well as some of the new classes or buildings that have been recently built due to the swelling numbers of learners. This school starts from Grade Five and continues to Grade Nine and it has an enrolment of learners that are more than 1000. It is surrounded by houses where most of the learners come from as well as the other areas that are from the other parts of the township. It has both learners from well to do families as well as learners from the poor families which is the information that I received from the school clerk when I asked her. Whilst most of the learners walk to school there are other learners who are taken by local taxis since they stay a bit far from the school. Therefore, learners that walk to school usually walk in groups because they come from the same area or because they are friends. However it should be noted that there are learners who stay a bit far from school who walk to school due to financial constraints. These learners have to walk to and from school everyday a distance of approximately two and a half kilometers. Therefore, these learners have to leave home very early, arrive at school feeling tired and in the afternoon they arrive at home very late and at the same time very tired for walking a long distance from school.

The reason that made me choose this school was that I knew the Principal hence I knew that he was not going to give me any difficulties when I ask him to conduct my study at his school. In fact he was once my mentor when I was doing my practice teaching at the very same school. That is why it was easy to approach him and when I introduced the topic of my study he was

very happy as he told me that he believed maybe I was going to help them find the solution since the non-completion of homework by the learners was also amongst the problematic areas they have highlighted as a major of concern over the years at his school and yet they have failed to come up with the solutions to remedy it. Therefore, he felt that maybe my study was going to come up with the recommendations that they can use or follow to help their learners with homework. The selection of the participatory school was therefore based on accessibility in terms of gaining entry and working within the constraints of time available. It was also made to position the research in a township school environment.

3.3.1 How the research proceeded

During the first week I could not do anything at this school because after I have met and explained to the principal my intentions we made an appointment for the following week because he told me that he wanted to talk to the management first about my visit. He told me that they were going to hold that meeting later that week since I was there on Monday. When I arrived on Monday afternoon the Principal introduced me to the Head of Department as he had previously promised. He told me that the Head of Department was going to introduce me to the English teacher who was going to help me conduct my study. Fortunately the Head of Department that I was introduced to was someone that I have met before during the schools inter soccer games since he was the sports convener and I am also the sports convener at my school. So he did introduce me to the English educator, explained why I was there and also asked the English educator to help me with whatever I need. I had never seen the English educator before but she welcomed me with warm hands and told me that I should feel free to ask whatever I want because she was prepared to help me. Thereafter, we discussed the things that I expected her to help me with like, how are we going to choose the participants and the subsequent meetings that I was going to hold with the participants as a group and as individuals. We also discussed the issue of the venue where I was going to meet with the participants and the duration that I was going to keep my participants for during the interviews.

This school that I had chosen had three sections of grade seven classes. They had Grade Seven A, Grade Seven B and Grade Seven C. According to the English educator there was no special criterion that was used to allocate these classes to the learners. They were just told to stand in the queue at the beginning of the year and one Grade Seven educator told them whether to go to

Grade Seven A, B or C whilst the other Grade Seven educators were checking whether are they really going to the classes that have been allocated to them or they are going to the classes where they know they are going to find their friends. All these classes had to write the comprehension test that I had agreed to prepare during our discussions with the English educator. The comprehension test that I used was extracted from a Grade Seven workbook that I use at my school to teach my Grade Seven learners. The reason why I chose this comprehension test was because I believe they were going to be able to do it since it was in their level. The English educator was going to read and explain it to them during the English period which is one hour. Thereafter using the answer sheets that I had given to them they would answer the questions and if they didn't finish within the period they were to be told to take it home as their homework and bring it back the following day. On the following day the educator was supposed to take the answer sheets from the learners and out of them randomly choose one boy and one girl per section who had not finished their homework.

3.3.2 Selection of the participants

The sampling used in this study was purposive sampling since I had asked the English educator who had given the learners the English homework to choose three boys and three girls who had not finished their homework. The reason why I decided to use the learners who had not done their homework as participants was because I wanted to find out what could have prevented them not to do their homework. Moreover, I felt that to understand the difficulties that the learners experience when they had to do their homework I had to choose the learners who had not done their homework so that they could be able to reveal what had prevented them from doing their homework. With these thoughts I felt that choosing the learners who have done their homework would not have helped reveal the difficulties. To hear the views from the different participants from the different classes and at the same time balancing the gender I asked the participants' educator to choose one boy and one girl per section, which means she was going to choose one girl and one boy from Grade Seven A, B and C. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) claim in purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality of the judgment on which learners represented typicality of what was put into the hands of the class teacher. The reason I chose to use purposive sampling was because I wanted to use the learners or the participants who had experienced or found

difficulty in completing or doing their English homework as I have previously mentioned in this chapter. However, I believe it is imperative for me to mention that I would have loved to interview the learners who had finished their homework because I have a notion that that would have revealed some of the methods that could have revealed some of the methods that could be used by the learners who are failing to do their homework. Furthermore, some of the responses or methods used by the learners who had completed their homework would have revealed some of the things that could be done by the learners who have the problem with writing their homework.

3.4 Informed consent

A consent letter was given to the principal of the school informing him about the study I intended doing at his school. I had to explain to him that I had already sent a letter asking the Department of Education to allow me to conduct a study in his school. The consent letter explained the purpose of the study, why I had chosen his school, the number of the participants I was going to use, how I was going to choose them as well as the rights the participants had. Moreover, I had to discuss or write in the consent letter how I was going to protect the image of the school by not mentioning its name and the names of the participants. Finally, the letter also stated the good cause that can be as a result of the research as well as what was going to happen to the data. I had to explain that the findings of the study were going to be available to them if they want them and that the data collected for this study was going to be kept at the university for a particular period of time and thereafter destroyed.

Another consent letter was given to the learners for them to read and sign should it happen that they were comfortable with being the participants. According to Cohen et al (2000, p. 50) much social research necessitates the consent and co-operation of subjects who are to assist in investigations and of significant others in the institutions or organizations providing the research facilities. Therefore, to ensure that my participants have trust in me with the information they were going to share in this study I had to share the rights they had in as far as their participation is concerned in this study. The consent letters to the learners were written in IsiZulu so that the learners would be able to understand them clearly since IsiZulu was their mother tongue as I had explained earlier on in this study. The purpose of the study was explained in the consent forms as well as the contribution that was expected from the participants. The consent forms to the

learners also stated categorically that should it happen that the participants feel that they no longer want to be part of the study they can do so and that would not put them at any kind of jeopardy or harm. As Theron et al (2011) put it; all research is regulated by ethical principles that try to ensure that the research participants are not harmed in any way by their participation in a research project. Time, duration and the venue of the study were also mentioned in the consent letter so that the participants would know when, for how long and where the interviews were going to take place. The participants were told that the study was going to take place after school in a secluded class and they were going to proceed for thirty minutes. It was also stated in the letter that the real names of the participants were not going to be used for confidentiality purposes.

A consent letter in IsiZulu to the parents was written to ask for the permission to use their children in this study. The purpose of the study was communicated to the parents as well as how it was going to help the school and their children provided a decision to use its findings or recommendations had been agreed upon by the stakeholders concerned. Protection or anonymity of their children was also ensured as well as the fact that their children have a right to withdraw at any given time of the study.

3.5 The research instrument

3.5.1 Interviews

To get in-depth information in this study I decided to use one on one interviews to collect data. According to Robson (2002), interviewing as a research method typically involves you, as a researcher, asking questions and, hopefully, receiving the answers from the people you are interviewing. The interviews took place in a secluded class to avoid disturbances. They were conducted after school and they proceeded for thirty to forty-five minutes over a week. The reason why the interviews took one week was because I interviewed two participants per day. Before the interviews commenced I met with all the participants as a group to explain who am I and the reason why I am at their school. I also discussed with them the rights they have in as far as participating or not participating or being part of the study. The reason why I decided to talk to all of them at the same time was that I wanted to build a rapport that was going to be useful when I had to conduct the individual interviews at a later stage. Obviously I had a belief that

when I talked to them as a group they would not feel shy and at the same time they will be able to develop trust since I had told them that I am also an educator and that the study was to help rather than to expose their difficulties or problems. Stage and Manning (2003, p. 41) argue that the priority during the beginning of the interview (or for the first interview if there are multiple interviews of individual participants) is to build rapport between the participants and the researcher. They further argue that part of this relationship building is to communicate the purposes of the research, negotiate the consent form, and discuss other procedural issues.

3.5.2 Conducting individual interviews

The participants were interviewed as individuals in a secluded class to avoid disturbances and the holding back of the responses as a result of shyness. Whilst the educator that I was assigned to had told me to use the staff room, I asked him to allow me to use a class of my choice. The reason for doing this was because I assumed that since the interviews were going to start immediately after school the participants or the learners were not going to feel free to participate in the study seeing their educators around. Moreover, I was also going to be disturbed by some of the educators during the interviews because some of them knew me, hence I felt they were going to waste some of my valuable time that I would have used for interviews. For the interviews I used the class teacher's table together with two chairs that were used by the participants and myself. Since I was interviewing one participant at a time the other one would stand outside the classroom waiting for his/her turn.

3.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

The type of interviews that I used in this study is called semi structured interviews. Barriball and While (1994) claim semi-structured interviews are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of the respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers. Smith, Harre` and van Langehove (1995) claims that semi-structured interviews can be used to gain a detailed picture of participant's beliefs about perceptions of those involved in a particular topic. Therefore, I felt that semi-structured interviews were relevant for this study because I anticipated that some of the answers that were going to be given by the participants were going to need more clarity.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002), semi-structured interviews make it possible to probe deeply and analyze intensely the issues that are being investigated.

For the learners to be able to fully understand the questions and at the same time be able to answer the questions freely or to the best of their ability, I used IsiZulu which they were more comfortable with since it is their home language. The data in IsiZulu was later transcribed by me to English for analysis purposes. During the interviews I used a tape recorder to collect data and this data was later transcribed to notes that were going to be used later on for analysis. The reason why I used the tape recorder was because I wanted to concentrate on the participants' responses. I felt that it was not going to be a good idea for me to write whilst the participants were responding to my questions because I wanted to concentrate on their responses. I also felt that writing whilst the participants were talking might make the participants think or believe that I am not interested in what they were saying. I believe I would have also spent most of the time asking my participants to repeat what they were saying since the concentration would have been less, considering that writing down the learners' responses would have taken most of my time rather than concentrating on what they were saying. Moreover, I wanted the participants to feel the importance of their contribution to the study whilst at the same time I also wanted to ensure accurate data collection.

3.6 The use of drawings for elicitation

To facilitate discussion I asked the participants to draw the space that they use when they are doing their homework as well as how they see themselves overcoming the difficulties of not completing their homework. For this purpose, I gave the participants pencils and some sheets of blank papers. The reason I used drawings in this study was because I had a belief that the drawings were going to help me as the researcher to have an insight on the difficulties that the participants had when writing their homework as well as what they feel can be done to overcome these difficulties. Theron et al (2011) suggest drawings can offer an entry point and provide insight into the experiences and perceptions of the people producing drawings. Over and above this I also felt that the drawings were going to help where the participants were unable to express themselves or to remember some of the things that they had planned to mention during the interviews since they had been previously briefed on what the study were about. As Klepsch and Logie (1982, p. 7) argue, children are able to convey in their drawings thoughts and feelings they

cannot possibly express in speech or in writing. Swart (1990, p. 9) claims, drawings provide a valuable means of access to otherwise inaccessible information. The other advantages of using drawings are that it is easy to use drawings and at the same time economical since there is no vast sums of money that are used to buy drawing materials. This then shows that the use of drawings could help the researcher receive a lot of useful data without the use of large amounts of money. As Mitchell, Walsh and Moletsane (2006) argue the use of drawings within the visual methodologies is economical, requiring minimal supplies, and is highly generative. Therefore, the intention of getting data in this study using individual interviews and drawings was to ensure that whilst lots of data is received there should

3.7 Data analysis

For this study to come up with the solutions or the recommendations on the difficulties that our learners face when they are doing their homework I had to go through or analyze the data that I had collected in relation to what my participants said during the interviews. Merriam (2009), states data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. Merriam further claims that making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read in the process of making meaning. This then shows that the data that was recorded during the interviews was going to be used to help the study come up with the patterns to be used in the findings and the recommendations of this study. After I had collected data in IsiZulu using the tape recorder I had to transcribe it in IsiZulu and then translate it into English as I have already mentioned in the previous paragraph. Since I had used the tape recorder during the interviews there was no data that was lost when I was transcribing because I had to go through the transcripts more than once to make sure that I had written everything. The data that I was working with were the transcripts from what my participants said using the drawings to explain the difficulties they had experienced when they were writing their English homework. Drawings were only there to help them remember some of the things that had made them not to do their homework. Therefore, the pre-planned questions were aimed at getting the difficulties that had made the participants not to complete their English homework using the drawings. Thereafter I had to work the data by breaking it into manageable units, organize it and search for themes and discover what is important and what could be learned and then decide how to report the findings that would have emerged from the data. As

Bodgan and Bicklen (2003) state data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging interview scripts, field notes and other materials that were generated during data collection to increase the researcher's understanding of them and to enable the researcher to present what he/she has found. Therefore, I had to read through the transcripts and write down the notes so that I could properly understand the data. I selected and categorized data into themes on the difficulties that the learners had experienced when they were writing their homework. Thereafter I had to list all the emerging themes, cluster and encode them according to the difficulties that were experienced by the participants when writing their homework. The codes helped me for easy access when I'm looking for them to use. Finally I had to easily analyze the data assisted by categorization of the themes and came up with the findings and the recommendations of this study.

3.8 Limitations of the study

There are a couple of things in this study that I can consider to be limitations. The first thing that I identified as a limitation was the small number of the participants. Findings of this study cannot be used to suggest or state that all the learners of this school or other schools share the same problems when it comes to the difficulties when they are doing their homework since I had used six participants. Since this study was conducted or done at one school, generalizations to suggest that all the learners from this and the other schools who are not doing their homework share the same experiences or difficulties might be misleading.

The other limitation to this study was that I did not use all the Grade Seven learners' comprehension test for this study. The reason why I did not use all the Grade Seven learners' comprehension test was because I had told the English educator that was assisting me to select three boys and three girls who had not finished their English homework. This as a result stopped me from seeing how all the learners who were able to complete their work responded to the comprehension test as well as how they managed to do their homework. I believe this could have answered some of the assumptions that I had when it comes to the learners who do their homework compared to those who do not do their homework.

Parents, to whom the learners take their homework, do not have any say in this study. Therefore, whilst the views of the learners were important in this study it would have been very interesting

to hear what the parents had to say when it comes to what their children get up to when they arrive home or when they are told to do their homework by their parents. This is a potential area for further study on the difficulties of homework. The reason I say this is because I don't believe that all the difficulties that were highlighted in this study by the learners would have been echoed by their parents since most parents during parents meetings usually say their children lie about homework when asked to write it. Other parents say their children always say they have written their homework at school when they ask them to do their schoolwork.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the research design and method for the way in which I proceeded with the research data collection. I believe the use of the various methods that has been used in this chapter would help this study come up with the relevant data that is going to help find the solution to the difficulties our learners face when they have to do their homework. In chapter four I present the findings for the research and more details and how the research unfolded.

CHAPTER FOUR: Working with the data

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings on the views of the learners on the experiences of doing their English homework and on what they believe should be done to make them overcome the difficulties they had identified or experienced when they were doing the particular piece of English homework in question. The reason why I decided to use the learners' views or the learners' voices is because I believe for us as educators to identify the difficulties our learners face when it comes to homework we have to hear or listen to what the learners have to say about the difficulties they experience in their homes when they are doing their homework as well as how they believe or feel these difficulties can be solved or overcome. According to Hong et al (2011) teachers with a good understanding of students' homework experiences can improve the quality and relevance of homework and lessen the homework problems that students experiences. Therefore, I believe if we as educators can understand the difficulties our learners face when they are doing their homework maybe together with the parents or the families of the learners we will be able to come up with the ideas or solutions to help our learners do their homework.

To conduct this study a total of six learners or participants; three boys and three girls from Grade Seven, were interviewed individually in a secluded class as mentioned earlier in this study. For the purpose of anonymity in this study I decided to use pseudo names that have no meaning or relationship whatsoever to the identity or the real names of the learners or the participants. The names that were given to the participants were Pearl, Rose and Queen whilst the boys were given Tom, Pat and Tim. The girls asked to be interviewed first because they said they were afraid to go alone after school since they were staying a bit far from the school whereas the boys had no problem except for one boy who stayed a bit far from school. We discussed with him before the interviews that I was going to take him home after the interviews. Therefore, on the first day of the interviews I had to interview Pearl and Rose and then the following day I had to start with Queen since I was interviewing two participants per day. On the first day I interviewed Pearl and Rose whereas on the following day I interviewed the last girl by the name of Queen and then interviewed Tom who is a boy. On the third day I interviewed Pat and Tim. All of my participants had brought two drawings as I had asked them to draw two drawings showing the space that they use when they are doing their homework with the things or the difficulties that caused them not to finish their

homework as well as the drawing showing how they envisage overcoming the difficulties of not finishing their homework.

4.2 Description of the participants and the drawings

Each and every participant was asked to draw two drawings that were going to be used to answer the questions by the participants during the interviews. For the first question the learners were asked to draw the space that they had used when they were writing their English homework. In this drawing the participants were asked to show or highlight the thing or things that made them not to finish their homework. The reason why they were asked to draw these drawings was because they were going to use them when they were explaining the difficulties that they had experienced when they were doing their English homework. For the second drawing the learners were asked to draw how they see themselves overcoming the difficulties that caused them not to finish their homework. The reason why I asked my participants to do these drawings before the interviews was because I felt that if they do the drawings and discuss them before the interviews trust and uneasiness on my and the participants' side was going to be developed. Besides, I also felt that the drawings were going to help the participants not to lose focus but most importantly remember the difficulties that they had experienced when they were doing their English homework. Since I wanted to get the learners' views in this study I felt it was very important to use the methods that were going to make the participants feel free to discuss their difficulties with me and not hold back the information that was going to shed light on the difficulties that my participants had experienced when they were doing or writing their English homework. Another important point to be made here concerning the drawings is that the participants were told before they started their drawings that any drawings were acceptable. This means that they were not expected to show how artistic are they the only important thing about their drawings was the meaning that was supposed to be evident. As Theron et al (2011) put it when we are inviting the participants to draw; the invitation needs to reassure them that the focus is on the content of their drawing, and not on the quality of it as a drawing.

Before looking at what the participants had to say concerning the questions on the difficulties they had experienced when they were doing their English homework, I had to analyse the drawings that the learners had done concerning the space that they used when they were writing the English homework and how they envisage overcoming the difficulties they had drawn or shown in their first drawing.

4.2.1 Pearl

The first participant that I interviewed was Pearl. Pearl is a young girl who is thirteen years old. She stays with her illiterate grandmother, an older brother who left schools in Grade Seven and her little sister in a five roomed house. According to Pearl when she comes back from school she has to juggle her time between her schoolwork and house chores. In most cases she fails to do her homework because her grandmother always calls her to do her house chores while she is busy doing her homework.

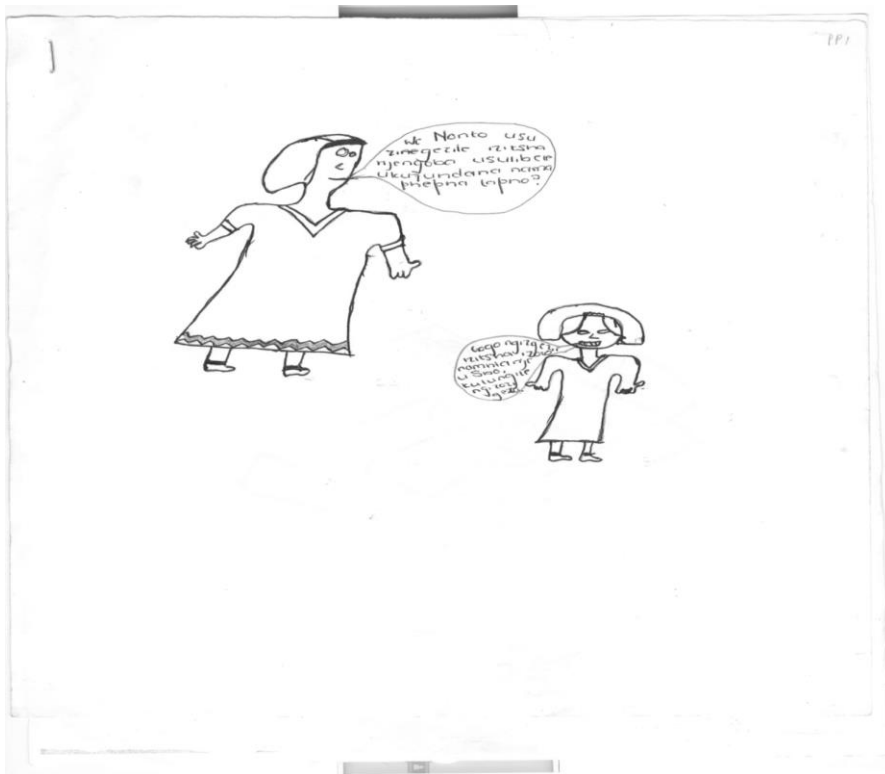


Figure 1

Pearl's first drawing on the things that disturb her when she is doing her homework

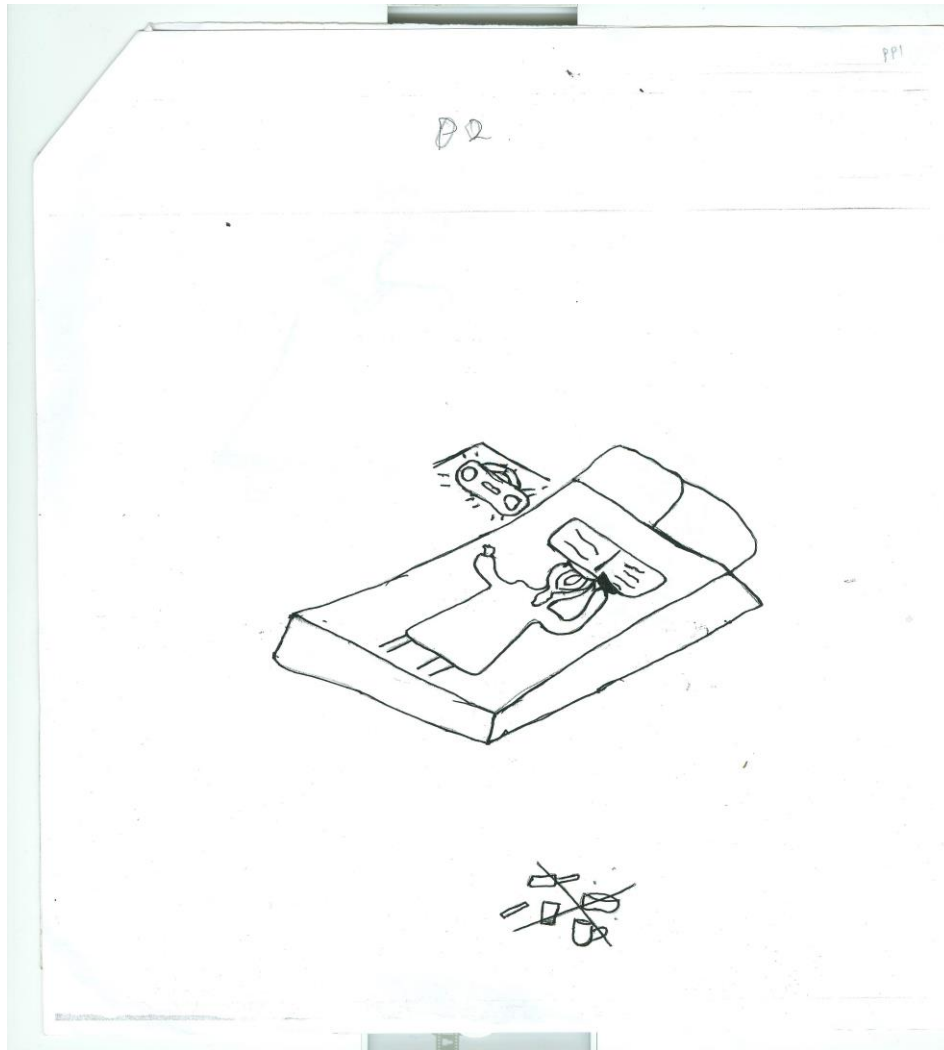


Figure 2

Pearl's second drawing on how she anticipates overcoming the difficulties of not doing her homework

For the first question, Pearl was asked to use the drawing to explain the things that caused her not to finish her homework. Pearl drew two drawings. One of the drawings shows her grandmother talking to her. Pearl's grandmother was asking her if she had washed the dishes. From the drawing and Pearl's explanation about it her grandmother was not happy that instead of washing the dishes she was doing her schoolwork. Why I say this it is because when you read the speech bubble that was written by Pearl which is in the drawing you can see that Pearl's grandmother is interested in her washing the dishes rather than doing her schoolwork. Pearl's response was that it was not her turn to wash the dishes but her little sister's since Pearl had washed the dishes the previous day. According to this drawing one can see that it is not easy for Pearl to concentrate on her schoolwork since she said during the

discussions her grandmother calls her time and again to find out if she has done the work she was supposed to do which does not involve her schoolwork.

In her second drawing Pearl has shown herself in her bedroom reading or doing her schoolwork. In her drawing she has also shown a radio that Pearl had said during the discussions she would like to listen to when doing her schoolwork at home. On the other side of her drawing she has drawn the dishes with a big cross on them implying that she does not like to wash them because they disturb her when she is doing her schoolwork. I assume if there had been discussions between Pearl and her grandmother, or between Pearl, her grandmother and her educators there wouldn't have been the animosity or disagreements that are shown by Pearl in her drawings.

During the interviews Pearl revealed that she would be very happy if her grandmother could stop calling her when she is doing her homework. She also revealed that she would find it easy to do her homework if her younger sister would stop asking her to help her with her homework. Besides, Pearl felt that she would be very happy if her educators could find time to help them as learners with their homework. Moreover, she believes that she can be very happy if her school can build a library that she and the other fellow learners can use after school. Pearl believes that the library can provide them with a quiet place to do their work as well as the resources that can help them do their schoolwork.

4.2.2 Rose

Rose is a girl who is fourteen years old. She stays with her sick mother and her younger sister in a one roomed house that has no electricity. During the interviews Rose told me that when she comes back from school she has to check if her sick mother is okay, go to the community tap to fetch water, go to the shops to buy food that she is going to cook, make a fire outside the house and then cook for her family. All these things that Rose has to do after school leave her with a very short time to do her schoolwork. Over and above these house chores that Rose has to do when she comes back from school she has a duty to check her younger sister's work and help her with her homework. It should be highlighted here that Rose cannot do her homework nor help her sister while she is cooking because of the fact that she is cooking outside so she cannot leave the pot alone. Therefore, she has to finish cooking first before doing other things like checking her sister's work and then attempting to do her own homework. By the time Rose starts to do homework it is late and at the same time she might

find that she does not finish her homework because the candle that she is supposed to use when writing her homework has been finished since they don't have electricity in her home.

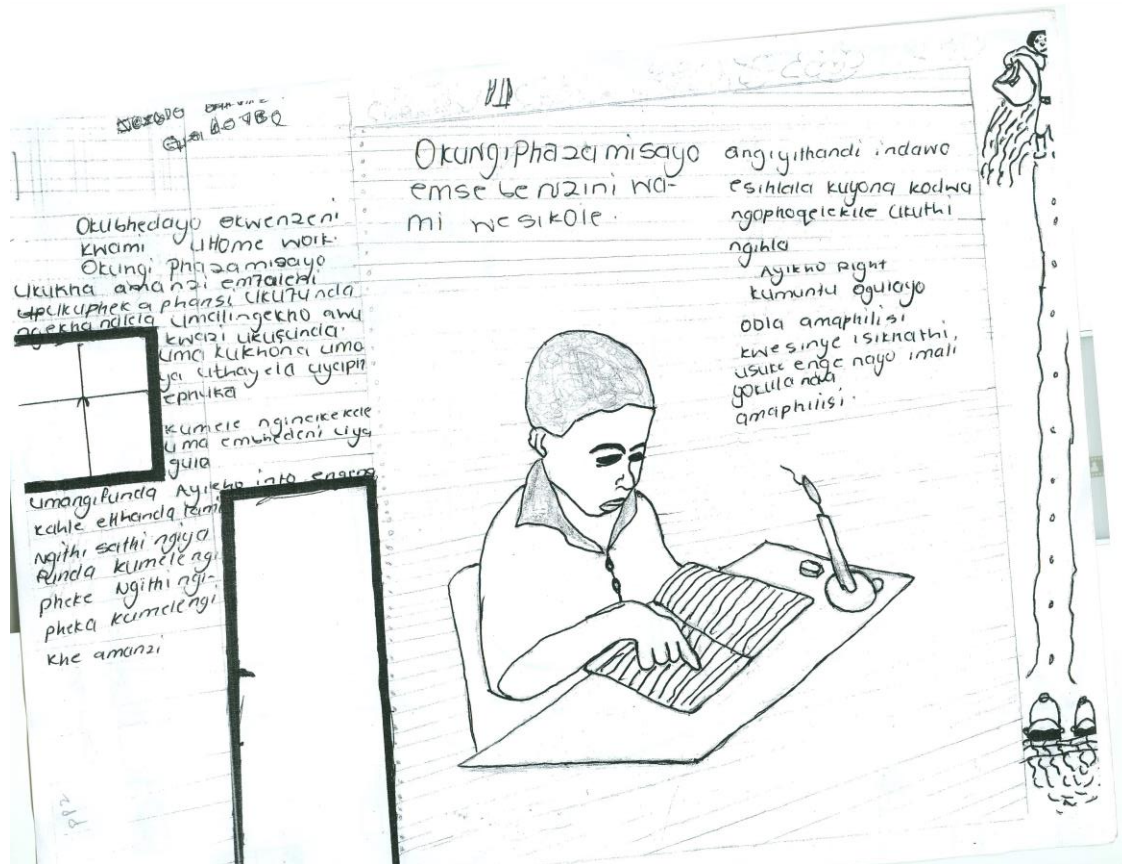


Figure 3

Rose's first drawing on the things that disturb her when she is doing homework

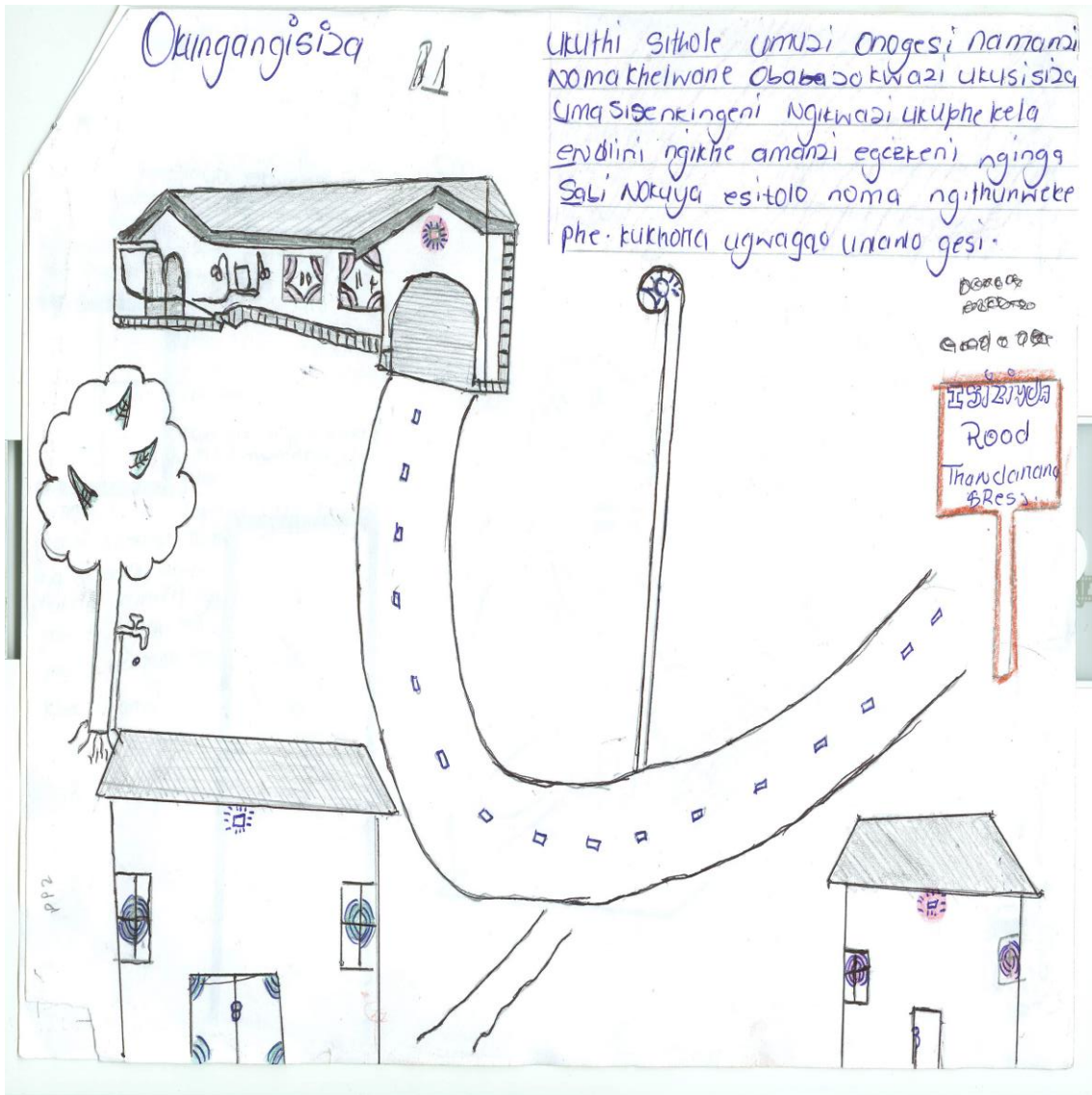


Figure 4

Rose's second drawing on how she anticipates overcoming the difficulties of not doing her homework

In the first drawing Rose has drawn and written what she considers as the difficulties that caused her not to finish her homework. In her drawing she has shown herself reading using a candle which she has mentioned as one of the difficulties that causes her not to finish her homework because it sometimes gets finished whilst she is in the middle of her schoolwork. Besides, she has written on her drawing that she finds it hard to concentrate on her schoolwork because of her sick mother. She further stated that the place where her home is, is not suitable for someone who is sick and who has to sometimes go to the clinic or hospital to fetch her medication or see the doctors. She also complains about the state of her house

which sometimes contributes to the difficulties that she experiences when she is doing her schoolwork. According to what she has written in her drawing which is on the things that disturb her when she is doing her homework, her house is covered in corrugated iron and when there is wind the corrugated iron make a terrible noise which makes it hard for her to concentrate on her schoolwork.

In the second drawing on how Rose see herself overcoming the difficulties of not finishing her homework she has drawn a big house with a garage, tarred road, electricity, tap and neighbours. She has written on her drawing that she wishes that they could get a house with electricity, water and neighbours who can help her when she has a problem with her schoolwork. She believes she would be able to cook and get water in the house and at the same time she believes that she won't be afraid to go to the shops because the road would have streetlights.

During the interviews Rose highlighted that she believes if the Ward councillor would attend to their problems by building them decent houses, build tarred roads, give them electricity and water she would be able to finish all her schoolwork that she had been given by her educators. Moreover, she believes that if they had supportive neighbours she can be able to concentrate well at school because she would know that her mother is in the capable hands of her neighbours. Rose also believes that she would be very happy if their educators could design a program that they can follow as learners to help them do their homework.

4.2.3 Queen

Queen is a girl who is thirteen years old. She lives with her parents and her older sister, who is doing Grade twelve, in a two roomed house. According to Queen she usually finds it hard to do her homework at home because there is nobody who helps her with her homework. The other thing that disturbs Queen is the television that her mother or the other members of the family switch on when she is studying or doing her schoolwork. During the interviews she revealed that she finds it very hard to concentrate in her schoolwork when she has switched on the television.

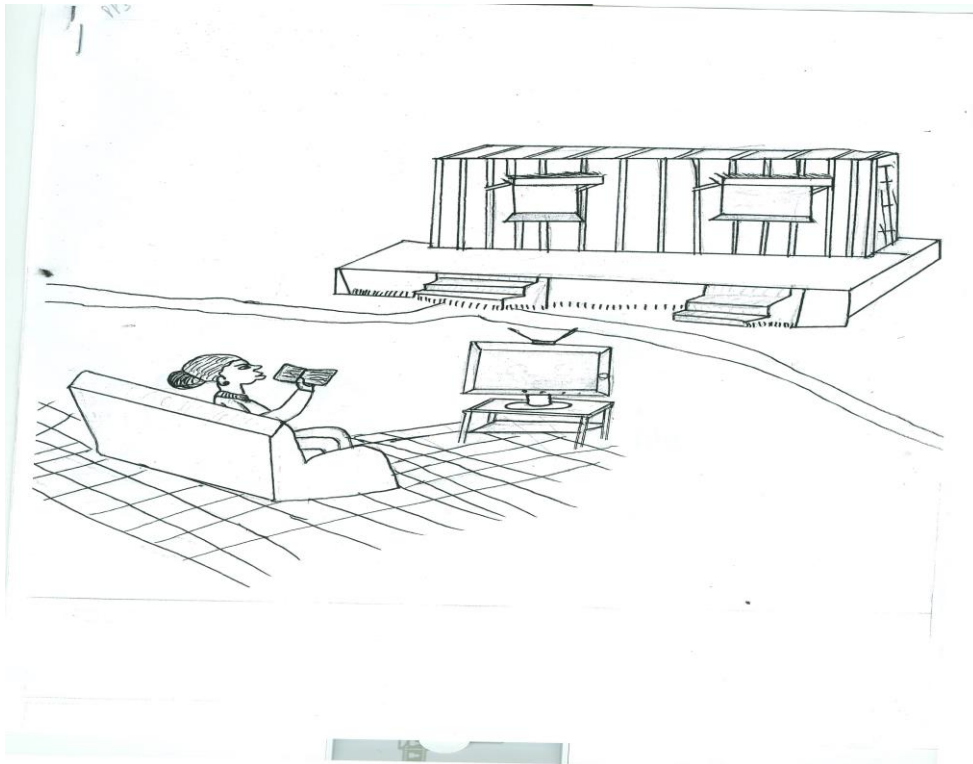


Figure 5

Queen's first drawing on the difficulties she experiences when she is doing her homework



Figure 6

Queen's second drawing on how she anticipates overcoming the difficulties of not doing her homework

In her first drawing based on the difficulties that prevent Queen from finishing her homework she has drawn what looks like a two roomed house and then outside that house there is a girl who sitting and reading a book in-front of a television . What is also noticeable in this first drawing is that she is all alone meaning according to what she has said during the discussions, there is no one who appears to help her or who is there to tell her not to switch on the television when she is doing her homework.

In the second drawing the same girl who was in the first drawing is in the second drawing and she is still sitting where she was in the first drawing same. However it should be noted that in this second drawing there are some changes that can be seen that were not in the first drawing. The first change that is evident in this drawing is that the television that was in the first drawing is no longer there but there is someone who is standing where the television was. This, according to the drawings implies that Queen would be very happy if she could get someone to remove the television and be there when she is doing her schoolwork to help or supervise her.

During the interview Queen mentioned the size of the house they live in as one of the difficulties that she experiences when she is doing her homework. Queen said because her house is small she sits in front of the television when she is doing her homework and as a result she ends up watching it instead of doing her schoolwork. Other than that, Queen said her parents disturb her by sending her time and again to the shops when she is busy with her schoolwork. Moreover, the lack of someone to help Queen with her homework also causes her not to do her homework.

To overcome these difficulties Queen felt that she would be very happy to get someone like her elder sister who is in a secondary school to help her with her homework. She also felt that if her school can build a library she can be able to do her homework before going home because she can be able to do her homework before going home. Furthermore, Queen felt that the library would be able to help with the resources when they had been given homework at school.

4.2.4 Tom

Tom is a boy who is fourteen years old. Tom is staying with his brother and his sister in a small house. Tom finds it hard to do his homework because he does not understand English. Besides the difficulty he has of the lack of English proficiency he does not have anyone to

help him with his homework since his brother, whom he believes is capable of helping him, spends most of his time away from home.

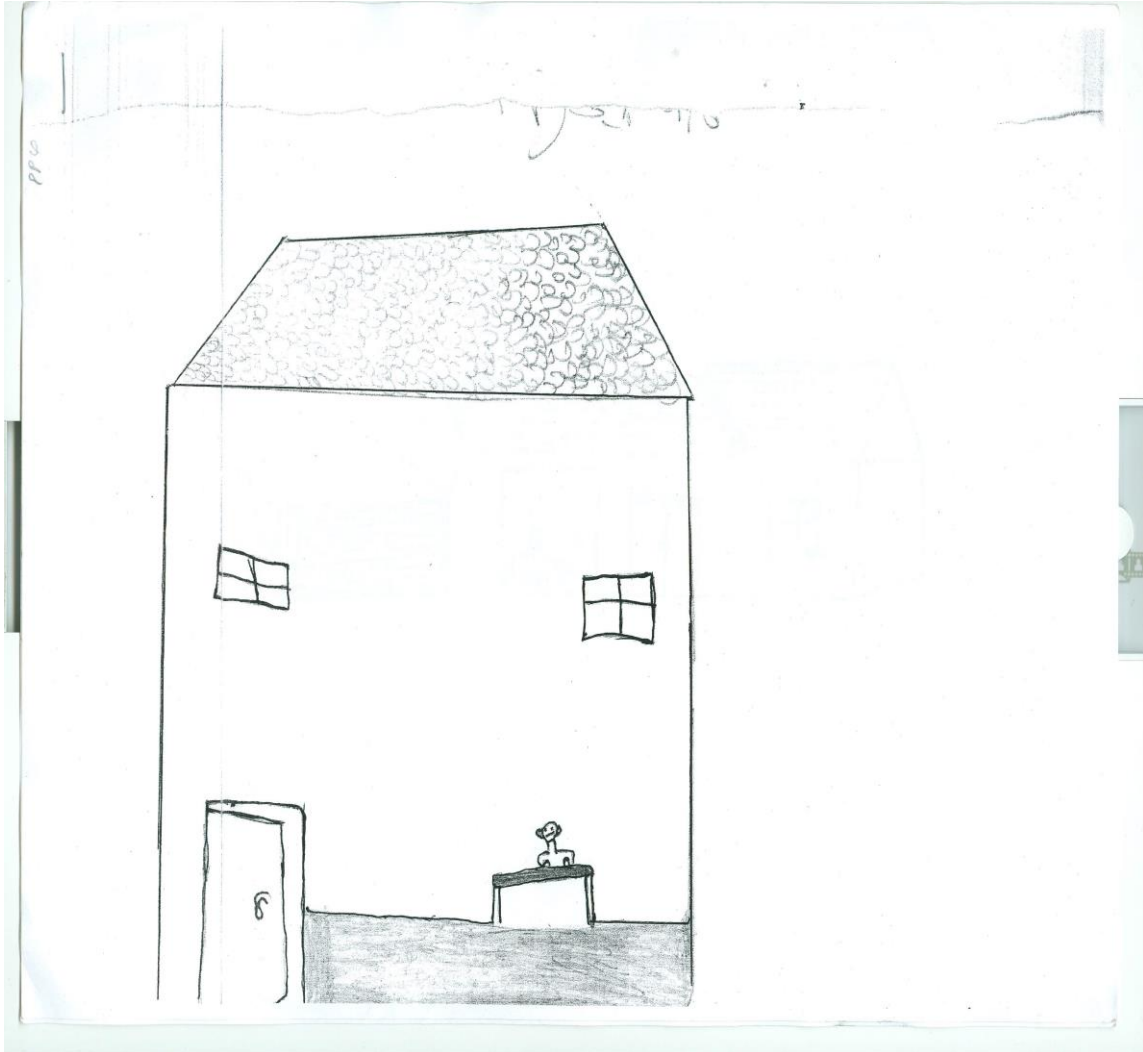


Figure7

Tom's first drawing on the difficulties that he experiences when doing his homework

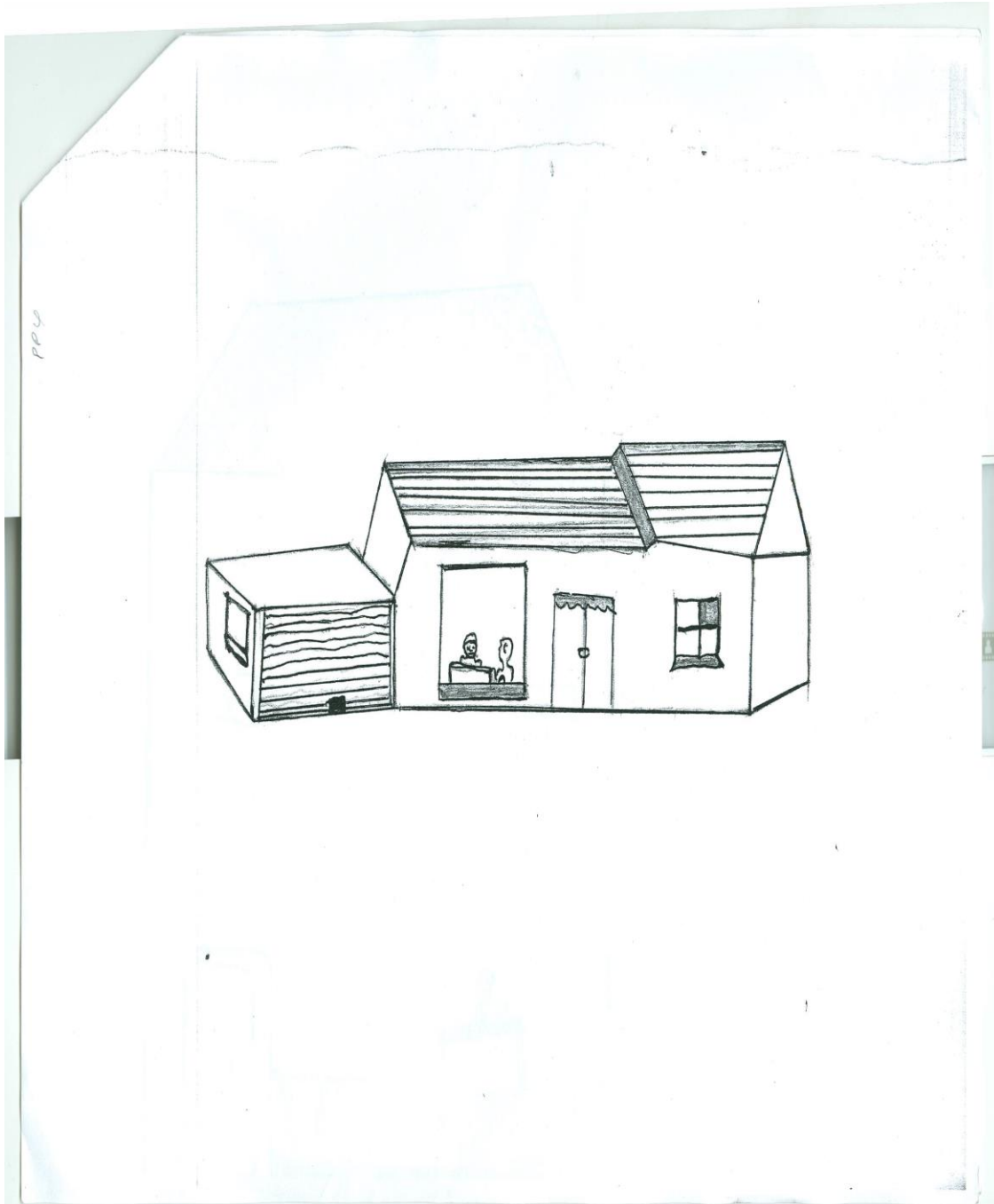


Figure 8

Tom's second drawing on how he anticipates overcoming the difficulties of not doing his homework

Tom's first drawing shows him sitting alone in a small house. In this drawing it looks like he is sitting at a table or desk and there is nobody around him. Another noticeable thing about this drawing is that Tom, like Queen, has drawn a small house with two small windows.

However, on the second drawing Tom has drawn a big house with a garage. Unlike in the first drawing Tom is now sitting with someone that I believe is helping him with his schoolwork. Therefore, I believe the reason Tom had shown himself all alone in the first drawing is because he felt that there should be someone who is going to help him with his schoolwork. Moreover, the reason for drawing a big house I presume is showing that he needs a space where he is going to be able to do his schoolwork without any disturbances and a space for someone who is going to help him with his homework as he has said during the discussions.

During the interview Tom said one of the difficulties that he experiences is that they have a problem with electricity in the area where they live. Tom said in most cases they experience power failure which usually leaves them in the dark. This obviously stops Tom from carrying on with his homework. The other difficulty that Tom mentioned during the interview was that of the lack of someone to help him with his homework.

To solve his problems Tom believes if he could get someone to help him with his homework he would be able to finish his homework. Tom also believes that if the problem of electricity was solved he would be able to do his homework all the time.

4.2.5 Pat

Pat is a young boy who is thirteen years old who lives with his mother, older brother and his siblings in a two roomed house. When Pat comes back from school he has to change and wash his school shirt. Thereafter his parent or brother sends Pat to the shops time and again to buy the things that they are going to cook for supper. Pat also finds time to go and play with his friends. Pat usually finds it hard to do his homework because when it is time to do homework in the afternoon his siblings make too much noise which makes it hard for him to concentrate or do his schoolwork. Besides his siblings who are disturbing Pat when he is doing his homework, his brother disturbs him by switching on the television thus making it hard for him to concentrate on his schoolwork. Since Pat stays in a two roomed house he does not have a quiet space or place that he can use to do his homework. Because of the abovementioned reasons it is clear that Pat is bound to arrive at school with unfinished homework.

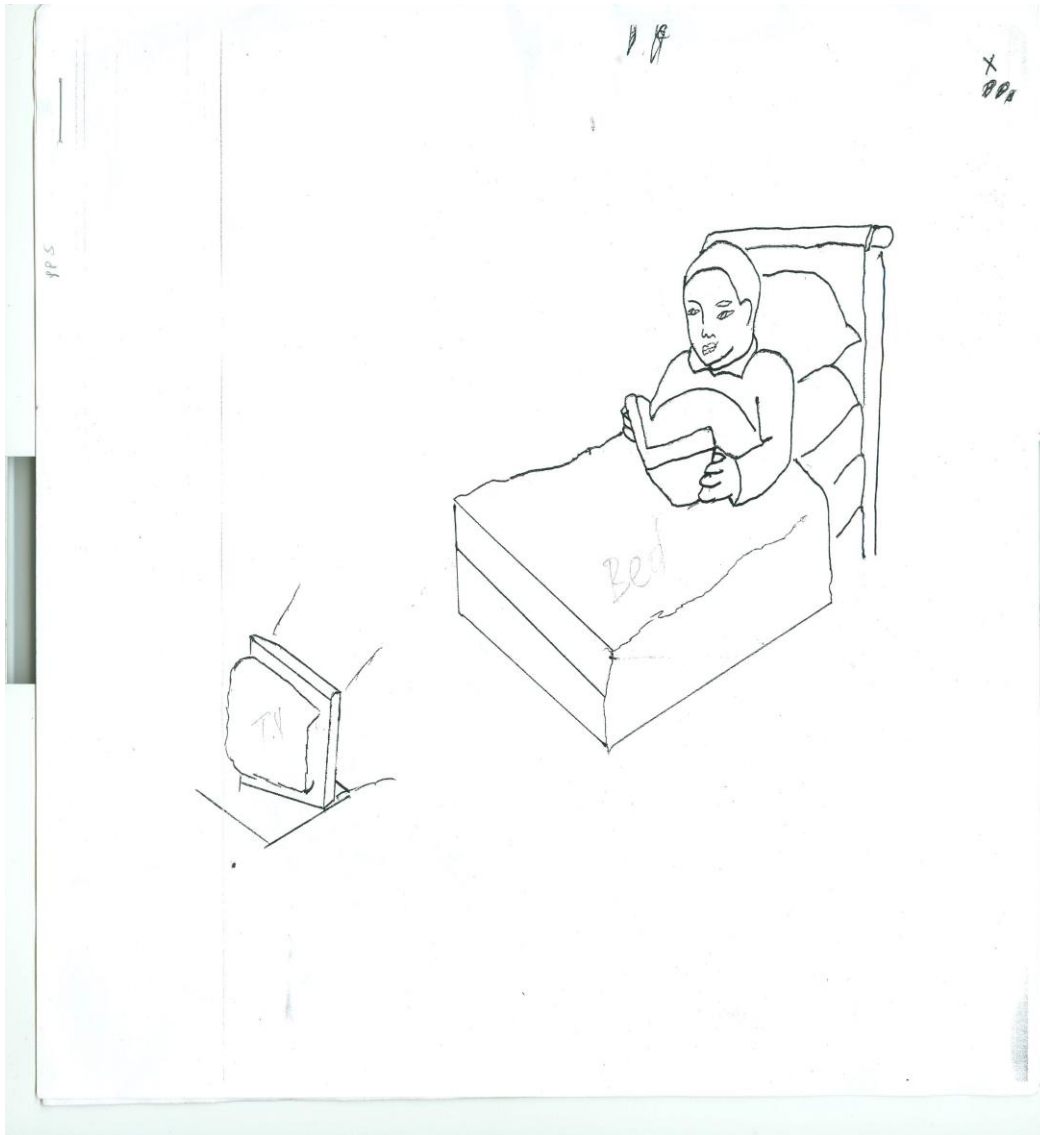


Figure 9

Pat's first drawing on the difficulties that cause him not to do his homework

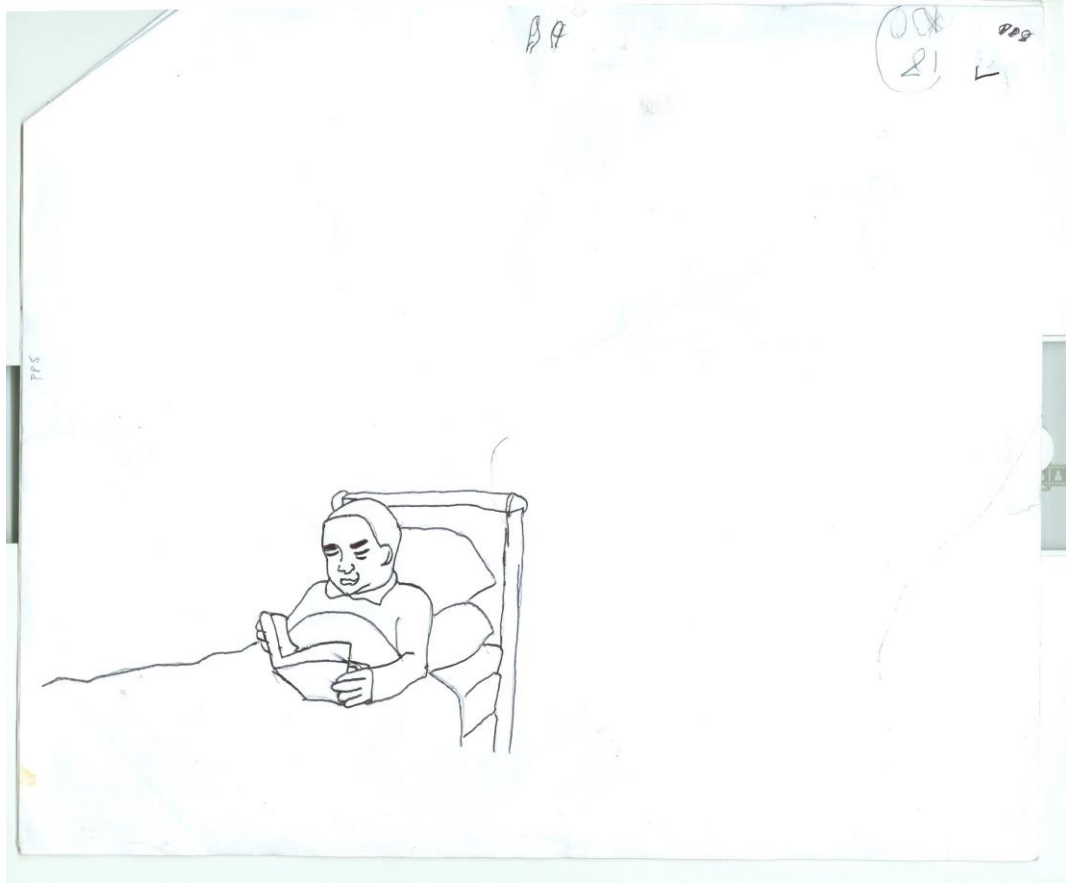


Figure 10

Pat's second drawing on how he anticipates overcoming the difficulties of not doing his homework

In the first drawing Pat is sitting in his bed and reading his book. The drawing also shows there is a television in front of him. This according to the drawing shows or implies that Pat is being disturbed by the television when he is trying to do his schoolwork. This obviously shows that because of the small size of the house Pat does not have enough space to do his homework. Even if Pat wants to do his homework in a quiet place that won't be possible because he lives with the other members of his family in a small house.

In the second drawing Pat is still sitting and doing his work in bed. However, what is noticeable in this second drawing is that Pat no longer has a television in front of him. This obviously shows that for Pat to do his homework the television has to be removed where Pat usually does his homework or his schoolwork.

During the interviews Pat was able to mention the television as one of difficulties that he experiences when he is trying to write his homework. Besides the television Pat also

mentioned the noise that is made by his siblings when he is trying to concentrate on his schoolwork. Pat also mentioned his mother and brother as some of the difficulties that cause him not to finish his homework. Pat said he doesn't like it when his brother and mother send him time and again to the shops.

During the interviews Pat said that he believes he would be able to overcome the difficulties he was facing only if there were changes in his home. Pat said he believes he would be able to do his homework if his brother can switch off the television when he is doing his schoolwork. Pat also said if his mother and brother can stop sending him time and again to the shops he would be able to do his schoolwork. Moreover, Pat felt that he can be able to do his homework if his siblings can stop making too much noise when he is busy with his homework. Lastly Pat said he believes he would be able to do his homework if his school able to build a library where he would be able to do his homework quietly.

4.2.6 Tim

Tim is a young boy who is thirteen years old. Tim and his older brother rent a one roomed house which is situated at a distance of approximately two kilometres from his school. Tim travels to and from school on foot and as a result when he arrives home from school in the afternoon he is very tired considering that he has to wash his shirt, do the house chores and then do his schoolwork. Tim's mother does not stay with him and his older brother is doing Grade twelve this year which makes it hard for him, to be around home most of the time to help his younger brother with his schoolwork. Tim told me that if there was someone to help him with his schoolwork all the time he would be able to do his homework.

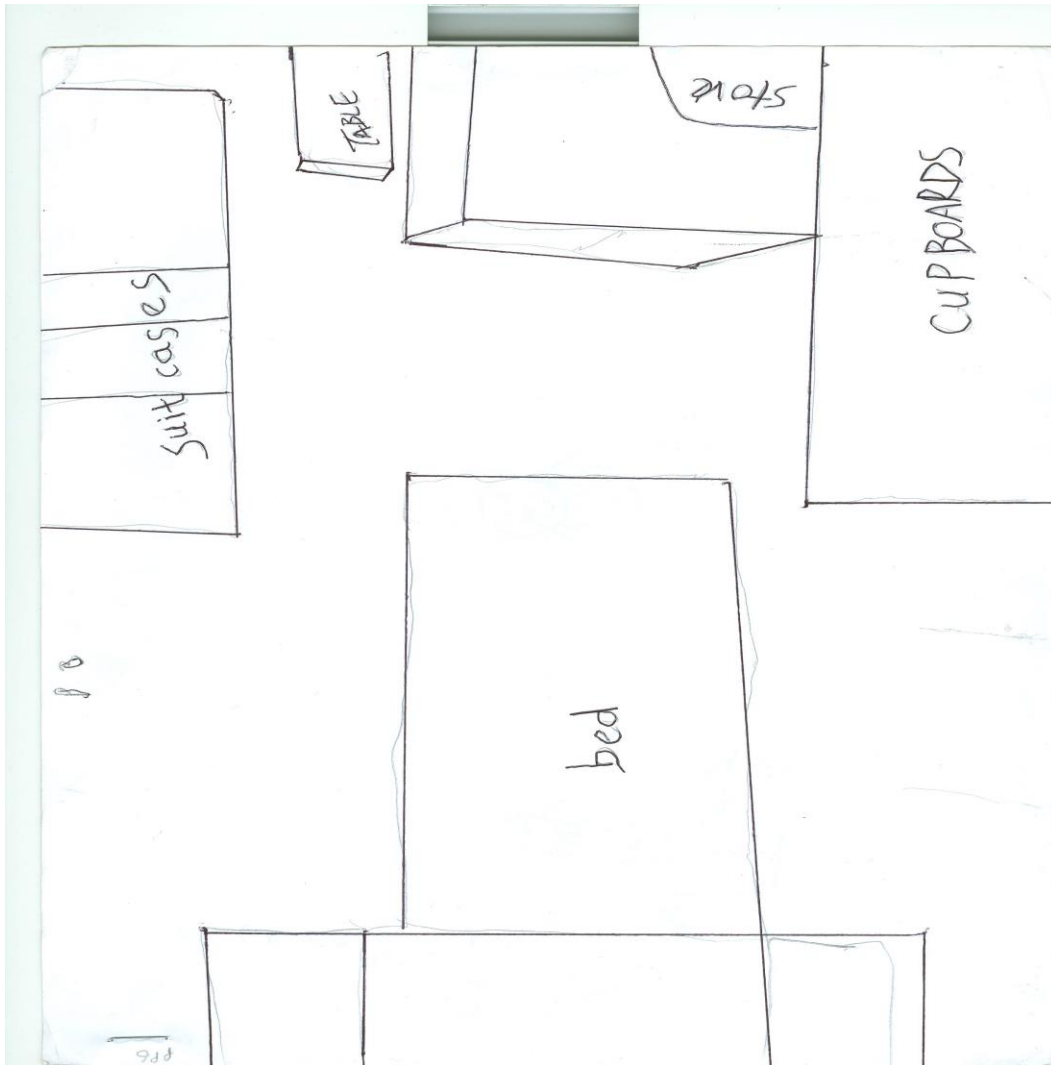


Figure 11

Tim's first drawing on the difficulties that prevent him from writing his homework



Figure 12

Tim's second drawing on how he anticipates overcoming the difficulties of not doing his homework

The first drawing by Tim shows a lot of things that are found in his space where he does his homework. Looking at the drawing one can see that Tim is staying in a one roomed house which makes it hard for him to do his schoolwork since in this room there are so many things like bed, suitcases, table, cupboards and stoves that are overcrowding the space that Tim can use when he is doing his schoolwork.

In the second drawing Tim has drawn a drawing that is without all the things that were shown in the first drawing. In this drawing there are three people that are shown who are Tim, Tim's mother and his brother. According to Tim if he could stay with his mother she can be able to help him with his homework. If Tim can get his mother or his brother to help him with his schoolwork he will be able to do his homework.

During the interviews Tim mentioned a couple of difficulties that he experiences when he is doing his homework. Tim said when he comes back from school he has to wash his shirt, go to the shops to buy things to cook before doing his house chores. Besides washing the school shirt and doing the house chores Tim said it is also a difficulty to do your homework without someone who is going to help you with it.

In relation to the things that Tim believes can be done to overcome the difficulties, he said he believes he would be able to do his homework if he could get someone to help him with his homework. Tim also said if he could get enough space to do his homework he would be very happy because he would be able to do his homework without any disturbances. He also mentioned that he would be very happy if he could attend a school that is not that far from his house. Tim said when he arrives home from school in the afternoon he is always tired and that this also contributes negatively towards his schoolwork.

4.3 Findings and discussions

4.3.1 The home as a space for homework

The first question asked the participants to draw the space that they used when they were doing their English homework. In the drawings the participants were supposed to show the things or the difficulties that caused them not to finish their homework. The second question asked the participants to explain using the drawings the things or the difficulties that caused them not to finish their homework. By looking at the drawings even before the participants used them in their explanations or in their responses I was able to identify or interpret some of the difficulties that the participants had experienced. However, it should be noted that some of the difficulties and the solutions were not shown in the drawings that were drawn by the participants but they emerged as the participants were explaining the things or the difficulties that they had experienced when they were doing their English homework. Furthermore, I believe I should clarify before anyone gets the wrong impression the participants used the drawings to help them remember some of the difficulties that had caused

them not to complete their homework. I also looked at the drawings prior to the interviews since I had asked them to draw the drawings before commencing with the interviews.

4.3.2 Lack of space

One of the things that were noticeable on the participants' drawings was that all the participants except for Rose who is staying in a five roomed house had a problem with finding a quiet place that they could use for doing their homework. The reason why the participants did not have a quiet place to do their homework in their homes was because some of them stay in one roomed houses whilst the other participants are staying in two roomed houses. Therefore, what actually was shown in their drawings was that the small space that they had in their homes was taken up by things like wardrobes, suitcases, stoves, beds, cupboards and televisions to name a few. This as a result caused the participants to use the small space that they had or use the bed when they were writing homework or sometimes they decided not to do their homework at all. The lack of the quiet place or space for the participants to do their homework caused them to be disturbed by the noise made by the other members of the family or by the television. Obviously when the other members of the family are making a noise or when they are watching the television the learner will be disturbed by the noise and what is happening or playing in the television thus causing the learner to stop doing his or her homework.

The difficulties and lack of space are borne out by the participants' words:

Queen in her response said:

One of the difficulties that I face when I'm doing my homework is that due to our small house I do my homework in front of a television and as a result I end up watching it.

Pat in his response stated that:

The reason why I didn't do my homework is because I stay in a two roomed house which does not have enough space for me to do my homework. Usually you would find that I can't do my homework because when I am trying to do my homework the other members of my family would be watching the television which disturbs me very much when it comes to my homework and as a result I end up watching it.

The other things that disturb me are my siblings. When I am doing my homework they make too much noise which makes me lose concentration.

The above responses show that the learners do feel they need a quiet space that is without the disturbances either by the members of the family, the things like cupboards or beds that take too much space or the television when they are doing their homework. Stern (2009 p. 90) in his study concurs with this claiming that, many homes are not well suited to completing many homework tasks, either because of the facilities available, the number of people competing for facilities, or the number of responsibilities the pupil has such as caring for others. Another South African research conducted by Singh et al (2004) on the roles played by families in their children's homework revealed that, homes in the areas where they conducted their study did not have enough space and the number of family members occupying the house usually made it impossible for the learners to work in their homes. This then shows that for the above participants to have a quiet space where they are going to do their homework their parents must try and create a quiet space for them by making or asking the other members of the family to be quiet during the homework time. This would also include switching off of the television and any other things that might disturb the participants. According to the findings by Posner and Vandell (1999) recent studies in America find TV watching and unstructured activities relatively common. They also find that these activities are negatively correlated with school achievement. This obviously shows that TV negatively affects the learners' homework or their school work if they are trying to do it. Therefore, for the learners not to be disturbed by the television parents or children need to make sure that it is switched off when the learners are doing their homework. As Margolis (2005) suggests, as part of a support plan, parents might, for example, schedule a daily homework and reading time for the family, when televisions, radios, and the like are off, and everyone reads or writes.

4.3.3 Lack of someone to help

Another issue that emerged from the participants' drawings and discussions was that some of the participants explained that the reason why they did not do their homework was because of the lack of a person who could help them when they are doing their homework. They felt that if there could be someone who is going to help them with their homework at home they would be able to do it. This was conspicuous in their drawings. The first drawings of Queen and Tom, which are on the difficulties, show them doing their schoolwork alone whilst the second drawings show them doing their schoolwork in the company of someone.

To support this claim we can consider what participants said in their responses:

Queen in her response said:

Another difficulty that I experience is that there is nobody who helps me when I am doing my homework.

Tom's response was:

The other difficulty that I experience is that of the lack of someone who is going to help me with my homework.

Tim concurred with the above statements:

The first difficulty that causes me not to finish my homework is that I don't have anyone to help me with my homework at home.

One of the things that I as an educator believe in and is possibly also the view of other educators is that when we send our learners home with homework it is because we believe that their parents or the other members of the family are going to help them with their schoolwork or homework. Moreover, we also believe that the help that they would get from their parents is going to help them in their schoolwork. As Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) claim, parent involvement in children's education is recognised by educators as a positive force for homework completion, student learning, and success in school. This then shows that if the participants can have someone to help them with their homework think they will be able to do their homework and thus perform better in their schoolwork. This is interesting because Xu (2005) says that the availability of someone who can provide homework help is associated with higher homework completion rates and greater enjoyment of the learning experience. However, it should be noted that this is not an easy exercise since most of the parents fail for various reasons to help their children with their schoolwork. One of the questions in a survey conducted by the HSRC (2005) for the Nelson Mandela foundation asked the children in the Eastern Cape if anyone assists them with homework and if not why. The study found that a striking 65% of children interviewed reported that no one in the house was sufficiently educated to do so.

4.3.4 House chores

The other difficulty that was brought up by most of the participants as a difficulty that caused them not to finish their homework was that of the fact that when they come back from school they have to do house chores like washing the dishes, fetching the water from the tap, washing the dishes, cooking, going to the shops to buy the things to cook and washing their

school uniforms. Obviously this according to the participants caused them not to find enough time or disturb them when they have to do their schoolwork.

This is evident particularly in their verbal explanations:

Pearl said:

In most cases when I try to do my homework my grandmother will keep on calling me and telling me to do the house chores. Even when I had gone to my grandmother to find out what she wants, she never stops calling and asking me to do the house chores even when I have finished doing them.

This is what Rose had to say:

In most cases when I arrive home I have to go and fetch water from the community tap which is far from home. When I come back from the tap I have to make fire outside since we do not have electricity and start preparing supper for my sick mother and my sibling. When I start doing my homework usually it is too late. Since there is no electricity I use a candle which sometimes gets finished even before I finish my homework.

Tim also highlighted the difficulty of household chores:

There are so many things that I have to do at home when I come back from school like washing my school shirt, doing my house chores and going to the shops to buy the things that are needed at home for cooking.

Whilst we as educators give homework to extend or reinforce what we have been doing at school we need to understand that our learners might not finish their homework due to the other home commitments that they have. The lack of communication between the school and the parents or the families can make the parents as well as the educators ignorant about the burden that the learners have. In a study conducted by Singh et al (2004) they revealed that in the homes they visited, the learners were expected to do many chores and these easily distracted them from their schoolwork. They further stated that by the time the children finished some of these chores, they were so tired that they wanted to go to sleep. Obviously when we don't understand these problems as educators we won't be able to give our learners homework or schoolwork that they are going to be able to finish. As Hong et al (2011) argue, to generate homework more relevant to students, teachers need to have an understanding of

homework difficulties that students are experiencing and the reasons students do not complete their assignments.

4.3.5 On the question of “how was your homework?”

From the third question of the interviews I wanted to find out from the participants how was their English homework and how did they tackle it. Most of the participants except for Tom told me that the homework was easy but the only problem that they had was that they couldn't do it because they were very busy. They said that they had a lot of things to do at their homes and as a result they couldn't find time to do their homework.

Pearl's response was:

I did not have any problem with the English homework because I was able to start it in the classroom but I could not finish it at home because my grandmother kept on calling me to do my chores.

Rose had this to say:

The English homework that was given to us was easy because by the time the period was over I had already underlined the correct answers on the question paper and all that was left was for me to write them in my exercise book when I arrived home. Unfortunately I couldn't do it at home since I had to attend to my sick mother and do my house chores.

Pat said:

My homework was not difficult but the problem was that I couldn't find time to do it at home and as a result I had to do it here at school in the morning.

The above responses by the participants indicate that as educators we don't have to think that when our learners arrive at home they are going to do their homework but, we need to understand that some of the learners have a lot of things to do before they do or write their homework. As Cooper (1989) puts it when the assignment goes home, several factors will affect how it is carried out including the student's other time commitments, the home environment and the involvement of others. This clearly shows that for us as educators to know about these problems we need to communicate with both the learners and the learners' parents or families so that we can be able to come up with the programs that can assist the learners with their homework or their schoolwork. This I believe can help the educators, the

parents or families and the learners since there would be a common understanding in as far as the issuing of homework as well as its monitoring. Obviously when the educators give the learners homework the learners will do it since they will have the support from their parents or the members of the family. As Baker (2003) argues, parents are often the key to improving struggling learners' academic and homework success. However, it should be noted that the onus is not going to rest on the parents' shoulders only but the educators and the learners will also be involved in coming up with the suggestions or strategies that are going to help the learners when they have been issued with homework. As Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1992) claim although parents may be less able to provide direct homework help as children advance to higher grade levels, parental involvement and homework help can take many forms.

Having said that, it should be noted that here in South Africa it is common for parents not to render help to their children not because they do not want to but because they have a problem that is used which is English in this instance. This leaves both our learners and educators with a huge problem because on one hand the learners do not get the necessary assistance they expect from their parents whilst on the other educators does not know that the learners' parents are unable to help their children when they have to do their homework. Therefore, lack thereof of communication between the educators, learners and the parents about the problems involving parents, their children and the lack of understanding English could lead to failure of these learners in writing their English homework or any other homework that is in English. As Eroz and Akbarov (2014) state there is significant research to suggest that parental involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement. This then shows that if these children's parents are not directly involved in their children's schoolwork as a result of a language barrier their children will not achieve positively in their schoolwork.

4.3.6 Lack of English proficiency

Whilst the five participants claimed that the reason they did not do their homework was because of the house chores they had to do, Tom indicated that he did not do his homework because he did not understand English.

In reply to the question how was your homework and how did you tackle it Tom said:

I did try to do it but I couldn't finish it. The reason why I couldn't finish it was that the questions were difficult for me and as a result I couldn't understand them since they were in English.

Tom's problem of not understanding the questions or the exercises that are in English are, to my view through my experience as an English educator, common in our schools. In most cases you find that as educators we don't attend to the problems that our learners have of failing to understand English. Bang (2011) in his study conducted in USA on immigrant youths revealed that the immigrant youths' limited English proficiency played a primary role in the extent to which the participants understood their lessons and the assignments given to them. Whilst we as English educators fail to help our learners, Bang in his study revealed that there should be some form of assistance that should be given to the learners or the students that are experiencing the problems so that they can be able to do their homework. According to Bang (2009) the fact that successful completion of homework is heavily dependent on student's English proficiency corroborates the findings from an earlier study (Bang et al., 2009) that examined the relationships between homework completion, course understanding, and English language skills of recently arrived immigrant youth. This shows that as educators we need to come up with programs or strategies that are going to help our learners to understand the work that has been given to them. It is obvious that when we are giving our learners school work to do at home it should not be the same or at the same level for all the learners but special exercises for learners who are struggling with the language should be taken into consideration. This I believe can make all the learners enjoy doing homework. Bang (2011) claims, if the homework is ill-suited to students' learning needs, it can potentially do more harm than good.

4.3.7 Why I did not get help?

In question number four I wanted to find out from the participants if there was anybody who had helped them with their homework. Obviously the answer to that question was no, there was nobody who had helped them with their homework and as a result I couldn't ask the second part of the question where they were supposed to tell me if the help that they had received was helpful or not. Instead I posed another question where I wanted to find out why they didn't receive any help with homework at home. On this question I received different responses which indicated to me the lack of communication between the educators and the learners' parents.

According to Pearl the reason she did not get any help from home was:

It is because my elder brother left school while he was doing Grade seven whereas my grandmother is illiterate.

Rose said:

I stay with my mother and my younger sister at home. Even though sometimes my mother tries to help me but she fails because she is very sick. My younger sister is doing Grade one.

Queen had this to say:

I usually do it on my own because when I ask them to help me they usually say they are busy or they don't understand the work that I had been given.

Looking at the above responses by Pearl, Rose and Queen and the other similar responses by the other three participants which revealed that they did not get any help, one can be able to see that these learners do not have anybody to help them with their school work. The educators as well as the parents or the family members of these learners do not care or check if these learners have any problems when it comes to homework. They also don't have any plans in place to help them with their homework on the difficulties they have when they are doing their homework. I believe if the parents and the educators can come up with some sort of assistance to help these learners maybe there can be a significant change that can be experienced by the learners, the parents and the educators. Xu (2005) concurs, the availability of someone who can provide homework help is associated with higher homework completion rates and greater enjoyment of the learning. I believe the combination of the educators and the parents together with the learners can come up with views that can be beneficial to everyone which may lead to the enjoyment that Xu (2005) revealed in his study. According to Epstein and Voorhis (2001) homework may be purposely designed to enable teachers to inform and involve all families in their children's curricula activities. They further argue that teachers may organise procedures and assignments to keep families aware of topics taught in class, how their children are progressing, how to support their children's work and progress, and how to connect with the teachers. This will obviously make the educators and the parents know when to help and how to help and, should it happen that they don't know what to do they would know who to contact so that the learners can get the necessary assistance they need to complete their homework. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) theory in Chapter Two shows the interconnections of different factors that cause or influence the learner not to

or to write his homework. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) talk about factors that could affect the learner should it be at home, environment or at school. They believe these factors overlap each other and as a result they might be a big influence on whether the learner does his homework or not. The reason why I want to concentrate on the positive influence is because I am of the opinion that our learners or the participants in this instance could use the various stakeholders mentioned in their communities to help them do their homework rather than having a negative influence. This however could only happen when the learners or the participants have a positive mind and the eagerness to do their schoolwork regardless of the difficulties that they face in their homes when they come from school. It is a pity because this study did not allow me to find the views of the learners who had done their homework. I hope and believe that had the learners who had finished their homework been given an opportunity to explain how and when did they do their homework they would have given me different responses to the ones that I had been given by my participants.

On whether there was there any communication between the school or the educators and the learners parents or families concerning homework the answer for the learners in this study again was no. The answer to this question revealed that there was no communication between the learners' families or parents and the educators concerning the difficulties they experience when they are doing their homework. According to Singh et al (2004) research done in many countries has shown the importance of parental involvement. They further state that parental role in education is crucial in ensuring the success of the learners. However, caution should be taken that the views of the learners are taken into consideration when there are issues that involve their wellbeing. I believe this can strengthen the relationship between the learners, the parents and the educators. As Hong and Lee (2003) suggest the degree of match between children's preferred ways of doing homework and parents' perceptions about their children's preferences is positively related to children's attitude towards homework and homework achievement.

4.4 Findings in relation to addressing the second question on how the participants anticipate overcoming the difficulties that prevent them from doing their homework

4.4.1 How to overcome the difficulties from their perspective?

In question five the participants were asked to draw drawings showing how they anticipate overcoming the difficulties of not finishing their homework. The very same drawings were going to be used by the participants in question six when explaining how they anticipate

overcoming the difficulties they had experienced when they were doing their homework. Different views on what the participants believed can be done to assist them with their homework were given using the drawings. However, it should be noted again that some of the responses did not emanate from the drawings, meaning some of the responses from the participants were not in the drawings since the participants could not draw them, but, that did not stop them from explaining what they feel should be done for them or what they should do so that they can be able to write their homework like all the other learners who had written and finished their English homework.

4.4.2 Building of the library

Some of the solutions given by the participants were common to a number of them whilst the other solutions given by the participants were unique but I felt that I had to write them in these findings because I believed that they were important more especially to the educators and the learners who have problems or challenges when it comes to homework. This is what the participants had to say in connection with what they feel should be done to overcome the difficulties of not writing their homework.

Pearl had this to say:

I believe the situation can be much better if we can have a library here at school so that I can be able to do my homework in a quiet and peaceful place before I go home. Moreover, the library can help us with the resources that we can use when doing our homework.

This sentiment was also shared by Queen.

She maintained:

Our school must build a library where we can be able to do our homework before going home as well as the books that we can use to get the information to use in our homework.

Pat in his response said:

I hope that our school can build a library that we can use when we have to do our homework before going home.

This according to the responses given by Pearl, Queen and Pat indicates that the noise that is made by the members of their families, whether it be when they are talking or watching television, disturbs them when they are doing their school work or homework at home.

Therefore, they believe that for them to work in a peaceful and quiet place their school must build a library with the resources they need to do their schoolwork. As Corno (2000) concurs as places of peace and quiet, libraries virtually guarantee concentration and again, provide an option for a child whose own home can be distracting.

4.4.3 Resources

Besides the quiet place that these participants felt that they need to do their homework quietly they also said they need the library to help them with the resources that they can use when they are doing their homework. This obviously shows that due to the financial status of their parents or family members they can't afford to have their own resources and hence they believe that they can be very glad if the school can buy the resources for them. A South African study by Singh et al (2004) revealed that 70% of the children in low socio economic status homes went home to parents who were not empowered and parents who had no resources at all to educationally enrich the lives of their children. In another study conducted in America by Brock, Lapp, Flood, Fisher and Han (2007) on homework revealed that most of the teachers in their study did make provisions for the fact that many of their children came from homes where English was not spoken at home and parents may not have the additional financial resources necessary to purchase materials for children to complete their homework. I believe that this shows that it is imperative for us as educators to understand our learners' socio-economic background so that we cannot give them the tasks where they are going to be expected to use various available resources to get the information they need. Therefore, before giving our learners homework we have to ask them if they have excess to the resources rather than assuming that they are going to be able to get the information that is needed for the schoolwork.

4.4.4 Stop doing the house chores

Some of the participants felt that they would be able to do their homework if their parents or the members of the family would stop giving or telling them to do the house chores when they come back from school. In this instance I do not believe that my participants want a total exemption from doing the house chores but all they wanted was to be told what to do when they come back from school and thereafter given ample time to do their homework peacefully.

Pearl said:

In this drawing I am trying to show that I can be very glad if my grandmother can stop calling and shouting at me when I am doing my homework.

According to Pat:

I believe if my parents can stop sending me to the shop time and again I can be able to do my homework after school.

Whilst the educators will give the learners homework with the hope that the parents are going to give their children time to do their schoolwork at home parents on the other hand expect their children to do the house chores at home when they come back from school. Obviously if there is no communication between the school and the parents of the learners, the learners will always be caught in the cross fire because on one hand the parents will be expecting them to do their house chores whilst the educators on the other hand will be expecting them to do their homework. I believe it is imperative for both the parents and the educators to understand that their involvement in the learners' life or education is very important. Therefore, if they work together they are going to be able to help the learners overcome the difficulties that they have concerning their schoolwork that they have to do at home. Teachers in a study conducted by Singh et al (2004) pointed out that the expected collaboration between parents and the school on educational issues was far from satisfactory. This obviously shows that the forums or meetings between the educators and the parents where they can sit and talk about the issues that concern the learners are not held. Therefore it should be noted that if the things remain the same, the difficulties faced by learners when it comes to homework and the other issues that involve them are far from being solved. We are still going to see the learners who do not finish their homework because of the lack of support from both the educators and the parents.

4.4.5 Do you think you can overcome the difficulties on your own or you need help?

Question seven was framed to find out from the participants if they thought they could overcome the difficulties on their own or they needed help? If so what type of help? All the participants gave the responses that were answers to question number five and six which asked them to use the drawings to explain how they envisaged overcoming the difficulties of not completing their English homework. As always some of their responses were similar since some of them had experienced the same difficulties when they were writing their homework whilst the other responses were different.

Pearl and Rose felt that the educators can be an answer to their difficulties:

Pearl's response was:

I believe my educators can be of great help when it comes to the solving of the problems that I have when it comes to homework.

I believe that my educators can try and find time to help me with my homework should it happen that I find it difficult. This they can do by explaining the homework they have given to us, making sure that we understand them clearly. Obviously this can help me to easily understand what is expected from me and at the same time be able to do my work.

Rose said:

Here at school I believe I can be happy if there can be a program designed by the educators and learners that is going to help us do our homework.

The above responses revealed that some of the participants believe that the educators can play a large role in helping them with their homework. The participants felt that the educators have to ensure that the learners understand what is expected from them when they have given them homework. The participants believe that this can help them understand clearly the work that they have to do as well as how to do that work or homework.

Queen, Tom, Tim and Pat believed that various members of the family like mothers, brothers and sisters could help them to overcome their difficulties of not doing their homework.

Queen said:

I believe I can overcome some of these difficulties with the help that I can get from various people. I believe if my elder sister who is doing matric at a secondary school can find time to help me with my homework I can be able to finish it.

This is what Tom had to say:

I believe I can overcome this difficulty if I can get someone who is going to help me with my homework at home since I am not good in English. I believe if my brother can find a job that is not going to make him go to faraway places for days or leave home early and come back late at night I can be able to overcome my problem because he can spend more time helping

me with my homework and I believe I can improve my performance when it comes to my schoolwork.

Tim's response was:

I believe that my mother can be able to help me. If I can stay with my mother I can be very happy because she can be able to help me with my homework.

Pat said:

I believe these problems can be solved with the help from my mother and my brother. I believe that my mother and my brother can decide to switch off the television when it is the time for us to do our homework.

Moreover, I believe that my mother and brother can be able to tell my siblings not to make noise when I am doing my homework.

I also believe that my mother and brother can stop sending me to the shops time and again when I have to do my homework.

Pat and Queen believed as earlier mentioned that if the school can build a library they can be able to do their homework.

4.5 Analysis on the context in which the learners live

Looking at the interviews and at what my participants have revealed during the interviews it is somewhat clear that most of these learners come from the families that are struggling in life. Why I say this it is because most of the drawings show a cramped space that the learners use when they are writing their homework. Besides most of the participants revealed that due to the lack of space they lack a place to write their homework. They also revealed that the other members of the family make it hard for them to write homework since they make noise through talking or they disturb them with television. This then shows that if the situations that these learners find themselves in could change maybe there could be positive improvement as some of the participants have indicated during the interviews. Besides the cramped space I believe if the parents could make sure that there is quiet time that is set aside for their children to do their schoolwork they can be able to write their homework. However, parents need to make sure that during this time their children do their schoolwork. I believe this does not need the parents to understand the content of the subject as long as their children have

told them that they are doing their schoolwork and as long as they have made sure that they monitor their children and sign to show that they have seen the schoolwork or homework.

4.6 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter the findings by my participants have provided some of the views on the difficulties that learners experience when they are doing their English homework. The responses by the participants have revealed the difficulties that they experience when they are doing their homework as well how they believe these difficulties can be the thing of the past. Whilst most of the responses have shown that for the learners to do their homework various stakeholders need to work together, they had further revealed that the learners' voices when it comes to the issuing of homework are equally important. This obviously means that whilst the educators can plan on the programs to be followed when it comes to homework, it is also equally important to give the learners an opportunity to say what they believe homework should be like. This means that learners should be given a chance to say what they expect from homework and the educators should ensure that they listen to these suggestions and involve the parents in the decisions that have taken place so that everybody can work towards helping the learners towards achieving their dream of doing their homework peacefully. Having said that I believe it is imperative to highlight that whilst the participants have given good suggestions on who they feel should assist them with their English homework none of them have given indications on how they believe they could strive to do homework on their own. None of the participants have revealed how they could organise to maybe do their homework before going home. Not even a single participant has indicated that he is going to ask their educator to give them some time so that they could ask the learners who are good in English to help them with their homework. Instead all the participants were expecting help from their school, parents or educators to name a few. This brings me to the next point that is going to be discussed in Chapter five which is on resilience. This sub topic in Chapter five will be looking at how learners who had difficulty in writing their English homework could have strived to write and finish their homework against all the hardships or difficulties that they experienced in their homes.

CHAPTER FIVE Implications and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The reason why I decided to conduct this study was because I wanted to find the views of the six learners on the reasons why they fail to finish or complete their English homework and what can be done about it. The two critical questions that this study tried to respond to are:

1. What do six Grade Seven learners in a township school reveal as reasons for failing to complete their English homework?
2. How do these Grade Seven learners envisage overcoming these difficulties?

This chapter discusses some of the implications and the recommendations that are as a result of the responses that were given by the six participants during the interviews as well as what can be done by the various stakeholders mentioned by the participants. Obviously the implications will be looking at making us as educators and the various stakeholders; parents, other members of the family and the caregivers to name a few, know what the implications imply and suggest as actions to follow. Implications based on the findings that respond to the first question where the participants were expected to reveal the difficulties that have caused them not to write their English homework are examined in this chapter under the heading that is on implications in the next page. Further implications that result from findings related to the second question that is aimed at finding out how the participants envisaged overcoming the difficulties of not completing their English homework are also discussed under the very same heading that is on implications. Moreover, this section on the implications looks at how the participants see themselves overcoming the difficulties of not finishing their homework with the hope that, that might be of great help to the educators, parents, caregivers and the other learners who are experiencing similar difficulties of not finishing their English homework.

Following discussions of the implications in this chapter there are recommendations as I have already mentioned in the previous paragraph. The recommendations in 5.3 in this chapter are aimed at looking at how the various methods that have been used to arrive at the findings of this study could be followed or used to see if they could be useful to the learners who are struggling with their homework. These are offered in the interest of all the various stakeholders like the educators, parents, caregivers and the principals suggesting that they could incorporate some of

the recommendations into their plans of assisting the learners who are struggling with their English homework after they have identified them. Moreover, these recommendations could also be used by the other researchers who are interested in revealing what really happens in their homes when the learners have to do their homework. I am hopeful that some of these recommendations used together with the other previous studies could help when it comes to studies on the reasons why some of the learners fail to do their homework.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Implications in relation to the difficulties identified impeding homework completion

Various responses given by the participants revealed a number of difficulties that they experienced when they have to do their homework. Responses given by the learners during the interviews revealed the interrelationship when it comes to the difficulties that were discussed in Chapter two based on Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) theoretical framework. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) study is guided by an ecological perspective which recognizes that academic performance is linked to various characteristics in students' family and school ecologies as earlier mentioned in Chapter two. Therefore, as researchers, educators, parents and caregivers need to understand that when we are trying to find solutions to our learners or children's difficulties we need not look at one aspect only such as home. We also need to take other factors into consideration like home, learner's environment, school and peers to name a few. Obviously this could help us identify and at the same time understand the reason why our learners are failing to do their homework which is English homework in this particular study.

One of the major difficulties highlighted by some of the participants was that of an environment that they find themselves in when they have to do their homework. Whilst Rose highlighted during the interviews that her major difficulty was that where she lives there are no neighbors who could help her with her homework, Queen, Pat and Tim indicated verbally during the interviews that the space that they have in their homes is too small for them to do their homework freely. Besides the small space to do homework that the participants highlighted, they also mentioned the disturbances that occur as a result of the siblings that make too much noise when they have to do their homework. This noise made by the siblings prevents the participants

from doing their homework. As Corno (2000) puts it, the number of siblings in the home, the work space and the presence of a friend matter. This shows that a quiet environment that is free from disturbances either by the other members of the family or siblings is conducive for the learners to do their homework. Therefore, parents or caregivers need to make sure that their children are given enough space when they have to do their homework. However, if there is not enough space as we have seen in some of the drawings in Chapter four as well as what they have said during the interviews about the lack of space to do their homework parents need to ensure that that small space they have created for their children does not have other things or people who are going to disturb them. The other members of the family should assist the child who is doing his/her homework rather than disturbing him/her by switching on the television or making unnecessary noise.

The second reason for the participants' difficulty in completing homework is in relation to the difficulties that have to do with the lack of English proficiency. Tom indicated in his response during the interviews that the reason he did not finish his homework was because he did not understand English. This shows that if Tom was more able to understand English he could have been able to answer the questions or do his homework. This is also what he indicated in his response on the second question on how he envisaged overcoming the difficulties of not finishing his homework. As August and Hacuta (1997) revealed in the literature review, that limited proficiency in English is a particular impediment to English language homework completion and the difficulties are even greater for students with interrupted formal education, as they lack the basic academic skills needed to complete assignments and perform in school. This implies that as educators we have to realize when issuing English homework to our learners that there are those learners who do not understand the language. Therefore, as educators we need to make sure that we go through the questions with the learners before they go home and make sure that they have understood the questions and the instructions clearly.

Lack of someone to help when some of the participants were doing their homework also emerged as one of the difficulties that caused them not to finish their homework. Queen, Tom and Tim all indicated in their responses that one of the difficulties that they experienced was that there was no one to help them with their homework. Even though there are older people that they are staying with they had various reasons that caused them not to help them with their

homework. Previous studies have revealed that learners who receive homework assistance from their parents or members of the family perform much better than the learners who do not get this help. A South African study conducted by Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) of black parental involvement in education found that parents' involvement in education was crucial, especially regarding homework. According to this study they went as far as indicating that "parents who played little or no role in their children's homework contributed to the poor performance of their children". This then shows that learners who do not have anyone to help them with their homework will find it hard to do their schoolwork. Therefore, the school together with parents needs to come together and devise methods or programs to be followed in helping these learners who are struggling with their schoolwork. The school could even go as far as creating time whereby learners would be expected to do homework under supervision by educators before going home.

A number of participants more especially female participants mentioned house chores as one of the difficulties that caused them not to finish their homework. Pearl, Rose and Tim indicated in their responses during the interviews that one of the reasons why they failed to do their homework was because they had to do house chores when they come back from school which leave them with no time to do their schoolwork. In a South African study conducted by Singh and Mbokodi (2004) it was revealed that children or learners in different homes that they visited learners were expected to do many chores and these easily distracted them from their schoolwork. This obviously shows that work that the learners have to do at home disturb them when they have to do their schoolwork. Instead of having sufficient time and proper guidance when doing homework learners find themselves having to do lots and lots of house work which leaves them with no time at all to do their schoolwork. This implies that it is imperative for parents to see to it that they give their children enough time to do their schoolwork or assist them to schedule a block of time when they are not busy with homework. Another important point that one needs to bring to the fore here is that whilst house chores has appeared as one of the main reasons it should be noted that the participants have to do them until late. But as some of them have indicated under the difficulties are the other things that disturb them like television, noise and the lack of enough space to do their homework.

5.2.2 How the learners envisage overcoming the difficulties of not finishing homework?

All the participants were able to come up with what they believe other people could do in order for them to be able to do their homework. Some of the participants like Pearl, Pat and Queen felt that it was imperative for their school to build a library and provide them with resources so that they could be able to do their schoolwork before going home. According to these participants the reason why they wanted to do their homework at school was because they wanted to do their schoolwork in a quiet place where they were not going to be disturbed from time to time by the other members of their families. These participants according to their responses revealed that the books in the library can be of great help and the library can help them find a place where they can do their homework without any disturbances. Corno (2000) concurs as earlier mentioned in Chapter four that as places of peace and quiet, libraries virtually guarantee concentration and again, provide an option for a child whose own home can be distracting. Therefore, as a solution on how to overcome the difficulties of not completing homework, the participants felt that if the school could be able to build the library with resources they could be able to do their homework before going home. This obviously would save them from the things that could disturb them like the other members of the family or television as some of them had earlier mentioned during the interviews. Cooper (1986) revealed in the literature review that, when the assignment goes home, several factors will affect how it is carried out including the student's other time commitments, the home environment, and the involvement of others.

The participants also felt that if they could stop doing the house chores they could be able to find time to do their homework. Pearl and Pat revealed in their comments during the interviews that if their parents or the other members of the family could stop asking them to do the house chores they could be able to do their schoolwork. This therefore implies that parents need to understand that they need to refrain from giving their children too much work to do at home, but they need to give them time to do their schoolwork and monitor or help them. However, it should be noted that if there is no communication between the school and the parents they won't be able to know when and how are they supposed to help their children.

5.3 Recommendations

One of the emerging findings from this study is that the reason why the educators fail to help the learners with their homework is that they don't know the difficulties that the learners face when they have to write their homework. This was revealed by some of the participants whereby they told me that even though they would like as learners to discuss issues concerning homework in their school but they don't have a platform to do so. Whilst it was revealed in the literature review in Chapter two that most of the studies on homework did not allow the learners to air their views, findings in this study which foregrounds the learners' points of view have shown that if the learners are given a chance to air their views when it comes to homework most of them think they can get the assistance they need when they have to do their homework because the educators and the parents know how to assist the learners or their children. Furthermore, drawing from the findings one can assume that there are different views from the learners that can be used by the school together with the parents to help the learners who have problems or difficulties when it comes to homework. It is possible that the views of the learners provide evidence that can help the educators understand the various difficulties the learners have, as well as the strategies that in their view can be applied or done to help the struggling learners with their homework. Why I say this is because of some of the difficulties that were revealed by the participants which are: house chores, lack of someone to help and the noise that is made by the members of the family as earlier mentioned in this chapter. The nature of the difficulties suggest if the educators and the parents can work towards rectifying these difficulties learners can be able to do their homework.

In this study the learners were able to give suggestions of how they feel when it comes to the question of how they envisaged overcoming the difficulties that they had identified when they were doing their homework. Findings have shown that the learners were able to identify the things that they believe should be done in order for them to do their homework like all the other learners who have done it. In these findings the learners suggested that they could be able to do their homework if they can get help from their educators or someone from home, if they can be given a quiet time and place to do their homework and if their parents can make them do less house chores.

It is possible that there are certain things that we as educators as well as parents and caregivers have to understand when it comes to the issuing and the monitoring of homework. Firstly difficulties on the non-completion of homework show us that we need to give our learners a chance to air their views when it comes to the issuing and monitoring of homework so that they can be able to tell us what they expect from us when it comes to homework. From my own perspective as an educator this can be done so that there would not be any learner or educator who does not know how homework is planned, issued and monitored. Secondly, in my suggestion this has shown me as an educator that when I give my learners homework I should avail myself to my learners so that when they experience problems they should feel free to come to me and ask for help rather than deciding not to do their homework. Decisions by the school that involve homework should be discussed with the learners so that their views can be taken into consideration when it comes to the issuing of homework. This will obviously make it easy for the educators to ask for the reasons if there are some of the learners who have not done their homework. Besides, giving learners homework that they have to start in the classroom means as an educator I have to go around checking if my learners have started their homework as well as check whether are they experiencing any problems in as far as their work so that the learners who are struggling could be given my individual attention.

The other thing that has been revealed through the findings is that whilst we as educators give homework with the hope of reinforcing the work that we have been doing in class, many of our learners do not benefit from homework or from our good intentions of giving homework because there are so many things that interfere with their ability to do it. The main reason for this is that as educators we do not know the difficulties that our learners experience in their homes when they have to do their homework. This obviously shows that as educators or schools we need to give our learners an opportunity where they have to air their views in as far as homework is concerned as earlier mentioned in this study. Looking at some of the findings in Chapter four some of the learners have revealed that for them to do their homework they need assistance from their educators. Take for example Pearl she believes her educators can be of great help when it comes to the solving of problems that she has when it comes to homework. Some of the participants revealed that sometimes they do not understand the work that they had been given as homework and as a result they decide not to do it. This suggest that as educators we have to make sure that all the learners in the class understand what is expected of them when it comes to

the work that they have to do at home. The other factor that was revealed in this study that caused the learners not to finish their homework was that, as educators we need to know that when our learners arrive home they have different things that they have to do before they sit down to do their schoolwork. Furthermore, as educators we need to know as revealed by some of the participants in Chapter four that, when some of the learners come back from school they have to do their house chores like cleaning the house, others have to go and fetch water from the community tap, others have to go and buy food or the things that they are going to use when they are cooking supper whilst others have to cook and at the same time help their siblings with their homework. Obviously this causes these learners to be left with a very short or no time at all to do their schoolwork.

Therefore, if we as educators do not know these difficulties our learners are going to find themselves failing to do their homework whilst we as educators are always going to be left in the dark when it comes to the difficulties that our learners face when it comes to homework. This then means that communication between the educators and the learners is very important. Whilst the open lines of communication between the educators and the learners will help the learners reveal some of the difficulties that they have in their homes when they have to do their homework, the educators will try and come up with the programs that will help these learners do their homework. Obviously when the educators know about the difficulties that their learners face when it comes to homework, both the educators and the learners can work towards achieving the solutions that can be used to help the learners who find it difficult to do their homework.

Another important factor here is that, as educators we need to know the family backgrounds of our learners more especially when we are going to ask them to take their schoolwork home as their homework. Why I say this is because in most cases if not all the time we believe that when we send our learners home with their homework there is someone at home who is going to help them whereas in some families that is not always the case. As educators we have to know that some learners that we teach have parents whilst others do not have them. Other learners get help from their parents with their schoolwork whilst other learners have illiterate parents who cannot read and write whilst the ever changing South African curriculum does not help at all. Telling

parents one thing today and telling them something different tomorrow might confuse them.

5.3.1 Recommendations for the involvement of Parents and Caregivers

This study has revealed that whilst in the literature review the emphasis was on the good relationship between the school and the families, findings of this study has shown that in this school there is no communication between the school and the parents or caregivers of the learners. This is because when I asked all the participants during the interviews whether their parents had spoken to the educators about the difficulties they face when it comes to homework they all said they had not. This then shows that both the school and the parents have not tried to contact or visit each other so that they can help the learners do their homework like making time before they go home to help them with their schoolwork.

One of the things that the participants raised in Chapter four was the lack of assistance that they get from their parents or the other members of the family when they have to do their homework. Besides the lack of assistance they also highlighted the things that their parents or caregivers expect them to do when they come back from school which leave them with no time at all to do their homework. Other than that, they also mentioned that the disturbances that they get from their siblings or the other members of the family make it hard for them to do their homework.

I believe if the parents and the educators can come up with some sort of assistance to help these learners maybe there can be a significant change that can be experienced by the learners, the parents and the educators. Xu (2005) concurs, the availability of someone who can provide homework help is associated with higher homework completion rates and greater enjoyment of the learning. I believe the combination of the educators and the parents or caregivers together with the learners can come up with views that can be beneficial to everyone which may lead to the enjoyment that Xu revealed in his study. According to Epstein and Voorhis (2001) homework may be purposely designed to enable teachers to inform and involve all families in their children's curricula activities. They further argue that teachers may organise procedures and assignments to keep families aware of topics taught in class, how their children are progressing, how to support their children's work and progress, and how to connect with the teachers. This will obviously make the educators and the parents know when to help and how to help and,

should it happen that they don't know what to do they would know who to contact so that the learners can get the necessary assistance they need to complete their homework. However, as educators we have to bear in mind that it is not all the learners that we teach that have stable families that consist of father mother and the siblings. We have to know that some of our learners do not have parents and as a result they are left in the care of their grandparents whilst others are left in the care of their uncles or aunts who do not have sufficient time to look after them. Moreover, we should also know that most of our learners' homes these days are left in the care of their brothers or sisters who are also attending school. This then shows that educators have to make sure that they understand this and identify those learners who are facing these difficulties so that they could give them proper assistance when it comes to homework.

According to Singh et al (2004) research done in many countries has shown the importance of parental involvement. They further state that parental role in education is crucial in ensuring the success of the learners. However, caution should be taken that the views of the learners are taken into consideration when there are issues that involve their wellbeing. I believe this can strengthen the relationship between the learners, the parents or caregivers and the educators. As Hong and Lee (2003) suggest, the degree of match between children's preferred ways of doing homework and parents' perceptions about their children's preferences is positively related to children's attitude towards homework and homework achievement.

Using drawings in this study of involving the learners' views has revealed that besides helping the participants convey in their drawings thoughts and feelings they cannot express in speech as earlier mentioned in Chapter three, drawings can be used for further research to find out the resilience of the learners who are experiencing the difficulties when it comes to homework.

5.3.2 Recommendations for further research

Findings of this study have shown that the drawings by the participants can be used by the various stakeholders like the educators, parents and the University to name a few during exhibitions, meetings, group work or for display purposes when dealing with issues that have to do with the importance of learners' drawings. Parents and the school might do this alone or they might decide to involve local business people who can help with some of the things that can be used to help the learners who have the difficulties that make them not to complete their

homework. The inter-relationship highlighted in Chapter two using Bronfenbrenner and Morris's theoretical framework could help show that whilst negative influences might be experienced by the learners due to their environment, neighborhood and school to name a few positive results might also be achieved when these various stakeholders work together to help children or learners.

Furthermore, this study has revealed that the views of the learners are important if we as educators are to find the reasons behind our learners' failure to do or complete their homework. Warton (2001) revealed in his study on the importance of the learners' views when it comes to homework has shown that the researchers have a tendency of not involving the learners' voice when they are conducting studies on homework. Warton (2001) claims there have been little formal investigation of views of the third group of participants, namely the students. Findings of this study has shown that the involvement of a small number of learners in a study can sometimes lead to a bigger study involving a number of schools that can end up being helpful to a number of people or institutions. Therefore, this small scale study has shown that if the learners can be involved when the educators are planning their homework they can contribute positively on the issuing writing and the monitoring of homework.

Moreover, through this small scale study on homework there are a number of studies that can be conducted. This study did not involve the views of the parents but a further perspective on the homework difficulties would have been very interesting should one wish to find out what the parents would have said about their children and schoolwork. Knowing the learners from the experience that I have as an educator I don't think that most of the parents or caregivers would have agreed with what their children have said about them during the interviews. Therefore, I believe the study on the views of the parents in the South African context would have given the researcher a clear overall indication of the difficulties that are experienced by our learners when they have to do English homework. I would like to recommend that anyone conducting a South African study on the learners' views on homework also include the views of the parents so that we can understand the views and the feelings of the South African parents when it comes to their children and homework. This hopefully could reveal whether the views given by the parents are the same as the views that are given by the participants in connection with homework. The reason why I am saying this is because whilst most of the participants have revealed during the

study that they don't get assistance from their parents or caregivers, previous studies on homework that have been conducted in other countries show that most of the parents want to be involved in their children's schooling. As Hoover-Dempsey et al (2001) in Chapter two suggested that parents involve themselves in student homework because they believe that they should be involved believe that their involvement will make a positive difference, and perceive that their children or children's teachers want their involvement.

Further research aimed at the educators of these learners can also play a large role in finding out where the problems lie when it comes to homework. Some of the participants revealed during the interviews that they don't have a homework timetable in their school. This therefore suggests that according to the participants; sometimes their educators give them too much homework whilst sometimes they go home without homework at all. A study on the educators about homework could reveal whether they have a homework policy that they follow when issuing homework as suggested in Chapter two. Such a study on the educators could further verify whether the educators have programs that are in place to help the learners who are struggling when it comes to homework.

One of the common responses among the participants was that the comprehension test was not that difficult and as a result they believed that if it was not for the various difficulties they had experienced at home they would have finished their homework. This brings me to another type of study that could be further explored which is based on resilience. A study on resilience would have shown how these learners could have done their homework regardless of all the difficulties that they have highlighted in this study. Theron and Donald (2012) interpret resilience as an ecological phenomenon that facilitates emphasis on the cultural variability of what it means to grow up positively in contexts of risks, and how this might be achieved. A study on resilience would have shown how the participants have made sure that regardless of all the things that they have to do when they arrive home they end up doing and finishing their homework. A study on resilience would have further shown us how the participants plan and do their work after spending their time doing house chores and looking after the siblings. Besides, this study could have shown us how the participants juggle their time between the things that they have to do at home and the schoolwork that they have to do as their homework. As Theron (2012) put it, even in township families where parents are present, many young people are overburdened with

household tasks, including cooking, cleaning, running errands and child care. A study on resilience would have shown how these learners would have done all the tasks they are supposed to do at home and at the same time find time to do their homework. In a study conducted by Malindi and Theron (2011) on street children they explain how the street children survive on the streets against all the dangers and hardships that they come across when they decide to live in the streets. This obviously makes them stand out because when they are on the street they have to look after each other so that they could survive. Likewise, participants of this study together with all the other learners who did not find time to write their homework should try and find time to do their homework regardless of the hardships they experience. This I believe can also be used by other schools that are experiencing the very same problems of the learners who do not do their homework. Resilience can be seen or observed when these learners can make sure that they write their homework before they go home because they know that at home they won't find time to do their schoolwork.

Besides the study on resilience I would have liked to find out the views of the learners on what they feel they could have done on their own rather than expecting other people to provide solutions for them. The reason why I say this is because throughout the interviews there was not even a single participant who revealed that he or she could come up with some strategies that he or she could use to overcome the difficulties of not finishing homework. All the participants that I interviewed expected people like the principal, their educators and their parents to assist them in one way or another so that they could be able to overcome the difficulties of not finishing their homework. There is not even a single participant who suggested that since the members of the family disturbed him/her when he/she was doing his/her homework, he/she would write his/her homework during break or immediately after school. Not even a single participant said he/she would go to those learners who always complete their homework to ask for assistance. Therefore I would have been very happy if I would have found responses that are showing the preparedness of the participants in finding their own solutions rather than expecting to get help from someone else.

A study on resilience is because I would like to see our learners not depending entirely on their parents and educators when it comes to schoolwork but I want to see them working very hard against all the obstacles or difficulties to get their schoolwork done. There should not be learners

who are not going to do their homework because of the house chores or because of the noise caused by the siblings. Learners should create their own space and time together with relevant people like their peers from their school or neighborhood who are going to see to it that they help them write and finish their English homework. They can form groups consisting of the learners who always finish their homework and find time before or after school to do their homework. This could obviously help these learners finish their schoolwork or homework in time. In a study conducted by Malindi and Theron (2010) they reported that resilient street youth approached social workers, adults and shelters, and other street youth for food, clothing, support and guidance and their actions were reciprocated by these people. Theron et al (2011) filmed a male participant walking to his cousin's house in a bid to get food and advice and his cousin responded positively. Theron et al (2011) also reported about the incidents of this male participant's peers, teachers and neighbors becoming aware of his hunger and need and supporting him. The above initiative displayed by this participant shows that the positive extra mile that he walked in order to get what he wanted helped him to get what he wanted eventually. Having said that, I believe there wouldn't have been anything wrong if the participants of this study would have shown or indicated that they have done their homework because of the assistance that they have received from the neighbors, friends or peers from other schools. This would have been in line with the Bronfenbrenner and Morris's theory in Chapter two which highlights the influence which is as a result of the learner's surroundings. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's theory in Chapter two reveals that the interconnection between the learner, the family, neighborhood and the learner's peers can affect the learner positively or negatively as I have earlier mentioned in Chapter two. The learner can be affected positively when he/she is able to get help from his peers or other people from the neighborhood whereas he/she can be affected negatively when there are things that are causing him not to do his homework from the neighborhood.

On the question of the reasons that caused the participants not to complete their English homework the participants revealed the lack of space to write homework, lack of someone to help, house chores lack of English proficiency and the things that disturbed them when they were doing their homework like television and the noise that was made by the members of the family. Looking at these reasons as an English educator one cannot help but notice that the gap that is between the school and the home needs to be reduced to a minimum. Closing the gap could help

bring the school, the parents and the learners together. Difficulties or challenges that our learners experience should it be at home or at school could be communicated and positive assistance given should it be to the learners or to the parents or to both the learners and the parents. The fact that the participants were able to state how they envisage overcoming the difficulties makes our tasks as educators and parents a bit easy. Why I say our tasks would be a bit easy is because as parents and educators we would know what type of assistance is needed to help our learners do their English homework or any other homework that is given to the learners. Whatever the parents fail to provide for their children the school should come in handy and try to solve that problem as some of the participants suggested on the question of how they envisage overcoming the difficulties. Suggestions like the building of the library where learners can do their homework before going home can be attended to by the school. Moreover, educators can inform parents to make sure that they set aside time for their children to do their schoolwork before doing house chores. Failing which parents can divide the house chores making sure that there are those house chores that are going to be done before and after homework so that their children can be able to do their homework and finish it early. For those who are struggling with English as a language various methods could be used or applied to help these learners understand their work which will involve a lot of remedial work to assist the learners. Extra English classes can be introduced to help as well as assistance from other learners who are not struggling to help those who are experiencing difficulties with their homework. As an educator I assume this can have positive contributions to those learners who are struggling when it comes to homework.

Looking at the method that I used for this study I can say it is suitable even though in Chapter 3 I had indicated that given an opportunity to re do it I can involve another group of participants like the learners who had finished their homework who also come from similar backgrounds as the participants who had been used in this study as well as their parents. But I need to highlight that I am happy about what transpired in this study because it gives educators

like me a direction that I could pursue in trying to help my learners who are struggling with my homework. Furthermore, this study has revealed to me the importance of involving my learners on the decisions that involve them rather than jumping to my own conclusions. This study has shown me that the learners' views can give us as educators something to work on rather than saying they are lazy to do their schoolwork. Therefore, findings of this study have revealed the

importance of the learners' voice in identifying their difficulties or challenges as well as the voice on how they believe they themselves can solve those difficulties. This study has clearly shown how important are the learners' contributions when it comes to their schoolwork. This means that as educators we have to make show that we try by all means to bring closer all the stakeholders like the parents and the caregivers to make sure that they offer the necessary assistance so that the learners can be able to concentrate on doing their schoolwork.

Finally, I believe all schools should issue homework, because, besides the notion that it reinforce work that has been done at school it also helps the learners to learn to work independently in preparation for tertiary education where they are expected to do lots of work in a limited time or over a short period of time.

5.4 Conclusion

I believe this study has revealed that a qualitative study of even a small group of learners' perspectives on homework, revealed through the drawings and subsequent interviews the difficulties that the learners face when they have to do their homework as well as how they envisage overcoming those difficulties. Learners in this study were able to reveal some of the difficulties that they face when they are writing homework like the house chores, lack of someone to help and lack of space to name a few and they have also revealed how they suggest these difficulties could be overcome. Its findings suggest that when their perspectives are evident, educators, parents and even learners have a base from which to work towards addressing the difficulties homework poses. Clearly the learners' points of view suggest that instead of assuming the difficulties that our learners are facing when it comes to homework we should ask them to tell us their problems or difficulties and then also involve them, educators and parents in solving them.

APPENDIX A- LETTER TO THE WARD MANAGER

The Ward Manager

Mr Shezi

University of KwaZulu Natal

Faculty of Education

12 July 2012

Dear Sir

Re: PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN DOE SCHOOL

I wish to request permission to undertake my project ‘challenges to completing English homework’ to your school. The project is based on the module that I am currently doing at the University of KwaZulu Natal Edgewood Campus at Masters level. In this project I am trying to identify the challenges that the learners experience when doing English homework and at the same time try and come up with solutions to help them. This would be done by various methodologies that would be aimed at some of the learners at your school.

The project will run from July to November and will entail contact sessions between myself and each of the participating learners. Permission will also be gained from the principal and informed consent will be obtained from the participating learners. The venue for the contact sessions will be at Nonopha Combined School and the meetings will take place thirty minutes after school. At the end of the project I’ll provide feedback to the school as well as to the Department of Education and also ascertain in what ways I as a researcher can further assist the school in the community.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured as no names and photographs of persons will be revealed, unless negotiated with them. The data from the interviews will be securely stored at the University and will be destroyed after five years.

I would appreciate your permission to undertake this research at Nonopha Combined as I believe the participatory nature could engender a sense of urgency in the learners and their community.

APPENDIX B-LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

THE PRINCIPAL

NONOPHA COMBINED SCHOOL

12 JULY 2012

RE: PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

DEAR SIR

I request permission to bring an aspect of my project 'Challenges to completing English homework' to your school. I have applied to the Department of Education for overall permission to run this project. The aim of the project is to identify the challenges that the learners face when doing English homework and at the same time try to come up with solutions to help them. This would be done by various methodologies that would be aimed at some of the learners at your school.

The participation of the learners will be voluntary and they will be allowed to withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to them. Informed consent will be obtained from the participating learners. The venue for the contact sessions will be your school and each meeting will continue for thirty minutes after school. At the end of the project I will provide feedback to the school as well as the Department of Education and also ascertain in what ways I as the researcher can further assist the school in the community.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured as no names or photographs of persons will be revealed, unless negotiated with them. The data for the interviews will be securely stored at the University of KwaZulu Natal and will be destroyed after five years.

I would appreciate your permission to undertake this research, as I believe the participatory nature could engender a sense of agency in the learners and their community.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Zondo (Project Leader) 083 5109 734 Sign:

Dr Stuart (Supervisor) 031 260 3486

APPENDIX C1- INCWADI YOKUCELA UKWENZA UCWANINGO

Mfundi

Ngicela ukuthi ube yingxenye yocwaningo olunesihloko esithi 'Izingqinamba ezenza umfundi angawuqedi umsebenzi wesingisi okumele awenze ekhaya'. Kulolucwaningo kunezindlela ezahlukene engizozisebenzisa ukuze ukwazi ukuthi uqhamuke nemicabango yakho ezoba wusizo kulolucwaningo.

Ukuzibandakanya kwakho kulolucwaningo aluyona impoqo lokho okusho ukuthi ungayeka noma inini uma ngabe uzwa ukuthi awusafisi ukuqhubeka nocwaningo lokho okungeke kukudalele amazinyo abushalelezi. Amagama akho ngeke aze asetshenziswe kulolucwaningo. Into engizocela ukuyisebenzisa engeke ize ikuveze wena imidwebo ozoyenza kulolucwaningo engingayisebenzisa uma ngikhuluma ngocwaningo noma ngisebenzisa la sifunda khona ngocwaningo lwami. Lolucwaningo luzokwenzeka ngezinsuku esizihlelile luzothatha isikhathi esiyimizuzu engamashumi amathathu emva kokuphuma kwesikole.

Ulwazi olutholakele kulolucwaningo luzohlala iminyaka emihlanu e Univesithi yaKwaZulu Natali bese kuthi emva kwalokho bese luyashabalaliswa. Uma uzimisele ukuba ingenye yalolucwaningo ngicela ugcalise ngezansi.

Mr J.T. Zondo (Umcwaningi) 083 510 9734

Dr Stuart (Umsizi wami)

ISIBOPHEZELO

Mina..... (igama eligcwele nesibongo) ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngiyawaqonda amagama abhalwe kulencwadi futhi ngiyavuma ukuthi ngizoba ingxenye yalolucwaningo. Ngiyavuma futhi nokuthi imidwebo ingakwazi ukuthi isetshenziswe umcwaningi ngaphandle kokuveza igama lami.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngikhululekile ukuthi ngingayeka noma inini kulolucwaningo uma ngingasafuni.

.....
Sayina

.....
Usuku

APPENDIX C2- DIRECT TRANSLATION OF CONSENT LETTER TO THE LEARNER IN ISIZULU

Dear Learner

I wish to invite you to participate in my project ‘challenges to completing English homework’. In this project I am going to try out various participatory methodologies that will allow you to come up with your own ideas on how to overcome the challenges of not writing English home work.

Your participation is voluntary and you are allowed to withdraw at any time, without any disadvantage to you, if you do not wish to participate. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured as no real names will be used in this study. The only thing that I would like to use that won’t reveal you are the drawings that I’ll use when I am presenting my study at the University. This research project is going to take place thirty minutes after school on the said dates.

The data collected during this project will be securely stored at the University of KwaZulu Natal and will be destroyed after five years. If you would like to be part of this study please fill in the declaration below.

Kindly Yours

Mr J.T. Zondo (Project Leader) 083 510 9734 Sign

Dr Stuart (Supervisor) 031 260 3486

DECLARATION

I (full name and surname) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project should the need arise. I also agree that my drawings can be used by the researcher without revealing my name. I know that I am free to withdraw from this study any time.

Signature of the participant.....

Date.....

APPENDIX D 1- INFORMED CONSENT LEATTER TO THE PARENT IN ISIZULU

Mzali

Ngicela ungivumele ukuthi ngisebenze nengane yakho ocwaningweni oluqondene nokubheka izingqinamba izingane ezihlangabezana nazo uma zenza ‘umsebenzi wesingisi eziwunikwe esikoleni ukuthi ziwenze ekhaya’. Lolu wucwaningo engizobe ngisebenzisa izinhlobonhlobo zezindlela ezidinga umntwana aveze izimvo zakhe kulona. Inhloso yalolucwaningo ukuthola izindlela abantwana abacabanga ngazo ezingasiza ekuthenini kutholakale izixazululo zalenkinga ebhekene nabantwana.

Ukubandakanywa komntwana wakho kulolucwaningo akuyona impoqo uma ethanda noma inini angayeka ukuba ingxenye yocwaningo kanthi lokho ngeke kuze kumenzele amazinyo abushelelezi. Ucwanoingo luzobe lwenziwa esikoleni afunda kusona imizuzu engamashumi amathathu emva kokuphuma kwesikole. Uma seluqediwe ucwaningo isikole kanjalo nomnyango wezemfundo uzokwazi ukuthi iziphumo zitheni njengoba lolucwaningo lizoba wusizo nasemphakathini.

Amagama angempela abantwana ngeke aze avezwe ukuvikela isithunzi sabo, ngaphandle kwemidwebo eyosetshenziswa ngokuvumelana nabo abantwana. Ulwazi oluzotholakala kulolucwaningo luzogcinwa enyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natali bese luyamoshwa emva kweminyaka emihlanu. Ngiyathemba uzongivumela ngisebenzise ingane yakho kulolucwaningo ngoba luzoba wusizo ezinganeni nasemphakathini.

Ozithobayo

Mr J.T. Zondo (Owenza ucwaningo) 083 519 9734 Sayina.....

Dr Stuart (Umsizi wami)

**APPENDIX D 2 - DIRECT TRANSLATION OF INFORMED CONSENT LETTER
SUBMITTED TO THE PARENT IN ISIZULU**

INFORMED CONSENT

DEAR PARENT

I request permission to work with your child in my project ‘Difficulties to completing English homework’. This is a project I am exploring and would be trying various participatory methods that give learners an opportunity to produce their own ideas. The aim of the project is to identify the perceptions of learners on the challenges of writing an English homework and at the same time try and come up with solutions on how to write it. This would be done by various methodologies that would be aimed at your child and his or her peers.

The participation of the learners is voluntary and they are allowed to withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to them. The venue for the contact sessions will be at school and each meeting will continue for approximately thirty minutes after school. At the end of the project I will provide feedback to the school as well as the Department of Education and also ascertain in what ways I as the researcher can further assist the school in the community.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured as no names or photographs of persons will be revealed, unless negotiated with them. The data for the interviews will be securely stored at the University of KwaZulu Natal and destroyed after five years.

I would appreciate your permission to use your child in this research as I believe the participatory nature could engender a sense of urgency in the learners and their community.

Kindly Yours

Mr J.T. Zondo (Project Leader) 083 510 9734 Sign:.....

Dr Stuart (Supervisor)

APPENDIX-E1 INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR USING DRAWINGS IN ISIZULU

Mina.....(igama eliphelele) ngiyazi ukuthi ngizocelwa ukuthi ngidwebe imidwebo. Umcwaningi ngiyamnika igunya lokuthi imidwebo yami ayisebenzise emphakathini. Ngiyamnika futhi igunya lokuthi imidwebo yami ayisebenzise ngaphandle kokungiveza kwizinkomfa kanjalo nasemibhalweni yocwaningo noma ophenyweni locwaningo.

NO.....

YES.....

SAYINA

USUKU.....

APPENDIX E2- CONSENT FORM FOR USING DRAWINGS

I (full name of the participant) am aware that I will be asked to make a drawing. I grant permission for the researcher to keep my drawing and to use my drawing publicly. I grant permission that my drawing can be shown anonymously in conference presentations, or reproduced in academic writings or included in visual displays.

NO....

YES....

.....

.....

Signature of the participant

Date

APPENDIX F 1- SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS IN ISIZULU

1. Dweba indawo la ujwayele ukwenzela khona umsebenzi wasekhaya ikhombise izinto ezikuphazamisayo uma wenza umsebenzi wakho.
2. Sebenzisa umdwebo ungitshela izinto eziyizingqinamba ezikuphazamisayo ekwenzeni umsebenzi wakho ekhaya. Kungaba ila esikoleni noma eduze kwasekhaya.
3. Ubunjani umsebenzi wakho wasekhay wesingisi obuunikwe uthisha futhi uwenze kanjani?
4. Ukhona okusizile ekhaya ukwenza umsebenzi wesikole ekhaya?
5. Dweba imidwebo ekhombisa izindlela ongakwazi ngazo ukuthi ungabe usaba nenkinga yokuthi uqede umsebenzi owunikwe eskoleni ukuthi uwenze ekhaya.
6. Chaza usebenzisa lemidwebo ukuthi uzibona uzilungisa kanjani lezinkinga zakho zokungawuqedi umsebenzi okuthiwe uwenze ekhaya.
7. Uma ucabanga lezizingqinamba ungakwazi ukuthi uzilungise wena noma udinga usizo? Uma kuwukuthi udinga usizo ubani ocabanga ukuthi angakusiza?

APPENDIX F 2-DIRECT TRANSLATION OF THE QUESTIONS IN ISIZULU

QUESTIONS FOR MY STUDY

1. Draw the space in which you usually do your homework and the things that you find difficult to the completion of your homework?
2. Using the drawing, tell me the difficulties that you experienced when you were doing your homework?
3. How was your homework and how did you tackle it?
4. Tell me is there anyone who helped you with homework at home and was this helpful to you?
5. Draw a picture showing how you see yourself overcome the difficulties that made you not to finish your homework.
6. Explain using the drawings how you see yourself overcoming the difficulties of not finishing your homework.
7. Do you think you can overcome these difficulties on your own or you will need help and, what type of help do you need?