

**HOME SCHOOLING IN SOUTH AFRICA AS AN
ALTERNATIVE TO
INSTITUTIONALIZED EDUCATION**

by

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation involves an investigation into home schooling in South Africa as an alternative to institutionalised schooling. This is done by means of qualitative research techniques, whereby an ethnographic study of a single home-schooling family takes place. This study occurs against the background established by a comprehensive literature review of the context, nature, scope and current issues of the home-schooling movement, in selected international countries as well as in South Africa. The study investigates the modus operandi of a home school in an attempt to explore actual practice and to uncover primary data. Limited recommendations for home schooling on the basis of the literature study and the specific qualitative inquiry are made.

KEY TERMS

Home schooling

Home education

Ethnographic inquiry

South African home-schooling movement

Social trend in education

Curricular approaches

Reasons for home schooling

Advantages and disadvantages

Socialization

Stress and burnout

DECLARATION

I declare that *Home schooling as an alternative to institutionalized education* (title of my dissertation) is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS

1.1 *Introduction*

Home schools have made their appearance in several countries, including South Africa. The home-schooling movement is becoming a consequential part of the education system in South Africa and thus warrants further investigation. For the purposes of this study, home-schooling refers to teaching provided in the home by one or more parents of the children (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 1; Wynn 1985: 7). Often co-operative learning experiences will be provided or extra classes arranged with a teacher who can offer specialised knowledge (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 1; Lines 2000: 79).

1.1.1 *Background to the home-schooling movement in general*

The home-schooling movement is relatively widespread in countries such as the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia and Britain. However, in these countries, the home-schooling movement remains somewhat controversial. In certain states in the USA, families have been engaged in court battles wherein they declare that it is their constitutional right to educate their own children (White 1995: 36). Lines (2000: 74) states: "The rise of homeschooling [sic] is one of the most significant social trends of the past half century." Indeed, the home-schooling movement abroad has seen the emergence of an immense industry, offering support systems and resources to parents choosing to home school their children (White 1995: 36; Lines 2000: 80).

It would be of benefit to establish whether the home-schooling movement in South Africa has been influenced by the movement abroad, as well as to determine which aspects are peculiar to the South African home-schooling movement.

1.1.2 *The home-schooling movement in South Africa*

Home schooling is considered in section 51 of The South African Schools Act (RSA 1996: 27). The aforementioned Act states that "A parent may apply to the Head of Department for the registration of a learner to receive education at the learner's home." It is stated that a learner may be registered for education at home if the provincial Head of the Education Department is satisfied that registration will be in the child's best interest, that the minimum requirements of the curriculum in public schools will be met and that the standard of the home education will at least match that of public schools. Home schooling is thus acknowledged as a legitimate schooling option in South Africa. However, the Head of the Education Department is given discretionary jurisdiction thereof.

Home schooling has enjoyed a reasonable amount of exposure through the popular press in recent years: for example, Wayman 1997; Behr 1997; *Die Burger*, 13 February 1998; *Rapport*, 15 March 1998; *Sunday Times*, 2 June 2000.) Behr (1997: 53) states that fear of prosecution caused many home schoolers to operate clandestinely at first, but, in response to the Government's enlightened human rights policies, several home schools have now come to the fore. Durham (1996: 77) asserts that although the South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996) is positive in the sense that it acknowledges home schooling, it is still restrictive in that excessive powers of jurisdiction are given to the provincial authorities.

Durham (1996: 77) estimates that in 1996 approximately 1 300 South African children were being taught at home. However, she draws attention to the possibility of a large "underground" component, owing to the fear of parents operating unregistered home schools that they would be exposed to prosecution or interference by authorities. Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 41) also indicate the presence of a large "underground" component. They cite surveys carried out in the Gauteng region, where application for registration was implemented by no more than three percent of home-schooling families. These families appeared to be apprehensive about liabilities intrinsic to registration (Durham 1996: 77).

The National Coalition of Home Schoolers, the largest South African home-schooling association, estimated that in 1997 there were approximately 2 000 children being home schooled in South Africa and that this represented a vast increase in numbers compared with those of previous years (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum, 1997a: 1).

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 1), however, estimated the figure to be approximately 2 400 home schoolers in 1997. Their figures were based on surveys of curriculum suppliers nationally and home schoolers in the Pretoria area. It is worth noting that not all home schoolers make use of curriculum suppliers and that on occasion more than one family may make use of one subscription. (Issues regarding the legalities of home schooling are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.)

In 2001, the Eastern Cape Home Schooling Association (ECHSA) estimated that there were in excess of 10 000 home learners in South Africa, a considerable increase over the numbers quoted for 1997 (<http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/faq.htm>). Thus, it may be said that home schooling is becoming an increasingly acceptable education alternative in this country.

Several home-schooling associations have been formed in South Africa: for example, in Gauteng, Kwazulu/Natal and Western Cape. In addition to these provincial associations, the National Coalition of Home Schoolers and a Legal Defence Fund for Home Education, entitled the Pestalozzi Trust, have been established (<http://www.grobler.co.za/hs/index.htm>).

Behr (1997: 53) comments that the number of curricula providers has increased in recent years. Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 4) refer to the use of "ready-made" curricula or "programmes" as the *Curricular Approach* and describe it as just one of the many approaches available to home schoolers (cf 2.8 and 2.11.5). ECHSA calls this the *Conventional Text Book Approach* and refers to several other recognised approaches: *The Classical Approach*; *The Unschooling Approach*; *The Unit Study Approach*; *The Charlotte Mason Approach*; *The Delayed Academics Approach*; *The Principles Approach*; *The Accelerated Education Approach*; *The Montessori Approach*; *The Eclectic Approach*; and *Curriculum 2005* (<http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/method.htm>).

Thus, there are a number of different approaches to home schooling available in South Africa. The Internet offers valuable information on almost all the existing approaches.

Home schooling has received relatively little attention in academic circles (Louw 1992: 355). In 1992, Louw (1992: 355) pointed out that home schooling seemed to be of far more interest to the general public than to educationalists and other researchers. Ten years later, a survey of literature specifically about home schooling in South Africa, indicates that very little has been researched and written on the subject.

1.1.3 *Reasons for home schooling*

The decision by parents to home school is based on several factors. Some parents home school because they have a child who is unwell or has specific learning difficulties. Dembitzer (1990: 40) states that, traditionally, parents have chosen to home school because they have little or no access to conventional education. In areas such as the Australian outback, parents home school until their children are old enough to attend boarding school or travel the considerable distances to their closest school (White 1995: 37).

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 2) also refer to pedagogic reasons, social reasons and other fundamental rights. Pedagogic reasons are where a family feels that it is able to provide a superior calibre of education to that offered by traditional schools, either academically or in terms of providing an environment which offers more advantageous learning conditions. Social reasons are those where parents wish to protect their children from negative peer pressure and social influences or simply wish to strengthen the family bond.

Other fundamental rights involve "the physical safety, human dignity or psychological integrity of children who have been in schools where sexual harassment, physical attacks or severe denigration of the child's personality have occurred" (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 2) (<http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/faq.htm>).

Lines (2000: 79) parcels reasons for home schooling largely into two major categories: religious and progressive. Nevertheless, Lines (2000: 79) also states that many families have indicated a change in attitude towards home schooling because of dissatisfaction with the standard of education offered by conventional schools.

1.1.4 Challenges that face conventional education

Van Galen (1991: 4) posits that challenges facing public education are brought to light by the home-schooling movement and parents' decisions to home school. Thus, the home-schooling movement can be viewed in part as a reflection of problems perceived and encountered within institutionalised education.

Problems faced in South African public schools are of a specific nature. Durham (1996: 76), examining traditional schools, suggests the following reasons for parents to choose alternate schooling models:

- a large teacher-pupil ratio;
- a lack of classroom discipline;
- violence and gangsterism;
- the declining standards of education; and
- the increasing costs of schooling.

Other reasons could include the loss of experienced teachers who have taken early retirement and retirement packages; problems experienced by groups who are unable to cope with multiculturalism in the schools; high matriculation failure rates; and people who home school for religious reasons. The Home Schooling Legal Defence Association (HSLDA), in a special feature on South Africa, writes: "And the Government is swiftly moving to secularise the public schools. As a result, more and more families are turning to home schooling" (<http://www.hslda.org/courtreport>).

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 2) also cite reasons such as the importance of instruction being offered in the mother-tongue and the dangers of women and children travelling through areas which are crime-ridden and dangerous, as being peculiar to the South African situation.

Wynn (1985: 8) describes his study as significant, in terms of the implications it has for public school educators, in that home schooling can be viewed as a criticism of public education. A study of the home-schooling movement in South Africa would, in this sense, highlight problems or perceptions of challenging areas within the South African education system.

Formal school attendance in South Africa was mandatory until 1996 when the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) was passed. Section 51 of this Act allowed for provisional registration of learners in home schools with the Education Department. The Act came into effect in January 1997. However, the first draft containing procedures for registration was only published provisionally in July 1998. The second draft was published on 9 April, 1999. The final Policy for the Registration of Learners for Home Education was passed on 23 November, 1999. This document contained a "Pro Forma Application for the Registration of a Learner for Home Education".

The passing of these policies saw the development of conflict between the home-schooling fraternity and the authorities. The main areas of contention were the perception held by the home-schooling associations that the authorities were not involved in adequate consultation with relevant stakeholders; nor did they have adequate knowledge of home schooling to enable them to pass acceptable legislation.

Early in 2000, there were prosecutions of families who violated the law (*Sunday Times*: 6 February 2000 in <http://www.suntimes.co.za/2000/02/06/news/gauteng>). It was after the publication of the Draft Revised National Curriculum on 30 July 2001 that the animosity escalated into a confrontation between the home-schooling associations and Professor Kader Asmal (Minister of Education) and his associates.

It culminated in a strongly-worded attack on the Pestalozzi Trust (a home-schooling legal defence organisation - cf. 2.11) by Professor Asmal and his associate, Professor Linda Chisholm, and an equally strongly-worded response from the Trust.

The issue of contention centred on the Government's policy regarding religious education, wherein learners were required to obtain an understanding of diverse religions and worldviews (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>). The argument deteriorated into an abusive situation where the parties were merely insulting each other.

In an attack on the concept of home schooling, Professor Asmal stated: "Home Schoolers should not attempt to impose their loony, paranoid and perverse ideas on the nation" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>).

The Pestalozzi Trust, in its turn, stated: "As they flounder in the numerous half truths, untruths, errors and outright distortions in their statement, one is tempted to shake one's head. It is sad that this spectacular ignorance and these silly propaganda antics should be exhibited by the two most influential policy makers on education in the country" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Response%20to%20Asmal.htm>). Further details of the South African home-schooling situation are outlined in Chapter Two.

1.1.5 Summary

In the light of the above, it is evident that a study of the present day home school is necessary. It is imperative to acknowledge the existence of home schools as a part of the education system in South Africa. An exploratory inquiry into their nature will enable one to gain a deeper understanding of the way in which this aspect of the educational sphere functions. Although home schooling is a legal option in South Africa, relations between the home-schooling associations and the education authorities have deteriorated. Thus, there are several issues that are peculiar to the home-schooling situation in South Africa.

1.2 *Problem formulation*

Within the context of home schooling in general, this study will investigate home schooling in South Africa as an alternative to institutionalised schooling. Several questions generated from the problem statement will be addressed.

- What is encompassed by the nature, scope and organisation of the home schooling movement internationally, as well as in South Africa? What are the legal implications of home schooling?
- How does a home school operate? What are the experiences of learners and parents in a home school? What are the advantages and disadvantages of home schooling?
- What recommendations for home schooling can be made?

1.3 *Aims of the study*

The study is an exploratory one that has three main aims:

- to undertake a literature study of the home-schooling movement abroad and in South Africa;
- to conduct an ethnographical study of a selected home school in order to explore actual practice and uncover primary data; and
- to make limited recommendations for home schooling on the basis of the literature review and qualitative inquiry.

1.4 *Research methodology*

A detailed explanation of the methodology and research design is furnished in Chapter Three. However, a basic overview is given here.

The initial research for the study involves a comprehensive literature study in order to gain a broad overview of the field of research. The literature study endeavours to reveal the development, nature and scope of the home-schooling movement internationally in order to understand the position of the South African movement therein.

The sources include: books, journal articles, magazine articles, newspaper articles, relevant policy documents and legislation, and the Internet.

A literature study on the circumstances encompassing South African home schooling has principally revolved around information gleaned from the Internet (Home-schooling Association web sites), as relatively little has been written on the subject.

In addition, a qualitative inquiry was conducted which involved an ethnography of a purposefully selected home school, with a view to the study of actual practice within a home school and the collection of primary data. The study progresses via an ethnography of a single home-schooling family.

The researcher attempts to use the techniques of participant observation to study a single home school over an extended period of time. The techniques of data collection include participant observation, whereby the field of study is entered into with general research questions in mind, but without specific hypotheses and preconceptions. The researcher allows themes to emerge through the general research questions before following a specific line of inquiry (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 48). Other techniques include in-depth interviewing and the use of field notes. Data analysis is done by means of a precise study of the field notes made whilst interviewing and observation were in progress. The research is intended to be exploratory and descriptive in nature, and no endeavour is made to establish cause and effect under experimental conditions or to predict behaviour.

1.5 *Limitations of the study*

The study is limited in so far as it undertakes the observation of a single home-school. Thus, the findings cannot be generalised. However, the intention is not to establish findings of a generalised nature.

1.6 *Definitions of concepts and terms*

- ***Home schooling***

The term *home schooling* refers to home schooling in the contemporary sense. Prior to the evolution of systems of public education, parents had to rely exclusively on schooling at home for the education of their children. This study refers to a movement which is a relatively recent trend wherein parents choose not to allow their children to participate within the formal-education system.

For the purposes of this study, the concept *home school* refers to a situation where at least one parent in a family accepts full responsibility for the formal education of the children (Louw 1992: 356; Durham 1996: 76). The person responsible for educating the children receives no financial compensation from the state (Louw 1992: 356). The children do not attend a public or private school at all (Louw 1992: 356). A home school may serve to educate the children of more than one family. However, in order to qualify as such, it should not have more than ten children in attendance (Louw 1992: 356). The home school may make use of tutors and or outside assistance, such as the sharing of resources with other home schoolers (Durham 1996: 77). Durham (1996: 77) states that since parents are usually anxious with regard to academic standards, they consult regularly with teachers and other professionals concerning the progress of their children. The home school does, however, strive to maintain a high degree of autonomy.

- ***Home education***

Home education is the term used by the South African education authorities in reference to:

- “a. a programme of education that a parent (1) of a learner(s) may provide to educate his/her own child at their own home. In addition the parent may, if necessary, enlist the specific services of a tutor for specific areas of the curriculum; or
- b. a legal, independent form of education, alternative to attendance at a public or an independent school.”

(Policy for the registration of learners for home education –

23 November 1999: <http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/law.htm>).

1.7 *Programme of study*

- *Chapter 1* serves as an introduction to the study and includes problem formulation, aims and the methodology of the study.
- *Chapter 2* deals with a general description and complete overview of home schooling in several selected countries, as well as in South Africa.
- *Chapter 3* discusses the methodology and qualitative research techniques and details the research design.
- *Chapter 4* presents the findings and an analysis of the research.
- *Chapter 5* provides a summary and discusses the limitations of the study, as well as providing recommendations for future research.

1.8 *Conclusion*

The home-school movement is experiencing a period of rapid growth in South Africa and abroad. Although home schooling has enjoyed a fair amount of exposure by the South African press recently, relatively little academic research has been undertaken on this subject in South Africa. It would prove useful to establish the extent to which the emergence of the home school could be viewed as a reflection of the formal education system. There is a need to determine the status of the home-schooling movement in South Africa within the broader social context and within the formal education system.

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CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HOME SCHOOLING MOVEMENT WITH REFERENCE TO SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 *Introduction*

As is indicated in Chapter One, the incidence of home schooling is on the increase globally. Lines (2000: 74) asserts: "The rise of home schooling is one of the most significant social trends of the past half-century." Van Galen and Pitman (1991: 1) state that fairly little research has been done on the area of home schooling. However, families who do home school have received a substantial amount of attention. The South African home-schooling movement is a relatively young one and has, to some extent, been built on the groundwork established internationally. What follows immediately is a historical overview of the home-schooling movement, as well as an exposition of fields of research with regard to home schooling.

A great proportion of the literature reports on research which indicates similarities amongst home-schooling families (Hood 1990: 26). Such literature focuses on aspects such as demographic characteristics, psychographic characteristics (political and religious worldview), operational characteristics or didactic approach, academic achievement, and social adaptation. This chapter will outline some of the above-mentioned trends.

Studies, such as those of Hood (1990); Mayberry, Knowles, Ray and Marlow (1995); and Van Galen and Pitman (1991), explore social and philosophical aspects of home schoolers. This chapter will give details of some of the philosophical and social aspects of home schooling.

In comparison to the international field, relatively little has been written on the subject in South Africa. This chapter will, however, give an overview of home schooling as it has taken place within the South African context. A discussion of home schooling and Outcomes Based Education will be included, as this is the policy with regard to curriculum reform in South Africa.

2.2 *Historical background*

“What is often forgotten is that in the broad sweep of time, universal, compulsory and comprehensive schooling is a relatively new invention” (Lines 2000: 76). Schooling as a full-time activity undertaken by professionals is a recent phenomenon (Lines 2000: 77). However, within the space of a very short time, it has become accepted as the norm (Lines 2000: 76).

Traditionally, the education of a child was the responsibility of the parents and took place in the home. Hood (1990: 1) states that, historically, the education of the masses was undertaken within the home. Chronicles of family life in Judeo-Christian times propose that the primary centre of learning was the home (Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore 1992: 201). The same is true of the Germanic and Latin cultures (Knowles et al 1992: 200). In the early Roman Empire, boys were taught by their fathers and girls were taught by their mothers (Wynn 1985: 11). According to Hood (1990: 1), girls generally remained at home and were taught domestic skills, whilst boys served in a variety of apprenticeship programmes, often with other families.

Lines (1991: 9) states that home instruction was “the mainstay of Education on the American frontier”. The wealthier families commonly relied upon the services of a tutor who taught within their students' own homes (Hood 1990: 1). Knowles et al (1992: 200) state that wealthy families in North America and Europe relied on parents or tutors to educate their children. Gradually, over the past 150 years, public schools were created to take over the duty of the family, church and community (Wynn 1985: 11).

2.2.1 *An international perspective of the home-schooling movement*

Mayberry et al (1995: 9) describe the home-schooling movement as a social movement. Long (2001: 67) states: “Although children have been schooled at home in the United States for centuries, the concept of home schooling as a cultural phenomenon has resurfaced in just the last 30 years.” It was a movement that grew quickly during a time when public education increasingly became the object of criticism.

Lines (1991: 10) states that the growth of the home-schooling movement is "undisputed". Knowles (1991: 203) writes that the number of home schools increased dramatically after the 1960s and the growth since the 1980s has been even more striking. Furthermore, he points out that other Western countries are following this trend too. The movement grew amid increasing legal conflict and judicial activity. Nevertheless, it managed to gain a measure of recognition and legitimacy (Mayberry et al 1995: 9).

2.2.1.1 *Home schooling in the USA*

An exposition focusing largely on the history of home schooling in America follows. This focus is primarily because an immense bulk of the literature focuses on the American movement, a movement which had an influence on those in other countries. Butler (2000: 45) quotes an estimated 1.5 million students are home schooled in America. Lines (2000: 75) indicates that the home-schooling movement in the USA is being augmented by as much as 15-20 percent a year. Lines (2000: 45) posited that in the year 2000/1 there would be approximately 1.5 to 2 million home-schooled children in the USA. This represents between three and four percent of school-age children across the country. Knowles et al (1992: 224) attribute "international consolidation" largely to the circulation of publications, especially those of Holt and Moore. The South African movement is relatively young and has undoubtedly been influenced by the American home-schooling movement.

American writers, such as Hood, Lape and Wynn, refer to the Colonial Period of education. During colonial times, the increasing population led to the development of more urban centres (Lape 1987: 30; Knowles 1991: 205). Colonial school arrangements were largely unplanned (Lape 1987: 32). According to Lape (1987: 46), education remained the prerogative of the family. Instruction was acquired through dame schools, private tutors, private schools or any other available resource. Furthermore, Lape (1987: 46) maintains that the home was the fundamental source of primary education throughout. Wynn (1985: 12) states that "colonial children learned the values, attitudes and beliefs of their culture, as well as most of its ways of earning a living through daily home and family life."

Knowles, Muchmore and Spaulding (1994: 239) assert that one of the objectives of home schooling was the Americanisation of immigrant families. A further objective was to purge society of the undesirable characteristics of the lower classes (Knowles et al 1994: 239). Thus, "In these ways, public schooling could be regarded as an action against the family unit; it was seen as a remedy for the multiple ills of lower-class family structure" (Knowles et al 1992: 201).

Formalised schooling for the majority of American children did not become a reality until the twentieth century (Lape 1987: 73; Hood 1990: 3).

Together with the development of compulsory school attendance, grew a gradual resistance towards the system. Hood (1990: 4) indicates that the circumstances began to change during 1950s and 1960s. Lape (1987: 88) talks about a decline in public confidence in schools during the period of the sixties.

Criticisms raised were varied and extensive. They included aspects such as low salaries for teachers, overcrowding, not enough funding and concerns regarding racial integration (Hood 1990: 4). Lape (1987: 88) adds that there was a demand for more attention to be paid to the gifted child. Furthermore, Lape (1987: 88) indicates that schools were criticised for the low standard of reading that was being attained by pupils.

The attendant result of these criticisms was various attempts at reform. Educational reformers included people such as Holt, Illich, Kozol and Kohl. The reform movement assumed its appearance in various forms. Certain educators undertook a "back-to-basics" approach (Hood 1990: 5). Other reformers focused on the appropriate age of school readiness (Hood 1990: 5, Lape 1987: 24).

One of the authors who wrote about school reform was John Holt. He wrote books such as *How Children Fail* (1964) and *How Children Learn* (1967). During the 1960s, several alternative schools were formed in accordance with the recommendations of Holt and other reformers. The organisation and methodologies of these schools were unconfined and fluid (Hood 1990: 6).

During the 1970s, the number of alternative schools began to dwindle (Hood 1990: 6). However, Hood (1990: 6) goes on to state that the alternative school movement directly influenced the advancement of the home-schooling movement. Lines (2000: 75) states that surveys point to a "disproportionate" number of home-schooled children having attended private schools. "A movement toward unstructured learning, strong and vigorous among some private schools in the 1960s, is now languishing, having lost many of its students to the liberal wing of the homeschooling [sic] movement and to various public school-choice programs" (Lines 2000: 75).

Lape (1987: 89) also states that it was within the concept of alternative schools that a revival in home schooling came about. Holt, affected by the writings of Ivan Illich, who wrote *Deschooling Society* (1970), and frustrated by the inadequacy of schools' attempts to realise his concepts, began to advocate home schooling as a logical option for parents (Hood 1990: 5,6). Holt wrote *Teach Your Own* (1981) and, in 1977, established a publication called *Growing Without Schooling*, which aimed at networking with and providing support to home-schooling parents (Hood 1990: 6, 7). Holt emerged as a national promoter of home schooling (Lape 1987: 91). He was of the opinion that learning should take place whilst children pursued their personal interests, aided and encouraged by the parents and other adults (Lape 2000: 76).

The ideas of John Holt decidedly influenced home schoolers in the USA and elsewhere. Furthermore, new concepts, such as "community control, free schools and deschooling" developed, which fuelled the idea that parents were in the best position to educate their own children (Knowles et al 1994: 240). Knowles et al (1992: 202) state that these popularised reform measures supported the justification that parents were better educators than schools.

Research into school readiness by Raymond and Dorothy Moore led to an interest in home schooling (Lape 1987: 89). The general public was exposed to their ideas by a popular Christian radio commentator, James Dobson (Hood 1990: 8). Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 2) cite the 1970s as a period when religious considerations influenced the home-schooling movement worldwide.

According to Hood (1990: 8), the 1980s saw a growth in a Christian movement which increasingly voiced its distrust of the official education system and began to try home education. The period saw an increase in legal opposition to and an expansion of research in the domain of home schooling (Hood 1990: 9). Hood (1990: 9) asserts that by the 1980s, home schooling had become a resolute legal alternative to other forms of education in the majority of the country. Home schooling is legal in all fifty states and home-school laws are continually being relaxed and reformed (Durham 1996: 79).

In 1998, the Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA) published research findings by Rudner, entitled *Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students in 1998*. This report represented the biggest survey and testing poll in the USA up to that date (Rudner 1998: 1). The main areas of enquiry of this study were: whether or not home schooling worked for those who were committed enough to attempt it; whether home-schooled children achieved comparable results to conventionally-schooled children; and a description of the population of home schoolers (Rudner 2000: 23). What did arise out of the study is the finding that home schoolers and their offspring are an exclusive group of people and that the home-schooling environment is capable of being very successful academically (Rudner 2000: 24). Further details of the findings will be discussed at a later stage in this chapter.

2.2.1.2 Other countries

The movement towards deschooling in Britain also began in the 1960s and, according to Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 2), has its roots firmly in the striving for the creation of a classless society. In the United Kingdom, organisations such as Education Otherwise and the Children's Home-based Education Association advise and support families considering home schooling (Louw 1992: 360). Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) was an influential British Educator (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 7). Her ideas have a firm biblical foundation and she stresses exposure to the outdoor world and classical works. To Mason, the child is to be valued and the learning environment is to be positive, stimulating and enjoyable (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 7).

The modern home school originated in the USA and Britain. However, home schools are to be found in countries such as Germany, France, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Louw 1992: 359). The largest number of home schoolers appears to be in the USA (Bunday 1996 in Van Oostrum 1997b: 30). Van Oostrum (1997b: 30) gives an account of home schooling in the following countries: Australia, England, Ireland, Japan, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. He, furthermore, gives an account of unconfirmed reports of home schooling in Denmark, Germany, France, Malaysia, Spain, Estonia and Switzerland, as well as in the Middle East.

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 2) indicate that the main impetus behind the home-schooling movement in the 1990s was the perception that the quality of education in conventional schools is inadequate. In the mid-nineties, Knowles and his co-authors comment that "home education has gained somewhat of an aura of respectability" (Knowles et al 1994: 240). Lines (1996: 63) states that "Home schooling has come of age." Furthermore, Lines indicates that the legal attitude has become more amenable towards the idea of home schooling and this has facilitated the increase in the number of home schoolers. Similarly in South Africa, Louw (1992: 359) declares that the legal position of home schooling has a direct bearing on the growth of the movement.

In addition to this, Lines (1996: 65) indicates that public attitude towards home schooling has become far more sympathetic as is indicated by favourable media reports. Knowles et al (1992: 198) state that the period from 1980 onwards has seen a gradual increase in the public's acceptance of home schooling. Furthermore, they indicate that "Children's learning predominantly from parents is a cross-cultural phenomenon and a natural occurrence within family contexts" (Knowles et al 1992: 201).

Dreckmeyr (1990: 15) states it would appear that the home school has come to stay and that there is a possibility that it will play a greater role in the future. It would appear that the number of home schoolers in South Africa is on the increase. Indeed, Durham (1996: 79) cites home schooling as a valid educational option which should be freely available to those who choose to use it and subject to moderate state regulation.

According to Durham (1996: 79), it is improbable that home schooling will ever become a mainstream option, but it is growing rapidly from a relatively small base. Lines (2000: 83) states that "As long as there are parents who object to the bureaucratic nature of today's schools, I would expect homeschooling [sic] to thrive."

2.3 *Common characteristics of home-schooling families*

Mayberry et al (1995: 33) emphasise that the home-schooling movement is not monolithic in nature. Butler (2000: 45) indicates that the educational backgrounds of home-schooling parents are diverse. Colfax and Colfax (1988: 37) state that the home-schooling movement contains a variety of contents and styles. Lines (2000: 78) points to the limited and imperfect nature of the data available on home schoolers. Nevertheless, Lines (2000: 78) does state that certain observations can be made about the movement.

Demographically, the average home-schooling family in the USA is characterised by being white, heterosexual and nuclear (Mayberry et al 1995: 33; Lines 2000: 78). Research indicates that the person responsible for the educational programme is usually a mother not employed in the labour force (Mayberry et al 1995: 33; Lines 2000: 78). The movement is predominantly a middle-class operation, usually comprised of young, well-educated members of society. Mayberry et al (1995: 43) note that, generally, the fathers' employment situations allow for a high degree of autonomy – indeed, they're often self-employed; religious and spiritual beliefs feature prominently and are often the major motivation behind home schooling; these families are frequently politically conservative; and often there is little trust in social institutions.

Lines (1991: 14) adds that although such families may adopt religion as the primary motivation for home schooling, it is not the only incentive; the family usually consists of two children of school-going age, plus a third child, usually a pre-schooler; the typical family makes use of community facilities, together with other resources, such as a church, the local school, a library and a distant home-schooling organisation. Lines (2000: 78) states that in possibly as many as one in ten families, the father takes primary responsibility for education.

Based on surveys of African-American students, Lines (2000: 78-79) also points to a possible increase in the USA of ethnic minorities home schooling in the future.

Moore and Moore (1994: 39) note the following additional characteristics: "Home-educated children are highly competent socially, seldom age-segregated, and generally respectful of their parents"; that an extensive sweep of conventional and enrichment subject matter is studied; that most of the parents have distinct philosophical or religious convictions, as well as high moral standards; that curricula are varied and range from very flexible programmes to relatively formal teaching; that children who are taught with much "warm parental responsiveness and camaraderie in study, work, and service develop an adult level of reasonability five to eight years sooner than conventionally schooled students" (Moore & Moore 1994: 39).

In 1998, the EPPA in the USA produced a report by Rudner. The study clearly indicated the distinct nature of the home-school family. "The distribution of students by state, gender, age, race, parent marital status, family size, mother's religion, parent education, family income, television viewing, money spent on educational materials, and other demographic characteristics are identified and, where possible, compared to national figures" (Rudner 1998: 4). Some of the major data contains the following information:

- achievement test scores of this cluster of home-schooled learners were particularly high;
- 25% were enrolled one or more grades beyond the age-level of private and public school equals;
- the parents on average were more formally educated than the general population – 88% of home-school parents had some form of tertiary education;
- the average income of home-school families was significantly greater than other families with children in the USA - \$52 000 per annum as opposed to the national mean of \$36 000;
- Virtually all home learners come from families where the parents are a married couple; and
- home-school learners do notably well in that educational milieu.

Other significant findings include the following facts:

- There was an almost equal split of females and males (50.4% female and 49.6% male).
- There was a much lower proportion of high-school learners than primary-school learners.
- The vast majority were non-Hispanic White, with the largest minority groups being comprised of American Indians and Asian learners (2.4% and 1.2% respectively).
- On average, home-school families are larger than school-going families. Home-schooled families had a mean of 3.1 children per family compared to the national mean of 1.9 children per family.
- In terms of the mother's religion, the largest percentage of mothers identified themselves as Independent Fundamental, Baptist, Independent Charismatic, Roman Catholic, Assembly of God or Presbyterian. 93.1% of the time, the father had the same religious preference as the mother.
- Very few home-school learners watch more than three hours of television each day, whereas more than 60% of conventionally schooled learners watch well over three hours.
- The median amount of money that was spent on educational materials was approximately \$400.
- In comparison to the rest of the nation, a greater number of home-school mothers remain at home and do not work for pay (76.9% compared to 30%). Of those home-school mothers who did work, 86.3% did so part-time.
- Approximately one in four (23.6%) of home-schooled learners has one or more parent who is a formally qualified teacher.

No similar South African study on a profile of a typical home school could be sourced.

2.4 *The rationale for home schooling*

There are many different reasons for home schooling (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 37). Butler (2000: 45) states, "The paths that lead to home schooling are endless and personal." These reasons are often politically, religiously, philosophically or pedagogically based (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 37). Further rationale is based on family integrity and examples provided by successful neighbours and friends who home school (Moore & Moore 1994: 39). It would appear that some home school temporarily and others are committed for a long period (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 37). Some believe that home schooling is a radical option, whilst others regard it as conservative.

Colfax and Colfax (1988: 38) state that the following four aspects provide the basic rationale for all home schooling: parents are able to exercise control over methods, content, timing and staff; it is more efficient than other forms of schooling; it encourages creativity; and promotes autonomy. However, subsequent studies have indicated that the rationale for home schooling is more complex than the aforementioned reasons. The following highlights some of the reasons for home schooling:

2.4.1 *Criticisms of conventional schools*

It would appear that many parents home school because they are not satisfied with conventional schools (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 38). Some of the criticisms levelled against conventional schools include: the promotion of anti-intellectualism; conformity; passivity; rigidity; disorganisation; over-socialising; under-socialising; testing too often; testing too seldom; failing to acknowledge differences; course content (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 38).

2.4.2 *Social forces and home schooling*

Mayberry et al (1995: 46) emphasise that forces within society and the community have an influence on home schoolers, as these learners cannot operate in a vacuum. Social forces and community organisations have a potent influence upon parents' perspective on education, as well as their expectations and goals. These influences can be both from the past and present.

Thus, parents' own educational experiences have a bearing on what they prefer for their children (Mayberry et al 1995: 47-48; Knowles 1991: 223).

It is important to note that the decision to home school should not be taken lightly. Mayberry et al (1995: 49) stress that the parents' workload, both physically and psychologically, becomes extremely heavy. In addition, parents lose the opportunity of acquiring a second income, as the parent educator chooses to stay at home. Very often social forces, such as organisations, participate in assisting parents in their decision to home school. For example, in South Africa, the Association for Home Schooling published a booklet with a chapter entitled *How to home School* by L. and K. Van Oostrum (1997a). This booklet provides a step-by-step guide to home schooling, including a section entitled *Getting the child out of school*. These organisations often act as support systems once the decision to home school has been taken.

2.4.3 Philosophical and ideological forces

Several reasons for home schooling were outlined in Chapter One. Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 2) note that seldom do families cite only one reason for home schooling, usually naming a variety of reasons for choosing this option. They note that families do prioritise their reasons (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 2). As was mentioned in Chapter One, religious, philosophical, pedagogical or social reasons might predominate. Authors, such as Knowles, Marlow, Muchmore, Hood, Van Galen and Pitman, indicate that the home-schooling movement is not a homogenous one. The differences go beyond didactic approaches.

In the late 1980s, Mayberry (1988: 37) identified four categories of home-school families in the United States by using Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative method of analysis. The first and largest category consisted of parents motivated by religious beliefs (65%). The second category included parents concerned with academic achievement (22%). The third category consisted of parents who were concerned about the social development of their children (11%). These parents did not believe that the conventional school environment was conducive to good socialization of their children.

The fourth group consisted of the so-called "New Age" parents (2%). New Age philosophy stresses the interrelatedness of all aspects of life, with emphasis on a peaceful spirituality.

Mayberry (1988: 40) emphasises the rationality of parents who choose to home school, stressing that they are in pursuit of a rational goal: an attempt to "sustain a way of life that protects and revitalises a stable set of means, [sic] home schooling, for these parents, provides such a structure".

It is interesting to note that there has been a shift in the arena of home schooling since the 1970s (Knowles et al 1992: 200). Knowles (1991: 205) indicates that by the 1990s religiously idealistic, specifically Christian fundamentalist, families had augmented the body of home schoolers. "Whereas Holt's network is liberal, pedagogical, secular and humanistic in its orientation, the most recent additions to the networking arena tend to be conservative, ideological, and Christian" (Knowles et al 1992: 225). Lines (2000: 75) perceives the contemporary home-schooling movement as having liberal, and not conservative, origins. Lines declares that during the 1980s the school culture became more liberal and religious families found themselves in a "countercultural position" (Lines 2000: 76).

Thus, several of these families sent their children to Christian schools and others began home schooling. The rationale for home schooling in some instances was that it is the Christian duty to home school. Others simply sought to combine education and religion with family life.

Lines (2000: 76) states that both the left and right wings of home schooling are active at present. Lines (2000: 76) states that some families home school for religious *and* philosophical reasons. She qualifies this by saying "Joining them are many homeschoolers [sic] who simply seek the highest quality education for their child, which they believe public and even private schools can no longer provide" (Lines 2000: 76).

According to Cushman (in Knowles et al 1992: 197), the identifiable groups within the home-schooling movement make "strange bedfellows". Knowles et al (1992: 197) go on to note that dichotomies manifest themselves very obviously in the focus and essence of home-school operations.

One of these dichotomies is described by Van Galen and Pitman (1991: 67). They divide home schoolers into "ideologues" and "pedagogues". According to Van Galen and Pitman (1991: 67), the *ideologues* see home schooling as inseparable from their Christian beliefs. Teaching their children is part of their Christian duty (God's will) and the family is the paramount social unit. The *pedagogues*, on the other hand, home school for pedagogic reasons – they view the public schools as inept. Van Galen and Pitman (1991: 67) see them as highly individualistic and home schooling is symbolic of their independence from social institutions. The learning style most frequently encouraged amongst children is individualistic, independent and self-directed.

Knowles et al (1992: 197) expand upon this dichotomy, saying that the ideologues transfer the activities of the school to the home environment. They follow rigid structures and curricula. They exclude elements from public schooling which they do not like (Knowles et al 1992: 197). The pedagogues place a greater emphasis on intrinsic motivation and adopt an approach which involves more experiential learning (Knowles et al 1992: 197).

Hood (1990: 51) describes the criteria for this division as methodological in nature and indicates that Van Galen is echoing the findings of Mayberry (1988/1989). In Hood (1990), Pitman refers to two groups: the one home schools for pedagogic reasons, whereas the other home schools for its Christian beliefs. Hood (1990: 48) notes that in Canada, authors such as Common and MacMullen (1986: 5), refer to two groups: the fundamentalists and secular radicals. According to Hood (1990: 48), in England, the schools are still dominated by the Christian religion. However, the majority of home schoolers are relatively conservative and they have authoritarian methodologies (Hood 1990: 49).

However, a minority of home schoolers adhere to another perspective of education which they describe as "autonomous" or "self-directed" (Hood 1990: 48).

Hood (1990: 173) undertook a historical-descriptive study, which probed the effect and influence of four modern educational philosophies on the home-schooling movement: essentialism; progressivism; perennialism and existentialism. Hood (1990: 173) emphasises that these divisions cannot be viewed as immutable and that authors who indicate a leaning towards a particular doctrine may subscribe to certain aspects of another doctrine.

2.4.3.1 Essentialism

The first such philosophy was that of **Essentialism**, the influence of which can be found in the writings of Gregg Harris and in the articles found in a magazine entitled *The Teaching Home*. Hood also mentions that, although not exclusively so, many of the members were outspoken Christians. This influence encouraged emphasis to be placed on hard work and obedience; an orderly environment; a structured curriculum; the teacher as an authority figure; textbooks; discipline; and evaluation (Hood 1990: 173).

2.4.3.2 Progressivism

The next philosophy was that of **Progressivism**. Influential writers in this area were Raymond and Dorothy Moore. Hood (1990: 173/4) notes that this was the least prominent of the four philosophical influences and that most of those who propounded this theory were trained educators. Hood (1990: 106) posits that perhaps this lack of popularity in the approach is due to the emphasis which progressives characteristically place upon the significance of the social group. This approach rejected the presence of absolute truths and eternal values (Hood 1990: 83).

2.4.3.3 *Perennialism*

The third philosophical approach identified by Hood is labelled **Perennialism**. Perennialism includes the work of Charlotte Mason and the Charlotte Mason Research and Supply Company, as well as that of an organisation named Child Light (Hood 1990: 175). Mason (cf 1.1.2) is like other Perennialists in that she believed in exposing her students to the classics in art, music and literature (Hood 1990: 124). Children are perceived as spiritually equal to adults and their individuality and intellect are valued (Hood 1990: 124). There has been a revival of interest in Mason's works and a concomitant resuscitation of perennialist thought among home schoolers (Hood 1990: 176).

2.4.3.4 *Existentialism*

The fourth philosophical approach is that of **Existentialism**. Holt (in Hood 1990: 178) displayed a predisposition towards this approach. While Existentialism refers to a philosophy of life, it can also be translated into the individual's relationship to the world and other human beings. Educationally, this means that individuals are able to choose their own curricula and to become emotionally involved with them. Authenticity in relationships is encouraged. Parents act as facilitators of learning and these learning situations develop spontaneously (Hood 1990: 177).

Hood (1990: 181) states that the curriculum material chosen by each group reflects their implicit beliefs and assumptions about education. Furthermore, previous studies which have divided home schoolers according to religious doctrines, do not accurately reflect the educational beliefs of home schoolers. Thus, perhaps the division of ideologues and pedagogues is less discrete than has previously been imagined. Moreover, the home-schooling movement is a heterogeneous one and many home schoolers adopt an assorted approach, incorporating more than one educational philosophy (Hood 1990: 83).

Knowles et al (1992: 205-207) describe the home-schooling movement in terms of a social phenomenon and indicate that this phenomenon has arisen since the 1970s. Marlow (1994: 441) states research indicates that many parents who home school "are not merely making an ideological or pedagogical choice, but are also responding to broader societal conditions, seeking to protect and defend their values and beliefs through the integrity and autonomy of the family".

They delineate five distinct phases in home education since 1970 in the USA. They speak about contention, confrontation, co-operation, consolidation and compartmentalisation. *Contention* refers to the period before the 1970s when there was dissatisfaction with the public school system. *Confrontation* refers to the period at the beginning of the 1970s when there was considerable confrontation between home schoolers and the administration. Then *co-operation* began to emerge and grow in the 1980s with the increase in co-operation between parents and authorities. The period of *consolidation* followed, in which home schooling is characterised by "networking, legislative lobbying and public acceptance" (Knowles et al 1992: 208). The final phase is that of *compartmentalisation*, which began emerging in the 1990s. Knowles et al (1992: 209) describe this concept as increasing disagreement among home schoolers and the beginning of ideological fracturing.

The authors indicate that the five phases are not complete, but that they do suggest that "home schools became grounds of and for ideological, conservative, religious expressions of educational matters, which symbolised the conservative right's push toward self-determinism" (Knowles et al 1992: 227).

2.4.4 *Summary*

What is evident from the above is that the home-schooling movement consists of several groups functioning from various philosophical and ideological stances. Furthermore, one might state that compartmentalisation exists where there has been a digression from the liberal roots of the movement (Knowles et al 1992: 227).

What is clearly observable is that the rationale for home schooling is indeed complex and interrelated. Parents have a more profound agenda than simply providing places of greater learning for their children.

2.5. Critique of home schooling

Educators and authorities are often critical of the home-schooling movement. This criticism sometimes stems from concern for the learners' predicament. There is frequently a concern that pupils are not being treated fairly in the sense that they are lacking many of the opportunities available to children involved in institutionalised education (Wynn 1985: 31).

Wynn (1985: 34) provides a summary of objections which public school officials have against home schooling and they include the following:

- Children need to get to encounter and become acquainted with other children who are different from themselves.
- Prejudiced and dogmatic parents transfer their ideas to or impose their convictions on their children.
- Children need to socialise in order to adapt to society in later life.
- The school offers valuable social opportunities.
- Teachers are often not qualified.
- Parents lack adequate time to teach the child properly.
- Children may not be able to learn everything they're required to learn.

Holt, in his work *Teach your own* (1981), addresses many of the objections already mentioned in a chapter entitled "Common Objections to Home Schooling". Further such objections addressed by Holt in the aforementioned chapter follow:

- Schools provide us with a sense of social unity.
- Schools provide us with the opportunity to meet others.
- Parents pass on "narrow and bigoted" ideas to their children.
- How will children learn the values of the society at large?

- What about the social life of the school?
- What about the teaching qualifications (or lack thereof) of parents?
- Will parents have the enthusiasm, interest and patience to teach adequately?
- Will parents have the time required to teach a child?
- What if children really want to go to school?
- Will children learn to come to terms with adversity and be able to overcome challenges and problems?

Holt's responses to these objections are dealt with in 2.6.

In a criticism of Holt, Franzosa (1991: 121) argues that Holt's rejection of institutional control and community involvement in education represents an emerging conservatism with serious educational consequences. Franzosa writes: "Thus, I believe Holt's conservatism ultimately sanctions the educational neglect of the vast majority of children and leads to a tacit acceptance of their plight" (Franzosa 1991: 121).

Wynn (1985: 34) states that even the most well-intentioned parents may not be adequately qualified to teach their children and that children learn valuable lessons when playing and fighting with their peers.

These criticisms are echoed among South African educators. Professor Penny Enslin, Professor of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, urges that home schooling be discouraged (Behr 1997: 56). Enslin believes that education should be a shared responsibility between parent and the state and that "to argue that education is solely a parental right is a misinterpretation of the Constitution" (Behr 1997: 56). Enslin expresses concern with regard to the propagation of undemocratic ideas and principles, especially in the way in which girls are raised (Behr 1997: 56).

In South Africa, the National Department of Education also expressed concerns as to the quality of education received by home-schooled children; the fact that children are not exposed to other cultures; and the lack of facilities in terms of libraries, computers and sports amenities (Behr 1997: 54).

Mary Metcalfe, former Minister of Education and Culture (MEC) for education in Gauteng, expressed concern about molestation and the taking advantage of and neglect of children involved in home schooling (Van Oostrum 1997b: 11).

Some people believe that home schooling shelters children from reality and that they will not be able to manage within the "real world" (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 12).

2.6 *A response to some of these criticisms*

Many studies have been done in response to such criticisms. A brief overview of this research follows.

2.6.1 *Academic achievement and possible limitations of parents' teaching abilities*

Rudner (1998: 23) comments that his study, although interpreted conservatively, nevertheless indicates that the achievement levels of home-schooled students are excellent. Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 12) believe that part of the success of home schooling lies in "a combination of maximal parental involvement with minimal class size".

Holt (1981: 51) is quite emphatic that for many years parents have taught their offspring and that teacher training is a reasonably recent development. He emphasises that teacher qualification is not an indicator of a parent's ability to teach his or her own child. Indeed, Moore and Moore (1994: 9) state that "If you can read with understanding, write with meaning, speak clearly, and add, subtract, multiply, and divide, and if you love and respond to your children, you can be a good teacher!"

Holt (1981: 57) does mention that not all families will be able to teach their children well, but that such families would not enjoy home schooling and would thus give it up. He says that in order to teach one's own children successfully, one would need to enjoy "their company, their physical presence, their energy, foolishness and passion" (Holt 1981: 57). He also states that perhaps only a minority of parents have the required qualities to teach their own children (Holt 1981: 57).

Butler (2000: 45) believes that home schooling is generally a success because home-schooling parents are extremely earnest about the matter of education. Colfax and Colfax (1998: 10) indicate that home schooling requires commitment, both in time and money. They state that parents need to be available at all times (Colfax & Colfax 1998: 10).

Rudner (1998: 23) states that the home-schooling population represents a select group with a particularly resolute commitment to their children and education. "Home schools can and do place a greater emphasis on study skills, critical thinking, working independently, and a love of learning" (Rudner 1998: 23).

Many parents express reservations regarding the number of hours they would be able to teach within a day. Holt (1981: 59) states that in institutionalised schools, children rarely receive much actual teaching time. He writes "Many poor, nonwhite [sic], or unusual kids never get any real teaching at all in their entire schooling. When teachers speak to them, it is only to command, correct, warn, threaten, or to blame" (Holt 1981: 59).

With reference to academic achievement, Rakestraw (1987/1988) and Wartes (1988) (in Hood 1990: 34) used an IQ test called the Stanford Achievement Test and did not find home-schooled children to be at a disadvantage when compared with children involved in conventional schools. Rudner's study (1998: 13) indicated that the average home-school student in the third grade exceeded the achievement levels of 81% of third-grade students across the nation (USA).

Furthermore, although the private schools scored higher on average than the public schools, the home-schooled children out-performed the Catholic/private schools in the study in every area and every grade (Rudner 1998: 13).

In addition, the average fourth-grade student was 1.1 of a grade ahead of his public/private-school counterparts (Rudner 1998: 15). This gap widened in grade five and, by the time home-school students were in grade eight, they were, on average, almost four grades ahead of their public/private-school peers (Rudner 1998: 16).

Interestingly enough, students who are home schooled throughout their schooling careers, achieve significantly better results than students who are home schooled only part of the time (Rudner 1998: 16).

In a study done by Ray and Wartes (1991: 46), the following was noted:

- the level of parent education was not a convincing forecaster of test scores;
- there is little relationship between the level of, structure of or number of formal school hours and academic achievement;
- there is little relationship between academic achievement and the sum total of consecutive years spent in home schooling; and
- there was no relationship between the level of family income and achievement.

Delahooke (1986) conducted a study comparing home-schooled children and children educated in private schools and, using the revised Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, was not able to find a significant difference between the home-schooled children and the children schooled in private schools (Hood 1990: 35). Ray (in Hood 1990: 35) conducted nation-wide studies in the USA in 1990 and 1996 using standardised test scores, and home-schooled students performed above average in both studies. Morris (1989: 10) cites an example by Whitehead and Bird (1984: 17) which refers to a national study done in the USA in which home-schooled pupils achieved higher than national averages in standardised tests.

Marlow (1994: 452) states that standardised achievement tests have been the prevailing method of assessment in home schools as well as in public schools. Marlow (1994: 452) attests to studies which indicate the above-average performance of home-schooled children on nationally normed standardised tests. Thus, Marlow states (1994: 452) "standardised testing tends to validate and showcase the academic quality of home schools."

Ray and Wartes (1991: 52) analysed the majority of the studies on academic achievement of home-schooled children. They concluded that "home school [sic] youths of compulsory education score equal to or better than their conventional school peers on measures of academic achievement" (Ray & Wartes 1991: 52). They note that there is no certainty that the groups were homogeneous in nature, but that home schooling does not obstruct pupils from "matching or excelling average conventional school achievement" (Ray & Wartes (1991: 52).

Dr Raymond Moore (in Hood 1990: 95-100) cites several reasons for the success of home education. These include factors which are not available in institutionalised schools and under which young children flourish, such as:

- highly interested and concerned parents;
- the partiality of parents;
- the opportunity to experience routine with a small number of children who hold similar family values;
- the fact that from ten to up to a hundred more personal adult-to-child interactions occur;
- a less rigid programme and thus more opportunity to think and explore freely; and
- a better grasp of the obligations of the home and thus greater independence and self-direction (Hood 1990: 95-100).

Durham (1996: 78) states "As long as children schooled at home have to comply with minimum requirements of the national curriculum or meet with minimum requirements of the curriculum of any registered, independent school, home schooling does not compromise any standards."

Furthermore, Mayberry et al (1995: 31) state that research has been unable to find a significant similarity between home-educated children's achievement scores and the level of education which has been attained by parents. Durham (1996: 78), Rudner (1998: 20) and Butler (2000: 45) confirm the lack of correlation between parent/teacher qualification and children's educational performance.

Besides, "parents have a vested interest in educating their children in the best possible way, and thus are willing to sacrifice time and energy that many teachers simply do not have" (Durham 1996: 78). Colfax and Colfax (1988: 8) state that every parent is an educator, and that it is only the "formal" education that the majority of parents assign to the "experts".

Furthermore, Colfax and Colfax (1988: 8) assert that home schooling typically involves the learners' engagement in self-teaching and that parents are merely there to suggest study courses and answer questions. "But more than credentials, experience builds confidence – and the ability to recover from mistakes" (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 9). Successfully having home schooled their own children, Colfax and Colfax (1988: 10), assert that as long as a child receives the relevant learning materials and opportunities, learning will take place.

2.6.2 Powers of reasoning

Holt (1981: 40) does not believe that it is the Government's right to decide what children should or should not think/believe. Furthermore, Holt (1981: 43) states that "schools are far more concerned to have children accept the values of mass society than to help them resist them". By implication then, according to Holt, it is not always desirable that children accept the values of mass society. Such an argument requires one to be specific with regard to which values are "undesirable", as encouraging these values could be construed as the propagation of anti-social mores and concomitant behaviour. It must surely be preferable to instil in children the ability to employ critical thinking by questioning societal values, rather than promoting the outright rejection thereof, purely for the sake of not adopting societal norms.

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 14) argue that home-schooled children learn to become critical thinkers at the same age as, if not younger than, the conventionally schooled child. Holt (1981: 62) states that parents would not be able to determine their children's worldview even if they wished to. However, it is not possible to avoid having some influence on a child's view of life. Thus, the question arises of whether or not home-schooled pupils are able to develop powers of critical thinking which can transcend any dogmatic or undemocratic teachings which may have been imposed by parents.

2.6.3 *Socialisation*

The issue of socialisation refers to the view that children should learn to meet and get to know others who are different from themselves, so that they can participate within the social life of the school and operate within society when they are older. Critics of home schooling question the socialisation skills of home-schooled children. Butler (2000: 46) states: "Whenever home schooling is brought up, someone invariably states that lack of socialization is the number one disadvantage to home education."

Colfax and Colfax (1988: 101) state that it is seldom or never that home-schooled children are isolated socially. Furthermore, home-schooled learners have more chances of interacting with a wide variety of people and thus often become more socially competent and responsible at a younger age than many of their contemporaries who are at conventional schools (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 101).

Studies which have been conducted that address the issue of socialisation include those of Wartes (1988), Rakestraw (1987; 1988), Taylor (1987), Delahooke (1986) and Montgomery (1989) (cf Hood 1990). Wartes (1988) and Rakestraw (1987; 1988) observed that although home-schooled children did come into contact with other children, they were apparently not socially isolated (Hood 1990: 37). Taylor conducted quantitative studies (in Hood 1990: 37-39). Taylor (1987) found the self-concepts of children in the fourth to twelfth grades were significantly higher on all scales than those of children educated in traditional schools. In Delahooke's study of social development, she argued that home-schooled children would manifest fewer aggressive social behaviours than children educated institutionally (Ray & Wartes 1991: 54).

Montgomery (in Hood 1990: 38) addressed the issue of leadership development and concluded that home-schooled teenagers were generally not socially isolated and, furthermore, that conditions for leadership development were present in the home school.

Lines (1996: 64) asserts that the stereotypical view of home schoolers is that they are loners who are uncaring of others' opinions.

She points to a survey conducted by Mayberry et al (1995) which demonstrates 95% of respondents (home-schooling families) indicate the need for support and encouragement from other social groups.

To address the need for social contact, Mayberry et al (1995: 22) indicate that home-schooling families network extensively. They attest to networking which occurs at all levels: local, state, national and international. Families hold meetings and conferences; they also lobby legislators and policy makers (Mayberry et al 1995: 22). Lines (1996: 64) states that "the most universal resource that home-schooling families draw upon are [sic] like-minded families".

A study conducted by Shyers (1992) found home-schooled children to be better adapted socially than children at public school. Furthermore, they exhibited significantly lower problem-behaviour scores than conventionally schooled children.

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 21) refer to a study done by Smedley in 1992. It was found that home-schooled children were better socialised and more mature than conventionally schooled children. Possible reasons suggested for this included:

- home schooling involves more open channels of communication and more meaningful interchanges,
- home schooling is more personalised, as opposed to socialising children into a "factory-like" mentality,
- home schooling offers a more natural opportunity for children to associate with people of various ages and
- home schooling focuses on self-discipline and self-directed learning, which create more confident and adaptable individuals

Follow-up studies have been initiated to investigate the performance of home-educated students in adult life. These studies indicate that home-schooled students do not appear to be disadvantaged in any way (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum, 1997a: 21).

Furthermore, Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 21) state that universities are generally positive about the admission of home schoolers. Indeed, both Yale and Harvard "have included the home schooling [sic] community in their priority recruitment sector" (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 21). As a counter-argument to the critique that children are socially isolated, Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 15) argue that the standard classroom is no longer representative of the average working environment. They continue by saying that the average classroom is totalitarian and representative of the military and prisons, and thus it far from prepares children to take their place in society.

Durham (1996: 78) also states that the classroom is an unnatural construction and that children run the risk of exposure to the vices of other children. Furthermore, in such a situation, the teachers are stretched beyond their limits, which results in their resorting to the use of verbal abuse and tactics of humiliation in order to uphold classroom discipline (Durham 1996: 78).

Many parents choose to home school precisely because of socialisation which occurs within formal schools and is perceived by them to be undesirable or negative (Mayberry et al 1995: 3). Holt (1981: 44-45) describes the social life of the school as reason enough to want to keep one's child at home. He says "... the social life of the children is mean-spirited, competitive, exclusive, status-seeking, snobbish ..." (Holt 1981: 45).

The above sentiment is echoed by Morris (1989: 15), who states that peer dependency is often a situation that is undesirable and best avoided. In addition to this, Morris states that family-oriented socialisation, as opposed to peer-oriented socialisation, gives children a more positive view of themselves and their future, as well as giving rise to less anti-social behaviour. Indeed, Moore and Moore (1994: 49) also caution against peer dependency. They point to the studies of Dr Urie Bronfenbrenner, who observed that children up to the ages of eleven or twelve who, by choice, spend more time with their peers than with their parents will become peer dependent. Such adherence to peer values leads to the loss of "self-worth, optimism, respect for parents, and trust in peers" (Moore & Moore 1994: 49).

Ray and Wartes (1991: 51) state that home-schooled children do not appear to be at any great risk with regard to socialisation. Research indicates that these pupils have a high self-concept; are well-adjusted both socially and emotionally; participate in many activities which are good predictors of leadership in adult life; and are consistent in their participation in social activities with both peers and adults (Ray & Wartes 1991: 51).

Holt (1981: 37) does not believe that schools serve as a cohesive element that moulds society together. He feels that schools do not cross barriers of race, class, custom and belief, as they really serve to entrench ideas of winners and losers. Children tend to mix with others of similar race and socio-economic status, and children of differing backgrounds seldom form friendships (Holt 1981: 40).

Butler (2000: 46) points out that conventional schools are not the only means of socialisation; children who are home schooled are socialised across diverse environments. Such environments include, for example, libraries; theatres; restaurants; churches; music, dance and art lessons; and scouting (Butler 2000: 47). Furthermore, there is interaction with different people across all age spectrums, such as family, neighbours and friends (Butler 2000: 47). Butler (2000: 46) refers to research done by Ray of the National Home Education Institute, which cites that the home-schooled child is characteristically involved in 5.2 social activities outside the home.

Thus, there appear to be valid concerns as to the quality and value of social opportunities which are provided in institutionalised schools. There is data to support the view that home-schooled children are presented with positive opportunities to become adequately socialised. They *are* socialised, but differently - with parental nurturing and guidance (Butler 2000: 47). Perhaps educators can be made aware of prevalent socialising problems through the home-schoolers' criticisms, and attempt to address some of the issues.

However, it is improbable that all social activities within institutionalised education are negative. Further studies need to be conducted on the positive areas of social interaction within conventional schools, which home-schooled children do not experience.

2.6.4 *Children's preferences*

The situation does arise where children ask to attend institutionalised schools. Holt (1981: 63) states that many parents believe that these schools can do permanent damage to children and thus believe that it is a non-negotiable issue. Holt (1981: 64) states that with younger children, one should not give them the choice, but that with older children, one should evaluate their reasons for wishing to attend an institutionalised school and base one's decision on the validity of the reasons. "How much older?" and "what reasons?" remain the subjective domain of the parent.

2.6.5 *Access to resources*

Holt (1981: 61) expresses doubts as to children's access to equipment in institutionalised schools. He writes, "As for equipment, you say that your high school had a very extensive chem lab, but I'll bet that very few of the students ever used more than a small part of the materials in the lab." He suggests that home-schooling parents should buy equipment and resell it to each other once they have finished with it (Holt 1981: 61).

We live in an age of technological advancement and home schoolers have resources such as CDROMs, e-mail and the Internet, as well as a huge array of curricula providers at their disposal. Furthermore, home-schooled children do not have to compete with approximately forty other children (average class size in South African Government schools) in order to make use of resources. Thus, it would appear that, depending on the financial status of the home-schooling family, the argument that home schoolers have limited resources and facilities would seem a weak one. Of course, it could be argued that the presence of peers and sharing of ideas amongst classmates is a resource in itself of which home-schooled children may be deprived.

2.6.6 *Children's ability to cope in the "real world"*

Colfax and Colfax (1988) cite their own child, Grant, as an example. He was home schooled and graduated from Harvard with honours and a Fulbright scholarship.

They believe that home schooling was a source of real-life experiences that would not have been encountered within the conventional learning situation (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 12). "Because they have learned to value and make good use of their time, they have developed skills that most children simply do not have the time or opportunity to acquire" (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 12).

2.6.7 Conclusions

In the light of research done, many of the concerns and criticisms with regard to home schooling seem to be unfounded. Research indicates that the academic and cognitive achievement of home-schooled children seems to be average, if not above average. Researchers (Ray & Wartes 1991; Lines 1996; Rudner 1998) have indicated that studies may not have involved homogenous groups and that there is no indication that the home-schooled pupils would not have done as well in conventional schools. However, it would appear that home-schooled children are not at risk with regard to academic achievement.

Home schooling is characterised by a high degree of involvement and commitment by parents to their children and to education. This, in itself, is an important factor in the success of the home school, rather than the level of education that has been achieved by the home-schooling parent.

Studies seem to support claims that the personal and social development of home-schooled children is normal. Home-schooled children have been found to be confident and well-adjusted socially. In fact, many of the situations within the home prove to be more advantageous to learning than the social setting within the school. Children are often not positively socialised within the school. The school is not the only arena for socialisation and children within home schools are socialised across a wide spectrum of situations with people of varying ages. They *are* socialised, but in a different way to that which is experienced by learners in conventional schools.

What is required is a paradigm shift that the social environment of the school is the only “normal” one – there are other valid alternatives. The home school is one of these alternatives. In the home school, the preparation for higher education would appear to be up to standard. Many universities accept home-schooled children.

Van Oostrum (1997b: 70) does mention that one area of concern appears to be that of motor development and physical activity, which is possibly lower than that of children in conventional schools.

Perhaps the question of neglect or abuse of children in home schools could be addressed by the degree of Government control over home schools. However, home schoolers in general appear to be sceptical over the issue of control. Van Oostrum (1997b: 96) cautions that such measures of control need to be based on factual information. Furthermore, in a country such as South Africa, where educational resources and staff are seriously pressured, it is questionable whether the extra manpower and resources required for such control could be spared. Van Oostrum indicates that neglect and abuse of children are a possibility within public schools too. In a comment on the proposed policy for home education, he writes, “The proposed policy therefore, while purporting to protect the interests of children by placing numerous restrictions on home learners, fails largely to ensure that responsible officials do not act in ways contrary to the interests of the learners” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

The issue of whether or not conservative ideas will be propagated remains a contentious one. The question raised thereby is how far it is the parental right, as opposed to the state's duty, to influence a child's personal beliefs and worldview deliberately. It is not the objective of every educator or parent to develop critical thinkers. Some would argue that it is the parents' constitutional and individual right to decide to which ideas their child should be exposed. Pitted against this, are the questions of community responsibility and the rights of the child. It would be hoped that a balance between the rights of the parent, the child and the community could be achieved.

2.7 *Disadvantages and advantages of home schooling*

2.7.1 *Disadvantages and difficulties of home schooling*

2.7.1.1 *Financial*

All things considered, a parent who waives employment or a career in order to home school makes financial sacrifices, however noble the cause (Colfax & Colfax 1988:11; Butler 2000: 47).

A certain amount of cash outlay is required (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 10). Rudner (1998: 18) discovered a significant difference in the achievement levels of home-school students in relation to the amount of money that was spent on educational materials, such as lesson materials, tutoring, textbooks, enrichment services and testing. In addition, students in higher income families had consistently higher scores. These achievement differences became more prominent for learners in higher grades. Furthermore, as Colfax and Colfax (1998: 11) comment, some parents, especially the single parent, cannot financially afford to forgo employment in order to home school.

2.7.1.2 *Commitment*

Butler (2000: 45) states that an all-embracing level of commitment and discipline from both parents and students are required in order to home school. Butler (2000: 45) warns that those who "begin projects with a great deal of enthusiasm, but have difficulty following through once the novelty has worn off, should probably look for other educational alternatives". Butler (2000: 47) cites an example which she saw where a child chose to return to public school and was inadequately prepared owing to the parents' deficiency in commitment to the rigours of home schooling.

2.7.1.3 *Restraints on freedom*

Many parents experience home schooling as confining (Butler 2000: 47). Home schooling does require considerable time and energy, as well as a clear conception of where one is heading (Butler 2000: 47). "There is a certain amount of time each day that *must* be set aside for instruction and schoolwork" (Butler 2000: 47).

2.7.1.4 *Adjusting to the individual requirements of the child*

Long (2001: 67) indicates that, at first, it is often difficult to establish one's child's developmental level clearly and thus devise a programme in accordance with his/her needs and interests. Furthermore, the pace is different to that of a classroom and a different level of planning is needed (Long 2001: 67). It places demands upon the parent to fulfil the stringent requirements of the home school on a continual basis.

2.7.1.5 *Rapid growth in the movement detrimental to home schoolers*

Home schooling is a rapidly growing movement which shows no signs of slowing down (Long 2001: 69). However, although Long (2001: 69) indicates that home-schooling parents are simply interested in teaching their own children and not "with building an alternative movement to conquer the public school system", the popular nature of the movement presents a new threat to home schoolers. The home-schooling associations could replace the traditional education authorities in the sense of wresting away parental control over their children's education (Long 2001: 69).

2.7.2 *Advantages*

2.7.2.1 *Family relationships*

Colfax and Colfax (1988: 12) acknowledge that all children can be "difficult" and obnoxious at times. However, they attest to how rewarding it is to watch children learn reading and mathematics skills (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 12).

Furthermore, they say that they are not able to identify with parents who say that they are unable to understand their teen-aged children because, through home schooling, they learnt to understand and support each other as a family (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 12).

2.7.2.2 Awareness of “readiness” in learners

Colfax and Colfax (1988: 44) indicate that children are best able to learn when they are intellectually, emotionally and socially ready to do so. They furthermore indicate that children differ as to when they achieve such readiness.

Butler (2000: 46) asserts that the ability to customise the curriculum in accordance with the individual needs of the learner is one of home schooling’s major benefits. Thus, the home-schooling parent is in an advantageous position to assess whether or not a child is ready for a particular learning area/skill (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 44).

2.7.2.3 Control over who teaches learners

Very few parents have a say in who teaches their children in conventional schools (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 45). Although parents who home school may not always be patient or the most experienced teachers, there are few who have become abusive because they find the task so demanding, as have “a too large minority of public school teachers” (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 46).

2.7.2.4 Autonomy

Most children are able to become proficient in the learning material after only a few months, although the same material is spread over several years in conventional schools (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 47). Furthermore, it takes considerably less time to accomplish a programme of daily lessons at home than at school, mainly because learners set their own pace (Butler 2000: 46).

The implication is that many hours, which could have been used profitably in other activities, are wasted in conventional schools. Thus, once home-school learners have completed their school work, they can engage in tasks such as studying topics of specific interest to them, hobbies, playing musical instruments, community service projects, web page development and mentorships (Butler 2000: 46).

Home-schooled children are able to choose projects which interest them and thus take greater responsibility for their own education (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 47). Families are able to enjoy a high degree of adaptability with regards their schedule and learners are able to spend as much time on a subject as they desire (Butler 2000: 46). With such time and flexibility available, children are able to complete projects at their own pace and engage in in-depth studies of subjects (Long 2001: 67).

“Home schooling [sic] parents eventually discover that, by providing individual attention and appropriate academic freedom, students who were burned out or restrained by labels can flourish in amazing ways” (Long 2001: 67).

2.7.2.5 Creativity

Linked to the above-mentioned aspect of increased autonomy is the issue of creativity. Because of the freedom that home schooling allows, creativity in learners is enhanced (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 48).

2.7.2.6 Individual attention

It seems obvious that home-schooled children will benefit from greater individual attention, but the discrepancy in this area between conventional schools and home-schooled children is alarming. A UCLA investigation of 1 016 public schools observed that teachers averaged seven minutes a day, in total, in personal exchanges with learners (Moore & Moore 1994: 45). In stark contrast, daily interactions in home schools ranged between fifty and almost three hundred (Moore & Moore 1994: 45).

2.7.2.7 Practical aspects

Butler (2000: 46) highlights the minimal effect of severe weather conditions, plus the advantages of positive safety and health considerations when home schooling.

2.8 *The curriculum*

The curriculum is discussed in 2.11.5. An educator's particular choice of curriculum will depend largely upon the underlying rationale for home schooling and the individual home-school educator's basic philosophy of education (Moore & Moore 1994: 23). Butler (2000: 45) advises parents to choose a curriculum in accordance with their educational and personal objectives.

"Just as no two families are alike, so are no two home schools equal" (Long 2001: 67). Long (2001: 67) considers this to be one of the biggest strengths and failings of the home-schooling movement. Long (2001: 67) says that the huge variety of approaches available to home schoolers can, in fact, be *too* large for educators and cause them to become overwhelmed and confused. "In response, they may never formulate a consistent and coherent structure within which to make judgements" (Long 2001: 67).

Colfax and Colfax (1988: 37) describe the public schools' curriculum as dogmatic. They furthermore indicate that there is a failure by educationalists to acknowledge that genuine learning differs according to community, class and social spheres, as well as in accordance with place and time (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 41). "For the most part any standardized, official curriculum is largely meaningless, incoherent and irrelevant to the lives of most children. It is rather a control mechanism, one which interferes with and undermines education" (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 41). They urge parents to instil the "basics" – reading, writing and arithmetic – and then to tailor-make courses in accordance with the needs, interests and abilities of the learner (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 42).

Holt (1981: 60) suggests that in order to sustain a child's appetite for learning, one needs to teach him what he wants to know at that particular time and not what adults think he ought to know at any given time. Colfax and Colfax (1988: 103) are opposed to the pre-packaged curricula on offer, as they believe that home schooling should foster independence and critical thinking, and comment that "this is lost when one set of authorities – public school administrators – is exchanged for another – homeschooling [sic] 'experts' and their products" (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 103).

Moore and Moore (1994: 9) state that many home-schooling families make the crucial error of using the first curriculum or method they encounter. Moore and Moore (1994: 9) maintain that genuine home schooling can only take place if it is “tutorial, handmade, customized to each child”. In this way, a balance is obtained between formal organisation and the liberty for learners to explore (Moore & Moore 1994: 9).

The study by Rudner (1998: 17) indicated no significant difference in the scores of home-schooled learners who were enrolled in a “full-service” curriculum and those who were not. Butler (2000: 46), however, states that, as it was more acceptable, the use of an accredited institution’s programme and feedback allowed for easier re-entry to the public-school system.

Scheps (1999: 38) states that increased numbers of people are shaping their own curricula. More and more independent schools offer assistance to home schools, making available curricula, online instruction, chat rooms, one-on-one counselling, test grading and high school graduation certificates (Scheps 1999: 38).

Scheps comments that the supply of home-schooling resources has developed into a flourishing enterprise and that the Internet has advanced unity amongst home schoolers across the world (Scheps 1999: 38).

Scheps, who is also the author of *The Librarian's Guide to Homeschooling Resources* – ALA, 1999, discusses home schoolers in the library. She says, “Providing reference and nonfiction readers’ advisory service to homeschool [sic] clientele simply means restructuring typical ideas of service to meet a somewhat non-traditional educational approach” (Scheps 1999: 38).

Scheps stresses that many home-schooling parents act as facilitators to their children and that librarians need to become increasingly familiar with this philosophy of learning in order to provide them with suitable materials (Scheps 1999: 38).

Scheps (1999: 38) states that home schoolers want:

- material that is creative and thought-provoking;
- books that disseminate information in a mode that is both exciting and readable;
- information about a particular topic at several levels, suitable for study by children of different age groups;
- hands-on activities, such as experiments, how-to books and videos, crafts, games, cookbooks, model building, dress-up and plays;
- books offering information on a wide variety of subjects, including biographies, trade, science, maths, history, money and investment matters;
- the opportunity to learn about other places and cultures via reading, Internet field trips and virtual Web sites.

Thus Scheps recognises that the curricula required by home-schooling families are specific in nature and urges libraries to assist in this regard.

2.8.1 *The Waldorf approach*

The Waldorf approach is not one that is usually used by home-schooling families. However, it is the approach which is adopted and then discarded within the ethnographic study that is detailed in Chapter Four. Thus, it is pertinent to provide details regarding this approach here.

“Waldorf education is a unique and distinctive approach to educating children that is practiced [sic] in Waldorf schools worldwide”
([http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald faq.html](http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald%20faq.html)).

Waldorf schools operate independently in terms of administration, but recognised associations promote the movement by providing, for example, resources, publications and sponsoring conferences.

Waldorf schooling, founded by Rudolf Steiner, promotes the education of “the whole child”. Academic subjects are juxtaposed with practical and artistic activities. “By freely using arts and activities in the service of teaching academics, an internal motivation to learn is developed in the students, doing away with the need for competitive testing and grading” ([http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald faq.html](http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald%20faq.html)).

Some of the characteristic features include the following:

- Academic activities are not emphasized in the early years. Children learn to read and write from their own writing in the second grade.
- The same teacher teaches the children for the first eight years.
- The utilization of electronic media, in particular the television, is fervently discouraged.
- Subjects which are regarded as non-traditional at mainstream schools are fundamental at Waldorf schools. These include art, music, gardening and foreign languages. In the first grades, all subjects are introduced via the mediums of art. All children are required to play the recorder and to knit.
- Children do not have formal textbooks in the first five grades. They produce their own “textbooks”, which serve as a record of their learning experiences. This book is called the “main lesson book”.

([http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald faq.html](http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald%20faq.html))

The Waldorf curriculum is intended to mirror the phases of a child’s development. “For example, pre-class 1 children are presented with fairy stories matching their dreamy state of consciousness, class 4 study the Vikings and Norse mythology which suit their war-like feelings, class 5 learn of the Greeks at the time their intellect is awakening and their sense of fair play is becoming obvious, and so on” ([http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald faq.html](http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald%20faq.html)).

This approach to the curriculum has been adopted by many home schoolers. Chapter Four addresses an ethnographic study of a home school in which one of the participants is named Louise. A basic outline of the Lower School curriculum is given below in order to indicate the extent to which Louise followed the Waldorf curriculum outline:

Grades 1 - 3:

- Graphic introduction to writing, reading, spelling, poetry, drama, the alphabet.
- Old Testament stories, fairy tales, legends, fables.
- Numeracy: numbers, basic functions of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
- Nature stories, gardening and house building.

([http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald faq.html](http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald%20faq.html))

The main philosophy of Steiner was Anthroposophy, wherein Steiner created a curriculum that was not only receptive to the developmental phases in childhood, but was also intended to foster the child's imagination.

Steiner believed that schools should provide for the needs of the child, instead of accommodating the demands of the Government, and thus he developed schools that nurtured creativity and free-thinking ([http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald faq.html](http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/Wald%20faq.html)). Waldorf education is closely entwined with oral tradition and the accomplishment of oral communication is viewed as central to all learning.

2.9 *Methods of teaching*

This refers to **how** children are taught – the didactic method. Methods of teaching vary and there is no “best” way to teach (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 44). Colfax and Colfax (1988: 44), however, urge parents to use a diverse approach in their choice of methods and materials. “They can continually seek out, sample, test, and discard or retain methods and materials of all kinds without having to worry about professional orthodoxies, fads or fashions” (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 44).

Moore and Moore (1994: 15) provide some guidelines for “shaping” children. These specify that:

- children must be read to from a very young age;
- discussion at all levels is important;
- project learning is more important than structured formal work;
- a goal should be the mastery of basic skills; and
- the educator should have fun with children whilst they learn.

2.9.1 *Materials for learning*

Moore and Moore (1994:15) indicate that materials should be simple and effective. Colfax and Colfax (1988: 60) state that what is needed for home schooling can mostly be handmade or borrowed.

However, they do suggest acquiring certain basic materials, including a good home library, art supplies, musical instruments and laboratory equipment - hardware of various sorts to facilitate exploration, autonomy and creativity (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 60).

2.10 *Stress and burnout*

Moore and Moore (1994) address the problem of stress and burnout in home schooling. They cite that following a rigid structure in an attempt to impose the formal style of conventional schools may be regarded as the foremost cause of burnout in home schoolers (Moore & Moore 1994: 17). To illustrate their point, they suggest that home teaching “is like learning to ice skate after you have been walking for fifteen or twenty or thirty years” (Moore & Moore 1994: 11).

However, they allude to other causes of burnout too. These include: fears of the law; certification demands; achievement testing; behaviour; family health; organisation; sociability; pressure from lecturers and publishers; and the successes and failures of other home teachers (Moore & Moore 1994: 17).

2.10.1 *Home schooling is different from conventional education*

Thus, it would appear that what is required is for home educators to “unlearn” what they know about education. This is especially true in the case of qualified or certified teachers (Moore & Moore 1994: 11). These teachers are schooled in the teaching of the masses and are not knowledgeable about informal tutoring (Moore & Moore 1994: 11). Moore and Moore caution that parents need not feel insecure that they do not have the qualifications to teach their children (Moore & Moore 1994: 11). “If you have a fairly decent basic education and a warm, responsive heart, you can be a good teacher at home” (Moore & Moore 1994: 11).

2.10.2 *A less formal style of teaching reduces stress*

Furthermore, Moore and Moore (1994: 11) indicate that home schooling has a progressive nature in that parents develop their own style of teaching, usually becoming less and less formal. They have to overcome the urge to bring the institutional school into the home (Moore & Moore 1994: 11). Moore and Moore (1994: 27) say that the belief that if we can endure, things will work out – together with the pressure to do things in the same way as everyone else – is an effective barrier to creativity.

Moore and Moore (1994: 11) refer to this as “peer dependency”. By this, they mean that “If you are an average adult, you are so peer dependent that you’re scared sick to stand out from the crowd – your relatives, neighbors [sic], school and church friends” (Moore & Moore 1994: 12). The spectre of failure renders such a person incapable of using any form of education bar standard practice (Moore & Moore 1994: 12). However, Moore and Moore indicate that such practice destroys a child’s love for learning (Moore & Moore 1994: 12).

2.10.3 *Readiness*

Children differ from each other and parents will alleviate stress if they do not force them to do things for which they are not yet developmentally ready (Moore & Moore 1994: 22).

However, when they are developmentally ready, they should be taught the basics – reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling (Moore & Moore 1994: 14). Moore and Moore believe that children are ready for formal study between the ages of eight and twelve (Moore & Moore 1994: 15). “You’ll pay if you ignore the maturity levels at which children naturally integrate their vision, hearing, taste, touch, smell, physical co-ordination, brain development, and reasoning ability” (Moore & Moore 1994: 23). This aspect is also discussed in 2.7.2.2

2.10.4 *Counsel*

Moore and Moore (1994: 15) indicate that one of the most effective means of alleviating stress is for parents to obtain “master teacher counsel”. They urge parents to obtain counsel in order to “get over the humps in the first year or two” (Moore & Moore 1994: 15).

2.10.5 *Negative groups within the ranks of the home schoolers*

Moore and Moore (1994: 19) caution against the following groups:

- *Curriculum rushers* – people who rush into the first approach they come upon, regardless of the developmental levels of their children;
- *Anti-Staters* – people who view the state as their enemy;
- *Zealots without wisdom* – people who promote early formal learning before the children are developmentally ready;
- *Bandwagoners* – curriculum providers who, for whatever reason (often financial), do not hold the best interests of the learners and their parents at heart;
- *Pretenders* – people who act authoritatively and knowledgeably offer counsel, which is based on assumption rather than investigation. (Moore and Moore (1994: 25) suggest that if such people offer legal representation, one should first ask if the organisation operates on a non-profit basis.)
- *Bigotry* – “...one of our most dangerous of burnout traps ...that stubborn and complete intolerance of any creed, belief or opinion that differs from one’s own” (Moore & Moore 1994: 25).

These are groups that represent a negative impact on the movement and home schoolers need to be aware of them. "As homeschool [sic] pioneers, we tell this out of deep concern for parents who burn out, but don't know why" (Moore & Moore 1994: 19). Home-schooling parents should also be aware of a sect of Christian home schoolers, who have sought to create disunity within the movement (Moore & Moore 1994: 25).

Moore and Moore (1994: 26) suggest strongly that home schoolers learn to identify the above-mentioned elements and avoid them, rather than impetuously supporting them.

2.11 *Home schooling in South Africa*

Although the home-schooling movement has gained momentum abroad, it is relatively young in South Africa - the formation of the Association for Home Schooling took place as recently as 1992 and the National Coalition of Home Schoolers (NCHS) in 1996 (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 33). The various provinces also have home-schooling associations. These include the Eastern Cape Home-Schooling Association; the KwaZulu/Natal Home-Schooling Association; and the Western Cape Home-Schooling Association.

In addition, the Pestalozzi Trust was founded in 1998 and is a legal defence fund for home education. It offers to represent member families "... from consultation to correspondence and negotiation with local officials, and in court proceedings all the way through the appellate courts. The Trust will pay all litigation costs for home school [sic] cases it undertakes" (<http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/law.htm>).

Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education in South Africa, describes the Trust as follows: "It is supported by the Home School Legal Defence Association in the USA and has links with a range of international fundamentalist Christian groupings" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>).

All of these associations have web sites that offer information and advice on home schooling, as well as networking opportunities and commentary on current issues regarding home schooling. There is also extensive information on the Internet regarding resources for home schooling.

Louw (1992: 357) indicates that home schooling in South Africa is not a novel phenomenon and dates back to the days of the early Trekboers and Voortrekkers. He states that it can be regarded as the most traditional form of education. However, the main difference is that, in those days, parents had no alternative but to home school, whereas in the contemporary sense of the word, parents choose to home school their children (Louw, 1992: 358).

Home schoolers in South Africa make use of much of the overseas literature in informing and guiding policy, and didactic approaches. For example, the Charlotte Mason approach is outlined by the Home Schooling Association and Hout Bay Church International stocks literature on the approach. Charlotte Mason is a British educator and is "now very fashionable among the home schooling [sic] fraternity" (Behr 1997: 53). Van Oostrum (in Behr 1997: 53) says that the majority of home schoolers in South Africa are white, English-speaking families. He adds that the number of Afrikaans families is on the increase.

2.11.1 *The legal situation*

Until recently, school attendance in South Africa was compulsory and home schooling, without exemption, was illegal. In 1994, Andre and Bokkie Meintjies were prosecuted for home schooling their children. They were given a suspended sentence (Van Oostrum 1997b: 1). However, in 1996, the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) was passed and section 51 states that a learner can be registered by the provincial Head of the Education Department if that person is satisfied that :

- the registration will be in the best interest of the child,
- the minimum requirements of the curriculum in the public schools will be met and
- the home education will correspond with the minimum standard of education in public schools (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum, 1997a: 33).

The home-schooling associations stress that home schooling in South Africa is a legal option. For example, the Eastern Cape Home Schooling Association comments on its website "Home Schooling is recognized as a legitimate education alternative" (<http://users/iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/law.htm>).

The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) came into effect in January 1997 (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>). Some of the provinces attempted to formulate policies in order to execute the terms of the policy, but most were uncertain of what was expected of them and they looked towards the National Education Department for direction (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

The National Coalition for Home Schoolers (NCHS) conservatively estimated that more than six thousand families were home schooling their children and that up to 95% elected not to register until the relevant policies and procedures that would pertain to them were made known (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

The National Coalition of Home Schoolers furthermore indicated that many home schoolers "had been forced underground – a situation that is most undesirable in the long term, because children may grow up with a fear of otherwise legitimate authority and a taste for civil disobedience" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

On 28 July 1998, the first draft of National Policy guidelines for home education was published. This contained guidelines for the registration of learners for home education. Guidelines included information regarding the application for registration, conditions for registration and withdrawal of registration. The second draft was published on 9 April 1999.

On 23 November 1999, in accordance with The National Education Policy Act (NEPA, No. 27 of 1996), the final Policy for the Registration of Learners for Home Education was passed.

The aforementioned document contains Policy for the Registration of Learners for Home Education and states that home education is:

- a. a programme of education that a parent (1) of a learner(s) may provide to his/her own child at their own home. In addition, the parent may, if necessary, enlist the specific services of a tutor for specific areas of the curriculum; or
- b. a legal, independent form of education, alternative to attendance at a public or an independent school"

(Policy for the registration of learners for home education –

23 November 1999: <http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/law.htm>).

The NEPA (No 27 of 1996) furthermore stipulates that parents “may not instil unfair discrimination, racism or religious intolerance in learners.”

In addition, several conditions for registration of a learner have to be complied with. The Head of Department must be content that:

- a) the home education “is in the best interest of the learner”; is beneficial to the learner; complies with the fundamental right of the learner to education; and will be taught at least as persistently and to the same standard as in a public school;
- b) the number of learning hours, available learning resources and highest education standard achieved by the learner is declared; the proposed learning programme is submitted; and the learning programme suits the age and ability of the learner, heeds the minimum requirements of the curriculum and is not of an inferior standard to that of public school education;
- c) the language policy and specified outcomes of the eight learning areas are complied with;
- d) a learner receives a minimum of three hours contact teaching per day;
- e) the parent will protect the learner from any form of abuse or unfair discrimination and will not promote racism or religious intolerance within the learner; and
- f) the values of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa prevail in the education which is provided at home.

The Policy for the Registration of Learners for Home Education (November 1999) outlines duties of the parent for the monitoring of home education. Such duties include:

- a) keeping a record of attendance; building up a portfolio of a learner's work, including up-to-date records of progression; providing evidence of intervention and educational support; and making all of the above available for inspection by an education official;
- b) keeping evidence of continuous assessment for a period of three years;
- c) providing for mandatory assessment of a learner's progress, upon completion of each phase, by an independent and suitably qualified person who has been approved by the department.

Guidelines for the withdrawal of registration are also included. In addition, there is a pro forma application for the registration of a learner for home education.

2.11.2 *Reactions to legislation*

It would appear that much of the initial reaction to legislation regarding home schooling focused on the requirements that surrounded registration. The responses that follow are made up of commentary, which was delivered by various home-schooling associations. However, this study recognises that there are several individuals who home school, but do not belong to the home-schooling associations and thus do not share the same views. For example, on 28 September 2001, a home-schooling parent is quoted as saying: "I find the responses of the home-schooling associations in general to be nothing less than reactionary. I have no problem with the current legislation and believe that it is there to protect the child" (Moore, personal interview conducted by researcher).

2.11.2.1 *Criticism of the South African Schools Act*

Although home schooling has been formally recognised, the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) came under criticism from several parties. It would seem that the problematic area is the requirement that the Head of Department be satisfied that home schooling is in the best interest of the learner.

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 34) indicate that this section of the law can be interpreted as relinquishing to the Head of Department the right to decide on the child's best interest from an educational viewpoint.

Lines (1996: 77) states that: "This militates against the assumption in common law, in the Constitution, and in international instruments of human rights, that the individual knows his or her best interest, and that in the case of children, parents are assumed to act in the interest of their children unless proven otherwise."

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 34) state that instead of protecting the interests of the child, Section 51 legislates against them and may be considered to be open to constitutional challenge.

Furthermore, Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 34) question the knowledge of education officials with regard to home schooling. They then posit that the law passed by the National Parliament "is not based on knowledge of home education, but on ignorance of it" (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum, 1997a: 37). Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum adopt the stance that, according to the South African Constitution, it is the right of all parents to "choose their children's education and to educate their children according to their own convictions" (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum, 1997a: 34).

2.11.2.2 *Responses to the proposed policy for the registration of learners for home schooling*

The proposed policy (draft guidelines published on 28 July 1998) drew weighty commentary from members of the National Coalition of Home Schoolers. A document entitled *Comments on Draft Guidelines for the registration of learners for home education* was drawn up by the National Coalition for Home Schoolers on 7 August 1998 (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>). In this document, exception is taken to the fact that the representative organisations of home schoolers were given only 48 hours to respond to the draft policy document. "This is confrontation – not consultation" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

Nevertheless, a statement of appreciation is made: "Our deep disappointment with the treatment meted out to the principle [sic] stakeholders in this issue is to some extent relieved by the abundant evidence in the document that some departmental officers have invested much time and energy in stressful schedules to study the pedagogical features of the phenomenon of home education as well as the policy alternatives and have made sincere attempts to provide for the unique nature of home education in the draft policy" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

It is important to note that there are some points of agreement between the NCHS and the National Department of Education:

- the affirmation of home schooling as a legitimate option;
- clarification that the term "interest of the child" refers to affairs of educational interest; and
- clarification on "the minimum requirements of the curriculum in public schools" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

General and specific concerns are outlined with recommendations for improvement. The fundamental objection to the draft policy appears to be the perception that the language in which it is expressed creates a legal presupposition that home schoolers are guilty of violating a child's right to suitable education, unless it can be proven differently (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

This objection by the National Coalition of Home Schoolers is couched in strong language: "In terms of the draft policy the assumption of parental negligence (or worse) is reinforced (when parents fail to apply for the prescribed registration) by the sanction of criminalising home educating [sic] parents, and by viciously labelling and stigmatising the home educated [sic] children as 'truants' ... the term constitutes nothing less than officially sanctioned libel and an insult to the innocent" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

In this document, it is deemed unfair that Section 3 of the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) states that if a *learner's* rights are infringed upon while *attending a school*, the onus is upon the learner's parent to prove that this is so and, thus, there is an assumption of innocence on the part of the school. Furthermore, the document states that there is apparently no other country that has a statute which places "a similar burden on applicants for home education" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

The document concludes by saying that it finds the language of the proposed policy statement oppressive and that its members have reacted to it with fear, anger and dismay.

"The entire structures of the organised home schooling [sic] community are preparing to dismantle the organs established to negotiate with authorities. They are ready to disappear underground to protect their rights by secrecy if good governance is not to be had" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

Furthermore, the National Coalition of Home Schoolers (NCHS) has made a declaration of intent to establish an organisation that will provide them with funds and expertise to take legal action. It goes on to announce the overwhelming success of similar organisations in other countries. The direct implementation of this threat led to the formation of the Pestalozzi Trust. Thus, the reaction of the organised home-schooling community to the proposed policy was negative and resulted in an organised attempt at defiance, as well as a threat of legal action. The NCHS nevertheless concludes by saying, "If, on the other hand, the problems relating to the assumption of parental negligence as opposed to the assumption of school diligence can be solved, the present draft policy holds the promise that its implementation may promote good relations between home educators and education authorities."

It would appear that by this statement, the home-schooling association is attempting to "dangle" the proverbial carrot before the education authorities by offering co-operation in exchange for a change in the policy or, more profoundly, threatening to withhold co-operation should there be no change in the proposed policy.

2.11.2.3 *Conflict and confrontation*

On Friday 7 August 1998, a meeting between various officials of the National Department of Education, representatives of the NCHS and representatives of the Western Cape Home Schooling Association took place (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>). This was apparently only the second time that such a meeting had taken place – despite several requests by the NCHS for such a meeting.

The above-mentioned document commenting on the proposed policy was submitted at the meeting (cf 2.11.2.2). A report by Leendart van Oostrum (leader of the NCHS) followed the meeting. The report was entitled *Education Department to hold children to ransom*.

A large proportion of the document is related to the issue of truancy and it is not without some rancour that a paragraph in the document was subtitled *Official truancy*. Herein it is stated that the officer responsible for the policy did not arrive at the meeting and nor did he excuse himself. This did not augur well for positive relations between the two parties. Van Oostrum states that during the meeting the Government representatives “demanded” that, along with objection to unacceptable clauses, the home-education representatives propose viable alternatives. The representatives felt that this was an unreasonable proposal, given that they had been allowed only 48 hours in which to respond to the policy (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

Van Oostrum indicates that tensions ran high during the meeting and the department’s legal adviser threatened “to apply the power of the law to instil order on the education front” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>). The representatives of home educators found this statement laughable and state, rather tongue-in-cheek that “these comments, addressed to the representatives of home educators, seemed quite absurd when viewed in the light of thousands of children who are registered to attend public schools, but who seem to find no point in doing so and, with the teachers, simply stay away.” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

The representatives of home education responded to legal threats by emphasising once again that home educators would then be forced underground and that this would “create an atmosphere in which children are likely to learn to fear legitimate authority, and develop a taste for civil disobedience” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

In addition to this, they pointed out just how difficult it would be to police such legislation and that valuable law enforcement resources could be used more productively in areas such as “educating school children and apprehending and prosecuting murderers thieves, [sic] and rapists” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

Van Oostrum emotively states: “The most insidious effect, though, is that many real cases of child neglect will go unnoticed while the Department chases after bona fide home schoolers who were driven underground by its own totalitarian policies” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

One of the issues which was discussed, and to which the representatives of home education took serious offence, is the charge of truancy. Van Oostrum describes it as a “vicious label” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>). The policy states that if parents do not comply with conditions of registration (which have been termed “unreasonable” by Van Oostrum <http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>), then children will be classified as “truant”, parents will be answerable in court and could ultimately be sentenced. In addition, Van Oostrum objects that children, by being labelled truant, become responsible for the actions of their parents (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>). This, he declares unlawful and unconstitutional, and comments that it is also a severe infringement on human rights (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

According to Van Oostrum, the word “truant” can be defined as “wilful shirking, loitering, or idling by the children”, which is unfair as “all the Department requires to declare a child a culprit is that the child be educated at home without having been registered for home education” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

Furthermore, says Van Oostrum, once a child has been declared “truant”, parents can be deemed neglectful in terms of the Children’s Act and their child could, because of this, be removed to a “place of safety” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

Van Oostrum maintains that the case would then be heard in Children’s Court, which is far less formal and held in camera; he then issues the warning that “children can be in the hands of welfare authorities within hours if the family is not adequately represented” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>). He continues by saying that truancy charges are “the only instrument of oppression left for totalitarian administrations once it becomes clear that there is no valid pedagogical argument for compelling children to attend schools” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/govpol.html>).

It is clear that Van Oostrum feels strongly about the attitude adopted by the Government towards home schooling. In his conclusion, Van Oostrum comments that the Government, by its actions, has elected to “antagonise” home-educating parents and has “chosen confrontation” (<http://www.grobler.co.za/hs/draft.htm>).

It would thus seem that relations between the Government and the home-schooling fraternity were fraught with tension after the above-mentioned events had taken place.

2.11.2.4 Issues relating to assessment

On 13 August 1998, the NCHS issued a document which was entitled *Considerations relating to assessment of home learning* (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/assess.html>). Assessment of home learning is governed by Section 51(2)(b) of the South African Schools Act.

In this document, there is a requisite that home learners fulfil the minimum requirements of the curriculum in public schools and that this is achieved in accordance with standards attained in public schools (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/assess.html>).

The Act does, however, recognise that home learning may surpass both these boundaries (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/assess.html>). The document, submitted by the NCHS, (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/assess.html>) points out that the Act does not oblige home schoolers to present any other forms of additional assessment which they may have done. It is unclear whether this statement is a criticism of the Act or an informative measure for home schoolers.

The document goes on to explain the differences between formative, summative and continuous assessment. It suggests that there is a distinction between formative and summative assessment and points out that the state's concern centres on the latter. Interestingly, there are pedagogical differences between home schooling and public schooling, and these differences are often only evident to a home-schooling parent. Thus, consultation is obviously beneficial to all parties.

There is further comment regarding the nature of the assessment tool and the question of whether or not it meets the criteria of validity and reliability. A brief definition of these two terms is possibly advisable: "A valid assessment assesses what it purports to assess, and not something else. A reliable assessment discriminates with a reasonable degree of accuracy between candidates who have achieved an objective and those who have not" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/assess.html>).

The document also indicates, by means of a diagram, the domain over which it deems the state may legitimately have an interest (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/assess.html>).

The document concludes by urging that home educators be informed as to the requirements of the national curriculum which are pertinent to public-school learners, as well as being aware of which validated assessment instruments are utilised by public schools.

**2.11.2.5 Responses to an amended policy for the registration of learners
(April 1999) and an attempt towards co-operation**

In May 1999, a document entitled *Comments on proposed policy for home education* was written by Leendert van Oostrum and followed the publication of a further policy for the registration of learners for home education (9 April 1999) issued by the Government.

In this document, it is stressed that home-educating parents are not in favour of underground home schooling. One of the problems is that “large scale underground home schooling and non-compliance, as presently occurs in South Africa, makes it more difficult and expensive for communities and legitimate authorities to identify and prosecute real cases where children may be neglected, exploited, or otherwise abused” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

However, they indicate that the aforementioned non-compliance would inevitably result should excessive restrictions be placed on the rights and liberties of home learners. (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>).

In the document, a detailed discussion of terminology follows, but this shall not be addressed here. Several aspects of the proposed policy are endorsed and noted with appreciation.

However, there are many concerns. Amongst these is the concern that many of the proposed measures of control are too restrictive and no information regarding any limitations which are to be imposed upon the actions of officials is offered (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>). A further concern is that officials do not need to have any specialised knowledge regarding the “specific pedagogical nature” of home education (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>). The document states that although measures will be taken to protect the interests of home learners, there are no measures in place to ensure that the actions of officials are not detrimental to home learners.

A detailed list of particulars of concerns, as well as corresponding alternatives, follows in the document. Clearly, the document (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/comment.html>) sincerely attempts to offer positive and carefully planned input regarding the policy and, in so doing, makes a somewhat begrudging attempt at co-operation with the Government.

2.11.3 *Heightened conflict between the Government and Home-education Associations*

February 2000 saw heightened conflict between home schoolers and the Government. A parent in Gauteng was charged with not complying with the provisions of the South African Schools Act. (*Sunday Times* 6 February 2000). This led to an outcry from the home-schooling associations.

On 30 July 2001, the Draft Revised National Curriculum was published. In support of this document, Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, wrote: "Our goal is to assist learners to reach high Academic standards, to build a solid foundation for lifelong learning and to improve the quality of learning and teaching throughout the system" ([http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE.Sites/Curriculum/New 2005/draft revised national curriculum.htm](http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE.Sites/Curriculum/New%202005/draft%20revised%20national%20curriculum.htm)). This resulted in heated debate by the press, radio talk shows and discussions on the Internet.

On 30 July 2001, Professor Kader Asmal, assisted by Professor Linda Chisholm, published a response to this debate that took the form of a stern admonishment of the Pestalozzi Trust (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>). The strongly-worded opening paragraph describes the discussions as a "bizarre campaign" orchestrated by the Pestalozzi Trust. Asmal (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>) goes on to outline what he perceives the Trust to be. The Pretoria-based Pestalozzi Trust Home-schooling Movement was founded in 1998 and is supported by the Home School Legal Defence Association in the USA. It has links with a range of international fundamentalist Christian groupings (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>).

Asmal perceives the main criticisms of the National Curriculum to be of the Social Sciences and Life Orientation Learning Area Statements. In these particular fields of study, learners are exposed to different religions and worldviews, so that they are in a better position to gain an understanding of society and its various communities (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>). Asmal states that the South African Home Schoolers promote a Christian education (based on Theocentric Christian Education) and that to them “understanding differences and similarities between religions is the worst abomination” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>).

Asmal emphasises the fact that the Constitution of South Africa embodies the separation of the State and the Church, as well as the individual’s right of state-guaranteed education (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>). Asmal indicates that home schoolers (he uses an all-embracing reference) disagree with both the aforementioned aspects. He states that “they want a theocratic education system based in Christian education regardless of the separation of Church and State and regardless of the reality of religious and cultural diversity in the country and the rights of all religious communities in it. They cannot abide learning about the religious beliefs and practices of those who do not share their own. As such, their aims and goals are unconstitutional” (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Asmalattack.htm>).

Furthermore, he emphasises that these are the views of the minority and are not shared by the key religious organisations and leaders of the country, who were closely involved in devising the approach to be taken to religious education in South African schools. Asmal accuses the “Home Schoolers” of attempting to do away with choice, freedom of thought and critical thinking – precisely the criticisms which the Association of Home Schoolers levelled at Asmal. He asserts that it would be unconstitutional, as well as impossible, for the state to renounce responsibility for education. He concludes by saying “Home Schoolers should not attempt to impose their loony, paranoid and perverse ideas on the nation.”

A statement, responding to Asmal's document of 30 July 2001, ensued on 5 October 2001. It is entitled *Statement by the Pestalozzi Trust legal defence fund for home education* (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Response%20to%20Asmal.htm>).

The dispute between the two parties was exacerbated by the Pestalozzi document, which states "It is sad that this spectacular ignorance and these silly propaganda antics should be exhibited by the two most influential policy makers on education in the country" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Response%20to%20Asmal.htm>). Furthermore, the Pestalozzi document describes (in strongly-worded terms) the curriculum as "unlawful" (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/curriculum/Response%20to%20Asmal.htm>).

2.11.4 *Home schooling and the curriculum in South Africa*

General aspects relating to the curriculum are discussed in 2.8. Within South Africa, several curricula providers exist. The Eastern Cape Home Schooling Association (ECHSA) identifies several approaches and lists curricula providers that fall within those approaches (<http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa/method.htm>). Most of the curricula providers on the ECHSA site are linked to sites of their own, thus the browser can have instant access to information regarding these curricula providers.

2.11.5 *Various approaches, curricular providers and web sites*

The approaches, plus curricula providers listed underneath each approach, as categorised by the ECHSA, are as follows:

a) *The Classical Approach*

This approach serves as a return to the antiquated styles of teaching. It focuses on the classical languages such as Greek and Latin; Basics such as Mathematics and Spelling; and higher order cognitive skills.

i) *Tree of Life*

b) The Conventional Text Book Approach

This is the approach according to which many of us were schooled. It is also known as the **Curricula/Structured Approach** or **School At Home**. It involves an individual text book that teaches each subject independently.

- i) A Beka Book
- ii) Alpha Omega
- iii) ACE School of Tomorrow
- iv) Bob Jones University Press
- v) Brainline/Breinlyn (JUNISA – Computer based)
- vi) Theocentric Christian Education

c) The Unit Study Approach

This is a means of synthesising all – or as many as possible – subjects under one topic.

- i) Alta Vista
- ii) Amanda Bennett
- iii) Design-A-Study
- iv) Far Above Rubies
- v) Five in a Row
- vi) Konos
- vii) Listen My Son
- viii) Prairie Primer
- ix) Weaver

d) The Unschooling Approach (Delight Directed Approach)

In this approach, the educator is led by the child's natural interests and curiosity.

e) The Charlotte Mason Approach

This is an approach founded on essential subjects and combines the fine arts. Classic literature, music and art are dealt with directly.

- i) Five in a Row
- ii) Sonlight

f) **The Delayed Academics Approach**

This was founded by Raymond and Dorothy Moore who believe that children are better able to cope with formal academic study when they are older (cf 2.8).

i) **The Moore Foundation**

g) **The Accelerated Education Approach**

This is an approach which begins formal learning at a young age and progresses rapidly and intensively.

h) **The Montessori Approach**

This approach is named after Maria Montessori, its founder and is based on the natural development of the child and self-discovery.

i) **The Eclectic Approach**

This involves the combining of elements from several approaches.

j) **Curriculum 2005**

This is discussed further on in section 2.11.5.1.

The Internet is a valuable source of advice on matters such as curricula, methods of teaching, teaching material, legislation regarding home schooling, networking opportunities and current trends in home schooling.

There are a huge number of websites available. Some e-mail addresses which may prove helpful to home schoolers include:

- The National Coalition of Home Schoolers

Curamus@lantic.co.za

Durham@dundee.lia.net

- The ECHSA

Exchsa@iafrica.com

- The KwaZulu/Natal Home Schooling Association
Kznhsa@webmail.com
- Western Cape Home Schooling Association (WCHSA)
Gaynor@cyberhost.co.za
- Brainline (curriculum providers)
Brain@brainline.com
- Clonard publishing (curriculum providers)
Clonard@csurf.co.za
- Association for Home Schooling
curamusl@lantic.co.za

Internet resources include:

- SA home schooling resources in South Africa
<http://www.grobler.co.za/has-dr.htm>
- Home Schooling Legal Defense Association (USA)
<http://www.hslda.org/nationalcenter/statsandreports/rudner1999>
- Pestalozzi Trust
<http://www.pestalozzi.org>
- ECHSA
<http://users.iafrica.com/e/ec/echsa>
- KwaZulu Natal Home Schooling Association (KZNHSA)
Kznhsa@webmail.com
- WCHSA
<http://www.grobler.co.za/wchsa>

2.11.5.1 Outcomes-based education

Outcomes-based education (OBE) has become an integral part of the new educational policy in South Africa. It has been named "Curriculum 2005" chiefly because that was initially the intended date for full implementation of the system.

Durham (1996: 78) has indicated that OBE in its genuine form should not have any bearing on whether a child is educated at school or at home.

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 11) are relatively critical of OBE. The main objection mirrors a concern expressed by Marlow (1994: 452). Outcome-based education assessment involves the evaluation of competency in the various subject areas as delineated in terms of outcome goals developed by the state. These are termed the core curriculum or core outcomes (Marlow 1994: 452). The South African system refers to critical outcomes.

The aspect which is potentially disturbing is the latent possibility of infusing values into the curriculum, which may be associated by some with secular humanism (Marlow 1994: 452). Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 10), in expressing concerns about evaluation, state that "these objectives relating to many aspects of attitude, social and communication skills, personal habits, world view and so on are to be explicitly specified and will be taken into account when qualifications are awarded or withheld."

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 10) exhibit disquiet about the prospect of the religious life of the child being evaluated in terms of "outcomes". Marlow (1994: 452) cites an example where a reform bill incorporating OBE in Pennsylvania was defeated in January 1993, principally because of one outcome - "appreciating and understanding others" (Marlow 1994: 453).

Certain parents found the incumbent inclusion of goals regarding interpersonal communication and cultural diversity, which they saw to support lifestyles different from students' own, unacceptable. Parents were opposed to what they perceived to be the advocacy of alternative lifestyles, such as homosexuality (Marlow 1994: 453).

"Despite the fact that home educators do not send their children to public schools, they fear that they could be expected to teach and be held accountable for state-mandated outcomes they find inimical to their own beliefs "(Marlow 1994: 453).

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 10) suggest that there is a danger that the system could subject children to oppression in that particular state-approved attitudes, habits and views would have to be demonstrated in order to gain a qualification.

Moreover, Marlow (1994: 453) indicates that assessment also raises questions with regard to accountability in court battles regarding equivalency requirements. Marlow expresses concerns that OBE could change standards of accountability and states that "For most home educators, whose primary motivation in educating their children is the promotion and protection of their family's belief system and lifestyle, this prospect is unthinkable" (Marlow 1994: 453).

Van Oostrum and Van Oostrum (1997a: 11) state that OBE could work well should families decide to use this education method of their own volition. However, they warn that home schoolers "would have to be vigilant against unconstitutional requirements being placed on them by OBE structures..." (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 11). They also comment that the implementation of OBE elsewhere has been problematic and suggest that the impending failure thereof in public schools will increase the numbers of home schoolers (Van Oostrum & Van Oostrum 1997a: 11).

Parents need to be aware of the pitfalls with regard to value-based outcomes so that they can make informed decisions. However, this does not necessarily forebode the collapse of the entire system. The controversy does highlight the significance of self-determination, with regard to their children's education, for home-schooling parents.

2.11.6 Summary

Home schooling in South Africa is a legal option. However, the emergence of legislation in this regard has led to conflict between the education authorities and home-education associations. To date, relations between the two parties remain tense, a situation which is not beneficial, ultimately, for the learners in question.

2.12 Conclusion

The home-schooling movement has changed in nature since the writings of reformers such as Holt (cf 2.2.1.1). It has developed into a substantial and globally organised group – which some may view as a social movement (cf 2.2.1).

Certain common trends amongst home-schooling families have emerged (cf 2.3). However, the home-schooling movement is by no means homogenous in nature. Very often the nature of the home school is determined by the rationale which governs a parent's decision to home school (cf 2.4). Various philosophical beliefs underpin parents' approaches to home schooling (cf 2.4.3). It would appear that religious motivation (particularly Christian) has become a strong factor in parents' decision to home school, as well as in their individual approaches to home schooling.

Some studies, such as those of Knowles et al (1992), have delineated phases of home schooling (cf 2.4.3.4) and it would be of interest to try to establish in which phase the South African home-schooling movement currently finds itself.

It is worth considering the extent to which the home-schooling movement can be viewed as a recognised social movement and, as such, a response to various social forces.

Criticisms of home schooling have been varied and extensive (cf 2.5). Many of these criticisms have been invalidated by studies that have been conducted (cf 2.6). However, this is not to say that every home school will automatically function optimally and there are both advantages and disadvantages to home schooling (cf 2.7).

What could be of value is the possibility that institutionalised schools could attempt to observe and incorporate aspects which are positive in home schools, so as to function more effectively.

In South Africa, many parents are seeking alternative forms of education for their children (cf 2.11). The growing numbers of parents who choose to home school indicate that home schooling appears to be an attractive and valid alternative for many South African parents. The new approach to education, Curriculum 2005 or Outcomes-based Education, is not incompatible with home schooling (cf 2.11.5.1). It would appear, however, that not all are in favour of the approach and it could be a factor in South African education that spurs some parents on in their decision to home school.

What does emerge as a response to these criticisms is that home schooling does not represent the educational neglect of the child. Rather, home schooling appears to represent a valid alternative to institutionalised education. In South Africa, both the home-schooling movement and institutionalised education stand to benefit from further research into the topic.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 *Introduction*

The study delineated in Chapter Four involves qualitative research techniques. An ethnographic study of one home-schooling family was undertaken and data-gathering techniques involved include participant observation and ethnographic interviewing. Many students and academics remain better acquainted with the quantitative method of inquiry, which is supported by the positivist or scientific paradigm (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 5-6). For this reason, in order to facilitate an understanding of the nature and scope of the study, an exposition of the qualitative research tradition was deemed necessary.

Qualitative research is used in many disciplines – for example, anthropology, sociology, psychology, sociolinguistics, political science - and each shares a common thread in that they all rely on sensory inputs obtained via verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory and gustatory observations (Le Compte, Millroy & Preissle 1992: xv). The qualitative tradition encompasses a variety of methodological and theoretical traditions. However, "... in the less than thirty years since qualitative research emerged as a serious approach to inquiry in education, its status has evolved from that of an upstart, marginal, and often pariah stepchild to a respected member of the research community" (Le Compte et al 1992: xvi).

The exposition which follows reflects information regarding the particular understanding of the qualitative research tradition upon which the study in Chapter Four has been based, as well as outlining the underlying principles of this specific method of research.

3.2 *Characteristics of qualitative research*

3.2.1 *Introduction*

"The phrase *qualitative methodology* refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour" (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 5). A qualitative inquiry exhibits features common to other studies of a similar nature. Not every study may exhibit each feature to the same extent, but Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 29) agree that it is somewhat an "issue of degree". What follows is an elaboration on some of the generally accepted characteristics of qualitative research.

3.2.2 *Qualitative research occurs within a natural setting*

Qualitative research almost always takes place within the field where all the elements of a setting may be studied holistically (Borg & Gall 1989: 385). Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 8) stress that all aspects of social life are considered sufficiently important to be studied. Thus, researchers spend sizeable amounts of time conducting educational research within schools, families, neighbourhoods and other places (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 29). The researcher views settings and people in holistic terms, and, thus, the research situation is not reduced to its component parts or variables (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 6).

3.2.3 *The researcher is the key instrument within qualitative research*

The human observer is the principal researcher; however, supplementary techniques, such as questionnaires and paper-and-pencil tests, are also employed (Borg & Gall 1989: 385). Materials, which are mechanically recorded, are analysed holistically and the researcher's insight becomes the main device for analysis (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 29). The reasoning behind using a human observer is that only a human is "sufficiently flexible to adapt to the complex situation as it evolves and to identify and take into account biases that result from the interactions and value differences between the 'instrument' and the subject" (Borg & Gall 1989: 385).

3.2.4 *Inductive analysis of data*

Instead of beginning with a research hypothesis, the qualitative researcher studies the data inductively so that unexpected findings are disclosed (Borg & Gall 1989: 386). Thus, theory comes forth from the bottom up and not vice versa (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 30). Patterns in the data are sought after and concepts, insights and illumination emerge from these patterns (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 5). Therefore, qualitative research requires a flexible research design with unspecific ally conceived questions (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 5).

3.2.5 *Grounded theory approaches*

Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 32) describe grounded theory as the construction of a picture which forms whilst collecting and examining the components thereof. Theory emerges from the data. Borg and Gall (1989: 386) cite grounded theory approaches as a major characteristic of qualitative research.

3.2.6 *Research design*

The design of the research develops while the research progresses (Borg & Gall 1989: 386). Implicit to this aspect is the fact that qualitative researchers are not simply concerned with outcomes, but with process as well (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 31).

3.2.7 *The role of the subject*

The qualitative researcher attempts to rebuild reality from the perspective of the subjects and thus the subject will inevitably have an influence on the outcomes (Borg & Gall 1989: 386). Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 33) state that observers are concerned with the perspective of the participant because they are interested in the ways in which individuals construe meaning for their lives. The inner dynamics of conditions are clarified and exposed once the perspective of the participant is sought (Bogdan and Biklen 1992: 32).

3.2.8 *Summary*

Qualitative research consists of several identifiable characteristics which are present to some degree in each study. Research occurs within a natural setting and focuses on social processes and dynamics. The entire setting with all its concomitant players and interactions are taken into account. The researcher becomes the key element of the research - all other techniques employed ultimately rely on the reasoning ability of the researcher for interpretation. Theory emerges from the research and is termed *grounded theory*. The research design is flexible and usually consists of loosely formulated questions. The role of the subject is paramount to the study and his/her perspective is required.

Although the approach to qualitative inquiry could appear informal, the qualitative researcher is nevertheless highly concerned with obtaining accurate interpretations (Bogdan and Biklen 1992: 32). "It is a piece of systematic research conducted with demanding, though not necessarily standardized, procedures" (Taylor and Bogdan 1984: 7).

3.3 *Ethnography and data gathering in qualitative inquiry*

3.3.1 *Introduction*

Wolcott (1992: 19) proposes that the scope of data-collection techniques within qualitative discovery can be described using three headings. These are often referred to as *observing*, *interviewing* and *archival research*, although Wolcott prefers the terms *experiencing*, *enquiring* and *examining* (Wolcott 1992: 19).

Qualitative researchers have generally come to label the *observing* as "participant observation" and the *interviewing* as "ethnographic interviewing". Qualitative inquiry, say Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 9), is a general term for many philosophical approaches to interpretive research. Thus, qualitative researchers may use terminology such as ethnography, case study, phenomenology or educational criticism, to mention but a few examples (Glesne and Peshkin 1992: 9). Wolcott (1992) provides a detailed exposition of the various terminologies.

For the purpose of the study in Chapter Four, the definition of ethnography as described by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) will be adhered to. They describe ethnography as “the anthropological tradition of long-term immersion in the field in which the researcher collects data primarily by participant-observation and interviewing” (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 10).

This section will discuss ethnography and describe the techniques of participant-observation and the ethnographic interview, as these are the data-gathering techniques used in the study in Chapter Four.

3.3.2 *Ethnography*

3.3.2.1 *Ethnography and culture*

Ethnography is defined as the discovery and comprehensive description of the culture of a group of people (Spradley 1979: iii; Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 38). Culture “refers to the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior [sic]” (Spradley 1972: 5). This includes shared beliefs, values, practices, perspectives, norms, rituals and artefacts that members of a group use in understanding their world and in relating to others (Johnson & Christensen 2000: 321). Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 39) state that the ethnographer is concerned with sharing the meanings that are taken for granted by the participants of a culture and then recreating them in a meaningful way for the rest of the world. The ethnographer has to represent his findings so as to reflect new understandings of cultural events. It is not possible to separate a discussion of ethnography from a discourse on culture and, thus, a description of the relevant cultural practices will continue to appear alongside the ethnographic interpretation in following paragraphs.

3.3.2.2 *Systems of meaning*

Spradley (1979: 4) states that the ethnographer begins his study with a conscious effort to eradicate prior assumptions and beliefs. He attempts to be taught by the people he is studying (Spradley 1979: 4). “The essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand” (Spradley 1979: 5).

These meanings are communicated via language or action (Spradley 1979: 5). Each society attempts to order the meaning systems so as to understand itself, others and the world around it (Spradley 1979: 5). Spradley (1979: 5) describes the systems of meanings as the elements of culture.

3.3.2.3 *Inferences*

Culture is acquired by listening to and observing other people, and then creating inferences from these observations (Spradley 1979: 8). The ethnographer uses the same technique of listening, seeing and then inferring what people know (Spradley 1979: 8). The following sources are used by ethnographers to make inferences: people's speech, people's actions and the artefacts which people use (Spradley 1979: 8). A hypothesis is then inferred and must be tested repeatedly until the ethnographer is certain "a particular system of cultural meaning" is shared by a group of people (Spradley 1979: 8).

3.3.2.4 *Discovering grounded theory*

Grounded theory is discussed in 3.2.5. Spradley (1979: 11) states that ethnographic inquiry is an excellent means of developing grounded theory.

3.3.2.5 *Interpretation*

Wolcott (1992: 21) describes ethnography as "the end-product for the culturally focused description and interpretation that characterise anthropological fieldwork". Thus, the interpretation of one's research is crucial to the ethnographer.

3.3.3 *Participant observation*

3.3.3.1 *Introduction*

Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 15) define participant observation in the following way: "research that involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected". Participant observation is the main technique of the ethnography.

3.3.3.2 *The participant-observation continuum*

Borg and Gall (1989: 391) note that the participant observer can gain a unique perspective and develop meaningful relationships with informants. However, there is a range of observation stretching from participation to observation (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 40).

Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 41) observe that the nature and context of the study, as well as the researcher's theoretical perspective, will have a bearing on his/her positioning upon the continuum. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 40) also note that within any particular study, one may be situated at various points along the continuum of participant to observer.

3.3.3.3 *Research design*

The qualitative research design continues to be flexible both before and after the research (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 16). "Although participant observers have a methodology to follow and perhaps some general research interests, the specifics of their approach evolve as they proceed" (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 16). The entrance of participant observers to the field usually precludes the existence of hypotheses or preconceived ideas (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 16).

Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 16) do note that researchers have general questions in mind when beginning a study. These are interrelated, and Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 16) divide questions into the categories of *substantive* and *theoretical*. Substantive questions relate to issues within a particular setting and theoretical questions relate to sociological issues (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 17). Participant observers do not usually predetermine the nature and number of locations to be studied; this is determined as the study progresses (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 18).

3.3.3.4 *Research setting*

"The ideal research setting is one in which the observer obtains easy access, establishes immediate rapport with informants and gathers data directly related to the research interests" (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 19). However, this is not usually the case.

Qualitative researchers speak about “gaining access” to settings from “gatekeepers” (Taylor & Bogdan 1984; Spradley 1979). In public settings, one can adopt a role and begin questioning people (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 23). This approach has ethical considerations and Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 23) caution that observers identify themselves to people prior to their becoming sceptical about their intentions, particularly when they are involved in illicit activities. When attempting to gain access to private settings, Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 23) refer to the technique of “snowballing”. Snowballing involves winning the trust of a small number of people who will then introduce the researcher to further people (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 24).

3.3.3.5 *Entering the research field*

Participant observers enter the field with the desired intention of establishing reciprocal relationships with informants (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 32).

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 44), the participant observer should attempt to observe all aspects of a situation. The following areas of attention have been identified.

- research setting
- participants within a setting
- events and acts within those events
- people’s gestures.

3.3.3.6 *The role of the researcher*

The researcher needs to establish rapport with subjects (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 36). Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 54) state: “The participant observer’s role entails a way of being present in everyday settings that enhances your awareness and curiosity about the interactions taking place around you.” Total immersion within the setting is required.

3.3.3.7 *Field notes*

“As an analytical research method, participant observation depends upon the recording of complete, accurate and detailed field notes.”(Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 52). Field notes should be recorded after every observation, as well as after chance encounters or telephone conversations (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 53).

Mechanical recording devices are increasingly used during participant observation; however, Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 57) question the effect they have on informants. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 46) state that notes should be descriptive as well as analytical. Analytical notes should include the researcher’s own feelings, impressions, speculations and future plans (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 46).

3.3.3.8 *Complementary data in the field*

Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 51) refer to “fieldwork allies”. Within this category, they include *informants, photographs and documents*.

- *Informants* are members of the research group with whom the researcher develops a close relationship.
- *Photographs* and video taping techniques can enhance or supplement one’s research.
- *Documents* “corroborate your observations and interviews and thus make your findings more trustworthy” (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 56).

3.3.3.9 *Summary*

Participant observation is the key tool of ethnography. It requires keen observation of all aspects of the research situation. Analysis of the situation is an ongoing process and one needs to keep a careful record of events within the field. Participant observation techniques can be supplemented and enhanced by other devices within the field. However, the researcher remains the key instrument of research.

3.3.4 *The in-depth interview*

Qualitative interviewing is not rigid or static, but “has been referred to as nondirective, unstructured, nonstandardized and open-ended” (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 77). The interviewer becomes the research tool and the interview reflects a normal conversation between equals (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 77). The interviews occur over a period of time and the emphasis is upon gaining the informant’s perspective of his/her world and experiences therein (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 77).

As with participant observation, it is important to establish rapport with the respondent. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 63) elaborate upon the nature of rapport. Indeed, these authors (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 63) state that one needs to “develop a clearly defined topic; design questions that fit the topic; ask the questions with consummate skill, and have ample time to ‘pitch’ the questions to forthcoming, available and knowledgeable respondents”. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 92) do emphasise that the questions are structured (in contrast to Taylor and Bogdan). However, they recognise that one should be open to follow up on unexpected leads (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 92).

3.3.5 *Data analysis*

Once the data has been collected, the researcher needs to create order of what has been perceived. The researcher formulates hypotheses, offers explanations and develops theories (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 127). In order to do this, Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 127) suggest that the researcher creates categories, searches for patterns, integrates data and synthesises information.

Spradley (1979: 207) emphasises that when writing an ethnography, the concerns range across the spectrum from the general to the particular. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 148) state that researchers make contributions “from the descriptive to the theoretical”.

3.4 *Design of the research*

3.4.1 *Introduction*

This chapter deals with the research design for the study described in Chapter Four. The study entails an ethnographic study of a home school within the qualitative research mode. A long-term study, in which the observer was immersed in the field in accordance with the anthropological tradition, was undertaken. The investigation took place over six months during 1999. The researcher obtained data mainly by participant observation and in-depth interviewing. Thereafter, data were analysed, and themes were extrapolated and linked where possible to the literature. At the time of writing, the researcher was unaware of any similar such study having been conducted on a home school within South Africa and, thus, the research was exploratory in nature and designed to generate in-depth understanding of the dynamics operating within a home school.

3.4.2 *The nature of the research design*

The study was conducted within the qualitative research tradition which has been described in the former sections of this chapter. A brief overview of some of the main characteristics follows. The study occurred within the natural setting of a home school in as holistic a manner as possible. The observer was the principal researcher and the insight of the researcher was the primary research device. Data were obtained inductively and thus theory was formulated from generalisations made by the researcher. A flexible research design was followed. Thus, the researcher entered the field without preconceived ideas about the participants and with general research questions regarding research interests based on the literature study. It must be noted that a literature review was conducted prior to the study in order to orientate the researcher with some of the main issues with respect to home schooling (cf Chapter Two). The research design developed as the research progressed. The researcher was particularly concerned with the perspectives of the research participants.

3.4.2.1 *Selection of home school*

The means by which the home school in the particular study in Chapter Four was identified is discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.4.2.2 *Criteria for selection*

The specific criteria for the choice of the home school under discussion were as follows:

- a family in which one or more parent/s home schooled his/their own children within the home environment (as opposed to employing a teacher to conduct tuition);
- a situation in which the parents chose to home school for reasons other than geographical (that is because the nearest school is an inconvenient distance away) or medical (that is because a child is too sick to attend a conventional school regularly);
- a situation in which the children were so young that they required a considerable amount of guidance (as opposed to, for example, an older child who was able to study independently);
- a situation in which one or more of the children had been removed from an existing school;
- a situation in which the parent-educator was not a qualified school teacher;
- a situation in which the nature of the setting and personalities of the individuals promised to be “data rich”.

The above characteristics were criteria for selection. In addition to the criteria for selection, the home school that was selected for the study had the following characteristics which the researcher deemed interesting and relevant to the study:

- the family had just begun with home schooling and the researcher was interested in the development of the home school from its inception;
- the family was not following one of the pre-existing programmes of the curricula providers such as ACE (cf 2.11.5);
- The family was centrally situated and was open to the researcher observing whenever it suited her;
- The family was not registered with the department, although an application had been submitted for registration.

After almost a year of attempting to find a suitable family to observe, the researcher was satisfied that the particular choice would provide valuable and interesting data to fulfil the study.

The method used to gain access to participants was by referral. Once people became aware that the researcher was conducting a study of home-schooling families, they offered the names of the families who were home schooling as a matter of interest and generally without prompting. Many of these people asked not to be mentioned in the study and, for ethical reasons, the researcher has chosen to honour their wishes.

The researcher came into contact with the family that she was to observe through her involvement with the local branch of the South African Guild of Speech and Drama Teachers.

3.4.2.3 *The participants*

The family observed are in a middle-class income bracket. They live in a suburban area on the Garden Route of the Cape South Coast (South Africa). So, although the area is suburban, its inhabitants are very close to picturesque and natural surroundings. The father is a Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and the family live in a spacious home, owned by the church and situated in a quiet, upper-class area. Both parents have tertiary education.

Albertus has a degree in Theology and Louise has an honours degree in Drama. Louise's father was also a Dutch-Reformed minister and her siblings were all tertiary educated. She mentioned that she was the only one of her siblings without a Master's degree.

The children, Hanco and Robert, aged seven and three respectively at the time this study was undertaken, participated in the daily activities of the house – such as the growing of vegetables. Louise is a vegetarian, although the children and Albertus are not. The family had a number of pets, including several ducklings and chickens, as well as a dog and a cat. Afrikaans is the mother-tongue of the family, although they all speak excellent English and the children are encouraged to speak English frequently.

3.4.2.4 *Natural setting*

An ethnographic study attempts to be as holistic as possible and takes place in the natural setting. In this study, as many aspects of the research setting as possible were studied. Thus, not only the "school room" was observed, but also elements such as visitors, domestic help, social events, the household routine, domestic pets, the rest of the domestic environment, interruptions, household events which deviated from usual activities, the purchase of new appliances, the activities of the father (who was not directly involved in the children's formal learning activities), visits to the library, nature walks, interaction with neighbours, illnesses and family visits.

The researcher spent approximately six months (February to July 1999) observing the family, with breaks only during school holidays (when the family was away) and for a two-week period when the researcher had a baby. Initially, the family was visited once a week, but later it was visited more frequently (two or three times a week). The researcher returned to the field for additional information - for verification purposes - in September 1999 and July 2001.

The family exhibited a strange mixture of tradition and non-conformity. This was mirrored by their surroundings. Louise is very artistic and the home was creatively decorated, with particular attention being paid to detail. During the time of the study, the home was re-decorated. The garden was extremely well tended. There was a large and challenging climbing-frame for the children, as well as a swimming pool surrounded by beautiful plants. There was a large vegetable garden of organically grown foodstuffs that was attended by Louise.

Although the family has a keen love of nature and advocates a natural way of life, they nevertheless have many modern conveniences, such as a dish-washer, a television set, a video recorder, a high-fidelity stereo system, a microwave, an oven and a washing-machine.

The school room was a former study, approximately three metres by three metres in dimension. Albertus has his office at home, situated right next to the front door. The school room was next to his office.

Louise had painted the school room a bright, warm, pumpkin-orange shade. There was a low pine table in the centre of the room. Louise had ordered special chairs, but they never arrived and the children made do with two little chairs. The room was filled with natural objects which the children had collected on their nature walks. These objects were often used to create a piece of artwork, such as a mobile made of seed pods and bark. Some of Hanko's water-colour paintings, which Robert was supposed to complete, were stuck on the wall. In fact, Robert never did complete the paintings.

In the corner, there was a box of wooden blocks for Robert to play with. The one wall consisted of shelving that still contained many of Albertus's theology books and also served to house the equipment that Louise used to teach the children. At that stage, there was no board on the wall. Several spelling words on brightly-coloured cardboard were pasted on the wall. The room was neat and attractive, and the atmosphere was cheerful.

3.4.2.5 *Gaining access to the research setting*

Gaining access to the study of a home school posed certain difficulties for the researcher. Many home-schooling families were sceptical of researchers owing to the fact that several home-schooling families did not have the required permission to home school from the Government. Furthermore, the intimate nature of an ethnographic study requires the researcher to spend many hours within the research subjects' home and this can prove intrusive to the home schooler.

What made the selection of a particular school especially difficult was that many of the families were not registered with the Head of Department (cf 2.11.1) and were thus, technically, operating illegally. Registration was made more difficult because, although provision for home schooling had been made in South African Schools' Act (cf 2.11.1), policy was only formulated in 1999 and there was confusion within the various departments as to procedure regarding registration. Many families were happy to co-operate with the researcher unofficially, but were not willing to become a part of a study and were not even prepared for their names to be used within a study. One of the families was prepared to allow the researcher to study them if she assisted with tuition. She felt that this would not be in the best interest of the study.

The opportunity to investigate the particular home school which was studied arose in January 1999. At the Annual General Meeting of the local branch of the South African Guild of Speech and Drama Teachers, a member, Louise, announced that she would no longer be able to play as active a role as previously because she was going to home school her children. Attending the meeting as a member of this Guild, the researcher subsequently interviewed Louise informally and found that her situation would meet the criteria specified by a case study. Although not knowing Louise very well, the researcher felt an immediate rapport with her and Louise proved to be very willing to participate in the study.

After Louise had agreed to take part in an ethnographic study, arrangements were made to begin such a study on 15 February 1999. An open relationship developed between the research participants and the researcher, which proved most beneficial to the study.

3.4.3 *Strategies for data collection*

3.4.3.1 *Introduction*

The techniques used are those which are detailed in 3.4. An ethnographic study was undertaken over a period of time. The main technique of the ethnographer is participant observation. Detailed field notes were taken of each observation. In-depth interviews were conducted, recorded and later transcribed in order to obtain greater insight into the perspective of the informants. Further studies, which took place later, involved verifying information gained earlier, so as to substantiate the reliability and validity of the study.

3.4.3.2 *The ethnography*

An ethnography was effected over a period of time. No particular time-span was identified at the beginning of the study, as the nature of the research design is flexible and, once it was felt that sufficient data had been gathered, the researcher undertook to exit the study. The study was conducted over a period of six months, the researcher being present at the home school for between four and five hours a week. Care was taken to note the participants' interpretation and attribution of meaning to social events and experiences in terms of what constituted their particular cultural experience.

3.4.3.3 *Participant observation*

The main technique of the ethnographer is participant observation and this was the primary method employed within this particular study. Initially purely an observer, as the relationship developed, the researcher participated in the sense of interacting within lessons when the subjects initiated the interaction. Participation never extended to actual teaching within the setting or even to offering advice regarding teaching methods or material.

3.4.3.4 *The individual interview*

Much of the insight into the study was developed by means of in-depth interviews. These took place informally while the children had their break or while they were busy working. There were nine key interviews in total, although notes were made of many other interactions. The interviews were largely unstructured, but sometimes questions were asked about the researcher's observations. The topics of the interviews were usually initiated by Louise. Key interviews were recorded and then later transcribed. In-depth interview opportunities with the children arose informally when their mother left the room and they were busy with a task such as knitting or painting. The in-depth interview provided invaluable insight and contributed considerably towards the development of a positive relationship between the participants and the researcher.

3.4.3.5 *The focus-group interview*

This type of interview took place with the whole family present. There were only two such interviews, as the children were too young to participate substantially. In order to provide a more relaxed atmosphere for the children, these interviews were held very informally around the kitchen table. This type of interview afforded the opportunity of triangulation, where data collected on previous occasions were compared and contrasted and the validity of the responses could thus be tested. This also afforded the opportunity to observe differences in behaviour when the family were together and to obtain an idea of additional relationships within the family.

3.4.3.6 *The method of recording data*

Speech and action were noted in an observation journal which was divided into columns headed: *speech*, *action*, *other* (for extraneous occurrences) and *observer comment*. Observations were also recorded on audiotape for maximum recall and then transcribed as field notes directly after the period of observation.

3.4.3.7 *Conclusion*

The main techniques used in the ethnographic study included participant observation and the in-depth interview. This is a time-consuming activity that required much reflection and thought in order to facilitate the analysis of the data at a later stage. Reflection and analysis were nevertheless part of an ongoing process which occurred throughout the study, and were constantly in the mind of the researcher. Such thoughts and reflections were recorded in the form of observer comments in order to assist with later analysis and evaluation of data.

3.5 *Analysis of data and presentation of findings*

3.5.1 *Introduction*

After collecting the data, the researcher needs to organise the information that has been gathered. "Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes [sic], and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 153) There are a number of methods available to the researcher. Details are given of the particular method used in this study (cf 3.5.2 and 3.5.3).

3.5.2 *The physical act of coding data*

For this specific study, the method of coding data was based on the recommendations of Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 176-179). The pages of all the data were numbered in sequence.

The researcher then read over the data several times and created preliminary coding categories. These were modified and adjusted until major codes were developed. The major codes were subdivided into smaller categories. A copy of the data was then made and the original was filed. Folders were labelled with each code. The data was then cut up, analysed and placed within its relevant folder.

3.5.3 *The development of coding categories and analysis of data*

Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 127) describe analysis as the organisation of what has been observed in order to “make sense” of what has been discovered. “Working with the data, you create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret data you have collected” (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 127). The process of developing coding categories is part of the analysis of the data. Analysis was not something which could occur independently, but rather was an ongoing part of the research process.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 166) indicate that the nature of the research inquiry and concerns determine the type of research coding categories that will be generated. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 166-172) suggest certain areas, which provide guidance for the researcher when deciding upon coding categories. For example, they suggest such areas as “Setting/Context Codes” under which general information regarding the setting, subjects or topic will be included. A more abstract category would include, for example, “Subject’s Ways of Thinking about People and Objects”.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 132) describe coding as “a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (i.e. observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to our research purpose.” Furthermore, they suggest that each major code should distinguish a particular concept or idea (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 132).

Spradley (1979: 186) does not refer to coding concepts, but talks about cultural themes and cultural domains. He defines a cultural theme as “any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning” (Spradley 1979: 186). He suggests that after collecting data, the researcher reviews the information and makes a list of cultural domains, taking care to note relationships between the domains.

Spradley (1979: 197) says that one should identify “Organizing Domains” which are able to synthesise vast amounts of information. He also states that one should search for universal themes amongst the domains (Spradley 1979: 199). Examples of such universal themes include “Social conflict”, “Managing impersonal social relationships” and “Acquiring and maintaining status” (Spradley 1979: 200).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher reviewed all data collected and searched for possible coding categories, bearing in mind some of the areas suggested by Bogdan and Biklen where applicable (1992: 166-172). The researcher subsequently established major coding categories and created sub-categories within the initial categories. The researcher attempted to ensure that each major coding category contained a particular concept or idea, which linked to the main focus of the study.

The researcher attempted to view concepts in terms of general cultural themes or domains, and was aware of broader cultural and social issues throughout the study. While concepts were being sought, the researcher remained constantly aware of possible relationships between and the interrelatedness of themes and concepts. Recurring themes were sought and these were also utilised in the identification of coding categories.

In the final analysis, an attempt was made to link findings to broader theoretical and social issues. The development of concepts and analysis of data are fluid processes, which are ongoing and complementary.

3.5.4 Conclusion

The researcher sought for meaning within the data and for relationships among the various concepts which were formulated. Reflection and critical inquiry were a continual part of the research process.

3.6 Presentation of data

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 193), qualitative researchers have many approaches to presenting findings. It is important that description from the data is clearly utilised in order to illuminate and substantiate the claims and hypotheses that are put forward (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 190).

The way in which data has been presented for the purpose of this study is one of the methods proposed by Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 190). Statements are made and then illustrated by means of examples. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 190) recommend this method for more academic research, such as a dissertation.

3.7 Ethical issues

The topic of study is a sensitive one. This is because many home schoolers do not have the permission of the authorities and are often the object of scrutiny amongst fellow members of the community.

Furthermore, an ethnographic study of the topic is intimate in the sense that the researcher spends many hours within the private world of the subjects' home. For this reason, the researcher was, at all times, aware of her responsibility to respect the research subjects' privacy and right to confidentiality. The researcher asked permission to take notes and offered to make research findings available to the subjects once the study was completed.

3.8 *Validity and reliability*

3.8.1 *Introduction*

“Validity and reliability of research are crucial in all social research regardless of disciplines and the methods employed” (Shimahara 1990: 86). Shimahara (1990: 86) states that all information gathered has to be “accurate, authentic and represent reality”. Qualitative research is often criticised by quantitative researchers for being inherently unreliable and invalid, owing to its subjective nature (Hutchinson 1990: 132). The presence of the researcher is deemed an intrusive factor that has a bearing upon participants’ behaviour. Furthermore, it may be felt that participants might falsify or fabricate information, or keep back certain facts, and thus mislead the researcher with inadequate, distorted or skewed data (Becker 1970: 43).

However, Becker (1970: 43) refutes these claims by saying that whilst a participant observer’s presence may initially have an influence on the situation, such an influence is offset by social and organisational confines. Thus, participants soon become used to the researcher’s presence and are more interested in adhering to the demands of their own situation than those of the researcher (Becker 1970: 43). Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 146) reiterate the above: “When a large amount of time is spent with others, they less readily feign behavior [sic] or feel the need to do so; moreover, they are more likely to be frank and comprehensive about what they tell you.” Furthermore, Richer (1975: 395) asserts that research based on grounded theory is able to bring about theories which accurately reflect the social existence of the school and are thus more effective than speculative theories which are not based on data.

Rist (1997: 440) states that whilst in qualitative research the emphasis is upon validity, quantitative researchers place the emphasis on reliability and replicability. Indeed, Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 7) state that qualitative researchers *are* concerned about the accuracy of their data and that qualitative research “is a piece of systematic research conducted with demanding, though not necessarily standardized, procedures.” They do state that if one is to generate valid studies of the real world, then it is not possible to produce perfect reliability (Taylor & Bogdan 1984: 7).

3.8.2 *Validity*

Shimahara (1990: 86) describes ethnographic validity as the extent to which participant observation is able to realise what it intends to discover, which involves a bona fide portrayal of events within a social situation.

3.8.3 *Reliability*

“Ethnographic reliability refers to the repeatability of a given study by researchers other than the original participant observer; the extent to which independent researchers discover the same phenomena in comparable situations.” (Shimahara 1990: 86).

Hutchinson (1990: 132) poses the question of whether or not a theory generated within a specific context can be generalized to a larger group. Hutchinson’s conclusion is that while a substantive theory can be said to be valid for just the group which was studied, a quality theory will identify a basic social process which is relevant to people in differing situations (Hutchinson 1990: 132). The generalisation of a theory would have to be established by means of verification studies (Hutchinson 1990: 132).

Hutchinson (1990: 132) states that grounded theory research is not particularly replicable as it encompasses the interaction between data and the personal interpretation of such data by the researcher. However, Hutchinson states that “The question of replicability is not especially relevant, since the point of theory generation is to offer a new perspective on a given situation that can then be tested by other research methods” (Hutchinson 1990: 132). Furthermore, qualitative research is an essential and beneficial forerunner to quantitative research (Hutchinson 1990: 132).

3.8.4 *Limitations of investigation*

Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 147) state that “Part of demonstrating the trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study.”

In this study, a single family is observed. This is recognized as a limitation of the study as the findings are not able to be generalised in any way. However, it is not intended that these findings should be generalised (cf 1.5). The findings indicate patterns that are useful, especially where such findings are confirmed by the large body of literature dealing with home schooling internationally across varying milieus.

3.8.5 *Reliability and validity in this particular study*

This study attempts to represent reality accurately and authentically. Participants rapidly became accustomed to the presence of the researcher and continued, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, as they would have done had she not been there. Observation continued over an extended period in an attempt to gain as comprehensive an understanding of the sociocultural experience as possible. Multiple data collection techniques were employed in order to decrease bias and inconsistencies. The contrasting and comparison of data served as a corroboration of validity of the data.

A comprehensive description of the research process is given in order to enhance reliability so that, under similar conditions, the study may possibly be repeated. Every effort has been made to ensure reliability in the sense of similarity between what was observed and recorded. Whilst the researcher does not intend the information gathered to be generalised and applied to a larger group, it is hoped that social processes, which are relevant to people across divergent circumstances, will be identified. The generalisation would thus need to be ascertained through the application of verification studies.

3.9 *Conclusion*

A description of the research design has been given. Details of the nature of qualitative inquiry have been outlined, with specific reference to the ethnography. Techniques of data collection, including participant observation and the in-depth interview, have been discussed. Limitations of the study, as well as reliability and validity, have been disclosed. The following chapter will present and discuss the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 *Introduction*

This chapter deals with the findings of an ethnographic study of a home school. It discusses recurring themes and attempts to extrapolate meaning from these.

4.2 *The context of the study*

The research design was discussed in Chapter Three. A description of the natural setting is described in the aforementioned chapter (3.4.2.4). Chapter Four deals in more detail with the nature of the home school and emphasizes aspects of relevance to the general focus of the study as outlined in the introduction. An attempt is made to understand how the participants attribute meaning to their daily events, for it is the way in which this meaning is attributed to experiences which ultimately constitutes reality for the participants.

4.2.1 *Description of the participants*

As in all families, the family members have different personalities. The inter-relationships of family members will be discussed later under another heading.

- *Albertus*

Albertus, the father, is the minister of an Afrikaans-speaking congregation, forming part of a prominent Protestant denomination. Albertus seems to be rather unconventional, both in his character and interests. He is lively, enjoys being outdoors and goes surfing each morning before beginning his daily ministry activities. He also frequently skate-boards while he is taking the dog for a run.

...

He was not directly involved in the children's education and thus the researcher's interactions with him were not as frequent as with the other members of the family.

Albertus works from home and periodically has members of his congregation coming to see him. A gregarious and friendly man, with a strong personality, he also shows a great deal of sensitivity - an important requirement for his occupation. In his wife's opinion, Albertus is not the typical South African male because he does not enjoy traditional South African leisure activities.

- *Louise*

Louise was the person responsible for the children's education. She is confident, warm, headstrong and high-spirited. Louise also ran a drama school in the afternoons and is very creative. This was in evidence in the productions that she staged - mainly children's theatre - which had flamboyant costumes and elaborate "fantasy-style" make-up that she applied herself. Her home is artistically decorated and her style of dress is also evidence of her artistic nature.

Louise has a strong sense of her own worth. Members of the community often request her professional services in the field of drama free-of-charge. Louise feels strongly that teaching drama and performing are professional occupations. She refuses to be intimidated and insists on her fee being paid.

The following incident offers another example of her individualistic nature. Once she had removed Hanco (the older boy) from his school, she was asked by other parents to sign a petition protesting against the headmistress. Although there were many aspects regarding the school with which she was not satisfied, she refused to speak unfavourably of it. She told the parents that she had nothing against the school, but that it was not the best situation for her child. She exhibits strong beliefs and ideals, but keeps them to herself unless she feels it is necessary to act on them.

Louise is a nature-lover. The garden was carefully cultivated and beautifully tended. The children were encouraged to participate both in growing vegetables (Louise is a vegetarian) and raising the animals (ducks, chickens, dogs and cats).

Generally, Louise may be described as a dynamic person who, once she has made up her mind about what she wants, pursues her goal enthusiastically and energetically. Louise has an underlying sensitivity which she does not always display to outsiders. Her children and the family unit take priority in her life.

- ***Hanko***

Hanko (aged seven years at the time of this study) is a bright, pleasant child with a friendly and outgoing nature. He always greeted the researcher in a friendly manner and informal chats often took place while he was busy with some or other task. If she were in the area, the researcher often encountered him riding his bicycle and playing with the neighbourhood children in the afternoon.

That Hanko shared his parents' love of nature was evident by his eagerness to play outside with the family pets. He even won a prize on *50-50*, a national nature programme. The general impression created by this little boy was one of gentle sweetness. This opinion was corroborated by others, a neighbour once commenting, "Hanko is a lovely, friendly, chap. He is always welcome to play here."

His relationship with his mother in the classroom brought out a different side of his personality and this will be discussed later.

- ***Robert***

Robert (aged three years at the time of this study) is the younger child and appears introverted. He was inclined to cling to his mother, was regarded by the family as the baby and was treated as such. He became increasingly difficult to control during the time that the researcher observed the home school.

4.3 *Emerging themes*

4.3.1 *A rejection of institutionalised schooling*

One of the questions that people inevitably ask of home-schooling parents is why they chose to remove their children from the formal school system.

In the Louw's case, Hanko had been at a private school in grade one, the first year of schooling. Robert had been at a nursery school for a few mornings a week. Louise had assisted at Hanko's school with drama and art lessons, and thus had had the opportunity to observe more than the average parent had. When asked why she had decided to remove Hanko from the conventional school, Louise responded that she had sent her child to an expensive private school because she had thought it would be best for him. Yet, subsequently, she had felt uneasy. She said, "There was nothing specific, but I felt that it was wrong."

By April of Hanko's first year there, Louise realised that she had made a mistake in sending him to school. However, she felt committed, as she had advance-paid a relatively substantial amount of the year's tuition fees.

Aspects that Louise did not like were:

- the curriculum – Louise felt it was inadequately structured;
- the system of rewarding good work with stars – Louise felt that children should be self-motivated;
- the computer studies programme – Louise felt that children should focus on play and that an emphasis on technology was detrimental to their development; and
- the lack of structure in the daily routine.

Most pertinent was that she said the only thing Hanko had learnt from school was that he was different from the other learners:

- He did not come from as wealthy a background as the other children.
- He was not allowed to watch television or play television games.
- Their family valued different social activities to those of other families at the school.

Thus, in this sense, home schooling for Louise was a response to broader societal conditions (cf 2.4.3.4, paragraph 3). She sought to shelter her children from societal conditions and values that were contrary to the family's by withdrawing into the confines of the home school.

From her responses, it became apparent that Louise had wanted the best for her child and had been disappointed - not only in the school, but in herself as well, because she perceived herself to have made a wrong decision. Furthermore, she was relying heavily on intuition:

“I felt that it was wrong. I knew that it was just the right thing for me to remove my child from the school.”

Six other children had also been removed from that school and were home schooling. Louise did not, however, have contact with these families. The school which Hanko had attended was already an alternative school and this possibly made the decision to home school easier for Louise. Her comments on the lack of structure indicated some dissatisfaction with the teaching methods; however, her major complaint was the discrepancy between her family's values and culture, and those of the school and the children who attended it. Robert stayed at home because Louise felt that that was the best possible place for a child of his age.

Once a child attends formal school, he is exposed to other cultures and values, and parents can either send their children to schools which perpetuate the same family values or their children have to learn to accept and respect the values and cultures of others. Where a family's values are so individual that a child is unable to find common ground, he is either rejected by the group or is absorbed into their particular culture. Parents have the choice of accepting that or finding another form of education, as Louise did.

It is thus clear that sending one's child to a formal school does encompass, at least to a degree, a measure of releasing full control over the child's existence. The concomitant is that true home schooling represents an attempt to regain control over the child's learning within the family (cf. 2.4.2 - Lines 2000: 74).

When the researcher asked why Hanko was not enrolled in a public school, Louise replied:

“I felt I had already tried to give him the best and that hadn't worked. I also don't like the rigid discipline of those schools. I experienced a school once where the discipline was so strict. All the children had to walk in the corridors in a straight line and hold their suitcases in their left hands. It was like the army. I feel that is enough to stifle all creativity.”

What emerges once again is Louise's emphasis on creativity. Her views on education are based on her personal experiences of education (cf Mayberry et al 1995: 47-48 and Knowles 1991: 223 in 2.4.2).

Also in evidence from the outset was Louise's "wait-and-see" approach. She had decided to home school, but was not ruling out the option of other forms of education at a later stage.

Colfax and Colfax (1988: 37) comment that the literature indicates that some parents decide to home school temporarily. If parents do intend to home school temporarily, or if there is a possibility home schooling may only be a transient measure, both they and their children should remain aware of this, in order to facilitate easier integration back into the system at a later stage.

4.3.2 *Responses of the community, friends and family*

Louise's decision to home school elicited several responses from the community in which they live. The general reaction proved to be one of scepticism. Her reaction to any form of criticism was to withdraw rather than to confront it; she would merely say that she had made her decision in the best interest of her children and was going to follow it through.

Louise and Hanko were sensitive to the perceptions of those around them. At first, when people asked where Hanko went to school, Louise said that she had evaded the question, but that she finally became used to it:

"Hanko also didn't want to tell people, but now his friends envy him because he doesn't go to school. He often tells his brother he's lucky; he won't go to school."

Louise stated that her parents were rather shocked:

"Initially they were very concerned about our decision to home school, but they've come to accept the home schooling because they realize that I'm very committed."

Louise has a loving relationship with her family, who live in another city. She keeps in close contact with them and the children are encouraged to correspond with their grandmother. Hanko wrote a letter to her each week during school time and Robert drew a picture for her.

Curious neighbours also had their opinions. Louise commented:

“When we arrived back, my neighbour came across and asked me why the children weren’t in school. When I told her that we were home schooling, she said that my children would end up stupid.”

Louise needed support, not criticism, from members of the community and such comments corroded her confidence. Lines (2000: 83) says that 95 percent of home schoolers indicate a need for support and encouragement from the community, through friends, family and church members, for example. Lines (2000: 83) comments that, according to one survey in the USA, support for home schooling grew between the 1980s and the 1990s from 16% to 36%. Although this is a positive increase, it nevertheless indicates that a number of people remain in opposition to home schooling and home schooling is not yet the norm. Moore and Moore (1994: 11) refer to social pressure (cf 2.10.2) which causes the typical adult to fear being different from the “crowd”. Criticism from the community can thus place stress on the home schooler, as it did in Louise’s case (cf 4.3.7.1).

Another neighbour, whose child was friendly with Hanko, remarked:

“When I arrive home from school with my kids, that poor child [meaning Hanko] is hanging over the wall he is so desperate for company.”

In the six month period during which the researcher observed the home school, she never encountered Hanko “hanging over the wall”. However, this comment indicates a perception that the home-schooled child is somehow deprived and evoked pity for Hanko in this particular neighbour.

What became increasingly evident was that parents have to feel completely convinced that they have made the right decision in removing their child from school; they will encounter opposition, not just from family, but from friends and other members of the community as well. This indicates that, for a number of reasons, home schooling is not always an easy option (cf 2.10).

4.3.3 The daily routine of the home school

A typical daily programme

±09:00	±09:30	±09:45	±10:30	±11:15
Learnt a religious verse and lit a candle	B R E A K 15 M I N U T E S	Mathematics (Louise was against drilling/rote learning at first)	B R E A K 45 M I N U T E S	Art Project Louise referred to this as <i>Waldorf Art</i>
Did Eurythmics (See Waldorf approach 2.8.1)				<u>Monday</u> : Paint
Read a story from the Old Testament				<u>Tuesday</u> : Wax-drawing
Drew a picture or wrote a story related to the Bible story just read				<u>Wednesday</u> : Finger-paint
Singing		One of the following activities depending on which day it was: Gardening Baking Nature Walk Trip to the library	M I N U T E S	<u>Thursday</u> : Paint
Reading (books from the library)				<u>Friday</u> : Recorder lesson – (Outside Tutor)
Look at and discuss new vocabulary				Played the Piano for ten minutes a day
Work on a craft item related to the story (such as a puppet – needlework and knitting were important)				
Played the piano for ten minutes				

The first break usually lasted more than the allotted fifteen minutes and during the second break, the children had a snack and played outside.

Lessons ended at approximately 11:30; thus, the school day lasted approximately two-and-a-half hours, with a one-hour break in total. Initially, Louise was quite relaxed about the routine.

4.3.3.1 *The initial routine*

The daily routine altered over time, a point that is significant and shall be discussed later. The initial routine will be described in order to provide a framework for what is to follow.

The routine focuses mainly on what Hanko did, as he was at grade two level. Robert's participation, because he was only three years old, was very informal. He participated when he wanted to and followed his own devices when he was not interested in what Louise was offering.

Initially, the family did not begin school at any specific time, although they did follow a schedule. School time had to fit in with the domestic routine; thus, once the house was clean and tidy, school began. Louise did most of the housework, with occasional help from the children and Albertus. Classical music was usually played in the background. This music emanated from Albertus's study.

4.3.3.2 *Difficulties and differences in routine*

When there is only one main educator – mother or father – practical difficulties arise should that person become ill or have other urgent activities to which they have to attend.

Such a difficulty arose when Louise became quite seriously ill for a week. While she lay in bed, the children sat near her reading, painting, playing dominoes, playing the piano, reading the Bible and doing musical theory. This was a difficult time for Louise; however, schooling was nevertheless able to continue, albeit in a different format. In addition, Louise had to undergo a minor operation. Robert went to a friend and Louise left a list of things for Hanko to complete. Esther, the domestic assistant, was asked to supervise.

Thus, it is clear that Louise was able to rely on her support system in times of need. Hanko learnt a lesson in taking responsibility in times of trouble. What is evident is the high level of dedication required from the entire home-schooling family. Louise was not able to take time off from her “job” – home schooling requires serious commitment (cf 2.6.1)

In some instances, home schooling can become restrictive (Butler 2000: 47). When family came to visit on two occasions – at one time, Louise’s brother, and, at another, Albertus’s sister from London – Louise was adamant that schooling had to continue as usual. However, although schooling did continue, she expressed resentment at missing time with her guests. Louise indicated once again the high level of self-discipline and commitment that is required in order to home school (cf 2.7.1.2) and persevered with her usual routine.

In spite of expressing determination to continue schooling under all circumstances, when Louise was involved in producing a play for her drama school – an activity for which she is paid - she did not home school for a week. Louise’s drama activities more than merely assisted the family financially; they were an economic necessity. Sometimes, owing to economic pressures, a home-schooler is obliged to take a part-time job as well as to fulfil his/her commitment to home schooling (Butler 2000: 47). In this study, the high degree of flexibility that the home-schooling scenario affords (Long 2001: 67), allowed Louise the opportunity to earn an additional income.

4.3.4 *The curriculum*

4.3.4.1 *Introduction*

The curriculum correlated with the daily routine. The two impacted upon each other and thus shall be discussed together.

Curriculum, as it is applied here, refers to the particular approach and methodology of teaching. The particular curriculum chosen tells much about the unique nature of the home educator’s philosophical views of his/her world (Moore & Moore 1994: 23). Very often, this begins with the home schooler’s fundamental perspective of the child and the parents’ role in educating the child (cf 2.6.7).

Parents often feel that it is their duty, and not the state's, to educate their children. Furthermore, they often wish their child to be educated within a particular religious or philosophical paradigm (cf 2.4; Mayberry et al 1995: 43; Colfax & Colfax 1988: 37). In this particular study, the approach to the curriculum changed quite markedly within a short period of time.

4.3.4.2 Planning

Initially, Louise's situation appeared to lack structure. She said:

"I don't really know what I'm doing. I don't know if you'll be able to learn anything, but you're welcome to come and watch."

However, upon observing her, it became apparent that she did indeed follow a definite pattern. She kept a journal of what had been done each day and wrote down what she thought needed to be done. She commented:

"It helps me to focus on what needs to be done."

4.3.4.3 Choice of curriculum

When asked what approach she followed and why, she said:

"Before I started, I made enquiries and a person who'd been following ACE made me promise that I would not take that approach. She said that it stifled all creativity and she nearly gave up because of it. I tend to agree with her. I've read quite a bit - John Holt, Charlotte Mason, etc, and have decided to use a combination of approaches."

Therefore, Louise had endeavoured to investigate various approaches and to obtain information regarding home schooling. What was important to her throughout her choice of curriculum was the aspect of creativity. It was fundamental in her choice of learning material. This supports the notion expressed by Moore and Moore (1994: 23) that the individual selection of a curriculum is dependent upon the home schooler's core philosophy of education.

4.3.5 *Noteworthy elements of the curricular approach*

Louise's approach was an eclectic one which combined the elements of several approaches, including those of: Charlotte Mason, Conventional Text Book (cf 2.11.5) and Waldorf (cf 2.8.1).

Specific areas of interest guided Louise's curriculum. There was a tri-fold focus on the arts (music, art, literature, drama), nature and religion. In addition to this, Louise had an interest in the Waldorf approach to education (cf 2.8.1).

4.3.5.1 *Art*

Art, as has been described, formed a major part of the daily routine. Louise was very particular about the quality of the material that she used and it was often very expensive. As observed in the researcher's field notes, the children almost always painted using water colours.

They were given three primary colours. They sponged down their paper and then made pictures with their paint. They were at liberty to paint what they wanted and beautiful patterns emerged. Louise then used the paintings to cover books.

From the outset, Louise told me that she was following the Waldorf approach to art (cf 2.8.1). Louise's interest in the art aspect eventually developed into a more intensive interest in the Waldorf approach to education in general.

4.3.5.2 *Nature study*

The family was very close to nature. They went on nature walks at least twice a week. The children were encouraged to play outside and the garden, and gardening, formed an integral part of the curriculum. The school room had many mobiles and works of "art" displayed (many hanging from the ceiling) which were made from natural objects (seed pods, bark, leaves) that had been collected on the children's nature walks. Louise did not like plastic and learning equipment was created out of natural materials, such as wood. Hanko used beans as counters in mathematics.

4.3.5.3 Conclusion

Initially Louise incorporated elements of the Waldorf approach (cf 2.8.1) in art, eurythmics and nature study, without encompassing the system as a whole. This would develop into a more cohesive system later on.

4.3.6 Teaching methods

The method of teaching altered over time. Many differences between the home school and conventional classroom emerged through observation of the didactic approach/ approaches taken.

Perhaps the most obvious is that the home-schooling parent has to choose from the large variety of curricular and didactic approaches available (Long 2001: 67), and then is at liberty to change such a decision as time passes. Indeed, some urge home schoolers to experiment with diverse approaches and methodologies (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 44). There is nobody prescribing what has to be done; the array of choices available and the responsibility of deciding which method to choose can, understandably, be both daunting and overwhelming. Changes in Louise's didactic approach are highlighted and certain pertinent events are discussed in detail.

4.3.6.1 The initial approach

Although Louise was reluctant to criticise Hanko's previous school, she did feel that there had been "gaps" in his education. Areas of concern for Louise included a lack of basic mathematical skills. Moreover, she felt that there were many of the phonics that Hanko did not know. Louise was also worried about the lack of structure in the time-table: for example, it concerned her that for some weeks, children did not practise reading. Louise believed that it was important for children to do mathematics, reading and writing every day.

Louise did not subscribe to any of the curricula providers (cf 2.11.5) and made use of the town library as her chief learning resource. The researcher accompanied the family on an excursion to the library (such excursions usually occurred on a Friday). The trip to the library highlighted aspects with regard to the particular characteristics of the home school.

It became increasingly evident that Louise was becoming concerned about routine. She insisted that Hanko complete his morning tasks before the library trip. This was the first time that difficulties in the home schooling process became apparent. Louise and the children arrived late at the library, Louise looking flustered. She said:

“I am a very tired mummy. We’re late because Hanko had a recorder lesson at 9:30 and he hadn’t finished all his work, so we had to go home for him to finish it before we came to the library. He’s very cross with me, but these things must be done!”

Louise had a dual role to play and was both “teacher” and “mummy”.

Her emotional involvement with the children – a mother is the most important person in a young child’s life (Roberts 1999: 4) – had an impact on her role as teacher, and vice versa, which was undoubtedly positive but, nevertheless, exhausting. She did not have the luxury of a relative degree of emotional neutrality towards the children that a teacher often has. Role conflict results when there is a compulsion to play more than one role at a time (Baron & Byrne 1991: 441). There is also no break from the stresses of motherhood, and the effect of the combined role of mother and teacher became evident. Stress and “burnout” is an aspect of home schooling to which Moore and Moore allude (cf 2.10). Some of the stress became evident during this observation at the library.

The events at the library indicate an interesting approach to learning. Home schooling is far more flexible than the conventional school – paradoxically, Louise was attempting to inculcate routine (cf 2.7.2.4). It would be difficult and time-consuming to manage the large classes of a formal school effectively within such an environment; even more so to cater to the individual needs of each child. Furthermore, the content of the home-school lessons is flexible – the children can pursue their own areas of interest.

For example, the previous day Hanco had asked a question about how Moses had written. Louise was able to use the visit to the library as an opportunity to focus on this area of interest.

They consulted several books, which led to a discussion about the topic. They spoke about ink and papyrus, and Louise said that they would make some later. They looked at Egyptian writing and how the symbols developed. While they did this, Louise continually referred to the Bible. The conversation developed into a discussion about recent events in the Middle East. Thus Louise was able to integrate several subjects.

Secondly, Hanco and Robert were both very at ease in the library and aware of the way in which it functioned. These are skills that enable life-long learning. Robert was exposed to many learning experiences to which he would not normally have been exposed were he at a conventional nursery school. He had the opportunity to participate when he was interested and to withdraw from the conversation when he did not feel like taking part. For example, he listened eagerly while Louise and Hanco discussed the Ancient cultures.

Many spontaneous learning experiences occurred within a short space of time, mainly owing to the individual attention the children received. An example is Robert's "counting" lesson: he chose five books, Louise said he could only take three and he had to work out how many to put back. Hanco's attention was directed towards topics that would only have been investigated in a much higher grade at a conventional school.

Religion, which is a way of life to the Louws, was introduced (seemingly unintentionally) throughout the lessons and although Louise stated that religion was not the main reason for home schooling, she was able to infuse the family values into all her teaching. This is an aspect of home schooling that could be construed as either positive or negative and which shall be dealt with later.

4.3.6.2 *A change towards the Waldorf approach*

The didactic approach changed over time. While visiting Bloemfontein, Louise observed at the Waldorf School in the city. One of the consequences of this visit was that their school day now began at 08h00 instead of 09h00. Louise enthusiastically remarked:

“I’m so excited! I’ve learnt so much. I’ve got so much to tell you!”

Louise was so impressed with the Waldorf approach that she made inquiries about doing a teacher-training course in this specific methodology.

4.3.6.3 *Aspects of the Waldorf approach that appealed to Louise*

Louise highlighted certain aspects of the Waldorf approach and they are important clues as to what she valued most about the approach and how it was linked to her philosophy of education and child-rearing.

Louise’s teaching already contained the following aspects (cf 2.8.1):

- art, music and gardening
- recorder playing and knitting
- the utilisation of electronic media was discouraged

In addition, she incorporated the following changes after she had observed at the Waldorf School in Bloemfontein:

- a focus on myths and legends (for grades one and two);
- emphasis on a specific area of interest for two weeks, with the other subjects playing a lesser role during that time;
- integrating rhythm with the study of mathematics;
- “drilling” in mathematics, something to which Louise had been opposed;
- teaching the four basic operations in mathematics simultaneously;
- ensuring that all learning was active;

- the concept that every page of work must have artistic merit (the children did not work in lined books);
- emphasis on crafts as the most important facets of all;
- the concept that learning should never be examination orientated;
- the concept that form drawing was an important element;
- the use of natural materials, such as bees wax crayons;
- the use of a special bag in which each child could keep his writing equipment. The bag was folded in an elaborate manner and tied with ribbons;
- the principle whereby the children would have the same reader for two weeks of a reading “main lesson” cycle, but would only actually receive the reader at the end of those two weeks;
- oral spelling only and that in the form of a game;
- rhymes and songs as a part of the daily school routine; and
- the opportunity for Hanko to learn German, which Louise initially taught him herself.

4.3.6.4 *Implications of these changes*

The daily lesson format had changed. No longer did the children practise reading, writing and mathematics each day, but, in accordance with the Waldorf approach, they would concentrate on one “main lesson” for two weeks. All other lessons were subordinate to the main lesson. This was the opposite of Louise’s original approach, where she had emphasised reading, writing and mathematics.

The most notable feature of the change in approach was the enjoyment which both Hanko and Louise were experiencing in the lessons. There was indeed a most positive change in Hanko’s attitude. A prime example of Louise’s new method of teaching is her different approach to spelling. She would choose a word, Hanko would write it in the air with his hand, then with his nose and then on the carpet with his toe. He laughed and approached tasks with enthusiasm.

Louise was using the senses to teach Hanco his sounds. He was actively and creatively involved in the learning process and he was clearly enjoying every lesson. Part of the enjoyment stemmed from the novelty value of what they were doing.

Louise was incorporating much of her drama training in body movement in Hanco's lessons. For instance, when teaching the sounds 'v' and 'f', which are similar in the Afrikaans language, Louise would give Hanco the sound and he was required to form it using his body. He could, for example, indicate the shape of the letter associated with the sound by means of his fingers.

As was mentioned, the oral tradition in the Waldorf approach is very important. Louise had previously emphasised the oral facet when home schooling, and, being a drama teacher, found this aspect extremely important.

What is interesting to note is that the researcher was being included in the lessons more and more. Although she did not teach, Hanco and Louise had become increasingly accustomed to her being there and Hanco seemed to need to have "someone besides mum" to offer praise and recognition.

Louise began to rely on others offering tuition outside her home to a greater degree. Her German was basic and later she took Hanco to a private tutor. It is sometimes necessary to request outside assistance with a specific branch of tuition for home-schooled children, (Kantrowitz & Wingert 1998: 66). A disadvantage was that Robert did not have the opportunity to learn German spontaneously, although he was present when they practised at home.

4.3.6.5 Difficulties

- ***Equipment***

The equipment that Louise required was both expensive and difficult to obtain.

Home schooling does require a degree of financial commitment (cf 2.7.1.1). Louise continued to purchase new equipment and the researcher noted that it was difficult for her, unlike in a conventional classroom, to assemble a selection of resources for their use.

Louise was not networking with other home schoolers; nor was she affiliated to a particular school. Thus, the financial burden fell solely upon her, together with the responsibility of sourcing new material. Louise was very particular about what she used and the materials that she required were not readily available in a relatively small town. She waited five weeks for a copy of the Waldorf Mathematics Programme.

- ***Boredom***

The children were bored by certain aspects of the routine. For example, Hanko mentioned that he was tired of counting beans and found it “boring”. The children were also required to water paint each week. They became tired of this and would seek distractions, such as playing “boats” in the paint, to add interest to the task.

It is difficult for one person who is teaching to continually come up with novel ideas, no matter how creative that person is. Networking with others would help by sharing ideas and frustrations. Moore and Moore urge parents to obtain “counsel” in the first few years of home schooling in order to alleviate some of the problems (cf 2.10.4). The children did, however, benefit from the painting activity via the discussion on “differences” which ensued and by creatively establishing their own game. If they had done this in a regular classroom, they might have been chastised for not following the correct instructions.

- ***Lack of competition***

Hanko enjoyed competition (cf 4.3.7.2). He loved to show the researcher his work and receive praise from someone besides his mother. He would enter competitions: for example, on television. He won a competition on *50/50*, a South African nature programme, and was evidently very proud of himself.

- ***No break from educational activities***

As the researcher was only observing during the formal school time in the mornings, she asked Louise what happened in the afternoon. Louise relied that at eleven o'clock when school finished, she went out on most days and Albertus supervised the children. She said that she needed "time out" for herself. A disadvantage of home schooling is the restraint it places on freedom, as it does require considerable time and energy (cf 2.7.1.3).

In the afternoon, the children often repeated activities which had formed part of the morning school session. This illustrates that there was seldom a break from the "educational" experiences for the children or the parents.

Moreover, every day, including weekends, tended to be described in terms of educational activities; for example, Louise evaluated a Sunday in terms of the quality of these activities. This is evidence of the way in which the home school becomes an extension of family life. It is possible that this contributed to their eventual decision to abandon home schooling. When Louise stopped home schooling, she said that the responsibility had been too great for her.

4.3.6.6 *A reversion to earlier methods*

Later that year, Louise reverted to her original approach and abandoned many aspects approved by the Waldorf School:

- the text book *Moderne Basiese Wiskunde* (*Modern Basic Mathematics*) had been reinstated;
- there were no more beanbag games to drill mathematics and spelling;
- spelling activities had reverted to the "lists" again. Louise said that it was too difficult to keep thinking up new words all the time.
- Hanko was again writing down the spelling words (Louise said that he preferred to write them down, even although the Waldorf approach didn't allow for that).

Incidents of emotional upheaval also affect the lives of home-schooling families. For example, pastoral duties performed by Albertus, such as bereavement counselling, placed pressure on the whole family.

Furthermore, in the home school, it is impossible to create a divide between emotional upheavals at home and the education process. This is not necessarily a negative factor, as children are learning about life's hardships first-hand. However, it is emotionally draining on the educator.

Louise had made a direct change to the previous, more conservative, teaching approach and her creativity and enthusiasm were depleted. It is difficult to be creative while under constant pressure (cf 2.7.1.4). She seemed tired of the whole home-schooling procedure. It became evident that she was suffering from what Moore and Moore refer to as "burnout" (cf 2.10).

4.3.6.7 *Robert's learning experiences*

The focus of this section of the study has been largely on Hanko's learning experiences, with occasional references to Robert's experiences. However, Robert had been removed from nursery school and was also a part of the home school. Thus, examination of his learning experiences is relevant to the discussion, at a later stage, on family inter-relationships.

Robert had little formal teaching or teaching geared to his level. Most of what he learnt, he picked up from his brother's lessons. He had a box of toys in the room and, later, some special puzzles were acquired. He had a weather chart that he was supposed to fill in. However, this was not done.

On several occasions, Robert's need for attention interfered with Hanko's lessons. For example, one day when Louise and Hanko were busy doing mathematics, Robert persistently nagged for his Smurfs (small plastic figurines).

“Young children tend to carry on complaining or protesting until they feel they have been heard, even if it takes all day” (Roberts 1999: 40). This, understandably, proved to be both distracting and stressful for Louise. Furthermore, Robert clearly felt a certain amount of loss and rejection. He had previously spent much more time on his own with Louise, while Hanko was at school. “Sometimes just not being forgotten is what is needed – the child needs to know that he or she is ‘held’ in the important person’s mind” (Roberts 1999: 15). Robert appeared to be “in the way” very often and this seemed to affect him negatively.

Despite Louise’s insistence on toys being made of natural materials, both children had plastic toys; for example, Smurfs and Lego.

Very few positive learning experiences were recorded for Robert. Some of these were mentioned in the section describing the trip to the library (cf 4.3.6.1). During one of Hanko’s German lessons, Robert played with some figures that he had made out of clay. Hanko helped Robert complete his little man. While Hanko had his lesson, Robert imitated the German and played with his little figurines. Hanko practised his recorder and Robert sang a song of his own volition.

Thus, Robert was learning German through imitation, although this opportunity was discontinued when Hanko started going for lessons with an outsider. It is interesting to note that Robert was very creative in his play. However, except for when Hanko helped him, he played on his own; he was not interacting with others. Robert learnt a reasonable amount from Hanko, but his activities were always secondary to those of Hanko. For example, when he sang a song on his own, it was because Hanko had played the recorder first; when he spoke German, it was because he was imitating his brother.

Roberts (1999: 26) states that inherent difficulties in sibling relationships are not restricted to the older child. It is difficult for a younger child continually to be in the presence of someone older who is infinitely more able than he/she is. This may lead to negative feelings and concomitant negative behaviour.

On one occasion, Albertus called Robert and told him he had to accompany him on an errand and stop bothering his brother. If Robert had been with children of his own age, he would have been functioning at a similar level of ability to them and would not have had to contend with the feelings of inferiority he experienced.

In some ways Robert's learning experiences were stifled by Hanco. For example, when they went to the library, Robert would ask questions, which obviously irritated Hanco. Robert would eventually keep quiet.

Thus, Robert's needs very often were regarded as secondary to those of Hanco. Although this situation was not intentional, it probably contributed to many of the behavioural problems, such as the aggression, which eventually surfaced in Robert. Perhaps he would have had a more positive home-schooling experience if he had followed one of the pre-school programmes, such as *Before Five In a Row*, even though this is not a formal, structured curriculum (<http://www.geocities.com/homeschoolingsa/homeschool.htm>).

Also in evidence are the possible difficulties arising from teaching in a multi-grade (multi-age) system. Avoiding these problems requires careful thought and planning.

This discussion will be continued when dealing with the themes of inter-personal relationships and conflict.

4.3.6.8 Assessment

The new *Policy for the Registration of Learners for Home Education* (Government Gazette, number 20659, 23 November 1999) states that the duties of the home-schooling parent include:

- Keeping a portfolio of the learner's work, with "evidence of intervention and other education support given to the learner".
- Keeping up-to-date records of a learner's progress.
- Keeping appropriate documentation of continuous assessment of the learner's work.

- Keeping proof of summative assessment at the end of the first year of home education and grades three, six and nine.
- Upon completion of each phase, an independent, appropriately qualified individual, who has been approved by the Head of Department, must assess the learner to ascertain whether he or she has reached the required level. A copy of the report must be given to the Head of Department.

Section 2.11.2.4 discusses assessment issues within the South African context. However, Louise had no formal method of assessment. She did not mark or “formally intervene” in Hanko’s work. This was not because she was negligent. The SASA had not been passed by then and Louise was not informed as to Government policy regarding home schooling at the time. Furthermore, formal assessment did not form a part of the approach that she was following; she believed that children ought to be self-motivated.

An advantage of the home school is that, owing to the small number of children in a group, a child’s progress is immediately evident. Butler (2000: 46) indicates that one of the advantages of accreditation from a recognised institution is that it is more “palatable” to the educational institutions upon the re-entry to the formal educational system. This was an issue which arose when Louise sent Hanko back to a formal school - the headmaster wanted him to be “tested” before he would accept him as a learner in the school.

4.3.6.9 *Advantages of the didactic approach of the home school*

One of the advantages of the home school was that Louise was able to adapt her lessons according to Hanko’s ability. This is evidently one of the major benefits of home schooling (cf 2.7.2.2.). When Hanko returned to formal schooling, his reading ability was ahead of his peers in both English and Afrikaans. Hanko had developed a real love of literature and reading. As has been mentioned before, there were many opportunities for informal learning experiences too.

4.3.7 *The relationship between the individual's personal identity and the home school*

The themes of Personal Identities, Interpersonal Relationships and Conflict Management impact upon one another. They will be discussed individually, but at times it will be necessary to refer interchangeably to several of the aspects. Gross and McIlveen (1998: 402) describe the *self-concept* as an individual's perception of his/her own personality. The distinctive nature of the personal identity and the incumbent inter-personal relationships are what make each home-schooling situation unique. These are contributing factors to the durability of each home school. The characteristic personality types, temperaments and associations of every home school will determine whether or not families will manage to overcome the stresses created by a home-schooling environment.

According to Gross and McIlveen (1998: 402), the self concept consists of three parts: self-image, self-esteem and the ideal-self. A brief explanation of each of these abstractions, as outlined by Gross and McIlveen (1998: 402-403), follows:

- *Self-image*: this refers to the way in which the individual describes him/herself (thus it is descriptive). Social roles form part of the self-image.
- *Self-esteem*: this is essentially evaluative in nature and refers to the degree to which the individual likes him/herself or regards his/her own worth.
- *Ideal-self*: this refers to the sort of person that the individual would wish to be.

Furthermore, the larger the discrepancy between the self-image and the ideal-self, the lower the self-esteem (Gross & McIlveen 1998: 403).

4.3.7.1 *Louise's personal identity*

Louise was outwardly a confident and self-fulfilled person, with a clearly established sense of self, but the home-schooling process brought changes to the self and she had to come to terms with these changes.

All people fulfil a number of roles, both general and specific (Morgan et al 1979: 422). A role is the expected behaviour of an individual who has a particular standing or position within a group (Morgan et al 1979: 422). For every role, particular patterns of behaviour are expected or anticipated by the group (Morgan et al 1979: 422).

Louise occupied several roles: homemaker, wife, drama teacher and mother (to mention but a few). In all these roles, she was very accomplished. When she assumed the added role of official educator, she needed to fulfil a new set of expectations. Home schooling is not considered the norm (cf 4.3.2), thus there are no clearly delineated expectations. In some ways, she was unable to contend with all the demands made on her and experienced a degree of role ambiguity. Role ambiguity occurs in the work place when the goals or objectives are blurred. Dissatisfaction can occur, which can lead to decreased self-esteem and, sometimes, even depression (Louw et al 1997: 618).

Originally, Louise had intended the home school to accommodate the domestic routine. When the researcher first began observing, Louise explained that school only began at 09:00, so that she could complete her domestic chores. Louise would hang out washing and complete other chores during the children's break time. She became increasingly irritated by the difficulties concomitant with fulfilling her roles as homemaker and parent-educator. Indeed, on certain occasions, Louise commented that she would have preferred to have spent that particular day engaged in other activities.

Louise is a very neat, organised person and stated that disarray irritated her. Furthermore, she said that, owing to the nature of Albertus's work, people often came to the house and it had to be kept clean. Thus, a rift developed between the self that Louise wished to be – neat and orderly homemaker – and what she was able to achieve: an incongruity between the self-image and the ideal-self, which, in turn, led to a lowered self-esteem.

Furthermore, Louise and Albertus *did* care what people thought of them. For example, Louise told me how embarrassed she was when new parishioners had arrived at the house unexpectedly one Sunday afternoon and the house had been in disarray.

In addition to all this, Louise felt that the domestic demands were hindering her ability to teach properly and affecting her personal relationship with her family. The home school was affecting Louise's personal identity. She needed help in order to be the person she wanted to be.

Later in the year, the family acquired full-time domestic help. When the researcher inquired about the presence of the assistant, Louise said that Albertus had suggested they employed someone to help with the domestic chores. He had told her that she was no longer a very nice person – she continually complained about the housework. Louise said that she felt she needed a bit of “space”. Louise also said that the children had felt pressurised because she was always hurrying off to do household chores. When Albertus suggested getting someone to help with the housework, she only too willingly accepted. She contacted the woman who had previously worked for them and she agreed to return.

Louw et al (1997: 503) indicate that children can reduce the degree of marital satisfaction as they become increasingly demanding in respect of “time, money and emotional energy”. Furthermore, Louw et al (1997: 503) state that this negative impact is increased if the wife must perform a number of roles: “worker, wife and mother”. In this instance, the demands of home schooling compounded the aforementioned aspects. Louw et al (1997: 503) speak of parenting in general and say that the negative affects are countered by realistic expectations.

Besides encountering insecurities on the domestic front, Louise also encountered insecurities in her teaching. It is not uncommon for teachers to experience this (Moore 1994: 17). In this case, it had more to do with Louise's *perceptions* of her abilities than her actual competency levels. Studies have indicated that formal training does not guarantee success in home schooling; it is the level of commitment of the parents that will determine academic success or failure (cf 2.6.1).

Louise had felt uncertain about many aspects of home schooling right from the beginning:

“Hanko was very accepting of the decision to home school, but I had misgivings of my own. I cried for a week while preparing. I have decided to give myself a year and see how it goes.”

Many people feel uncertain while home schooling (Moore & Moore 1994: 17). This should not be the case, as the concept of educating one's own children has been followed from the beginning of recorded history (cf 2.2). However, owing to the nature of modern society, the onus of formally educating one's children has been largely removed from the parent (Wynn 1985: 11). For Louise, the decision to reclaim that right was accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and responsibility.

Louise experienced uncertainty in a number of areas:

- *English*

"Teaching English reading is a problem for me as I don't know all the phonics."

- *Mathematics*

"Mathematics is problematic. I don't have a syllabus and I'm working from 'Moderne Basiese Wiskunde'."

- *Sporting activities*

"When people ask me what I'm going to do about sport and extra-mural activities, I just say that I don't know. I'm taking one day at a time and going on intuition. I'm doing what is right for now."

- *Amount of learning*

"I often worry about whether I'm doing enough, but I suppose I can't push him."

Thus, initially, there were several reasons for Louise's lack of self-confidence. However, she has a strong personality and, coupled with the intrinsic feeling that "this was right", she was able to continue. Once Louise had become better acquainted with the Waldorf approach, teaching began to form an important part of her identity and need for recognition. As was mentioned, Louise had made inquiries about completing a Waldorf teacher's training course. In addition, she was contemplating extending her home school by admitting additional children:

"I'm seriously thinking about taking on two or three extra children next year. I have some parents who are interested but they must buy into the 'New Age' philosophy. Preparation [for the lessons] doesn't bother me - it'll be nice to be busy."

Later in the year, Louise said that she had a grade one pupil for the following year (2000). At the time, I noted that Louise would lose some of the advantages of home schooling should she extend in this way. However, upon reflection, many more issues became apparent. The home school was taking on a new meaning for Louise. It became a means for her to self-actualise. Self-actualisation, as described by the theorist Maslow, is our “self-initiated striving to become whatever we believe we are capable of being” (Maslow in Gross & McIlveen 1998: 142).

4.3.7.2 *Hanko's personal identity*

Hanko often looked for forms of encouragement outside the immediate family (cf 4.3.6.5). For example, he would write a letter to his grandmother each week. He used to love to show his work to or sing a song for the researcher, seeking some form of praise.

Hanko seemed to miss “competition”. For example, he and his mother were working in units of three in mathematics. They had to do a three-legged race. Hanko complained that it was not a race because there was nobody to race against. He became quite irritated and refused to participate.

A further example was when Hanko was playing a game where he had to pick up marbles using his toes and count them. He picked up 14 and then commented that the time they visited the Waldorf School in Bloemfontein, he had picked up the most marbles. He competed against his mother, but this did not appeal to him. Louw et al (1997: 503) indicate that once children are of school-going age, their games become increasingly competitive and teamwork gains added importance. Hanko missed the competitive aspect of school and had no other outlet for this need, as he did not participate in additional team games (such as at a local soccer club, for example).

He is a sociable child and spoke often of his friends. Hanko has a very positive personal identity, but he nevertheless missed both the competition with and the camaraderie of peers.

4.3.7.3 *Albertus's personal identity*

The father was not directly involved in the school. However, he was his wife's supporter and confidante. He would look after the children in the afternoon on occasion to give his wife some much needed time alone. He was involved when there was a crisis and did not hesitate to offer advice: for example, on the occasion when he suggested they seek domestic help or when he indicated to Louise that he felt she was being too strict with Hanko. The literature confirms that, in most home schools, the father is usually less involved in the schooling process (Mayberry et al 1995: 33; Lines 2000: 78).

4.3.7.4 *Robert's personal identity*

Robert appeared increasingly isolated and rejected. This was entirely unintentional on Louise's part. As the stresses of home schooling increased, so Robert became more difficult and demanding. He seemed to have decided that negative attention was better than nothing at all. Children who sense that they are deprived of their parents' attention will continue being naughty if they obtain attention, albeit negative attention, because any attention is better than none at all (Gross & McIlveen 1998: 276).

Louise was very patient, but sometimes it is very difficult to manage a child's manifestation of pain, anxiety or anger (Roberts 1999: 24). Rejection, for the young child, is akin to loss, as they have a largely egocentric worldview (Roberts 1999: 16). Adults need to shield the young child from repeated feelings of rejection (Roberts 1999: 16). Robert became a "nuisance", a hindrance, and became even more determined to make his presence felt. It is important for young children to feel accepted and that they are deemed important (Roberts 1999: 15), and Robert's need for acceptance and recognition grew.

4.3.7.5 *Conclusion*

Each person had his/her own specific needs that the home-schooling option was or was not able to fulfil. Furthermore, the home school led to the development and change in each participant's role, and accompanying personal identity. Their views of themselves altered in some specific way as the home school progressed.

4.3.8 *Inter-personal relationships and conflict management*

The home school substantially added to and changed the dynamics of the inter-personal relationships. An advantage of the home school is the close bond that forms within families (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 12). It did place a huge strain on the family, but also acted as a cohesive factor, drawing the family closer together. The act of home schooling in a sense represents a retraction or withdrawal from an important domain of society. The family unit had to find a new place for itself within the social structures in which it functioned. Unlike several other families, this home-schooling family did not network with other home-schooling families, who may have assisted in the Louws finding a new social niche.

4.3.8.1 *The relationship between Louise and Hanco*

There was an added dimension to the role of mother and son, that of teacher and pupil. The two of them had to adjust to these new roles. The adjustment was not always easy. Right from the outset Louise had concerns about her relationship with Hanco. Ironically, it was the relationship with Robert that ultimately deteriorated. She commented:

“I’m really worried about my relationship with Hanco. We have a good relationship and I don’t want this [home schooling] to spoil it.”

Generally, conflict management was facilitated by Louise’s patient and tolerant manner. For example, if Hanco refused to read, then Louise would encourage him by offering to read every alternate page herself.

The concept of motivational conflict refers to the experience of a conflict of motives (Morgan et al 1979: 234; <http://www.tjhsst.edu/Psych/ch9-2/glossary.htm>). Louise very seldom chastised or admonished Hanco. The researcher never observed her speak harshly to him or shout at him. She confessed that she hid or internalised much of her frustration. Thus, there was a conflict of motives in that Louise would have liked to have given vent to her anger (and needed to do so), but feared a breakdown in her relationship with Hanco.

It was also noted that Louise often fulfilled the role that a classmate would have taken: for example, in games or in alternating reading. This became a source of frustration for both Louise and Hanko. Although Louise had a wonderful relationship with Hanko, a mother can only fulfil the role of “playmate” to a seven-year-old to a degree and ultimately Louise tired of often having to be “silly”.

After they had been home schooling for barely a month, the family had a “learning crisis”. Louise mentioned that Hanko had just refused to work. He was allowed to continue playing, but would have to complete his work before going to bed that night. Hanko became tearful, impertinent and cantankerous. Louise placed the responsibility for learning on Hanko. Albertus intervened and stated that he differed from Louise in her approach to the situation. He could not offer an alternative and Louise resolved the situation in her own manner.

Louise had an authoritative parenting style, thus there were definite rules and standards that had to be met, but the children were encouraged to think independently and made to feel that their opinions were valued.

“Three methods of parental discipline are induction, love-withdrawal and power assertion” (Gross & McIlveen 1998: 352). The *inductive* method involves attempting to give the child the understanding to enable him/her to behave suitably in varying situations (Gross & McIlveen 1998: 349). They therefore become self-motivated to behave appropriately.

Louise tried to establish boundaries from the beginning. She had decided that she was not going to “fight” with Hanko. Her means of solving the problem was to place the responsibility for learning on Hanko. A new situation had arisen in the home with regard to discipline and Louise and Albertus had to establish new means to deal with it.

In many respects, Louise appeared over-ambitious and over-hasty in her expectations, considering Hanko's age. Roberts (1999: 81) states that whilst parents know their individual children better than anyone else, staff in early childhood settings have a wide sweep of experience. This experience, in conjunction with their theoretical knowledge, allows them to have a better perspective of what is "normal" and what is "special" in children's development (Roberts 1999: 81). Often, comparisons with other children lead parents to have unrealistic expectations of their children and children find this overpowering (Roberts 1999: 81). Thus, the home-schooling parent needs to guard against overly high expectations in order to avoid overwhelming the child.

Parents need to set limits in order to provide children with a sound structure inside which they can investigate their worlds (Roberts 1999: 51). However, the home school creates new scenarios for which discipline has to be applied.

Structures need to be created (or allowed to develop) within the home school in which the child feels secure enough to explore and learn. This is what Louise was attempting to establish by placing the responsibility of learning on Hanko's shoulders.

Parents have a vast quantity of information about and a keen understanding of their children (Roberts 1999: 81). For example, they are able to understand bad behaviour because they are aware that their child is tired. Sometimes this can lead to viewing a child through what may be termed mother-coloured-glasses.

For example, Hanko repeatedly wrote double-digit numbers in the incorrect order. When he eventually managed to write the number eighty-three (83) correctly, Louise exclaimed, "That's not bad for someone with dyslexia!" The dyslexia was a limitation that had not been mentioned previously and was not referred to again. Louise concealed many of Hanko's weaknesses, although not necessarily intentionally.

Thus, a home-schooled child receives the watchful attention of a loving and concerned parent, who is also the teacher. This type of focus on the individual is impossible in a formal school. It is important to note, however, that there are disadvantages to the teacher having such insight as well: faults which need correction may be ignored because too much allowance has been made for existing circumstances.

It was noted that Hanko became increasingly co-operative. During the time that the family followed the Waldorf approach, very few incidences of conflict were recorded. It would seem that he needed a period in which to adjust to the home school and the changes it caused in his life. Paradoxically, as Hanko became more co-operative, so Robert became more recalcitrant.

4.3.8.2 *The relationship between Louise and Robert*

Louise was aware from the outset of possible problems that she might encounter with Robert. She remarked that when she initially decided to home school Robert and Hanko, a friend told her that Robert would be a “problem”. However, she was adamant that she would overcome any difficulties. Louise said that this same friend came to observe the home school and, on that day, Robert had climbed all over her and had complained the whole time. She said that she had remained outwardly calm, but inside she was in turmoil. Her friend told her that she could not believe how calm Louise had remained and Louise had resolutely refused to admit to her friend how she was feeling.

However, Louise acknowledged that Robert could be really trying at times. The researcher felt quite privileged that Louise had chosen to share this confidence – perhaps she realised it was impossible for someone who spent so much time there *not* to see how she was feeling.

It seemed important to Louise that “outsiders” did not witness the difficulties she was experiencing. Home schoolers fear failure (cf 2.10.2) and desire the approval of the community (Lines 2000: 83). Thus, there was similar motivational conflict in Louise’s relationship with Robert to that with Hanko (cf 4.3.8.1).

Robert became increasingly difficult during school-time. For example, during a lesson, he interrupted five times, asking for blocks. He continually demanded attention by exhibiting behaviour such as throwing all the beans on the floor, crying and jumping on and off a chair.

It became a formidable task for Louise to teach Hanko while, at the same time, contending with Robert's continual demand for attention. Many parents find whining one of the most difficult things to endure in young children (Roberts 1999: 37).

Louise seemingly remained patient and tolerant, although she said that inside she was experiencing intense anger and frustration. She tried to interest Robert in educational activities, but, being so young, he had a short attention span and needed to change activities often. This was difficult to organise while trying to teach Hanko at the same time. Sibling relationships will be discussed in the following section. After the July school holidays, Louise arranged for Robert to return to nursery school.

4.3.8.3 *The relationship between Hanko and Robert*

Studies indicate that there are no obvious norms regarding relationships between siblings; they vary (Roberts 1999: 35). Generally, the relationship between Hanko and Robert was positive. They played together and Hanko helped Robert quite often: for example, with building a puzzle.

Robert enjoyed Hanko's company. In one instance, Robert said that he wanted "Boeta" (Hanko) to go outside and make him an arrow. Louise said that Robert had to leave Hanko alone because he was working. Robert was proud of his big brother, but, as has been mentioned before, he was often unintentionally made to feel less important than Hanko.

Baron and Byrne (1991: 306) define jealousy as "the thoughts, feelings, and actions that are instigated by a real or imagined rival". Robert was jealous of Hanko, particularly of all the attention he received from Louise. He did display signs of anger and open animosity toward Hanko: for example, he hit him on two occasions.

It is normal for siblings to play together well one minute and to ignore each other the next; to love and hate each other; to agree and to argue with each other (Roberts 1999: 36). However, the sibling rivalry did add stress to the process of home schooling.

4.3.8.4 *Albertus's relationship with Louise and the children*

Albertus has been discussed in 4.3.7.3. He mainly provided support for Louise. He offered advice and help where needed. His relationship with the boys was strengthened, as he spent more time with them than he had previously.

4.3.8.5 *Relationships of power*

What did become evident was that in many ways the home school raises issues of power and control. "They [parents] see home schooling as one more step in the evolution of parent power that has given birth to school-choice programs [sic], vouchers and charter schools" (Kantrowitz & Wingert 1998: 67). It is taking control over the child's education from the state (Kantrowitz & Wingert 1998: 67). This gives a parent a sense of power over both the state and the child.

The questions of how much power one has over one's child, and the extent to which one has the right to manipulate a child's beliefs and values, are raised. When asked how Hanco had responded to the idea that other children were at school while he was at home, Louise replied: "Children are adaptable. If you tell them something, they believe you."

There is a fine line between parents' responsibility vis-à-vis the state's responsibility with regard to educating a child. Many educators are of the opinion that governments have a responsibility to ensure that children receive what they need in order to become functional citizens (Kantrowitz & Wingert 1998: 67).

The school represents a form of social control and has a certain amount of power over individuals. In a small town, a headmaster is regarded as a prominent member of the community. Then again, so is the religious minister.

When Louise enrolled Hanko in the local Government school, after having home schooled for approximately eight months, the headmaster's attitude was reproachful. Louise said:

"I felt like a naughty school child, being chastised for doing something terribly irresponsible."

There are issues of power with regard to home schooling. In South Africa, as well as in other countries such as USA (cf 2.2.1), the government and the home-schooling associations have been involved in a power struggle over the education domain (cf 2.11). Our Government believes that education is a fundamental right: "Every person shall have the right to basic education and to equal access to educational institutions" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No 200 of 1993, Chapter Three, Section 32). Van Oostrum (<http://www.pestalozzi.org/archives/com4-99.html>) states that "home educators claim the fundamental right to choose the kind of education their children shall receive and the right to ensure a religious and moral education according to their own convictions, as recognised by international instruments of human rights." Ultimately, the home school represents a potential threat to those in national authority.

4.3.9 *Society and the home school*

The home school has been described as an important social trend (Lines 2000: 74). The social world in which we live necessitates the interaction and co-operation, to some degree, of the humans who cohabit it (www.sociology.org.uk/p2i6nl.htm). A home school requires, by its nature, a decrease in the number of social contacts for both children and parents. The reason some parents home school is in order to limit the nature and scope of the social contacts which the child encounters (Mayberry et al 1995: 3; Holt 1981: 44-45).

Mayberry et al (1995: 45) state that the home school is influenced by forces in society and the community. The Louw's home school and the way in which they operated within their particular social realm will be discussed.

4.3.9.1 *The Louw family's social interactions*

Louise and Albertus were sociable people with a sense of community and a wide circle of acquaintances. Louise spoke often of her friends and social interactions that the family had.

One of the social milieus in which the Louw family functioned was that of their church. For example, during "Pinkster" (Pentecost), it was customary for them to go to church every night. Louise said:

"We go to church every night and then afterwards have a social gathering. Everyone chats and we have a bite to eat. It's very nice and the children enjoy it too."

However, in other ways, she did not conform to some of the roles that were expected of her by members of the church hierarchy, as may be seen by these comments she made:

"They often ask me to read or recite poetry at ladies' meetings and I refuse to do it. I once did it to return a favour for a friend. I was very sorry, as I was inundated with requests after that. Now I just say 'no'."

"We performed a play on stage. It involved fantasy and witches. A parent came to me and said that she was surprised that I, of all people, being a minister's wife, didn't know better and used such irreligious material. My response to her was that my husband is the minister and not myself. She was very shocked."

Louise seemed to enjoy being unconventional. One day, she said:

"Please could you give me a list of some of the books which you read. I'm so bored with the Afrikaans literature and I want to read something more absorbing, but am not sure what."

It seemed as though Louise had an interest in extending her cultural horizons. She was individualistic enough and had the strength of character to pursue these needs and desires actively. However, the persona that she presented to outsiders was far tougher than the more vulnerable individual that the home school highlighted.

4.3.9.2 *The particular meaning which objects assumed in terms of culture*

Spradley (1979: 6) comments that people attribute cultural meaning to objects and these objects assume significance within their social interactions. Louise wanted learning material and toys to be of natural materials (cf 4.3.6.3 and 4.3.6.7). The children were encouraged to play outside (cf 4.3.5.2).

Louise was also adamant that only the best quality material be used. For example, she insisted on using waterpaint paper, which was expensive and could have been replaced with a cheaper brand of paper. The use of objects was repetitive. They always used waterpaints and the bowl of beans was ever-present. Once Louise began to follow the Waldorf approach, the materials she used became even more important: for example, the children only used beeswax crayons.

Discrepancies in Louise's beliefs about objects did emerge, however. Initially, Louise commented she had told Hanco that children ought to play and that everything that came with a plug on it was bad for a child's development. This was despite the vast array of technical appliances in the kitchen, as well as the subsequent purchase of a brand new, state-of-the-art oven. Furthermore, there were occasions when the family watched videos, although watching television was discouraged. In fact, Hanco won a competition organised by the television programme *50-50*.

Louise had criticised the formal school Hanco had attended for forcing children to take computer studies. In fact, she had asked that Hanco not participate in the lessons. There was, however, more than one computer in the house.

Furthermore, in one incident when Robert asked if he could type on the computer, Louise answered, "In a moment". She also said that they had had a late start that morning because the children had been watching videos. It seemed as though, by that stage, the cultural meaning which objects signified for Louise had altered in many ways.

4.3.10 *The children's return to formal schooling*

After the July school holidays, Robert returned to nursery school. Louise found his presence too disruptive during the home-schooling process and she found him increasingly difficult to manage (cf 4.3.8.2). Hanko returned to a public primary school in early September, 1999. The researcher had left the observation site just prior to that, but upon hearing the news, returned to interview Louise and the family. A number of aspects were discussed. The return of the children to formal schooling inevitably changed the focus of the study and the researcher was curious to know why home schooling had been abandoned.

4.3.10.1 *Reasons for return to public schooling*

Louise provided the following reasons:

- *Robert had become aggressive*

Aggression in a child is exhibited by resistance; he is hostile, cheeky, quarrelsome and often insolent (Kapp 1991: 118). Louise said, "I had already decided to return Robert to school because he had become so aggressive." Aggression is often the response to frustration or the obstruction of goal-directed behaviour (Baron and Byrne 1991: 403).

- *Boredom*

Louise noticed that Hanko was beginning to gain weight. She began weighing him and was shocked when he gained 2kg in one week. Upon observing him, she deduced that he was eating out of boredom and frustration. Hanko was constantly asking to go out; he did not want to be at home for any length of time.

Louise felt that what she was doing was detrimental to her child and that she had to take drastic action:

“If I hadn’t seen that the home schooling was physically detrimental to my child, I would have stuck it out, but I just realized that I had to do something quickly.”

- *Problems with managing everything*

Louise tried to do the best for her children, but ultimately the home school wore her out emotionally and physically. Stress and burnout occurs amongst home schoolers and is an issue that is addressed by Raymond and Dorothy Moore (cf 2.10). Louise said that the whole “business” was a process of self-discovery. Furthermore, she said:

“In the end, I realised that I was trying to be a super-human being. A friend of mine told me afterwards that she thought I was a freak because I was managing to do so much. I was so torn by trying to be perfect and I continually had to suppress feelings of losing my cool.”

Louise said that in the end she was so tired and emotionally drained that she had decided that Hanko would either have to transfer to a computer programme of learning or go back to school. Louise admitted that it was wonderful to drop the children off at school and do “her own thing” in the mornings. What Louise said is confirmed by the literature (cf 2.7.1.2 and 2.7.1.3); home schooling requires considerable commitment and can impose limitations on one’s freedom.

There was a discrepancy between the way in which Louise perceived herself and her ideal self (cf 4.3.7). She was not fulfilling her expectations of herself. Motivational conflict led to frustration (cf 4.3.8.2; 4.3.8.3). Home schooling is not an easy option. By “surrendering” her children to a conventional school, she regained some of her former identity, as well as a measure of control over her life. She also experienced a sense of relief in relegating the responsibility for educating her children. It was Louise who made the decision to return the children to school; Albertus fully supported her in this.

4.3.10.2 *The procedure for returning the children to school*

Robert's return was easy and he was enrolled at a local nursery school. Louise said that she had thought carefully about where to send Hanko and had decided that, as she had tried a private school and home schooling, she would resort to a conventional government school.

The procedure for returning Hanko to school posed some difficulties. Louise went to see the headmaster and reported that he was "very cross" with her for having home schooled Hanko. Although she had found his attitude somewhat unfriendly, Louise said that she remained very calm and just listened to his chastisements of her. She said:

"I felt like a naughty child in the headmaster's office."

Initially, he wanted to test Hanko to see if he was up government-school standard. Louise agreed. However, the school did not test him. There are no clear guidelines as to how home-schooled children are to be dealt with if they return to school. It is an area worthy of further investigation.

4.3.10.3 *Adaption to public schooling*

Both children adapted easily to the return to public schools. Louise said that Robert became less aggressive, calmer and more like his former self. He enjoyed the contact with children of his own age. Hanko was pleased to return to a formal school. He looked forward to singing in the choir and playing rugby. Hanko had missed the extra-mural activities whilst he was home schooled. When interviewed about how he was enjoying his schooling, his answer was:

"It's nice but we just have to sit for a very long time and my bottom gets sore. It's nice to have lots of friends and to do all the things after school."

The major difference Hanko noted between the home school and the conventional school was that he had to sit for a long time. An advantage of the home school is that it is less restrictive than a conventional school (cf 2.7.2.4). Hanko was a sociable child who enjoyed his extra-mural activities and inter-relations with other children; it was something that he had missed during the home-school period.

Academically, Hanko was up to standard. Louise commented that the mathematics system at the school was wonderful:

“It’s similar to the Waldorf system, with a lot of repetition, but they just work at a much faster pace.”

Hanko had done some of the mathematics, but not all of it. He had also covered additional aspects that the other children had not. His reading, spelling and English were way ahead of the other children’s. The teacher was impressed with the high standard of Hanko’s general knowledge. His handwriting (penmanship), however, was poor in comparison to the other children’s.

Socially, Hanko adapted well. Outcomes-based education (cf 2.11.5.1) involves a fair amount of group work and Hanko enjoyed this immensely. His teacher said that she was amazed at how well he had adjusted to the formal school.

4.3.10.4 Louise’s experience in retrospect

Louise remained positive about home schooling. However, she did not believe that it suited every family. She feared that her children would become too isolated:

“I still believe that home schooling is good, but not in every situation.

If you’re out of town, it’s fine, but Hanko realised that he was different and he didn’t like being different.”

Louise’s original plans to teach other children and to study the Waldorf course had altered. Louise had come to believe that the Waldorf approach did not work with just a few children and had to be implemented in a group situation. Thus, home schooling is a learning process for parents - they adapt and discard ideas continually. Louise furthermore felt that it was just too much responsibility to teach other people’s children.

4.3.10.5 *Social and cultural considerations*

Louise made a shift in her original social and cultural perceptions (cf 4.3.1, 4.3.9.1 and 4.3.9.2). She said:

“I discovered that you can’t alienate a child by not allowing him to watch television or videos or play with plastic toys. If he’s not allowed to do those things, then he just doesn’t fit in.”

Louise had changed in the way in which she attributed cultural meaning to objects. She did not like those objects, but had decided that she did not want her children to feel alienated from the norm.

Her acceptance of those objects resulted in conforming to the norm. Conformity is an example of social influence wherein behaviour is altered by individuals so as to align themselves with existing social norms (Baron & Byrne 1991: 311). These social norms are “widely accepted ideas or rules indicating how people should behave in certain conditions” (Baron & Byrne 1991: 311).

Furthermore, the home school **had** represented a withdrawal from mainstream society. Louise ultimately did not want her family to be isolated socially or to be different from the social norm. Baron and Byrne (1991: 323) indicate that the majority of people find unpleasant the social disapproval that is aimed at them when they deviate from the norms of the group; many conform in order to avoid this social disapproval. Hanko did not wish to deviate from the norm and Louise did not want him to feel different, thus she conformed to the social norm and replaced him within the conventional education system.

In addition, it took strength of character to return the children to school.

“It was the hardest decision on earth to admit that I’d made a mistake and didn’t want to home school anymore. I just know it’s the best thing for him.”

4.3.10.6 Conclusion

The home-schooling process had provided a learning opportunity for the Louw family, particularly Louise. By the time the children had returned to formal schools, Louise was physically and emotionally drained; she was suffering from burnout (cf 2.10). Hanko and Robert adapted well to their new schools.

The home-schooling experience had been positive in several ways. Louise was far more aware of different approaches and methods of teaching, and she was better able to help Hanko with his homework. Louise became notably less critical of formal education, as she was aware of how difficult teaching can be. Although the children were returned to formal schooling, this does not signify that the home school failed.

4.4 Summary and conclusion

What emerged from the study is that this home school had been a viable educational alternative. However, ultimately it did not suit the requirements of this particular family. Recommendations for overcoming many of the obstacles experienced by the family in the study are outlined in Chapter Five.

4.4.1 Each home school is unique

The particular self-identities of its participants, as well as the way in which each interacts, will have a significant bearing on the nature of the home school. This uniqueness will contribute to the degree of success or failure of the home school.

4.4.2 The reasons for home schooling are individual and complex

Each family will have a unique set of reasons for rejecting formal education (cf 2.4). These reasons are often based on the previous educational experiences of the parents – either their own or those which their children have experienced (cf 2.4.2). Often parents are critical of these previous educational experiences and do not want their children to be a part of the same system (cf 2.4.2). This was partly the reason the Louw family home schooled - Louise did not want her children to experience the same education system that she had (cf 4.3.1).

More significant was that Hanko had felt "different" in the private school. However, he ultimately felt "different" in the home school too and it was only when he was enrolled at a public school that he considered he did fit in. It is clearly important that the model of school to which one sends one's child to must be in keeping with the family values and culture.

4.4.3 *Advantages of home schooling that became evident through the study*

Several advantages to home schooling became evident through the study (cf 4.3.6.9). Some aspects have been mentioned in the literature before (cf 2.7.2). The home school allows for a large measure of adaptability and thus the interest of the learner can be quickly established and focused upon (cf 4.3.6.1). Weaknesses are also more easily established and remedied. The actual school time that is required is far less than in a conventional school and this frees children to pursue areas of interest to them. The home environment is non-threatening and thus is very conducive to positive learning experiences.

4.4.4 *The home school within the broader society*

In the home school studied, there was no evidence of the family's leading a "hermit-like" existence (cf 4.3.9). The home school in the study signified a limit in the nature and scope of social interaction, but it did, nevertheless, function as a part of modern society. Home schooling in itself has been described as a modern social trend (cf 1.1.1). However, home schooling, in this case, was a deviation from the norm and, as such, did provoke criticism and censure from social groups such as the family, community, authorities and friends. The family found this difficult to endure.

4.4.5 *The daily routine of the home school*

The added dimension of schooling within the home gave the home an additional function. New roles were taken on by the participants (cf 4.3.7). It takes time for the family to adapt to such a different situation. It takes time to establish a routine that is suitable for the family's needs (cf 4.3.3). Ultimately, the Louws were not able to find a *modus operandi* that suited the whole family, in spite of experimentation with and modification of various methodologies.

Problems arise when unforeseen events occur (cf 4.3.6.6 and 4.3.3.2), an inevitable part of the home school. Just as when unforeseen events occur in conventional schools, contingency plans have to be formed in order to minimize disruptive effects.

One of the advantages of the home school is the flexibility it affords (cf 4.3.6.9). For example, field trips and excursions are easily manageable and educationally valuable. However, a great deal of commitment, self-discipline and energy is required in order to home school effectively (cf 2.7.1 and 4.3.3.2).

4.4.6 *Choice of curricula*

There are a vast number of curricula providers, to the extent that the choices may seem overwhelming (cf 2.8). Some of the literature advises one not to follow the approach of the curricula providers (Colfax & Colfax 1988: 44), but to develop an eclectic approach. The approach each home school follows will depend on that home school's particular philosophy (cf 2.8). It is advisable to read widely, as Louise did, until one finds an approach that suits one's fundamental philosophy of education and child-rearing. The initial choice is not immutable and serves as a starting point that will be expanded upon and developed, according to the needs of the family (cf 2.8 and 4.3.4).

4.4.7 *Burnout*

Home schooling sometimes leads to stress and burnout (cf 2.10). The primary parent-educator in this study was unable to manage the stresses accompanying home schooling effectively and ultimately sent her children back to school (cf 4.3.10). In the light of Moore and Moore's recommendations for avoiding stress and burnout (cf 2.10), the following factors affected the home school in the study.

4.4.7.1 *The home school is a unique model of education*

One cannot impose the model of conventional schooling on the home school. One needs to discard traditional notions of schooling, as tutoring the individual is not the same as tutoring a whole class (cf 2.10.1).

Louise observed the Waldorf approach at a school and tried to apply what she had seen working with a whole class to the tutoring of two children (cf 4.3.4 and 4.3.6). She admitted in the end that this had not worked (cf 4.3.10.4).

4.4.7.2 *Social pressure*

The average adult does not want to appear different to the norm (cf 2.10.3). Louise succumbed to social pressure. She did not like the fact that Hanko felt different to others – it was one of the reasons she put him back in school (cf 4.3.10.4 and 4.3.10.5). The degree to which Louise felt the social pressure was expressed when she said that the most difficult thing of all was to admit that she had made a mistake and put Hanko back in a conventional school (cf 4.3.10.5).

4.4.7.3 *Guidance*

Moore and Moore (1994: 15; cf 2.10.4) indicate that one of the most effective means of avoiding stress and burnout in the home-school scenario is to obtain advice from experts in the field, especially in the first year or two.

Louise was fortunate in that she had a supportive spouse (cf 4.3.7.3). However, one of the major downfalls of the Louw home school was that there was no networking with other home-schooling families or associations. Such networking could have provided help, advice and guidance with regard to difficulties that were experienced; curricula options; creative ideas; and opportunities for social interaction for both children and parents. It would also have offered support, in that Louise could have shared educational ideas and resources, and thus had some time for herself.

Louw et al (1997: 636) state that social support has the effect of lessening or completely eradicating the negative effects of stress. Furthermore, just the knowledge that help is available – even when it is not utilized – is one of the most effective means of diminishing stress (Louw et al 1997: 636).

4.4.8 *Managing to home school with very young children*

One of the aspects that contributed to the stress in the home school under study was contending with the behavioural changes and needs of a very young child – he was three-years-old at the time (cf 4.3.8.2; 4.3.8.3 and 4.3.10.1). Recommendations for managing young children within a home-school environment are made in Chapter Five (cf 5.3).

4.4.9 *Managing change*

The home school requires a period of adjustment to various changes that are present within it. There are changes to the routine of the home (cf 4.4.5). There are adaptations to the roles of the participants (cf 4.3.7). There are adaptations to the individuals' personal identity (cf 4.3.7). There are changes in the inter-personal relationships (cf 4.3.8). There are changes in the ways in which the family interacts socially (cf 2.7.2.1 and 4.4.4). It takes time to establish which curriculum and methodology works well for the family and this involves change too (cf 4.4.6). Thus, the home-school family has to adapt to and contend with several changes within a short period of time. This can prove stressful (cf 4.4.5).

4.4.10 *Awareness of the individual requirements of the child*

Initially, it is not easy to establish a child's level of interest and ability (cf 2.7.1.4). At times, Hanko was just not interested in what Louise was teaching him (cf 4.3.8.1). The planning requirements are taxing on a parent at times (cf 4.3.6.6 and 2.7.1.4).

4.4.11 *Managing behaviour (discipline)*

The home school creates a new scenario in which children and parents operate (cf 4.3.8). Guidelines and boundaries for acceptable behaviour have to be established in order for effective learning to take place (cf 4.3.8.1).

4.4.12 Conclusion

Hanko returned to a formal school and adapted well, both academically and socially (cf 4.3.10). This home school was a feasible educational option, but it did not suit the needs of the family in the long term. It often requires strength of character to choose an educational option that is not the social norm. The home school demands commitment and dedication. Together with the adoption of the home school must go the adoption of a different mindset, for the home school does not function in the same way as a conventional school. Much can be learnt from the home school and incorporated into the conventional school. This is discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 *Introduction*

This chapter is comprised of a summary of the research. Recommendations are made for home schooling, based on the findings of Chapter Four. Further recommendations are made for the incorporation of positive aspects of home schooling within conventional schools. Parents who do not home school would benefit from these recommendations as well. Recommendations for further areas of research are discussed.

5.2 *Synthesis of major findings*

The synthesis of the study is formulated in accordance with the subdivisions of the broad problem as outlined in section 1.2:

- The nature, scope and organisation of the home-schooling movement, internationally, as well as in South Africa, are discussed in Chapter Two. The chapter explores the historical background of home schooling (cf 2.2), which is a burgeoning phenomenon. Prevalent issues and trends within home schooling are focused upon (cf 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7). The chapter moves more specifically to the South African situation, where home schooling is a legal option (cf 2.11). Home schooling in South Africa has several levels of organisation, both nationally and locally. More recently, there has been an escalation in conflict between the home-schooling associations and the National Department of Education.
- The way in which a home school operates is explored in the ethnographic study which is detailed in Chapter Four. The experiences of the learners and parents within a home school are examined.

- The context of the study is detailed and emerging themes are discussed (cf 4.3).

These include:

- a) a rejection of institutionalised schooling (cf 4.3.1);
- b) responses of the community, friends and family (cf 4.3.2);
- c) the daily routine of the home school (cf 4.3.3);
- d) the curriculum (cf 4.3.4);
- e) noteworthy elements of the curricular approach (cf 4.3.5);
- f) teaching methods (cf 4.3.6);
- g) the relationship between the individual's personal identity and the home school (cf 4.3.7);
- h) inter-personal relationships and conflict management (cf 4.3.8);
- i) society and the home school (cf 4.3.9); and
- j) the children's return to formal schooling (cf 4.3.10)

Ultimately, the home school in the study was deemed a feasible option. However, it did not suit the needs of the family in the study. The family exhibited several signs of stress as a result of difficulties which have also manifested themselves in other home schools (cf 2.10).

Several recommendations for various parties, regarding home schooling, emerge as a result of the particular study. These are detailed in this chapter (cf 5.3).

5.3 *Recommendations for home schooling*

5.3.1 *Recommendations for home-schooling families*

The home schooler is advised to prepare him/herself in the following ways:

- Read widely and consult with others before and during the home-schooling period.
- View the home school as an independent model of education and do not impose a model of the formal school on the home school.
- Appreciate that, within the home school, it takes time to formulate the routine, the curriculum and the teaching methods that are best suited to the individual family and its philosophy of life.

- Evolve a means of contending with criticism and questions from educational authorities, community, family and friends.
- Prepare the home-schooled children so that they may respond confidently to criticisms and questions from the educational authorities, community, family and friends.
- Establish new social networks (for example, with other home schoolers) within which to function, replacing those which have been discarded along with the option of formal education, so that the family does not feel socially alienated.
- Share ideas and experiences with other home-schooling families and experts, so that problems and frustrations do not lead to burnout and stress.
- Establish a partnership with formal academic institutions, where both parties assist with resources, assessment, extra-mural activities and social opportunities for children, rather than reject such institutions outright.
- Be aware that returning children to formal schooling does not represent the failure of the home school, but merely a return to another mode of education.
- Adapt schooling routine to accommodate the daily domestic chores.
- Have an alternative plan for emergencies and disruption of routine: for example, by enlisting the assistance of a grandparent or a friend who does not work or by organising for the children to attend another home school for a while.
- Explain to family and friends that, under normal circumstances, they may not interrupt the schooling process.
- Take into consideration that the pre-school child has needs of his own - to be acknowledged and accepted. The following recommendations are made in this regard :
 - a) Allow him/her to follow a special programme, such as *Five in a Row* (cf 2.11.5 and 2.8).
 - b) Allow him/her to interact with children of his/her own age.
- Develop strategies for managing change.
- Beware of overly high expectations of the child.
- At all times, remain sensitive to the needs of the child.

5.3.2 *Recommendations for the education authorities*

Education authorities should realise that home schooling is a viable educational alternative. Co-operation with home schoolers is in the best interest of the individual's right to learn.

Increased co-operation and discussion with relevant parties will enable the authorities to gain a better sense of the specific nature and needs of the home school. This will be to the benefit of both home schooling and formal education. Formal education stands to learn from the home schooling model and the possibility of a symbiotic relationship exists.

Recommendations include:

- arranging regular meetings with representatives of home-schooling associations to discuss relevant aspects and to resolve disagreements before they escalate into full-blown confrontation;
- formulating constructive guidelines, which apply to both parents and schools, for the re-entry of home-schooled pupils into the formal education system; and
- formulating policies whereby public libraries and formal schools have available material which suits the needs of home-schooled children.

5.4 *Recommendations for parents of children who are not home schooled*

Home-schooling does not suit every family and, consequently, it is not an approach that all families are in a position to adopt.

However, with regard to their children's education and upbringing, parents of children who are not home schooled, stand to learn valuable lessons from home-schooling families. Parental involvement; individual attention; and commitment to and interest in the child all contribute immeasurably to the successful education of a child.

Some examples of aspects from which all parents could benefit are:

- The parental role in learning and teaching does not stop when children enter formal school. The more involved the parent, the better the child will perform. Thus, parents need to attend as many functions at school as possible and to maintain open lines of communication with their children's educators.
- Children must be encouraged to pursue areas of interest to them in their spare time - even ten minutes a day thus occupied could prove invaluable.
- Family excursions and educational outings are important.
- Parents must network with teachers in order to continue, at home, the work done at school.
- Reading should be encouraged at every opportunity.
- It would appear advisable to limit television viewing.
- Discussions on topical matters and subjects being taught at school should be encouraged.
- Make use of home-school material and curricula that could enhance your child's learning experience.

5.5 *Recommendations for teachers in formal schools based on what is effective for home-schooled children*

Teachers in conventional schools can also learn from the successes of those who home-school their children. The following recommendations are made:

- Create a homely and stress-free environment in which children feel secure and confident to learn effectively.
- Allow the learner to pursue areas of interest to him.
- Actively encourage reading.
- Actively encourage open dialogue and channels of communication with the parents of learners.
- Take an interest in the child as an individual and make a dynamic attempt to engage and communicate with each child as often as possible.

5.6 *Recommendations for further research*

Several proposed areas, for future research, emerge:

- Social and cultural themes came strongly to the fore during this study. It would be useful to conduct a study of home schooling that is guided by a specific conceptual framework, inspired by the fields of cultural psychology and informed by traditions of anthropology, psychology and social psychology. It would be interesting to conduct such a study within a wider sociocultural context.
- It would be useful to conduct a comprehensive study in South Africa, similar to the study entitled *Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students*, which was undertaken by L.M. Rudner in 1998 for EPPA.
- It would be beneficial to undertake a full investigation into the topics of stress and burnout amongst those who home school, to gain an understanding of how widespread these phenomena are and how best to facilitate ways of minimising their effects.

5.7 *Limitations of the study*

This study, besides a comprehensive literature study, involves an ethnographic study of a single family within the qualitative research tradition (cf 3.2) and, as such, both strengths and limitations inherent in a study of this nature are in evidence. The most obvious limitation is the focus on a single case.

However, the design of the research is intended to be descriptive and exploratory in nature (cf 3.4; 1.4) and not to create generalised findings (cf 1.5). Data are presented descriptively and not quantified, and no endeavour has been made to predict future behaviour under similar experimental conditions.

The literature study in Chapter Two provided an important framework for the participant observations and informal interviews. However, no attempt was made to prove or disprove theory. Ultimately, grounded theory – theory that emerges from data collected (cf 3.2.5) – was devised based on themes which emerged from the ethnographic study (cf 3.3.2; 4.3).

The subjective nature of the recording and decoding of data in qualitative research is acknowledged (cf 3.8). The study strives to represent reality (cf 3.8.5) accurately and authentically, so as to ensure reliability and validity of the study. Within the confines of the limitations of this study, it is believed that the study can contribute towards a body of knowledge of home schooling in South Africa and form a basis for future research.

5.8 *Concluding remarks*

Home schooling represents a viable educational alternative to institutionalised education. It does not infringe upon children's right to education and does no academic "damage". Although home schooling is a growing social trend, it is, nevertheless, not always an easy option. Families who home school elect to depart from the norms of mainstream society. Children thus become socialised in other ways – with other like-minded families.

Home schooling is an effective model of education that is very rewarding for many families, but it does require extensive commitment, dedication, preparation, emotional involvement and stamina.

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