

TEACHER	TEACHER				
CLASS TEACGER	CLASS TEACHER	BA. Ed	15 years	3 YEARS	40 YEARS
CLASS TEACHER	CLASS TEACHER	MSC	5 YEARS	2 YEARS	32 YEARS

5.1 BRIEF PORTRAITS OF THE PARTICIPANTS' EDUCATIONAL BELIEFS

Thabo (Deputy)

Thabo is the deputy principal of the school. He is 48 years and has trained as a History and English Language teacher. Thabo believes that in a good school, teachers and learners must be disciplined and orderly for the proper functioning. He commented that quality education is indicated by good academic results, which are the products of hard work of both teachers and learners. Thabo perceives that policies must be followed for the effectiveness of the school. He believes in the cooperation of teachers in order for the school to function properly. For him discipline, order, care and commitment to one's work are key issues in education. He claims that it is beneficial to reflect on our practices for better performance.

Lineo (Resource teacher)

Lineo is also a trained Mathematics and Science teacher. As a resource teacher, Lineo is responsible for organising meetings for the in-service courses at district level. Lineo indicates that she works with different teachers and advises them on various educational matters, such as for example, arranging for an effective class, developing teaching and learning materials, to name a few examples. At this school, the work is done with other teachers for the improvement of their own classes and the improvement of materials for their classes. Lineo shares a class with another teacher. Furthermore, her argument is that a strict environment is good for learning as it enforces responsibility to both teachers and learners. She also comments that parents' involvement in education encourages participation in the teaching and learning process.

Maneo (class teacher)

Maneo is a class teacher and is 48 years old. She is trained in teaching English and Sesotho. Her opinion is that effective teaching and learning is a combination of infrastructure such as good buildings, electricity, learning materials, responsibility and a low teacher-pupil ratio. Maneo believes in parental involvement and thinks that order and discipline are a result of strict management and concern for learners. Maneo has been in this school since its establishment and her assumption is that teaching learners English increases their chances of succeeding and progressing to higher education. She views good education as one in which teachers create a close relationship between the school and the community.

Mobu (class teacher)

Mobu is teaching Geography and Mathematics. He was the deputy principal in one of the public schools for a period of five years. He believes that good education is a combination of many elements such as good discipline, involvement of parents, to mention a few factors. He refers to human resources and a non-human resource such as buildings and the infrastructure. However, his opinion is that human resources are more important because they regulate the other resources. He claims that teachers are valuable in education particularly if they possess qualities such as commitment, concern and responsibility to one's duty. His view is that discipline makes the teaching and learning process productive. Mobu is also of the idea that parents must be made aware of the importance of their involvement in the education of their children.

Lucy (class teacher)

Lucy is a class teacher although she does not possess the educational credentials for teaching. She possesses a Master of Science (MSc) degree and teaches Science. Lucy believes that selection of learners is not important for success but the school's environment plays an important role in making learners what they are. She believes that hard work and cooperation among the teaching staff make a difference in education. Lucy demonstrates that strictness in school policies is a good measure for any productive school. She is of the idea that parents need to be encouraged to take part in their children's education so as to build confidence in the child.

Rethabile (class teacher)

Rethabile is a primary school teacher who has recently obtained the Primary school teacher certificate (PTC). She believes that teachers need to develop themselves through in-service courses in order to remain effective and productive. Rethabile believes that a good school is determined by the kind of environment the school creates. For her, high level of control of learners and teachers is important because each does his/her work. She is of the view that this induces responsibility to both teachers and learners. She also argues for community participation in schools. Rethabile comments that educating the child must be the concern of the community as the child serves not only the family, but the society as a whole.

In sum, the portraits suggest that the teachers view responsibility and discipline as significant to the proper functioning of the school. Their beliefs suggest that they know that the teaching profession needs the effort of both parents and teachers.

5.2 "HOW DID I COME TO KNOW ABOUT AND CHOOSE TO TEACH IN THIS SCHOOL?"

When the participants were asked how they knew about the school, their responses reflected that they have experienced the school in different personal ways. They have been involved in the activities of the school in one way or another. Lineo, Maneo and Rethabile reported that they knew of the school because the school is in the area in which they own homes. They show thus, "I learned about the school while staying at this place"; "I was attracted during my teaching practice"; "The school is within my home." Mobu explains thus, "A friend told me about the school." Lucy commented, "My husband, who is teaching here, told me about the school." This means that participants obtained first hand information because of the relationship of the school to their informants.

When the respondents were probed on their reasons for choosing the school, they paid attention to examination results and appreciation of teachers' work. These are their remarks: "I can choose a school where my work is appreciated"; "I choose a school where my work is being reflected by good results, where I enjoy my profession, through good results and a feeling that I belong to the environment in which I work"; "I prefer a school that increases my professional interest by considering and

appreciating the good I do as a teacher"; "I feel accepted in a school if I am positively criticised when I am wrong."

5.3 THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The literature on school quality or school effectiveness shows that school quality is not a notion to be reflected by one factor, it is a combination of multiple factors (Lightfoot, 1983). Teachers' responses foreground some of these factors, namely

- * Physical conditions, discipline and motivation
- * Teaching and learning
- * Recognition of teachers' professional status
- * Leadership

5.3.1 PHYSICAL CONDITIONS, DISCIPLINE AND MOTIVATION

With regard to an orderly and disciplined environment, teachers claimed that they were attracted to the school because of its organisation and physical conditions. This is portrayed in Rethabile's (class teacher) description,

The school environment is very orderly. Our classrooms are organised. There are desks, boards, and enough space for different class activities. Both the primary and the high school have well equipped classrooms.

According to this teacher the school has good infrastructure and learners and teachers are motivated because their environment is equipped and spacious. Order and clean environment are claimed to motivate both teachers and learners, as they are sure of what to do at what time.

Maneo (class teacher) adds,

We work very hard to discipline our learners. Learners have clear rules for behaviour in the school in general and if they are disobedient they are punished. In my class I apply my own procedures that can help make learners work. For example, I make them repeat my activities five times if the assignment is not done.

In order to sustain the learners' motivation, teachers used different strategies. Thabo (Deputy) gives the following example,

I always see to it that I give them a continuous feedback of their assignments and I have realised that I retain their interest in teaching and learning process. Besides as a school, we try hard to release their reports in time so that they can see how we value their work.

Lucy (class teacher) adds,

Because we want to instill self-discipline, the school encourages the children to participate in different school activities. Prefects assist in keeping order. In the class I make my learners participate during the lessons.

The teachers' commitment to their work enhances the functioning of the school. For example, Rethabile (class teacher) explains,

Teachers follow progress of learners. If the child tends to work poorly in the different subjects, it is the duty of the teacher to make a very close analysis of the behaviour and solve the problem. It does not pay to rebuke a child who is miserable.

Thabo added that teachers in this school are always engaged in their work. They plan, mark the activities and give back feedback.

Teachers mentioned that they are always engaged at school. They indicated that the principal is very strict, and monitors their work closely. They claimed that there are times when they feel very stressed since there is a lot of work. For example Lineo (Resource Teacher) remarks,

During my first three months, I was unable to manage my class-work. The teaching, preparations and marking learners' work was a very tough job for me especially when I came from a very permitting school. I found it very difficult and I had to approach other teachers on ways of coping with the situation.

The teachers also indicated that the parents encourage learning motivation by providing them with learning materials like stationery and with any resources needed for learning. This is reflected in Thabo's words,

Children are cared for and parents are involved in their children's work. If parents are involved, learners become motivated and confidence is developed.

5.3.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The low learners-teacher ratio in this school was emphasised repeatedly by teachers.

The teachers claimed that the ratio encourages a close relationship with the learners and enables teachers to have time for each learner. Rethabile (class teacher) indicates,

Teachers in good educational environment are committed, and concerned. The reason is that classes are small and there is time for each child. They are trying a lot and they are more responsible.

To show that they are concerned, one claims,

We work very hard, because we want our learners to succeed. We research before attempting to teach topics. This means that we do not use learners' prescribed texts only.

And Lucy (class teacher) comments that there is a lot of collaboration in the school, particularly with teaching and learning. Maneo (class teacher) expresses the collaboration process in their school,

Preparation for classroom instruction is a concern of different class teachers because the concerned teacher gets advice from other teachers in order to make an effective instruction. Besides, we engage learners and find means of solving problems or at times to develop the learning materials. Learners are encouraged to be creative.

Lucy (class teacher) comments,

If a teacher is confident, he/she is ready to be corrected not only by his colleagues, but also by the learners. This makes learning interesting because the learners' views are also accepted. Such a teacher is able to make a learner-centered classroom.

In addition, the teachers related that they allow the learners to question any knowledge that they receive. Thabo (deputy) remarks,

Learners are allowed to participate and are always involved in the teaching and learning so, they can question, and criticise during the lesson. Learners have the spirit of inquiry.

According to the teachers, questioning assist learners to have more understanding and learners are not indoctrinated. Maneo claims, "I involve my learners and I usually interrogate their knowledge by asking them questions."

The teachers indicated that the most important thing in their teaching strategy is to involve learners and encourage criticism. Mobu exclaims, "Learners are allowed to be critical when teaching and learning takes place. This means that they are permitted to

ask teachers during the lessons for more clarity and understanding of the lesson taught."

5.3.3 RECOGNITION OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL STATUS

The participants asserted that the principal recognises and wants teachers to develop professionally. The principal encourages teachers to gain new knowledge and insights in the teaching profession for the benefit of the learners. This was reflected in the following,

The principal allows us to attend seminars and expects to see very clear reports of the workshop.

The teachers remarked that they feel accepted and important particularly when they make decisions for the school. Maneo and Lucy comment,

He gives us chance to say our views and our decisions are given a trial. If we fail, nobody is blamed for failure. A different approach is thought and tried. In this sense one feels accepted, trusted and we are always eager to make suggestions and we work.

5.3.4 LEADERSHIP

The teachers praised the leadership qualities of their principal. They indicated that the principal works with her teachers in harmony and sets a good example to the community. This is reflected in Maneo's (class teacher) words,

She supervises the teachers' classes and induces cooperation because she has delegates duties to teachers and expects them to work hard in the management processes of the school. Besides, the principal is accountable for the entire operation of the school.

And

If the principal intends to visit the classes, she makes us aware that such class visits will be done.

They described the way in which the principal respects the job and the ways she maintains accountability. Thabo comments,

She comes early to school and is always present at school. If she is away from school on either private matters or school matters, she reports to us. She is a real leader.

Respondents claimed that in their present school they are given responsibilities and

advised to develop their own learning materials. They claimed to be involved in the development of the school. Lineo (Resource teacher) gives an example,

The principal advises us to develop our own learning materials and projects. For example, members of the same department develop teaching-learning materials in cooperation.

Maneo (class teacher) perceives,

We can develop stories out of picture cuttings from magazines for the classes with which we are engaged for that time. These pictures can be used in the class as a task for a language lesson or for any appropriate lesson.

In sum, teachers' responses associate a good learning environment with a multiple of factors. For example, they stated presence of factors such as physical environment, the teaching and learning attitude of both the teachers and learners. They view these as influences to the discipline and motivation of teachers and learners in the school. In addition, they indicate that accountability and responsibility play a major part in the private school.

5.4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The teachers appreciated the high level of parental involvement in educational matters found in HEMS. They said parents are involved in ways such as assisting with children's homework, visiting children's school, attending meetings such as the open-day meetings and assisting in different school activities.

Participants understand the minimum involvement of parents as making sure that homework is done. They claimed that this helps learning. For instance Mobu (class teacher) asserts,

If parents regularly check the homework of their children and the child does his work through the supervision of the parent, the child develops skills in learning. Besides, they are able to find out who among teachers does teaching and learning effectively and a parent is free to approach the teacher or the principal to find the progress of the child.

They asserted thus, "guided learners do their assignments with a purpose and understanding of what they do rather than a mere copying from their friends' work". By guided learners teachers refer to supervised learners. In addition, teachers

encourage parents to help children in reading and to read with them magazines and other books they possess at home. Lineo (resource teacher) claims:

In meetings we ask parents to assist their children. They must buy them magazines, newspapers. Besides, they must enforce them to either read to their parents and the parents must help them understand the stories.

The teachers reported that the school schedules parents' meetings quarterly. At the meetings the teachers discuss the performance and welfare of the children. However, teachers indicated that not all parents are able to come to meetings especially because of work problems. They indicated that parents who are unable to come to meetings are encouraged to have representatives such as close relatives so that they can be informed about the school activities. For example Thabo (Deputy) claims that:

Parents' meetings are scheduled for every quarter of the academic season. In these meetings parents are asked to assist in different measures on their children's education. Parents can guide their learners in homework or they can supplement the school texts and buy their children extra books.

The teachers indicated that parents are permitted to visit the school at any time for purposes of discussing the children's academic progress. Participants claimed that a parent learns about performance of her child, by asking the responsible teacher. The respondents cited a close relationship between parents and teachers. They claim to know the learners' parents. This is reflected in,

We meet parents when they come to pay school fees and when they are called for disciplinary problems and when they come for the academic problems of their children.

And,

Some parents come daily when bringing their children to school and taking children home. We meet them informally and formally.

The teachers also referred to the open-day. They declared the day as educative to teachers, parents and learners. Teachers argue thus,

The most interesting day in this school is the open-day. Parents learn what their children do at school because all the record is shown to the parent. Parents are not only shown the academic work of their children, but children present the different games and

projects they developed at school.

These quotations reflect that the teachers view meeting parents as the home-school contact. They believe to have created a close relationship between the school and the homes of learners. But the question is, does meeting parents mean knowing parents?

The teachers claim that parents are allowed to give their views in meetings and are permitted to make academic decisions. Parents are represented on the school board. According to the teachers, the school board is elected among parents. In a committee of seven members two represent the parents. Thabo (deputy) says,

They are asked to assist teachers with ideas on measures that can assist children to learn, especially in the teaching of English, which is a failing subject. Or at times they are allowed to suggest ways that can best assist their children on the kind of skills they think can be taught to their children

This means that it is possible that parents' views are not taken into consideration as they are few.

Mobu (class teacher) claims,

Parents are allowed to make decisions for the school. For example they decided to make contributions for the laboratory and the building was established. Besides, they have decided to make contributions of R70.00 per child for the building of the school hall.

The teachers also revealed that parents complain about the behaviour of their children. Parents requested them to be very strict with the children in order to assist them to be responsible and well behaved. Thabo (Deputy) complains,

Parents complain about the conduct of their children and they want us to be strict to their children at the same time they complain that we beat their children.

In sum, teachers appear to be satisfied with the degree of parental involvement in the professional environment of the school. They assert that there is co-operation between the working staff and the parents. At the same time participants reflect that there is conflict between both the parents and the teachers due to misunderstandings. It is to this point that I now turn.

5.4.1 HIGH EXPECTATIONS FROM PARENTAL PRESSURE ON TEACHERS

Respondents stressed the problem of high parental expectations. At the same time they are concerned with the pressure some parents exert on them and the tensions which this brings about. They claim that tensions are prominent because parents demand good results at the end of the year. Because of high expectations about their children's education, a child's performance is not expected to decline. This means that parents are unable to accept the possibility that their child can perform poorly. The decline of children's academic performance creates conflict between parents and teachers. This is reflected in Mobu's (class teacher) words,

Parents usually complain if they find the performance of their children declining.

And

Parents do not want the declining academic performance of their children. For example, a parent may quarrel about why her child's performance declines in a certain class while the child has been performing well in the previous class.

Teachers explained that parents' concern creates conflict between teachers and parents as the parents criticise teachers and sometimes this creates tension between teachers and the parents. Lineo (resource teacher) describes thus:

At the moment one of my learners' parent does not talk to me and she has made allegations in the village that I am jealous, I do not want her child to succeed academically.

When the situation is like this, the parents go to the principal. Thabo (deputy) says,

The principal has to explain to the parent that the child's learning develops and is affected by different factors. The principal said that in order to calm the parent. Besides, parents are made aware that education does not only consist of academic results. They are made aware that even the child's personality development contributes to his/her education. It is very difficult to convince the parents at times.

Maneo (class teacher) claims that,

Because of parents' high expectations we work hard trying to satisfy parents and the principal. We are always stressed up if we find

parents complaining about their children's performance especially if the child is a slow learner. And in villages, the social relationship declines as parents feel that we are a hindrance to the learning of their children. Parents expect first class passes from their children, failing which, the teacher is blamed.

The teachers showed that they encounter difficulties where parents are intensely involved. The teachers reported that the parents want the children to proceed to the next class even when teachers believe that the child requires more time in the same class before proceeding to the next one. Lineo (Resource teacher) expressed,

At times you have to cheat, and show that the learner has passed even when the learner has not succeeded, in order to avoid conflict from the principal and the parents.

In summary, high parental expectations create tension between teachers and parents. The relationships within the school premises at times deteriorate between the parents and the teachers, as parents at times demand children to proceed to higher institutions even when they are not capable. Sometimes other teachers do not give the parents real internal results in order to avoid conflict between the parents and the teachers.

5.5 THE IMPACT OF THE PRIVATE SCHOOL ON CHILDREN'S INTERGRATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

This section explores the responses to the question "Do you think that children who attend private schools can be cut off from their community?" The data reflects both positive and negative effects of the school on the community.

The participants' commented on the school's ability to instill confidence in the learners. Respondents claim that their learners feel confident and competent due to the environment they experience at school. They indicated that they assure their learners about their importance and that they are all able to do some excellent work.

We stress that they are important and special, and they become self-confident. Besides we do not want to see a lonely child in the environment of the school.

And Lucy (class teacher) comments,

Our learners are confident and competent. You can see their confidence during their debating clubs and the dance clubs. They are not shy to argue their points to their colleagues. They are also

free to dance in the presence of many people.

For some teachers, "learning English" is a strong contributor for confidence. Thabo (Deputy) commented thus,

Learners feel they are better and know better because of English that is the medium of instruction. Besides, their study discussions are also performed in English and this induces competence in the language and they develop self confidence.

In addition, the teachers reflect that continuity of the value system of the home environment is important at school because learners learn easily if their education is related to the way in which they live. Lucy (class teacher) remarks,

The school teaches what the home requires of the child. The school develops the child so that he/she can participate in the community as he/she grows. Therefore continuity should exist. For example, parents need learners who are educated, who are respectful and who can be trusted in the community. Therefore, the school must teach these values to the learners.

The teachers were also probed on the question, "Is it important for the children to be taught by local people?" The purpose of this question was to find out how teachers feel about outsiders. Respondents insisted that either local teachers or expatriates are good as long as they are confident and competent. A confident teacher is the one who has developed the concept of self, which means accepting his/her strengths and his/her weaknesses as a leader and accepting that learners are not passive partners. This helps teachers to work with learners who are developing. The teacher acts as a role model. Lucy (class teacher) comments that,

Any teacher is good as long as he/she is able to develop an authoritative and a loving relationship between herself/himself and the learner. If he /she is respected by learners.

In addition to that, the teachers indicated that they do not discriminate. Teachers who come from other nationalities are also welcome because they can teach values from their own cultures. According to the respondents people learn from one another and knowledge is good regardless of the nationality of teachers. Mobu (class teacher) perceives,

The world is becoming very small. It is good for children to learn ways of working with different characters because in future he/she

may find himself/herself in a different country. This is one reason that we have different clubs at this school. There is a dance club and the debating society club.

Although teachers claim that the school equips learners with positive cultural values, the data in the next paragraph reflects that some teachers realise that there is some separation of learners from the rest of the community. They acknowledge that the environment of the school influences the learners' character and behaviour. The learners feel that they are superior and tend to be detached from the rest of the community, especially their peers in the public school. Maneo (class teacher) explains,

Since the medium of instruction is English, learners are inclined to speak in English when going to their localities. They meet the public school children whose expression is local language. Learners in the public school feel inferior. They are not yet able to express themselves in English fluently and this gives our school learners' power to feel superior to their peers and they show it by making funny things to them. Those in the public schools tease the private school learners. In most cases these conflicts develop into physical fights.

Maneo (class teacher) also gives an example,

Our children's superiority may be emanating from their socio-economic background complex. Fees are high in the school and this gives the learners pride as their parents can afford the fees while other children's parents in the public schools cannot afford. Therefore they feel they are advantaged and superior.

And

The school does not relate to other schools during sports days or debate. They do not socialise well with the rest of the community.

And again

Many parents are not happy about the school because of high fees and because the admission is strictly controlled, the numbers admitted are very low and only a few learners are able to get admission.

In sum, the teachers' report shows that HEMS' environment creates on the one hand positive attitudes such as confidence and competence. On the other hand teachers feel that negative attitude such as superiority to others in the community is also developed. The teachers are aware that this superiority becomes a source of the conflict between

learners and the community.

5.6 PROFESSIONALISM IN PUBLIC SCHOOL

In this section the data is in response to the question, "Why did you decide to leave the school in which you were teaching?" Teachers' responses referred to factors such as poor learning environment. The concept of which is examined and discussed under the sub-themes:

- * lack of professionalism,
- * poor management and leadership.
- * lack of cooperation

5.6.1 LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM

Maneo (class teacher) reports that the school administration in her previous school was negative about teachers. She claims that their principal did not recognise their profession. For example:

In my previous school, if you suggested something concerning your subject, the principal would not accept your suggestion but only to find that she uses the same idea for the programme she wants to implement. Or if you ask for finance for a specific project for the learners, she will not give you any assistance, but will make the same project for her own interest not for the benefit of the school. Such actions discouraged teachers because they feel they are being taken for granted instead of being considered professional and helpful for the school in general. Besides, if teachers are blamed for an idea that has not succeeded, it gives them the idea that they should not give any assistance in making decisions in education.

The respondents described the unprofessional and unproductive environment of learning in the public schools. Teachers were denied access to short-term courses. Maneo claims,

The principal never informed teachers about anything educational like teachers' seminars. This means that we did not attend teacher refresher courses and we felt less informed and powerless. Perhaps those who benefited were 'his teachers' as he always called them.

5.6.2 POOR MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Lineo added that another problem of the public schools is poor management of these

schools.

Whenever there is a meeting, the principal will begin very late. Teachers would sit in the staff-room waiting for him.

And

Meetings were lengthy and lacked a clear purpose. If teachers advised the principal about the length of time and the kind of meetings that can be best for development of the school, he would rebuke them and tell them that they think they know better. He never accepted advice. This was very painful to teachers who were sincere and wanted to see the school functioning professionally.

Lineo (Resource teacher) described the problem of discipline in her previous school. Children are scattered all over the streets. She claims that the principal was the only person who had the right to discipline learners.

The principal does not recognise other teachers, as she did not allow them to take part in disciplining learners. In this sense there was no respect between teachers and learners. Learners used to go out of the school premises and move up and down the streets at any time during the class periods especially when the principal is absent from school. We always said as long as we are teaching them in the class, we do not care about what happens to them outside the class.

The participants reported that in their previous schools they had very low sense of duty. They came late for school and did not respect the learners and the community. There was no sense of responsibility. Maneo (class teacher) comments bitterly,

Teachers arrived late and at times did not even attend classes. They sit in the sun or they went hawking because the school failed to forge the unity of the school. At these periods the classes would be in a horrible noise with learners looking through windows.

5.6.3 LACK OF COOPERATION

One respondent claimed that the principal related differently to different teachers. There are those who are close to the principal. Lineo (Resource teacher) claims thus,

The teachers in this school are in groups. The principal relates well with one group and is in conflict with another group. It is very tense and conflicting relationships reign at the school's environment. If you are critical about what he does, you are fired.

The teachers indicated that they felt unable to do the schoolwork effectively, because they felt unwanted, isolated, and discouraged in the profession. Lineo (Resource

teacher) remarks,

Teachers lack cooperation and good communication, and there is fragmentation between the teachers and the principal. Teachers are not working as a team.

Participants asserted that this lack of cooperation results in teachers, learners and the principal not trusting one another and there is disunity among the different members of the school. They are aware that such an environment creates a very weak sense of belonging in general and a poor school community.

5.7 TEACHERS' VIEWS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The teachers reported that many parents in public schools do not care much about the performance of their children. Poor interest is shown when parents are asked to assist their children in their assignments. The parents do not feel obliged to assist their children. The teachers argue that parental involvement in the public schools is very poor. They associate this with the schools' exclusion of parents from school matters even though the governing body exists. For example Maneo (class teacher) remarks,

Most parents do not play a role in school life other than when called to the school to be informed about the misbehavior of their children. Those in the governing body are not functional since they get orders from the principal.

The teachers mentioned that when a school is owned by the church parents feel that they are not responsible for the school. Mobu (class teacher) shows,

The school belongs to the church. Parents have not been used to responsibility in education. They have always known that they are not supposed to intrude in school activities. Therefore, their tradition has not changed. They still isolate themselves because the school is for the church not for the community. Besides, parents have not been made aware about their importance in their children's education.

In sum, this shows the extent to which parents in the public schools can still get involved in the education of their children as long as the school leadership gives them opportunity to do so.

5.8 OPINIONS ABOUT IMPROVING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

When asked whether they would change their attitudes towards public schools if

improvements were made, the respondents gave conflicting responses. The expatriate teachers responded that they would not find it necessary to change schools because they were satisfied with the school. "I am pleased where I am. I cannot change the school for the sake of changing, there must be valid reasons for that to occur." "I am pleased at this school."

The teachers commented that they are ready to serve in any school in the country if the learning environment could be improved for the betterment of the learners. They argue that if everyone in the schools felt that responsibility and commitment are important, then the schools can change and there will be no need for teachers to move from one school to another. "If changes can occur in the public schools, I could go to serve other children in the other schools."

5.9 SUMMARY

The teachers in this school affirm that there is high spirit of commitment and responsibility in the community of the school. The teachers affirm that the school has good physical conditions, the environment that enhances motivation and there is discipline among learners and teachers. Again they show that leadership of the school is good and this enables good teaching and learning. To this extent the teachers' views support the decision made by the parents as well as their views of quality learning environment. However the teachers are concerned about the conflict which at times arise between the parents and the teachers due to parents' misunderstandings of the way their children learn. The teachers notice that the parents do not accept that their children can fail. In addition, the teachers can see the gap the school develops between these learners and their community. For the teachers, this gap is a result of the learners' knowledge that their parents are capable of paying the high fees demanded by the school. Besides, the environment of English to which the learners are exposed is said to develop superiority attitudes in these learners.

CHAPTER 6

PERSPECTIVES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the attitudes of the six public school teachers regarding the public school's learning environment. These views are important for the comparative dimension of this study (see 3.2). This chapter begins by presenting brief portraits of the participants' educational beliefs. This chapter is organised around the following themes:

- * How did I come to know about this school.
- * The school environment
- * Parental Involvement in the public school
- * The teachers' perceptions of the cultural values in the private school
- * The teachers' suggestions for improvement of public schools

Table 5 below portrays the professional experience of the six public school teachers. The table shows their professional status with respect to their position in the school, professional qualifications, age and years of the teaching experience. Thereafter, portraits of the teachers' experience and views are presented.

Table 5: The public school respondents' professional status

POSITION AT SCHOOL	PREVIOUS POSITION	PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS	EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	EXPERIENCE IN PRIVATE SCHOOL	AGE OF TEACHER
PRINCIPAL	CLASS TEACHER	PH	21 YEARS	0 YEARS	48 YEARS
DEPUTY	CLASS TEACHER	STC+ACP	15 YEARS	0 YEARS	41 YEARS
CLASS TEACHER	CLASS TEACHER	PTC	13 YEARS	0 YEARS	41 YEARS
CLASS TEACHER	PRINCIPAL	LPTC + LIET	18 YEARS	10 YEARS	52 YEARS

CLASS TEACHER	HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	BAED	26 YEARS	0 YEARS	52 YEARS
CLASS TEACHER	CLASS TEACHER	BED	12 YEARS	0 YEARS	41 YEARS

6.1 BRIEF PORTRAITS OF THE PARTICIPANTS' EDUCATIONAL BELIEFS

Pascali (The principal)

The principal is 48 years old and is qualified in the teaching profession. Pascali is responsible for employing teachers, disciplining teachers and dismissing teachers. In addition, she is responsible for the pedagogic processes of teachers. This means that she is responsible for seeing to it that teaching and learning is done effectively. She claims that good relationship between the different members of the school community is essential for maintaining a productive learning environment within the school. Pascali indicates that parents must be involved in school activities so that responsibility, care and concern, commitment, and cooperation can be induced in learners. Pascali is of the opinion that individual members of the school must contribute in decision making for the development of the school. She claims that discipline is important for the effective functioning of the school.

Tumi (deputy)

The deputy principal is 41 years. Tumi indicates that she has never taught in a private school but her children attend a private school. She takes the office of the principal when the principal is absent. She claims that discipline is important for the school to function properly and that the members of the school need to work in harmony with each other. Again, she argues that responsibility improves the quality of any school. Tumi maintains that the importance of involving teachers in the decision making processes of the school, can keep harmony of the learning environment. She admits that teachers' involvement in decisions motivates and develops enthusiasm in their work. As a deputy she also encourages the involvement of the community in school matters in order to develop the relationship between the home and the school. She

believes that learners should not view school as different from the home.

Ramotso (class teacher)

Ramotso is 41 years and qualified in the teaching profession. Ramotso is a class teacher. He previously taught in a primary school. He asserts that he makes policies for his class. He claims to be a leader and to supervise his learners. For example, he sees to it that basic learning materials such as timetable for the class, chalkboard, desks for learners are available for the convenient functioning of the classroom. Ramotso also claims that concern and commitment are basic ingredients in the teaching and learning process. Ramotso indicates that it is his responsibility to develop close and friendly relationship between the teacher and the community. In fact, he is of the opinion that education is a combination of different processes that need dedicated and willing agents to work collaboratively for the benefit of the learners and the community.

Chaale (class teacher)

Chaale is also a class teacher and is 52 years old. She indicates that she was a principal in a private school for ten years. Her opinion is that parental involvement is important because parents assist the school in the academic success of learners. According to her, teachers need to encourage parental involvement in education so that school and family develop confidence and competence in their learners. Chaale is of the opinion that it is good that all learners study in English for the purpose of understanding other nations and studying in higher educational institutions. She hopes that the private school performs better in examinations because of the good learning environment experienced by both the teachers and the learners. She asserts that strict administration, dedication of the school community, motivation and collaboration are agents of good learning environment and success.

Nthabi (class teacher)

Nthabi is a qualified high school class teacher. According to Nthabi responsibility is important for every teacher who likes hard work. She claims that their school's administration prohibits a culture of concern in the school as it dictates and does not value contributions from teachers. Nthabi views parents as responsible for their children's education. Nthabi claims that in order to understand their involvement in

the school, many of the parents need a lot of awareness workshops for their valuable participation in education system.

Tsabe (Head of department)

Tsabe is the head of the Geography department and is 52 years old. Tsabe claims that a good environment is reflected by good results obtained at the school. She believes that this is a result of hard work, concern and care of teachers. Previously Tsabe worked as a school manager, and she was responsible for the maintenance of the school buildings and infrastructure. She is of the opinion that private schools' policies could be used in other schools for the improvement of other schools that are unproductive.

These portraits reflect that the public school teachers' understand education as responsibility. They believe that education is the responsibility of the school, the parents and the community within which the school is located.

6.2 "HOW DID I COME TO KNOW ABOUT THIS SCHOOL?"

The previous section presented teachers' professional status and the portraits of their professional beliefs about the education process. This section discusses factors which attracted the teachers to the school, among them are factors such as distance, religion and academic performance.

The teachers indicated that the school is near their homes. For example, Ramotso responded, "The school is near our homes and I am never late and I do not have to pay for transport." The six teachers also mentioned that it was important to them that the school belongs to the Catholic Church. They mentioned that learners need religious education for purposes of understanding themselves. For example Pascali (the principal) claims, "This is a Catholic school and learners are equipped with moral education which is also required for their education."

In addition one teacher commented that admission is not meritocratic. Tumi (Deputy) reported thus, "We admit learners in order to develop the child, we do not discriminate our learners according to academic capability."

When the teachers were probed about things that made them happy about the school, Tumi (deputy) reported that a number of things made them happy in the school. The

responses include some procedures in teaching and learning process. For example Tumi (deputy) replied, "Learners are clean and their classrooms are clean." While Nthabi (class teacher) commented thus, "I teach during my spare time to assist slow learners"; "Besides, the results are improving every year"; "We motivate learners and engage them in games."

The teachers' responses demonstrate progress in the learning environment of the school. However, although these responses reflected the positive and good practices of the school, most of their responses indicated that their school was facing a number of problems.

6.3 THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The six teachers' responses in relation to the problems of the school were mainly related to the professional environment. This is discussed under the sub-themes of

- * poor physical conditions
- * poor management
- * poor teaching and learning
- * lack of cooperation

6.3.1 POOR PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

The teachers perceive that the parents are not happy with the infrastructure of the school. They described that the school was not in a good condition. Teachers are of the view that although the buildings are not important to the teaching and learning process, proper buildings encourage the learners to learn and the parents to engage in the process of learning. In the following statement Pascali (principal) claims,

Parents complain that as long as the school buildings are in the old conditions, they will continue to transfer their children. Parents tell us that their children cannot risk their children's life with the buildings that can fall on their children at any time.

And Ramotso (class teacher) adds:

They complain about the cold conditions of the school mostly in winter because there is no ceiling.

Participants reflect that the building is problematic as the teachers can overhear one another from their respective classes. Again Pascali (principal) claims:

We overhear one another as we teach because our school is only a hall. There is no privacy.

6.3.2 POOR MANAGEMENT

Teachers believe that the parents' complaints are well grounded as the manager of the school had neglected the school. They claim that management did not maintain the school. Pascali (the principal) also put it thus:

The management has neglected the school. The school has become the property of teachers while the owner (proprietor) is less interested in the school and what is taking place in the school. The management does not care and is not concerned about the teaching and learning conditions of the teachers and learners.

In addition to that the teachers referred to mismanagement of the school funds.

Ramotso claims that, "Even if the school fee is little, however the managing group does not consider the teaching and learning facilities, the school funds are not reported, we do not know what the money does." Ramotso also claims, "The buildings of this school are very old but nobody wants to maintain them."

Pascali (Principal) indicates,

Parents in this school also are responsible for the malfunctioning of the school. Instead of assisting, by making positive criticisms, they take their children out of the school. This cannot help at all. I feel that if they show that the school belongs to them, management could improve.

In these statements, it is shown that management of the school is negligent of responsibility as the management does not take any initiative in relation to offering pedagogical and administrative support to the teachers and the principal. In addition it seems that even the parents in this school have a negative attitude. What is amazing and interesting is that the principal did not consider herself as the management.

6.3.3 POOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The teachers claim that they do not put effort in their work. They argue that there is

very poor motivation in the school. Shaale (class teacher) commented thus, "Most of us do not do the work whole-heartedly." And Ramotso (class teacher) claims, "We are not serious in our work."

The teachers showed that the teachers do not use the ideas they themselves suggested in order to improve their teaching and learning. Nthabi (class teacher) comments:

In school meetings one can suggest good ideas about the procedures to be taken for improving our practice in the teaching and learning process but none of us practise. We are not practical even if we can suggest good ideas about our problems in the teaching and learning process. We are not committed to our work and we are lazy.

6.3.4 LACK OF COOPERATION

Not only do these teachers realise that they are not practical but they assert that the school has a problem of teachers who are not cooperative. The participants claim that public school teachers are selfish because it is difficult to work together for the development of the school particularly in relation to pedagogical processes. This is reflected in Chaale's (class teacher) comment,

There is very poor cooperation for the success of the school, what is reigning is individualistic practices, for instance, each teacher is found in her own class. If one teacher has a teaching and learning problem, s/he does not get any assistance from others. They gossip.

And Pascali (principal) comments, "There are loop-holes in this school, teachers refuse to cooperate in school activities."

The public school teachers emphasised that the problems of the school are related to lack of responsibility. This results in lack of cooperation and encourages gossiping among the staff and low morale in the work. This in itself results in poor performance of the learners and bad reputation of the school.

6.4 PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

This section explores teachers' opinions about the involvement of the parents in the education of their children. Teachers' responses are clustered into:

- * parents' involvement in the academic work of their children
- * parents' school visits

Most responses reflect the negative attitude of parents to the school. In the following I describe the teachers' experiences in relation to parents' participation in the education process.

6.4.1 PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC WORK OF THEIR CHILDREN

The Public school teachers pointed out that very few parents are involved in their children's academic work, and few learners are assisted with the homework. For example, Ramotso (class teacher) comments:

Few parents are involved in the children's academic work. For those learners whose parents are involved, there is a change in performance in different subjects.

And Tsabe (head of department) adds:

Very few parents are involved in the academic work of their children. There is progress in their children. For example, one boy was very weak in English Language, but since I called the parents and insisted that they should help their son when he does his homework, his work in the subject has changed. He even asks clever questions during lessons.

6.4.2 PARENTS' SCHOOL VISITS

When probed on whether parents are able to come to the school, to discuss the children's progress, the teachers indicated that very few parents are able to show themselves in the school. The teachers explained that at times parents come to ask if their child will pass the examination. Nthabi (class teacher) comments, "Parents just come to ask if their children are going to pass or not, they do not ask anything except examinations."

The participants also commented that they welcome the parents if parents came to the school. The principal claims that any teacher who meets a parent always helps her/him to get assistance she/he wanted. She reported, "We welcome parents. We share the little we have together and we give them chance to criticise us in meetings."

The teachers comment that they communicate with parents by calling parents' meetings. The individual teachers usually call parents to discuss the progress of their

children. The teachers said that if they wanted to meet with parents they gave learners' letters to give to their parents. However even then, parents' attendance is reported as very poor. Nthabi (class teacher) complains,

Some parents do not come to school, even when invited, so we assume that they do not have problems or that they do not have interest in education of their children.

While Chaale (class teacher) links,

Our learners' parents seem not to have problems with the children's education because they do not come to the school when they are to be interviewed in relation to their children. Few who come are assisted. We discuss the progress of the children.

The teachers perceive that there are parents who are reluctant to come to meetings at school even when they are called to the school to solve discipline problems of their children. For instance, Pascali (principal) says bitterly:

Parents' interest in their children's education is very poor. If the management calls parents to meetings, they do not come even in very serious disciplinary problems of children.

When probed to give the reasons behind the negative attitude of parents to the school. Chaale responds thus:

Because of lack of cooperation between us the staff, some teachers are friends of the parents and they discourage parents to attend the meetings as they regard the principal inferior. This means that teachers contribute to the poor functioning of this school because they influence parents.

And Pascali (the principal) adds,

One parent told me that some of the teachers (in this school) discourage them to attend meetings because teachers encourage parents to transfer their children to other schools.

The teachers' responses reflect that they are frustrated. They also perceive that parents' interest is focused on the end of year results only. Again the deputy principal argues that one of the reasons for poor parental involvement is their inferiority complex as many parents could not communicate with teachers due to an inability to express themselves in English. But the principal maintains that poor parental

involvement is a result of poor teacher cooperation.

6.5 THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CULTURAL VALUES IN THE PRIVATE SCHOOL

The public school teachers explored the question "Can children who attend the private school be cut off from their community?" Most participants believe that children in the private school are separated from their community. The responses reflected different situations indicating learners' separation from the community. Ramotso (class teacher) gives a general point,

Some parents who are unable to send their children in private school feel jealous of the children in private schools because they feel that the education is not equal in quality especially when the private school children are very fluent in English.

Furthermore, Chaale (class teacher) claims,

The children are separated because they feel they are better and know better due to the fluency in English.

Nthabi (class teacher) adds,

These children are separated because they never participate in educational clubs with children from other schools, such as the public.

And Tsabe (head of department) also gives the example,

The children are cut off because they do not participate in sports, or in national functions. They feel that they are better. Again, they are always engaged academically.

Pascali (class teacher) also adds that the private schools induce inequalities in the community since only learners who are economically privileged benefit from such schools. She argues,

Private schools are meant for the children who are from good economic background while public schools allow children from different economic backgrounds.

These quotations reflect the public school teachers' worry in relation to the inequalities of education prominent in the two models of schooling. They also feel that the school creates inequality between members of the society.

Respondents attempted the question, "Is it important for children to be taught by their own people?" The participants showed that both local and expatriate teachers are good for the learning child. Tumi (deputy) gives an example,

Local teachers are good because they share similar cultural values with the learners and the child's learning become easy as he/she relates to common values with the teacher. On clarifying concepts, teachers are able to make examples that learners experienced. Besides, as they share similar local cultural values, teachers can guide the learners.

She also indicates,

Expatriate teachers are also good, because they expose learners to other values that are new to learners but which benefit them.

When the teachers are interviewed on whether there should be continuity between the value system of the school and the value system of the home environment, they said that continuity is important, as the school is to develop the family values. For example, Nthabi (class teacher) points out:

This school develops values of the family as learners are taught in their mother tongue for four years. This assists the learners to mature in their own language. We know that language is the most important carrier of the values of any community. Consequently, our learners develop into real citizens of the country who value themselves and who are not separated from their communities. If there is continuity, children learn easily.

There are teachers who reflected that the family experiences must be taught in the school. Tsabe (class teacher) reports:

The school must be a place where the child learns about trust, respect, cooperation and other related values, the values that a child learns from his parents at home.

And

This school teaches values of the family, because there is order in this school. It is important that the family's values of trust and respect, cooperation and other cultural values be taught in the school and this is what we work hard to instill in our learners especially when our school is a church school.

This teacher's responses reveal trust in this school. A point of view is that this school can handle the problems and teach respect and trust to learners, as the school is able to

press toward a common identification with different learners. The teachers stress that their school is good in relation to creating good community relations and acceptance of the children by their communities even though the academic results may not be very good. Tsabe believes that a common good exists at school that develops learners into responsible adults.

6.6 THE TEACHERS' SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This section reports on the teachers' responses to the question, "How can the public school be improved?" The teachers reflect that different things were to be done for the improvement of the public school. Chaale (class teacher) responded thus,

There is a need for teachers to cooperate in order for the school to develop. Teachers need to work together academically. This means that team planning and teaching in the different departments of the school is needed.

While Pascali (principal) puts it thus,

We must improve our personality and learn to compromise in order to work towards change because children learn from us.

Tumi adds,

There should be commitment to work. Parents and teachers must work together for the development of children.

And

Our learners have to come with their parents to school meetings so that we can show them that we want to work with them not to mock them.

Pascali also shows thus,

Development also requires people to be given on the job training. For example, the management committee must know the description of their work, even parents must know their responsibility in relation to the education of their children. In the same way teachers need workshops in order for them to gain knowledge of the technology for teaching effectively. Besides, it is important for all the members of the school community to learn to reflect on their deeds rather than to blame one another.

6.7 SUMMARY

In summary, the general impression of the public school teachers reflects that the learning environment of their school is not very pleasing. They mention a number of factors that contribute to the malfunctioning of the school. For example poor social relationship results in teachers not being committed. However, they show that the little they do still has an impact on the learners. Besides, culturally the learners are not separated from their communities.

These responses reflect that the public school teachers realize the problem of the conflict that kept on causing the decline. The teachers are aware that unless they reflect on their practices and opt for better ways, change might not occur in this school. They see the importance of cooperation and commitment in education for the development of the school. Nevertheless the teachers can still perceive that although there is poor engagement, progress is still observed in this school as the results improve every year.

The teachers indicate that the school is the only institution that can assist the learners to a common good. However, the private community school environment separates the learners from the community, as they never participate in common national functions with other schools. In this respect a sense of superiority is observed among the learners in the private school. Another factor is that other parents feel jealous because they are either unable to pay high fees or have been denied access by the admission regulations of the school. This means separation from the society because they feel inferior.

It is interesting to note that the comparative dimension of the research enabled a reach picture on the relationship between parental choice and learning environment. It is also important to note specifically, the confession between the groups on the question of private school values. All three groups (parents in the private school; teachers in the private school and teachers in the public school) seem to agree on the negative consequences of private school culture on the children's sense of community identity. This strengthens the finding of this study that in the Leribe district of Lesotho parental

choice of a private school is not a straight-forward matter. It is influenced by contextual consideration; it is often experienced as a choice with severe social costs; and it is not a choice that simply follows considerations of state of a middle-class family. The last chapter follows these ideas further.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The dominant perception of parental choice found by this study assumes that the main consideration taken by parents is that the school demonstrates a good learning environment. The parents in this study said that there are conditions in Hareeng English Medium community school that portray a good learning environment. Their responses indicate a number of factors that resemble schools with good learning conditions. The parents believe in factors such as strong discipline, care of learners, low pupil teacher ratio, good academic results, dedicated teachers, motivated teachers and teachers' concern in the teaching and learning process. They said they associated such an environment with good results which will enable their children to proceed to better institutions thus attain social mobility.

It is important to understand that the parents' preference for this school derives from the perception of the quality of teaching and learning environment. The parents in this study do not have a general preference for a particular type of school. Matters of social circumstances and educational preferences led them to make this choice in this instance. The study did not establish evidence that the parents prefer this school for social considerations related to their middle-class status. The parents in this study opted for the school that they thought could provide a good learning environment in order for their children to be successful in life or to experience mobility both socially and economically. Had this school been a public school, the parents would have still sent their children provided it demonstrated a good learning environment. Moreover the study found that the parents emphasise the school's strong teaching and learning environment. However, they are at the same time, very concerned that their children are isolated from the larger community. The discussion in the last part of this chapter will examine this.

Some of the parents' perceptions seem to be inconsistent with the literature on what makes a good learning environment. The analysis in this chapter begins by examining some of the inconsistencies between the parents' beliefs about a good learning environment and the views conveyed in the literature on quality schooling. The examination includes parents' understanding of discipline, particularly their insistence

on measures that secure good results, their emphasis on care and happiness in the daily experiences of their children, and their poor understanding of teaching and learning. The discussion will lead to the recommendation that for the sake of clarity and accuracy of parental choice, it is important to problematise the common distinction between a public and a private school and to further examine the assumption that middle-class parents prefer a private school, and believe that a private school creates a better learning environment. There is no clear evidence in the literature or through this research that parental choice is informed by this distinction, at least not in any simple way. Instead the study will recommend that more research has to be done on how parents understand good learning environment either in a public or in a private school.

When reviewing the socio-economic level of the parents, the study shows that the parents belong to the middle-class. However, it is found that there is a small group which is not middle-class but which manage to send their children to this school. This is the unskilled (refer to chapter 4, table 2). The life-styles of the parents locate them in the middle-class; they live in good environmental conditions although not all of the parents fared well. The fact that they have not fared well is shown in parents' portraits (chapter 4 section 4.2.1) and where the parents show their difficulties to pay the school fee (4.3). This is an indication that the parents in this study are not rich. However, because of the parents' high aspirations from education they feel a need for their children to experience better learning conditions, which they believe to be associated with the private school.

Most of the parents said they value education because it is the most important weapon for improving people's life-chances. This is why the majority of the parents choose to improve their careers by studying, or moving into new jobs, in order to gain access to better life (Chapter 4, table 3). This finding is consistent with that of Roberts (1980) and Biggs and Porter (1994) that middle-class parents have education and hold very high aspirations, encouraging their children towards high career aspirations. The literature also suggests that the parents choose schools that are able to provide them with a good learning environment. Walford (1990) indicates that although middle class families can choose any school, in most cases they choose private schools. However there is a debate in the literature about the idea that middle-class parents

prefer private schooling. Biggs and Porter (1994), Salter and Tapper (1985) and Crafts et al (1980) argue that middle-class parents choose any school that demonstrates a good learning environment regardless of its social form. This suggests that parents select a school that possesses a good learning environment and not a particular social model of school.

Because parents' choices were not related to their social status but to the quality of the learning environment, the study shifted to examine the question of what makes a good learning environment from the perspectives of the parents. In my discussion, I began with the aspects that parents appear to agree on, but which were inconsistent with the literature.

The parents believe that the children need to be highly controlled through strict disciplinary measures in order to obtain good results. The measures as reflected by the parents are that schools must develop rules that do not allow learners to be out of the school premises during classes. Other parents reflected enforced study periods as well as corporal punishment if the learners' conduct is poor. These (enforced study and corporal punishment) assumed disciplinary measures are needed for good behavior and good manners. For parents, 'good' means measures that ensure that children learn and obtain good results. They believe that the good results would allow them a means to institutions of high education and this is more important for them than the actual methods of teaching and learning used. In addition, some parents want their children to understand that their actions bear consequences and bad actions result in punishment. That is why the parents want a school that is strict in attendance time, a school that does not allow children to hang around. But there is no consistency with the literature on school quality. Wexler (1990) shows that strict forms of discipline are experienced by learners as poor care for the social and emotional needs. According to Wexler, such a learning environment results in learners' developing resilient measures, because of being regarded 'irresponsible'. Likewise the literature suggests that education cannot be enforced but must come from within (Lightfoot, 1983). A strict environment might result in the destruction of learners' social and emotional identity.

It is possible that the parents' perception of education as a process that needs

enforcement is influenced by the traditional belief that a learning child needs strict learning environment. During the interview the parents kept on showing that during their time, the teachers were harsh but they managed to succeed. They expect their children to be treated likewise. Again, this seems to coincide with the traditional practice in Lesotho's education that conceived learners as passive recipients of teachers' knowledge. They learned factual knowledge and they had to reproduce it in tests. This method of learning allowed the learners to obtain higher grades but without developing critical skills. Parents' social aspirations make them search for schools that enable their children to obtain a pass and go to a tertiary institution. These considerations are in conflict with Lightfoot's (1983) and Wexler's (1990) understanding of a good learning environment. In their view learners and teachers have to challenge and criticise knowledge that comes their way and not perform for good results only.

In their consideration of the psychological well being of their children, and their general happiness in the daily experience in school, parents' understanding shows much more sensitivity and thoughtfulness to the learning experiences of their children. The parents agreed that their children's happiness is reflected in a variety of ways. That is, care and happiness are not only related to being taught in class but reflected by learners being guided and supervised by concerned and motivated teachers. The parents' views show that they see that children have interest in learning when they do assignments and feel motivated to collect learning materials. Parents are concerned about the well being of their children.

The public school teachers in this study have similar perspectives about teachers at the private school. They perceive these teachers as concerned and hard working. They emphasise that there is a general agreement, a common perception in the community, that the teachers in Hareeng school engage with learners' understanding in a careful and systematic way, follow up and support the learners and show care and concern.

The study also found that parents regarded care and happiness related to the private school teachers' not being involved in political matters. The study stated that many parents became interested in this school since the 1995 teachers' strike. The strike was a result of the teachers' demand for a salary increase and improvement of working

conditions from the government. During the strike the public schools and those that are under the control of the churches were closed because the staff participated in the strike. Hareeng's teachers did not join the strike on account of high parental influence. This demonstrates that parents do not want their children's education to be tampered with.

Furthermore, it was found that the parents are not strongly informed about teaching and learning processes. As they were less informed about how their children should learn, the parents exerted pressures on teachers to make sure that their children are succeeding, irrespective of their actual mental capability level of attainment. The study explains that this kind of extra-parental pressure is related to the parents' poor understanding of the process of teaching and learning. The study also found that the parents' high expectations about the children's performance are also influenced by the high amount of fee that parents pay for their children's education.

The above discussion shows that although the driving force behind parental choice is a good learning environment, this does not mean that the choice is informed by a clear understanding of teaching and learning. In fact, the discussion shows poor understanding of the relationships between good teaching and achievement. This does not follow with a clear distinction between achievement of results and daily experiences of learning. Parents tend to conflate happiness with learning, strong discipline with good results, and uncritical curriculum with good education. The parents' consistent pressure on teachers to achieve good results even through the use of poor teaching methods and even at cases of weak learning is also an evidence for their poor understanding of what is involved in learning and the achievement of good results. This does not suggest that their choice is not informed by educational considerations. It does suggest, however that the parents' considerations are not clear and coherent and that more research which investigates the complexity of parental choice is needed.

The parents did not only show educational concerns regarding their children's learning. Their interests are also social. In the following discussion I examine the parents' social concerns regarding their children's relation with the larger community. This part of the research demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between the

parents' preference for a good learning environment and their social beliefs and aspirations.

The parents perceived that the study of English gives their children confidence and power to enroll with higher institutions. The parents demonstrate a high need for their children to learn the foreign language. It is possible to deduce that they are confident that English exposes their children to cognitive skills and can lead learners to achievement. The parents are however, not sure as to the moral and social implications of enrolling their children in an English medium private school. This doubt on the parents' part is suggested on the basis of the moral ambivalence about what 'knowing English' stands for. The parents are concerned that one of the consequences of their children learning English is that they develop a sense of superiority in relation to their counterparts in the larger community.

This is the parents' dilemma: The school is perceived to expose learners to world's skills. The parents regard 'confidence' as a value which, their children did not experience in their previous schools. It is possible to assume that the parents' previous schools deprived their children of confidence since the teaching and learning conditions were unable to reinforce such experiences. However, most parents are concerned that because their children know that their parents pay high fees for the school, and because the school is associated with English-world culture they feel powerful and do not see themselves as equal to their public school counterparts. This fear of 'superiority' is linked to another concern, that their children will reject their cultural heritage and become isolated from the larger community.

The parents suggest that the school influences the learners negatively as their children regard themselves superior to their counterparts. This means that the school encourages individualistic, elite practices. Wexler (1990), Lightfoot (1983) and Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) encourage collaboration with the community of the school for the better functioning and success of the school and of the learners. These studies show that an environment of superiority demonstrates weak professional commitment.

The findings of this study show that the parents do not value conditions that separate learners from the local culture. From the parents' point of view superiority creates

conflict and a feeling of isolation from other children. This suggests that although the parents and the teachers in this study regard the school as a good school, they also realise being associated with this school might position them as elite and superior, a perception that they do not appreciate.

Fenstemacher (1997) shows that a possible influence for low spirit and bad learning habits among the children is the exposure of private matters such as sexual habits to the public as well as poor responsibility in most of the families. These two are claimed to be a source of learners' low morale which develop anxiety among their parents. The parents are fearful that their children are exposed to those things that are to be experienced later in life in their early ages. This results in insecurity among parents on the realization that the interest of their children is in these factors that encourage bad morality and discourage learning. As the parents realise this problem of the corrupted public, they hope that choosing schools with strict administration procedures will assist their children, they believe that their children will be secure. However, Fenstemacher (1997) argues that such a choice measure only develops separation between the community. She argues that parenting of children should focus on the idea that the child is for both public and private environment.

The parents stated that their involvement in the school their children attended previously was poor while in this private school they experience high involvement. They mentioned a number of ways that they feel responsible for the education of their children, for example, assisting in homework, assisting in raising funds for the school and visiting the school. They feel that involvement in school matters gives their children strength in learning. Only two parents said that they serve as members of the school's governing body. They added that although they serve on the governing body of the school, they do not feel as equal members. These parents mentioned that at times they attend meetings only and their presence is appreciated but they do not participate in the discussions. This shows that the notion of parental involvement shown in the school refers mainly to individual involvement of parents. Through their children education, parents' involvement presumes mainly personal interest in the good results of their children.

On a more collective level the school does not initiate any community projects such as

those stated in the literature (Lightfoot, 1983). For instance, the parents indicated that the school organises open day and this day is meant for parents, learners and teachers. Open day functions are educational for these three groups. They also raise funds for the school to support the school to function daily. The literature on good schools shows that strong parental involvement includes activities such as working in community projects. Learners can be allowed to work in different departments of the community, like assisting the community by demonstrating agricultural skills they acquired in the agriculture lessons. The learners can be allowed to work in the community shops. They experience the skills they acquired in the business education. In that sense the school will function in the community to develop the community. However, in this school such activities are not observed.

7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion recommends that more research should be done on how parents conceive a good learning environment in both models of schooling. More research needs to be conducted on parents' understanding of teaching and learning, their understanding of authority relations of the teacher and the learner, care, the role of concern and discipline in the process of learning and teaching.

This is a challenge to all stakeholders in the country, the politicians, church leaders, the community, the parents, the teachers and the learners to rethink about education as a process which needs commitment, responsibility and concern.

In addition, the schools are encouraged to be professional in the teaching and learning process. This spirit of professionalism can be inspired through workshops where the teachers are encouraged to state the problems they meet in relation to the teaching and learning process and even suggest solutions to their different situations. In addition, the teachers are to be motivated to value responsibility and concern for the learner as a developing individual.

Furthermore, there should be awareness among parents about democratic practices in education. The parents must be made aware that education is both a public good and a private good. If education is considered as both a public and a private good, parents can make an informed choice with the consideration that the learners are developed

for the public and for the private. Which means that if education is considered an important weapon for the private, the family, it is highly likely that families, which include the schools, will raise the children for the public society. In this sense, the country will develop socially, culturally and educationally.

In addition, parents need to be aware that children are psychologically different. This difference contributes to the difference in acquiring the cognitive skills associated with good performance. Parents must appreciate that teaching and learning in schools function within different environments related to the history, ideology, culture and politics that are inherent to their actors.

Workshops can be held for parents and teachers to inculcate the spirit of collaboration with parents and teachers. In these workshops, parents can be informed about teaching, learning and alternative forms of discipline, fair and objective assessment of learners' competence and difficulties encountered by the school.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE PARENTS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

- 1) Father or Mother
- 2) Age
- 3) Your monthly income
- 4) Your occupation
- 5) Do you think that you need to improve your career?
- 6) Do you feel the need to improve your educational qualifications? Give your reasons.

PREVIOUS SCHOOL

- 1) How long has your child been in this school?
- 2) Was your child in any other school before?
- 3) Tell me about the previous school
 - What did you like most about the other school (give me an example of personal experience that affected your child).
 - What did you hate about this school (give me an example of personal experience that affected your child in a bad way).

(Facilities, school ethos, management style and effectiveness, teacher and learner, parental involvement, professionalism of teachers, method of teaching).

THE PRESENT SCHOOL

- 1) Who chose this school (you, your child, both)?
- 2) Who told you about this school (give me an example of personal experience that affected your child).

- What do you not like about this school? Can you give an example?

(Facilities, school ethos, management style and effectiveness, teacher and learner, parental involvement, professionalism of teachers, method of teaching).

ORDER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF REASONS

- 1) What is the most important factor in choosing a school for your child? Explain why.
- 2) What is the least important factor in choosing a school for your child? Explain why.

GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE SCHOOL

- 1) What is the image of this school in the community? Or what are the people saying about this school?
- 2) Do you think that your child is happy at this school? How do you see it?
- 3) What is the most resent thing your child said about the school?

HOME AND SCHOOL

- 1) How far is the school from home? Does your child need transport to get to the school?
- 2) Who organises and pay for the transport (the school? You? Both?)
- 3) How much do you pay for this a month?

THE IMAGE OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL

- 1) What do you think are the problems with the public schools? Why do so many parents take their kids out of public schools?
- 2) What do you think can be done to public schools to improve?
- 3) Have you ever tried to get involved in public school matters? (alone or with other parents?)

HOME, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

- 1) Do you think that children who are attending private schools are cut from their community? If yes, then in what way? Give me an example from your own experience in this school.
- 2) Do you know the teacher who is currently teaching your child? How often do you see her/him?
- 3) When you visit the school, do you feel welcome or not? Explain and give examples.
- 4) What is the medium of instruction in this school? Does it affect your child's learning?
- 5) Do you speak English at home at all times?
- 6) Do you think that the school teaches your child about your culture and tradition? If so how? Give me an example (Syllabus, rituals in the school).
- 7) Are you involved in any way in your child's homework?

COMMON ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOLING -AGREE/ DISAGREE AND WHY!

"It is important for children to grow up and socialise with their own people."

"It is important for children to be taught by their own people."

"It is important for children to be taught by good teacher and to attend an effective school."

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- 1) Do you have any problems with your child's performance and progress? Tell me about them.
- 2) What are you doing about the problems?
- 3) What is the school doing about these problems? (How do you communicate the problem and how do they deal with the problem?)

- 4) In what ways are you involved in the school? (Meetings, governing bodies, any other special responsibility?)
- 5) How does the school encourage your involvement? Can the school do more to involve you?
- 6) Do you know that your involvement influence your child's academic and emotional success in the school? Does your child encourage you to be involved? Give me examples?

ACADEMIC AND GENERAL

- 1) If you had to wish a future to your child, what would you have wished?
- 2) Do you think that your wish is attainable?
- 3) Do you think that the school will help your child to attain this wish? Explain.

APPENDIX B: TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS (PRIVATE)

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

- 1) Teacher's gender
- 2) Teacher's age
- 3) Qualifications
- 4) What position do you hold in the school?

THE PREVIOUS SCHOOL

- 1) Have you taught in another school?
- 2) How long have you been teaching in your previous school?
- 3) Why did you decide to leave the school?

THE PRESENT SCHOOL

- 1) How did you know about this school?
- 2) Why did you decide that you should teach in this school? (Give examples of things that attracted you).
- 3) Do you find any difference between this school and your previous school? (Explain the differences and give examples).
- 4) Do you have any problems with the school? (Give an example of a problem and how it was handled).
- 5) How does the school advertise itself? What things does it do to get more pupils?

ORDER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF REASONS

- 1) What is the most important factor in choosing a school in which you want to teach?
Explain why?
- 2) What is the least important factor in choosing a school in which you want to teach?
Explain why?

GENERAL IMPRESSION

- 1) Are you in favor of having private schools operating in the country?
- 2) Looking back, do you think that your impression of this school was correct? Do you still think it is a good school?
- 3) Give examples of a recent experience that made you very happy.
- 4) Give example of a recent experience that made you angry.

THE IMAGE OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL

- 1) What do you think are the problems with public school? Why do so many parents transfer their children from public schools to private schools?
- 2) What do you think can be done to public schools to improve?

HOME, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

- 1) Do you think that children who attend private schools (as against a public school) can be cut from their community?
- 2) Is it important for children to grow up with their own people (e.g. for children to be taught by their own people)?
- 3) Is it important that there should be continuity between the value system of the school and the value system of the home environment? (Give an example of your own).
- 4) What is the medium of instruction in this school? Does it affect the students' learning?
- 5) Do you know your students' parents? How do you meet them?

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- 1) Is it important that the community in which the school is located be involved in school activities, Why? Explain.
- 2) Are parents involved in their children's homework? Does this help their learning? (Give examples from your experience?)
- 3) Do parents come to school to discuss progress of their children with you as their children's teacher? Explain and give examples.

- 4) When parents visit the school, do the school welcome them?
- 5) How does the school communicate with parents? (e.g. students progress; school activities; parents' meetings)
- 6) Do parents have any problems with discussing their children's progress at the school? Explain and give examples.
- 7) Are there any problems that can prevent parents from attending parent's meetings and how could this be solved?
- 8) How can the school further encourage parents' involvement?

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

- 1) Do you have special managerial responsibilities at the school?
- 2) In the previous school, were you involved in the management of the school?
- 3) Are you a member of the school's governing body?

GENERAL INSPIRATION

- 1) If public schools can be restructured and improved, would you go back to teach in these schools? Explain.

APPENDIX C: TEACHER'S INTERVIEW (PUBLIC)

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

- 1) Teacher's gender
- 2) Teacher's age
- 3) Qualifications
- 4) What position do you hold in the school?

THE PREVIOUS SCHOOL

- 1) Have you taught in another school?
- 2) Was it a public or a private school
- 3) How long have you been teaching in your previous school?
- 4) Why did you decide to leave the school?

THE PRESENT SCHOOL

- 1) Why did you decide that you should teach in this school? (Give examples of things that attracted you).
- 2) Do you find any difference between this school and your previous school? (Explain the differences and give examples).
- 3) Do you have any problems with the schools?
- 4) How does the school advertise itself? What things does it do to get more pupils?

ORDER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF REASONS

- 1) What is the most important factor in choosing a school in which you want to teach?
Explain why.
- 2) What is the least important factor in choosing a school in which you want to teach?
Explain why.

GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE SCHOOL

- 1) Are you in favor of having private schools operating in the country? Explain why.
- 2) Looking back, at your personal experience in a private school, what would you say is its main advantage?
 - Give example of a recent experience that made you very happy to be a teacher in this school.
 - Give example of a recent experience that made you very frustrated

IMAGE OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL

- 1) Do you think that this school (the one you are working now) has problems? What are the problems?
- 2) Do parents transfer their children from this school? What reasons do parents give?
- 3) What is the medium of instruction?
- 4) What do you think can be done to public schools to improve?

HOME, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

- 1) Do you think that children who attend private schools (as against a public school) can be cut off from their community? In what ways? Give examples of your experience.
- 2) Is it important for children to be taught by local people?
- 3) Is it important that there should be continuity between the value system of the school and the value system of the home environment? (Give an example of your

own).

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- 1) Do you know your students' parents? How often do you meet them
- 2) Are parents involved in their children's homework? Does this help their learning?
(Give examples from your experience).
- 3) Do parents come to school to discuss progress of their children with you as their children's teachers? Explain and give examples.
- 4) When parents visit the school, do the school welcome them? If so how?
- 5) How does the school communicate with parents? (e.g. student progress; school activities; parent's meetings).
- 6) Do parents have any problems with discussing their children's progress at the school? Explain and give examples.
- 7) Are there any problems that can prevent parents from attending parent's meetings and how could this be solved?
- 8) How can the school further encourage parent's involvement?
- 9) Is it important that the community in which the school is located be involved in school activities?

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

- 1) Do you have special managerial responsibilities at your school?
- 2) In the previous school, were you involved in the management of the school?
- 3) Are you a member of the school's governing body?
- 4) There is a public perception that teachers in private school are more professional?
Do you think that this is a true justified perception?

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