



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

COPYRIGHT AND CITATION CONSIDERATIONS FOR THIS THESIS/ DISSERTATION



- Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.
- ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

How to cite this thesis

Surname, Initial(s). (2012). Title of the thesis or dissertation (Doctoral Thesis / Master's Dissertation). Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. Available from: <http://hdl.handle.net/102000/0002> (Accessed: 22 August 2017).

**PARENTAL DECISION-MAKING FOR SCHOOL CHOICE: FACTORS, ANXIETIES,
ASPIRATIONS AND STRATEGIES**

by

BEVERLEY SHANNON BLAKE

THESIS

**submitted in fulfilment of the
full requirements for the degree**

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

in

**UNIVERSITY
OF
EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

in the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

SUPERVISOR: Prof R Mestry

OCTOBER 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“YEAH BABY!! You can call me *Doc* now!!”

I hereby wish to express my gratitude to the following individuals who enabled this document to be successfully completed:

- Firstly, to my Supervisor, Professor Raj Mestry, who has endured long suffering patience with me and yet through it all has never waived in terms of his confidence in my abilities. “Thanks Prof, I really appreciate everything you have done for me!” xxx
- Secondly to the University of Johannesburg, who has continually throughout the years of my study awarded me the necessary financial incentives in the form of merit bursaries to keep me going.
- Next to my Statistician, Richard Devy, for all the numbers which he put together for me, without which this document would not be possible.
- Lastly to my Husband, Donovan, my kids Declan and Abbey, my incredible Mother-in-law Jenny, and my parents Godfrey, Denise & Allan for the continued confidence and support throughout the entire ordeal. “I love you all tooooo much!”
- Finally, to my Lord God & Saviour Jesus Christ, who has blessed me with the necessary talents and intelligence, and has given me the strength and perseverance needed to complete this document.

“Thank you Lord!”

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my kids, Declan and Abbey

“Without you guys, tomorrow wouldn’t be worth the wait and yesterday wouldn’t be worth remembering. Never forget that you are both capable of amazing things – go get them!!!”

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

ABSTRACT

The crisis in the quality of South African education has resulted in a flight trend across all types of primary and secondary education. It is no secret that a huge divide exists between functional schools and dysfunctional ones. South African schools are split into two worlds, one on par with the best in the world, the other perpetually constrained by incompetent/dishonest administrators, ineffectual teaching and industrial action by teacher trade unions. Amidst this backdrop, there is a growing perception among South Africans that public schooling will not be able to enhance the educational outcomes and future of their children. Accordingly, South African parents are increasingly making decisions regarding where to send their children to school. Historically (pre-1994), the majority of South African parents were not actively involved in making choices regarding the schools their children would attend. Reason being, this was determined for them by legislation and children were enrolled in schools by residence, language and/or by colour. Democracy opened the door to many possibilities and post-1994 policy changes resulted in parents starting to formulate their own ideas and preferences of what they thought the ideal school should be and offer their children.

As a new body of knowledge that needs to be explored, a quantitative study was used to establish the perceptions of middle class South African parents regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies in making the best possible school-choice decision for their children's future and whether these perceptions were consistent with those of school principals. Items to measure variables that emerged as important determinants or factors in decision-making with regards to exercising school choice, was constructed and compiled into two questionnaires, one for parents and one for principals. The results of the research point to a number of factors complicating the school choice decision as often the decisions parents in South Africa make are unique and stem from consequences of apartheid policies and as such need to be understood in this specific context. Among others, the top five factors parents indicated as being important in

school choice decision-making were, the child's happiness in the school, school safety, the academic curriculum and quality of discipline offered by the school, the training and experience of staff at the school as well as the quality of professional leadership, school facilities, performance and the overarching factor of school fees. The most significant information sources used by parents in their decision-making was found to be the schools' image in the community followed by open-days. School fees and oversubscription of functional schools were identified as the major obstacles parents experienced in decision-making. The key aspirations of parents to exercise school choice embrace the desire for a quality education effecting the economic empowerment of a child's future. In establishing synergy, it was found that for the most part principals do share similar perceptions to parents concerning issues around school choice. As South African parents increasingly value the importance of education for the life opportunities of their children so the weight and cost of school choice intensifies. This is the dilemma many parents face when choosing a school for their children.

Keywords: Cost, decision-making, education, parents, quality, school-choice.



TABLE OF CONTENTS	page
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE PROBLEM	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.	1
1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY	4
1.3 THEORETICAL CONTEXT	11
1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	12
1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH	13
1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH	14
1.7 ETHICAL ASPECTS	16
1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY	17
1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS	18
1.9.1 School choice	18
1.9.2 School marketing	19
1.9.3 School principal as manager and leader	19
1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY	20
1.11 SUMMARY	21
CHAPTER TWO	
LITERATURE REVIEW	23
2.1 INTRODUCTION	23
2.2 AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL CHOICE	24
2.2.1 The United States of America (US)	25
2.2.2 Australia	26
2.2.3 United Kingdom (UK)	27
2.2.4 Ghana	27
2.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM	29
2.3.1 Historical overview (pre – 1994)	29

2.3.2 Educational transformation (post – 1994)	32
2.3.3 Educational transformation and school choice	33
2.4 CONTEXTUALISATION OF IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS	34
2.4.1 School choice	35
2.4.2 Quality education	35
2.4.3 School management	36
2.5 THEORETICAL CONTEXT FOR SCHOOL CHOICE	37
2.5.1 Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) explained	38
2.5.1.1 The three generations of CHAT	38
2.5.1.2 CHAT and school choice	41
2.5.1.3 Contradictions and disturbances regarding CHAT	44
2.5.2 Choice theory explained	45
2.5.2.1 The five key concepts of Choice theory	46
2.5.2.2 How Choice theory impacts school choice	48
2.6 SCHOOL CHOICE	49
2.6.1 The demographics of school choice – Who chooses?	50
2.6.2 The different reasons for choosing a school – Why parents choose?	53
2.6.2.1 The United States (US) model	54
2.6.2.2 Australia	56
2.6.2.3 United Kingdom (UK) model	57
2.6.2.4 Ghana	58
2.6.2.5 South Africa	59
2.6.2.6 Taiwan	60
2.6.3 Parental strategies for school choice – How parents choose?	62
2.6.4 Anxieties associated with parental choice – What parents fear?	66
2.6.5 Aspirations of parents regarding school choice – What do parents want?	69
2.7 QUALITY EDUCATION AND SCHOOL CHOICE	72

2.7.1	What is quality education?	73
2.7.2	Access to schools of choice	77
2.7.3	School choice and equality	79
2.7.4	School choice and opportunity	80
2.8	THE SCHOOLS INFLUENCE ON PARENTAL SCHOOL CHOICE	82
2.8.1	School Marketing	83
2.8.1.1	The unique characteristic of a school as a service	84
2.8.1.2	Marketing planning for schools	86
2.8.1.3	A schools marketing strategy	88
2.8.1.3.1	Product strategies for schools	89
2.8.1.3.2	Pricing strategies for schools	90
2.8.1.3.3	Promotional strategies for schools	92
2.8.1.3.4	The human factor	97
2.8.1.3.5	School processes	98
2.8.1.3.6	The school environment	98
2.9	CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PARENTAL SCHOOL CHOICE DECISION-MAKING	100
2.9.1	The consumer decision-making process	101
2.9.1.1	Need recognition	101
2.9.1.2	Information search	102
2.9.1.3	Evaluation of alternatives	103
2.9.1.4	Service Encounter	104
2.9.1.5	Post-purchase behaviour	105
2.9.2	Factors influencing consumer buying decisions	106
2.9.2.1	Cultural factors	106
2.9.2.2	Social factors	107
2.9.2.3	Individual factors	109
2.9.2.4	Psychological factors	110
2.10	CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS	112
2.10.1	Cultural factors	112

2.10.2 Social factors	113
2.10.3 Individual factors	114
2.10.4 Psychological factors	114
2.11 SUMMARY	116

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 118

3.1 INTRODUCTION	118
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	119
3.2.1 Classification of the research design	119
3.2.2 Type of information required	120
3.2.3 Measurement and scaling procedures	122
3.2.4 Questionnaire design and pre-testing	124
3.2.5 Sampling design	127
3.2.6 Data analysis	130
3.3 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	131
3.4 HYPOTHESES	133
3.5 ANALYSIS OF SECTION A BIOGRAPHIC PROFILES	135
3.5.1 Parents	135
3.5.2 Principals	143
3.6 SUMMARY	147

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF A SELECTED SAMPLE OF EMPIRICAL DATA 149

4.1 INTRODUCTION	149
4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PARENTS	150
4.2.1 Factors influencing school choice	150
4.2.2 The top three choice factors as determined by parents	154

4.2.3	Parent strategies for school choice	156
4.2.4	The top three school choice information sources as determined by parents	158
4.2.5	Parent anxieties associated with school choice	159
4.2.6	The top three obstacles to school choice as determined by parents	161
4.2.7	Aspirations of parents regarding school choice	162
4.3	QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PRINCIPALS	164
4.3.1	Principals perceptions of quality education	164
4.3.2	Principal strategies used to influence school choice	172
4.3.3	Principals response to parental anxiety associated with school choice	175
4.3.4	Principals response to parental aspirations associated with school choice	177
4.4	FACTOR ANALYSIS	179
4.4.1	Factor analysis of factors influencing parental school choice	180
4.4.2	Factor analysis of information sources influencing parental school choice	198
4.4.3	Factor analysis of obstacles parents experience to school choice	204
4.5	HYPOTHESES	209
4.5.1	Comparison of two independent groups	212
4.5.2	Comparison of three or more independent groups	215
4.5.2.1	Differences with respect to parent's home language and school choice factors	216
4.5.2.2	Differences with respect to parent's combined monthly gross income	221
4.5.2.3	Differences with respect to parent's highest academic qualification	226
4.5.2.4	Differences with respect to parent's choice of type of school	231
4.6	SUMMARY	235

CHAPTER FIVE	
SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	237
5.1 INTRODUCTION	237
5.2 SUMMARY	238
5.3 IMPORTANT FINDINGS	241
5.3.1 Findings in relation to the first objective	241
5.3.1.1 Findings from the literature review	241
5.3.1.2 Findings from the empirical study	244
5.3.2 Findings in relation to the second objective	247
5.3.2.1 Findings of synergy and discord	247
5.3.3 Findings in relation to the third objective	249
5.3.4 Findings in relation to the fourth objective	249
5.3.4.1 Findings with respect to school choice factors	250
5.3.4.2 Findings with respect to information sources for school choice	252
5.3.4.3 Findings with respect to school choice obstacles	253
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS	253
5.4.1 Recommendations to generate a preliminary framework for school marketing aligned to parental school choice decision-making:	254
5.4.2 Recommendations to strengthen parents decision-making Processes when making school choice decisions:	259
5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY	263
5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	264
5.7 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY	265
5.7.1 From a theoretical perspective	265
5.7.2 From a practical perspective	265
5.7.3 From a methodological perspective	265
5.8 CONCLUSION	266
BIBLIOGRAPHY	268

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Parental choice factors in the US	55
Table 2.2: Parental choice factors in Australia	57
Table 2.3: Parental choice factors in the UK	58
Table 2.4: Parental choice factors in Ghana	58
Table 2.5: Parental choice factors in South Africa	60
Table 2.6: Parental choice factors in Taiwan	61
Table 3.1: Sample realisation rate	129
Table 3.2: Position in family	135
Table 3.3: Age	136
Table 3.4: Marital status	137
Table 3.5: Home language	138
Table 3.6: Employment status	139
Table 3.7: Highest academic qualification	140
Table 3.8: Combined monthly gross income	141
Table 3.9: Population group	142
Table 3.10: Demographic profile of Principals and the schools they manage	144
Table 4.1: Items associated with factors influencing parental school choice in question 7	151
Table 4.2: Items associated with information sources influencing parental school choice in question 9	156
Table 4.3: Items associated with obstacles to school choice in question 11	160
Table 4.4: Items associated with factors that principals could use in school marketing to influence parental school choice	165
Table 4.5: Common items of influence for school choice between parents and principals	167
Table 4.6: Items of discord with regards to school choice between parents and principals	169

Table 4.7: Items associated with promotional mechanisms used by principals to influence parental school choice	172
Table 4.8: KMO and Bartlett's test	180
Table 4.9: Total variance explained	181
Table 4.10: Factors constituting parental school choice	182
Table 4.11: Items associated with the factor: Intrinsic child related influences	183
Table 4.12: Items associated with the factor: Effective school leadership and governance	185
Table 4.13: Items associated with the factor: Academic excellence	187
Table 4.14: Items associated with the factor: Geography	189
Table 4.15: Items associated with the factor: School infrastructure	191
Table 4.16: Items associated with the factor: School size	193
Table 4.17: Items associated with the factor: School culture	194
Table 4.18: Items associated with the factor: Value added incentives	196
Table 4.19: Factors constituting information sources for school choice	199
Table 4.20: Items associated with the information factor: Mass media promotional sources	199
Table 4.21: Items associated with the information factor: Social networks	200
Table 4.22: Items associated with the information factor: Personal interaction	201
Table 4.23: Items associated with the information factor: Public network sources	203
Table 4.24: Factors constituting obstacles to school choice	205
Table 4.25: Items associated with the obstacle factor: Admission criteria	205
Table 4.26: Items associated with the obstacle factor: Access to information	206
Table 4.27: Items associated with the obstacle factor: Geographic logistics	207

Table 4.28: Statistical significance related to factors influencing parental school choice	210
Table 4.29: Statistical significance of information sources and obstacles to school choice	211
Table 4.30: Hypothesis with respect to position in family as the independent variable	213
Table 4.31: Significance of differences between mothers and fathers regarding the three obstacle factors	214
Table 4.32: Hypothesis of Home language as the independent variable	217
Table 4.33: Significance of differences among respondents Home language in respect of the eight School choice factors	218
Table 4.34: Hypothesis of Combined monthly income as the independent variable	221
Table 4.35: Significance of differences among respondents Combined monthly income in respect of the eight School choice factors	223
Table 4.36: Hypothesis of Highest academic qualification as the Independent variable	226
Table 4.37: Significance of differences among respondent's Highest academic qualification in respect of the eight School choice factors	228
Table 4.38: Hypothesis of School type as the independent variable	231
Table 4.39: Significance of differences among respondent's choice of School type in respect of the eight School choice factors	233

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: First Generation CHAT (Vygotsky)	39
Figure 2.2: Second Generation CHAT (Leontiev & Engestrom)	40
Figure 2.3: Third Generation CHAT (Engestrom)	40
Figure 2.4: Parental school choice as an activity system	42

Figure 2.5: Choice Theory	48
Figure 2.6: Elements of a School's Marketing Plan	86
Figure 2.7: Elements of the Promotional Mix	92
Figure 2.8: The Decision-Making Process	101
Figure 3.1: The components of research design	118
Figure 3.2: Position in family	135
Figure 3.3: Age	136
Figure 3.4: Marital status	137
Figure 3.5: Home language	138
Figure 3.6: Employment status	139
Figure 3.7: Highest academic qualification	140
Figure 3.8: Combined monthly gross income	141
Figure 3.9: Population group	142
Figure 4.1: Histogram of the factor Intrinsic child related influences	184
Figure 4.2: Box-plot of the factor Intrinsic child related influences	184
Figure 4.3: Histogram of the factor Effective school leadership and governance	186
Figure 4.4: Box-plot of the factor Effective school leadership and governance	186
Figure 4.5: Histogram of the factor Academic excellence	188
Figure 4.6: Box-plot of the factor Academic excellence	188
Figure 4.7: Histogram of the factor Geography	190
Figure 4.8: Box-plot of the factor Geography	190
Figure 4.9: Histogram of the factor School infrastructure	192
Figure 4.10: Box-plot of the factor School infrastructure	192
Figure 4.11: Histogram of the factor School size	193
Figure 4.12: Box-plot of the factor School size	194
Figure 4.13: Histogram of the factor School culture	195
Figure 4.14: Box-plot of the factor School culture	195
Figure 4.15: Histogram of the factor Value added incentives	197
Figure 4.16: Box-plot of the factor Value added incentives	197

Figure 4.17: Histogram for the factor Mass media promotional sources	200
Figure 4.18: Histogram for the factor Social networks	201
Figure 4.19: Histogram for the factor Personal interaction	202
Figure 4.20: Histogram for the factor Public network sources	203
Figure 4.21: Histogram for the factor Admission criteria	206
Figure 4.22: Histogram for the factor Access to information	207
Figure 4.23: Histogram for the factor Geographic logistics	208

LIST OF ANNEXURES

Annexure A: COVER LETTER TO PRINCIPALS AND PARENTS	289
Annexure B: QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PARENTS	291
Annexure C: QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PRINCIPALS	300
Annexure D: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH	308
Annexure E: ETHICS APPROVAL	310



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has undergone significant and major political, social and economic changes since the advent of democracy in 1994. Within this broad context of transformation, education has not been overlooked. Changes brought about to the education system through a number of policy initiatives have resulted in a vision for education that is committed to providing greater access to education, addresses quality of education and ensures redress for past injustices (South Africa, 1996(b)). The provision of such a quality of education for all South Africans is crucial, not only for ensuring that the population is well-educated, but also for human development and for the maintenance of socially responsive economic and political systems (Modisaotsile, 2012). Despite this noble visualisation, the quality of education in South Africa varies widely. Public spending on education has gone from being highly unequal on the basis of race under the apartheid regime to being well targeted towards poor children under the democratic government. This redistribution has come about as a result of the quintile ranking system as determined nationally by government according to the poverty and infrastructure of the community surrounding the school (Mestry & Bisschoff, 2009). In spite of the many positive trends, a far more resilient legacy from the past has been the low quality of education within the historically disadvantaged parts of the school system (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull, Armstrong, 2011; Modisaotsile, 2012) which is a cause for concern.

In a recently conducted Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality III (SACMEQ) survey (2007), the quality of Grade 6 mathematics and literacy was investigated (Spaull, 2011). It was reported in this survey that South Africa as one of fifteen educational systems that participated in the study, ranked third in having the highest proportion of functionally illiterate learners at 27% and ranked fifth in having the highest proportion of functionally innumerate learners

at 40% (Spaull, 2011). Further to this in its latest assessment of South Africa's economic progression since 1994, the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) fingered substandard public education as one of the key challenges facing the country (OECD, 2013). These dismal results were ratified in a National School Effectiveness Study (NSES) which demonstrated that Grade 5 learners in historically black schools performed considerably worse than Grade 3 learners in historically white schools (Taylor, 2011). It was thus found that by early primary school; historically black learners already carried an educational backlog equivalent to 2 years (Taylor, 2011). Policy changes have resulted in parents being able to exercise choice and it is no wonder that parents from township schools are fleeing to suburban former Model C¹ schools in search of better educational opportunities (Maile, 2004; Hoadley, 1999; Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001). The reality of the situation is that this is not an isolated phenomenon. The crisis in the quality of South African education has resulted in a flight trend across all types of primary and secondary education. From township schools to suburban schools, from Department of Education and Training schools (created during apartheid to serve the needs of black South Africans only) to House of Representative (responsible for serving the needs of the coloured group) and House of Delegate schools (to serve the Indian group), from rural areas to township or suburban schools, from House of Assembly or public schools (those created to serve the white population) to private schools and from poor provinces to 'perceived to be better' provinces (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001). This movement, or what has been termed 'migration of learners' is a cause of concern for school principals and a tale telling sign of the aspirations of learners' and parents having no confidence in governments' ability to provide a consistent standard of quality education.

Internationally, school choice policies are sweeping the globe. The problems that these policies are expected to address vary widely across countries as do the

¹ The Clase Models A, B, C and D were introduced by Minister Piet Clase in 1990 as new admission policy models for South African schools. Although differences in these models are noted, in essence all schools, unless parents voted by a two-thirds majority against this, became Model C schools from April 1992. Essentially this meant that a Model C school would receive a state subsidy but would have to raise the balance of its budget through fees and donations. It could also only admit black children up to 50% of its enrolment, but this restriction was set aside after the 1994 democratic elections.

details of policy design. Often these policies make the funding of school's dependent on their ability to attract and retain learners as parents are given more freedom to choose the schools that their children attend. Governments it seems, have decided that giving parents more choice among schools is an appropriate policy response to local educational problems (Plank & Sykes, 2003). This seems to be also true for South Africa.

Quality in the context of education, and a problem in South Africa, is not an easy concept to clarify. Many definitions exist and this attests to the complexity of the concept. Quality education according to Grima (2008), determines how much and how well children learn from the teaching and learning process and the extent to which this translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defines the concept in a paper entitled "What is quality education?" (2000) as a complex integration of five quality dimensions including learners, learning environments, content, processes and outcomes. This definition allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context relevant to this particular study.

A quality education is inextricably intertwined with notions of freedom and upward mobility. Schools in South Africa cannot improve until communities improve and it is amidst this backdrop that parents are becoming more and more disillusioned with their children's education in government schools (Maile, 2004; Bloch, 2009). From a personal perspective and as a parent, it is my utmost desire for my children to lead successful lives in this wonderful country we live in. The greatest way I believe I can ensure this success is through providing my children with the best education possible. Unfortunately, with high enrolment rates each year, and increasingly poor Annual National Senior Certificate Examination results (Modisaotsile, 2012), there is a growing perception among South Africans that public schooling will not be able to enhance the educational outcomes and future of their children. Many parents view the public school system as ineffective and dangerous and are thus voting with their feet and exploring other options before they believe it is too late (Russell, 2006). This together with the escalating costs of alternative educational possibilities

is the dilemma many parents, including myself, face when choosing a school for their children.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Much research is available highlighting the generally poor state of education in South African public schools and this provides credence to the disenchantment parents experience with the government's inability to uplift public schooling (Maile, 2004; Bloch, 2009). It is no secret that a huge divide exists between functional schools and dysfunctional ones (Fleisch, 2008; van der Berg et al., 2011; Modisaotsile, 2012). South African schools it seems are split into two worlds, one on par with the best in the world, producing quality foundation learning and providing access to top tertiary education, the other (making up the vast majority) is perpetually constrained by incompetent/dishonest administrators, ineffectual teaching and industrial action by teacher trade unions (Reprobate, 2012).

Consequently the South African educational system can be depicted as an ecosystem effectively consisting of two different functioning sub-systems (Fleisch, 2008; van der Berg, 2008; Taylor & Yu, 2009). The first sub-system is that of dysfunctional schools of whom are historically disadvantaged, and at present unfortunately serve mainly black and coloured children throughout South Africa (van der Berg, et al., 2011). Functional schools represent the second sub-system consisting of those schools that historically served white children, and produce educational achievement closer to the norms of developed countries (van der Berg et al., 2011). These schools today cater for a far more diverse population and it is in this second system, as an advent of democracy in South Africa, that has led to a scrambling for enrolment in the context of parents exercising choice (Maile, 2004). Having said this, it should however be noted that pockets of excellence are evident among historically disadvantaged schools. Some of these schools have extraordinarily conquered the dysfunctionality quagmire and are now performing and in some instances even outperforming previously advantaged schools (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). Although these schools are a beacon of hope they still remain few and far between.

According to Education Statistics (Department Basic Education, 2012), independent schools have seen a net increase of 25% from 2009 to 2012 with the highest concentration of schools and learners in Gauteng. From this it is evident that there is an increase in the percentage of people making use of private education (Gillingham, 2012). As such, I contend that this eco-system is further advanced by the existence of a third and fourth sub-system. The third sub-system comprises the approximate 3 500 registered independent schools according to Umalusi, the statutory quality assurance body, offering educational facilities in South Africa and gaining momentum (Anon., 2013). The number of unregistered independent schools is at present unknown. What is interesting in this sector is that whereas the majority of the sector used to consist of high-fee schools, the majority are now mid-fee and low-fee schools. These low-fee private/independent schools offer an alternative schooling option in poorer communities, where public schooling is sometimes unavailable, but even where it is, public schooling is often seen as undesirable by parents (Hofmeyr, McCarthy, Oliphant, Schirmer, & Bernstein, 2013). The fourth sub-system is the oldest alternative form of education and is that of the home schooling route. This form of education is becoming more common as it is provided for by the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)). In this sub-system parents choose to educate their children outside both the public and private domain. It is from these four choices that parents are able to exercise 'the right to choose' in ensuring a quality education for their children. This ability to choose, however, is often restricted by various factors including and among others, admission criteria of schools, knowledge of admission procedure or information relating to the admission procedure and household income (OECD, 2012).

Historically (pre-1994), the majority of South African parents were not actively involved in making choices regarding the schools their children would attend. This was simply determined for them by legislation. Children were enrolled in schools by residence, language and/or by colour. Very little thought or consideration for other factors were taken into account to determine the school that a child would attend. Democracy opened the door to many possibilities and post-1994 parents started to formulate their own ideas and preferences of what they thought the ideal school should be and offer their children (Russell, 2006; Venter, 2011).

Research suggests that active parental involvement in a child's education can have a significant impact on a child's educational achievement (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Most children have two main educators in their lives – their parents as primary educators and their teachers (*in loco parentis*). The term *in loco parentis*, Latin for "in the place of a parent" refers to the legal responsibility of a person, teacher or organization to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. In this context it allows schools and teachers operating in these schools to act in the best interests of their learners as they see fit (Elliott, 2018). Parental involvement can take many forms, but in the context of this study, will be limited to the aspirations and decisions parents make in choosing a school for their children to attend. Interestingly in an engaging parent's quality survey conducted by Public Agenda - a non-profit nonpartisan organization (Engaging parents., 2012) in 2011, it was found that parents want to be involved in their children's education but often lack the understanding of how to engage in this process. Along with this it was also found that parents have little or no knowledge of how schools in general operate or how well their local school functioned in comparison to others. The survey found that over 27% of parents know nothing about the qualifications of their child's principal, while 47% know little or nothing at all about how their child's schools ranks academically compared to other schools in the area. These are both massive barriers to rational decision-making processes that are involved with parental school choice. This could be a reason why an overwhelming majority of learners remain within the dysfunctional public schooling system (Anon., 2013). Nevertheless there is an undeniable increase in the percentage of people making use of private education (Gillingham, 2012).

The number of known independent schools has, according to the research conducted by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE), increased by 44% (Hofmeyr et al., 2013). Parents it seems, will choose to pay fees in search of quality education rather than send their children to poorly performing public schools (Hofmeyr et al., 2013). The advent of low-fee private/independent schools, that on the whole achieve better results than public schools (Goldhaber, 1999; Tooley, Dixon & Amuah, 2007; Longfield, 2011), has made the option of private education far more affordable than mid/ high-fee private/independent schools. The problem

however, is that many of these schools are even more poorly resourced than some public schools and are characterised by instability (Plank & Sykes, 2003). Some of these schools are often referred to as 'fly-by-nights' because so many have not been registered with the Department of Education and close down suddenly, abandoning learners who have already paid fees (Shezi, 2017). Why schools of this nature continue to attract learners is an incongruity that is difficult to understand but perhaps is a reflection of the extreme dissatisfaction among parents and learners of public schooling and its ability to provide quality education.

As private schooling increases to fill the gap where public schools for a number of reasons are found lacking, the public school sector according to the same research is shrinking. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of public schools declined by 9%, a strong indicator of parents' dissatisfaction of public schooling and its inability to meet the educational needs of what parents expect (Hofmeyr et al., 2013). This emphasis on private education does not mean that South Africa is not spending money on education, but rather that educational outcomes are not reflecting this spending (Gillingham, 2012). Despite the fact that South Africa spends 20.5 % of its annual budget on education, the quality of education being made available remains very poor (Reprobate, 2012). The point has been reached where it is becoming increasingly difficult to rationalise pouring additional money into a failing educational system and it is time for strong leadership and considerable political will to come to the fore for educational change to come about. This change requires a committed partnership between schools, parents, learners and community leaders. In a private school, the teachers are accountable to the manager/principal (who can terminate their services) and through the principal to the parents (who can withdraw their children). In a government public school, the chain of accountability is much weaker, as teachers have a permanent job with salaries and promotions unrelated to performance. The contrast is perceived with crystal clarity by the vast majority of parents (Hill & Chalaux, 2011).

A concerning consequence of these eco systems is the growing gap between schools in the various sub-systems. This gap specifically refers to the quality of education the different schools respectfully offer (Taylor, 2011). That is between

schools historically catering for black and coloured learners and schools historically catering for white learners and recently between these schools and private schools. This gap is not isolated to the South African situation, and although each having their own unique contexts are evident in many other countries throughout the world (OCED, 2012). Education affects the future prosperity and economy of any country and therefore there exists a social responsibility to narrow this gap. In a proposition to close this gap, the highly debated issue of “school choice” has come to the fore. School choice can be broadly defined as any policy that is designed to reduce the constraints that current school configurations place on schools and learners (Lamdin & Mintrom, 1997). It has also been described as a common sense idea that gives all parents the power and freedom to choose their child’s education, while encouraging healthy competition among schools and other institutions to better serve learners’ needs and priorities (edchoice.org, nd). In a South African context, school choice as indicated earlier, may be limited to choice among public schools within a district or it may allow for choice across district boundaries into other public schools, private schools or home schooling.

School choice in the public domain in South Africa operates within the context of the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)). The Act is based on the premise of neighbourhood schools. This means that feeder areas for schools are demarcated by provincial legislation in order to control learner numbers of schools and co-ordinate parental preferences. These feeder zones do not need to be geographically adjacent to the school but preference must be given to those parents who live and work in the feeder zone (South Africa, 1998(b)). Parents are however not compelled to enrol their children in the nearest school (South Africa, 1998(b)) and this has had a compounding effect on the migration of learners in search of quality education. The impact of this on school choice is two-fold (Du Toit, 2008): In the first instance, generally well-resourced and successful schools are mainly located in formally ‘white’ areas. Thus children of parents who can afford to live in these areas have first choice in attending these schools. A second consequence is the emergence of ‘unusual learner migration patterns’ (Du Toit, 2008). Parents travelling long distances to schools in an effort to exercise choice are making

enormous sacrifices both financially and in terms of travelling time, in the quest for quality education.

Parents exercising school choice have changed the distribution of learners across different schools in South Africa. Schools no longer typically reflect the social aspects of a community but rather a diversity of race, class, wealth and religion (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001). In this context, parental school choice is often restricted by school admission criteria, family income and access to information in much the same way as in other countries across the world (OECD, 2012). Research has shown that oversubscribed schools are selective in their admission and tend to cream or skim learners who are easier to teach and more able to learn, which effectively weeds out learners with low performance (OCED, 2012). In addition, better-off parents are more likely to exercise school choice, as they have more information and resources, and usually enrol their children in high quality schools. In contrast, more disadvantaged parents tend to exercise choice less and send their children to their local neighbourhood schools. It has been found that less educated families may face more difficulties in gauging information required to make informed school choice decisions, or have different preferences over school characteristics (Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005). Parents with a better-off background tend to avoid schools with a significant number of disadvantaged learners and research suggests that parents prefer schools with populations ethnically similar to their own family (Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005). School choice thus can increase differences between schools in terms of performance and socio-economic background and this enhances segregation by ability, income and ethnic background causing greater inequalities across education systems (OECD, 2012).

School choice advocates argue that the intention of market mechanisms in education allows equal access to high quality schooling for all (Musset, 2012). Expanding school choice opportunities, it is alleged, would allow all learners – including disadvantaged ones and those attending low performing schools – to opt for higher quality schools, as the introduction of choice in education can foster efficiency, spur innovation and raise quality overall (Musset, 2012). Choice opponents point to the potential for school choice, particularly public-private choice

to lead to greater inequities. They believe choice would result in a “creaming” of the best learners and teachers from traditional public schools, leading to further segregation of the school system by race and income and in effect leaving the public schools a “dumping ground” for disadvantaged learners (Goldhaber, 1999; Musset, 2012). This I believe is an accurate picture of what is taking place in South African schools currently.

For effective school choice to be exercised, the OECD in 2012 found in a report entitled “Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged learners and school” (OECD, 2012) that there must be school alternatives to choose from, but that these should be available to all families and should not widen inequalities nor exacerbate segregation. They propose a number of controlled choice schemes that can be adopted by school principals and that provide for parental choice but at the same time mitigate the risk of increased segregation.

The South African Department of Education (DoE) in its annual report in a chapter on Race, Diversity and Values (DoE, 1999) acknowledges that since 1995, the school system has experienced new patterns of learner movement from poorly resourced schools to better resourced schools; from poorly disciplined schools to better disciplined schools and from schools where learners fail national examinations and tests to schools where learners succeed. The report is also concerned with parents’ ability to make informed choices, as it indicates that ‘quite often parents are enticed by false expectations and as a result make poor choices if they have little experience of education or are of limited financial means’ themselves. This documented migration has resulted in decreased parental support and involvement in local schools. This decreased involvement does not transpire into increase support or involvement in new schools as distance between new schools and home become an issue and as such purports further disaster for the concept of democratic governance as laid out in the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996a).

Parents are increasingly making decisions regarding where to send their children to school, and thus it is important for us to know what information or what

rationalisation processes they employ in making these decisions. By virtue of this new found freedom of choice, it follows that marketing strategies implemented by school principals in order to attract learners, would also become an important facet in meeting the needs and desires of parents exercising choice for quality education. Thus, all parents, and inadvertently school principals, are involved in school choice decisions in South Africa at present. As such it is a body of knowledge that needs to be explored. Accordingly, the key focus of this study is therefore to examine the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies of parents in making the best possible school decision for their children's future and whether school marketing, under the management of the school principal, in-turn influences this process. There are a number of subtle and complex influences on both a macro and micro level that add to the complexity of the process influencing parental school choices. It is in this context that parents exercise decision-making with respect to school choice.

Research on school choice in South Africa is fairly limited and focus has mainly been on the exodus of black learners from township schools to other schools outside the boundaries of these confines (Maile, 2004; Msila, 2009). Also a large majority of this research is qualitative in nature and located geographically in the Western Cape (Hoadley, 1999; Du Toit, 2008). This is a strong justification for an empirical investigation of the actual extent of parental decision-making surrounding school choice as found in Gauteng to allow for both the contextualisation of data and the identification of more generalizable patterns.

1.3 THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The context for the theoretical exploration of parental decision-making and school choice in this study will be conducted from an activity theory perspective drawing from Engestrom's formulation of "second generation activity theory" (Engestrom, 2001), or Cultural-Historical Activity theory (CHAT) coupled with Glasser's Choice theory (1999). Applying a theoretical framework of this nature, should serve as a useful viewpoint in that parental decision-making can be seen not to be only embedded within an activity system, but also continuously influenced by tensions between the other elements of the system. These core ideas of how systems work,

underpin human behaviour in the field of Choice theory and accordingly allows me the opportunity to uncover causal mechanisms structuring learning in activity systems that would be otherwise invisible. CHAT and Choice theory as a theoretical framework will be elucidated in Chapter 2 (section 2.5).

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As parents increasingly value the importance of education for the life opportunities of their children, so the weight of school choice intensifies. The school choice decisions parents make in South Africa are unique as often they stem from consequences of apartheid policies and as such need to be understood in this specific context. If South Africa is to join the ranks of developing countries with higher standards of schooling performance, and with good schooling available to the poor, it will need to review the ethics and the practicalities of national and provincial education funding (Anon., 2013). This in turn will have a major effect on the management of schools by school principals and the decisions parents make. Arising from the above discussion of the research problem, the research question thus for this study is:

“What are the perceptions of South African parents regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies in making the best possible school choice decision and how consistent are these perceptions with those of school principals as depicted and influenced by school marketing?”

In order to answer this question a number of sub-questions need to be addressed. They are:

- How is ‘school choice’ manifested in terms of factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for parents and school principals?
- What evidence of synergy is apparent when comparing parental and principal perceptions of school choice?
- How can school marketing be aligned (if necessary) with parental perceptions of school choice?

- How can parents' decision-making processes (if necessary) be strengthened when making a school choice decision?

Having demarcated the research, it is now necessary to state the aim of this research.

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Research priorities in education in South Africa are shifting from an emphasis on policy formulation to one of policy implementation and the implications of this on the wider school community. The need therefore to explore school choice in the context of increased access, equality, opportunity and participation will therefore guide this investigation, the major aim of which is:

“To determine the perceptions of parents regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies influencing the school choice decision and to establish whether these perceptions are consistent with those of school principals. The general intention is to aid the capacity of parental school choice decision-making (if necessary) and generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in marketing their schools.”

The following objectives will assist in enabling the investigation to realise the aim of the study which is:

- To demonstrate 'school choice' as a base of knowledge in terms of factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for parents and school principals.
- To ascertain items of synergy and discord between parental and principal perceptions of school choice.
- To generate a preliminary framework for school marketing taking parental perceptions of school choice into consideration.
- To strengthen parental decision-making processes with respect to school choice for quality education (if necessary).

It is clear that parental school choice has the capacity to complicate national educational policy and this investigation therefore aims to provide empirical evidence of this interesting phenomenon. Following the discussion of the research question and statement of aims, the method contemplated to research the problem of school choice will now be discussed.

1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Willis (2007) explains a paradigm as a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field. As such, this particular research will follow a post-positivist paradigm. A quantitative study making use of questionnaires will be used to establish the perceptions of parents and school principals regarding their decision-making process with respect to school choice and how schools influence these decisions. The aim of the data collected in this paradigm will be to produce objective and generalisable knowledge about parental social patterns, seeking to affirm the presence of universal properties in relationships amongst the pre-defined variables. This paradigm also allows the opportunity of more interaction between the research participants and the researcher in terms of developing a process of developing explanations for relationships among variables or of describing trends in terms of responses from participants of a study (Creswell, 2002). This research design I believe is thus well suited to answering the research questions outlined above.

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study, a literature search will be conducted to clarify the concept of school choice and to highlight the gap as such, in the South African context. Information gleaned from this review and items to measure variables that emerge as important determinates or factors in decision-making with regards to exercising school choice, will be constructed and compiled into a questionnaire. Possibilities to this nature include sibling attendance, school proximity to home or work, school academic reputation, recommendations, special programs, aftercare facilities and programs, neighbourhood safety, availability of school resources (textbooks and stationery), the physical and social structures of the school, medium of instruction, actual and perceived safety of the school,

proximity to green space, training and experience of teachers and staff, involvement of parents in children's education, opportunities for extracurricular activities, school management, whether the school is used as a multi-use facility in the afternoons, evenings and weekends, etc.

Two questionnaires will be compiled. One for parents consisting of personal, attitudinal and behavioural questions to determine trends in their thinking with regards to school choice, and one for school principals with respect to their behaviour in terms of promotional mechanisms for school marketing and the administration of school admission. These questionnaires will be divided into two sections: Section A will represent biographical details of participants and will form the independent variables for the quantitative study. Section B will consist of questions relating to the core components under investigation and will constitute the dependent variables of the dimensions involved in parental school choice and those of the school that influence decision-making. These questionnaires will be administered to the sample from which conclusions will be drawn. The justification for the use of questionnaires is that:

- They are a simple way to gather responses to questions regarding a number of people's opinions;
- They are less time consuming than interviews and can be easily kept anonymous;
- The data arising out of the questionnaire can be quantified easily with the use of a software package (Debois, 2016);

Sampling or participant selection in this study will be way of purposive sampling of parents and schools in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, specifically the West Rand. The reasons associated with this choice are firstly, cost effectiveness and secondly, because I will be able to reach the particular targeted sample or those whom I think would be appropriate for the study. I may also engage in a variation of respondent-driven sampling with the aim of maximizing my sample size. I am aware of the risks associated with this form of nonprobability sampling, which may be the possibility of a sample that is over-weighted in terms of accessibility, but I am

hoping that I will be able to make estimates about the social network, perhaps connecting the hidden population as an offset.

Statistical analyses of the results will be performed on the data collected using the SPSS 15.0 statistical package and support from Statistical Services of the University of Johannesburg (STATCON). Questionnaire items will be subjected to principal axis factoring in order to establish factors constituting school choice among parents for the necessary hypotheses testing.

In quantitative research, measures must be reliable in order to claim for the validity of the findings. In this study, content validity will be established firstly, by means of protocol for questionnaire design. To ensure this, the questionnaire will be drawn up with the help of my supervisor, other experts in the field and STATCON. Also, I will perform a pilot study to ensure that the questionnaire is appropriate in answering the research questions for this study, shows no ambiguity and that it complies with the subject domain. Construct validity will be investigated by means of factor analysis to explain variability among observed random variables in terms of fewer unobserved random variables. The second measure of reliability and validity will be in regards to protocol while administering the questionnaire. Finally, trustworthiness of the data will be established via statistical measures to ensure the integrity of data by means of correlation coefficients.

1.7 ETHICAL ASPECTS

The research was conducted in such a manner that the ethical code of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) was upheld throughout the process. The necessary permission to conduct research in sampled schools under the jurisdiction of the Gauteng Department of Education was made and ethics clearance sought from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at UJ. Furthermore, respondents were fully aware of the purpose of the research and the way in which the information was utilised. This was made possible via a cover page on the questionnaires (See Annexure A), which drew attention to important aspects. There were no foreseeable risks associated with the research and respondents were free to access the

research report once it was completed. In addition to this, the utmost respect was upheld for the autonomy of the participant, the basic rights and dignity of the individual and the confidentiality and anonymity of individuals under all circumstances. Also, informed consent from participants was obtained and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage confirmed. In all aspects participants received the highest degree of professionalism from the researcher.

1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

The theoretical contribution is that this study may have the ability to present a base of knowledge regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for school choice in the South African context as perceived by parents, and to determine whether these perceptions are consistent with those of school principals. The empirical study unpacking the decision-making process of parents in selecting schools at which to enrol their children, may provide a way to integrate the current international literature on school choice by explaining how and why school choice in the South African context differs from experiences in other countries. Another important aspect that could possibly come to the fore is the role of the school in shaping school choice outcomes. For example, to what extent are children not able to enrol in the school they select e.g. for reasons of overcrowding, lack of social capital or knowhow, or even overt discrimination. Finally, in asserting the implications of school choice for academic outcomes this study may allow for an exploration of the relationship between learner migration, school choice and academic outcomes. That is to say, “To what extent does the ability to access education at a private school or historically advantaged school determine opportunities available to a child as they move through school and then into higher education or the workplace?”

The practical contribution of this study will hopefully be able to provide the Department of Education and principals an interesting insight into “school choice” with regards to logistical planning in terms of additional classrooms or the building of new schools where possible. Additionally, this study would also offer an in-depth look at how parents choose schools for their children based on a number of criteria.

The findings may have the ability to enlighten and help parents make the right decisions for the right reasons. Furthermore, this study may also be of interest to schools in that by understanding the criteria parents attach to school choice, school management teams may be able to apply these findings to their marketing campaigns or strategic school improvement plans. Moreover aspects of accountability, community and district involvement and support for schools may come to the fore as necessary determinants in providing quality education that is valued and beneficial to learners.

This study will contribute to policy in the following ways. The outcome of this study may influence a revisiting of the Norms and Standards of School Funding Policy (South Africa, 1998(b)) within the Department of Education. Findings may highlight the notion that a school's access to resources cannot be determined by looking at its location, but rather at its composition of its learners as a result of parent's exercising choice. Additionally, policy with regards to admission criteria (South Africa, 1998(a)) or the capacity to enforce regulation thereof in an attempt to minimise inequality or segregation as a consequence of exercising choice could also come to the fore.

1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this study the following concepts will be used frequently and therefore need clarification:

1.9.1 School Choice

In South Africa, the choice of a school has a legal foundation as formulated in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996(d)). According to section 29 of the Constitution, everyone has the right to receive an education in a public educational institution of their choice, where the education is reasonable practicable and in the language of their choice. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word 'choice' as the act of choosing, or of deciding between alternatives (Choice., nd). '**School choice**' therefore in this study will be defined as the process through which parents go, when they choose

one school over another born out of a vision to provide a quality education for their children. In this context, factors influencing the decision-making process parents grapple with will be considered.

1.9.2 School Marketing

Marketing in an educational context is concerned with managing the relationship between the school and its clients. Bisschoff, Du Plessis & Smith (2004:4), define '**marketing**' in education, "as the means by which the school actively communicates and promotes its purpose, values and products to learners, parents, staff and the wider community". This definition lends itself fastidiously to this study and as such, this definition will be subscribed to throughout.

1.9.3 School principal as manager and leader

Management of an institution involves the managerial functions of planning, organising, leading and control. Management focuses on non-behavioural aspects such as the systematic selection of goals and objectives, the development of strategies to achieve these goals, the design of the organization and the control of the activities required to attain these goals. In contrast, leadership focuses on behavioural aspects such as energising people to change and to steer the organisation in a certain direction (Smit & Cronje, 1992: 286). In a nutshell, leadership is the ability to influence others to cooperate willingly, while management includes leadership but also involves planning, organizing and controlling.

In the context of the school, there is no single correct definition and therefore for the purpose of this study a '**school principal**' will be defined as "one who is able to guide him, or herself and others through various situations toward the betterment of all" (Day, 2011: 13). This means that principals need to take into account the entire interactive system of environmental factors, individual needs and school objectives and bring these into their leadership philosophy. This classification fits well with the theoretical context of this study as it accentuates the systems theory of organisations that are organic and open, consisting of interacting and

interdependent parts and having a variety of goals. Principals in this context are to maintain balance among the conflicting objectives, goals and activities of various role players that make up the school.

1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

In this chapter an introduction to the study has been provided. It has outlined the the rationale and problem statement for the study.

Chapter two consists of a literature review of the concept school choice as well as an explanation of the theoretical context for the study. A number of secondary sources used for reference purposes in this study may be considered to be outdated. School choice globally, although not a new phenomenon, however, is so in the South Africa context and has only come to the fore since political change in 1994. As such, I have intentionally included studies conducted at the onset of school choice in these international contexts since many issues highlighted in these studies were found to be relevant to my study and encapsulated many of the challenges and dilemmas faced at present in South Africa with regards school choice and parental decision-making. This literature pertaining to school choice is explored and related to the decision making process parent's face in order to conceptualise the problem. School principals, through identifying and understanding these factors have the opportunity to develop a school marketing mix that is more in line with the needs and ways of thinking of parents. As such, marketing or school promotion as an added dimension to school choice is unpacked.

Chapter three details the research methodology of the study. It depicts the research design to be used to gather empirical information as well as how the data is to be analysed and what the intended purpose of the data will be. Issues surrounding sampling, reliability, validity and hypotheses are explained. Graphical representations depicting the biographical details of the sample is additionally provided.

Chapter four provides an analysis and interpretation of a selected sample of empirical data. It includes a discussion of the questionnaire administered to both parents and principals as well as factor analysis and hypothesis testing.

Chapter five outlines the major findings, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study relative to the aim.

1.11 SUMMARY

Education is sometimes described as the “great equaliser”, a powerful social force that can level the playing fields of opportunity among citizens (Byanyima, 2014). The current education system in South Africa only provides some children with this opportunity insofar as their parents can actually choose for them to attend good schools. Other parents, without the resources, are left it seems, with little or no choice. The new school market is reshaping society now and for the long term. Often differences in schools at present reflect not only differences in clientele but those in the ability of the state to provide adequate schooling for its citizens. All parents – not just those who can afford it – should have a say in where their children go to school and have the opportunity to choose excellent schools for their children.

In the context of a struggling and patently unaccountable public schooling system in South Africa, the development and expansion of private schools serving poorer communities is a trend to be welcomed and encouraged. Choice is synonymous with democracy and parents exercising school choice may have the ability to force all schools – public and private – to compete and innovate in order to offer the best education possible to attract and retain learners. Parents need to be able to exercise choice and this choice should be unrestricted.

Thus while school choice can take many forms, the central issue under investigation in this study is the ability of parents to choose which schools to send their children to rather than relying on more traditional methods of allocating children to schools and the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies that influence and shape these

decisions they make. These insights may in turn have an interesting effect on schools themselves and their respective marketing campaigns.

The necessity for the research study has been established in this chapter. The next chapter will concentrate on the literature review to provide a basis for this investigation.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order for people to participate fully, not only in their own lives but also those of their children, they need to be able to develop a vision of the future for themselves (Modisaotsile, 2012). This vision can be conceptualized through education. One of the most important ways in which parents are involved in their children's education is through choosing the school they attend. As a parent, I want my children in an environment that allows them to excel and develop confidence in their abilities. I expect the school to prepare my children for employment in a rapidly changing environment and school choice is the key element that drives the positive outcome of this expectation.

Assumptions have been made about what parents are looking for in the schools they select for their children to attend, but there has been little real evidence to show what really influences parents when choosing a school in South Africa (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). What is clear is that parents have been voting with their feet over the past number of years (Msila, 2009). Traditionally, the concept of migration focused on labour and urbanisation trends in response to socio-economic pressures and there was little attention given to migration in education. Now recent developments in this area have shown that educational migration patterns are driven either by a lack of local access to educational opportunities, or by the motivation to gain access to educational opportunities that are perceived to be 'better' (Paterson & Kruss, 1998). The total number of public schools in South Africa dropped between the years 2000 and 2010, while the number of independent schools over the years have shown a steady increase (South African Press Association (SAPA), 2012). There has clearly been a drift away from public school education, however, what has caused this drift? What do parents really think of South African schools? The increased mobility of our population combined with the school choice movement has resulted in increasingly large numbers of parents who want to shop for schools as they do for consumer products. As such, school choice has the ability to bring about a consumer-oriented approach to education that needs

to be studied (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001). In such an approach it is imperative to sharpen the skills of parents as consumers of education and principals as managers of schools, who engage in market research in an attempt to define the desires of their current and prospective clients. Being familiar with the choice factors parents take into account when choosing a school for their child, is central in the development of appropriate marketing guidelines for schools. The general lack of local studies on parental choice factors emphasise the need for research in this field as in South Africa, parental school choice decisions are often influenced by the consequences of apartheid policies and need to be understood in this context. Schools are experiencing change like never before and any attempt at changing a complex system like that of education, especially in area of school choice, requires a consumer-oriented approach.

Having introduced the problem, what follows is an international perspective of school choice and an exposition of some of the different school choice policies offered to parents across the globe as a strategy for encouraging improvement in the educational opportunities that governments provide for their citizens (Plank & Sykes, 2003). It is important for South African schools to extrapolate from these international experiences so that principals are able to avoid unnecessary errors and implement school choice strategies that are effective.

2.2 AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL CHOICE

In countries on every continent, governments have decided that giving parents more choices among schools is an appropriate policy in response to local educational problems (Plank & Sykes, 2003). A wide diversity of policies exists across the globe in response to a wide range of problems experienced in different contexts. School choice policies, however, have two essential features in common. Firstly, they allow parents to choose what schools their children will attend. In so doing, the power of government to assign children, according to some set of criteria, be it geographical or social, to a specific school diminishes. Secondly, school choice policies result in competition among schools. With the advent of school choice and a parent's ability to leave a school if they dislike it and in some cases leaving with their share of public

funding, schools no longer 'own' their learners and thus have to make a concerted effort to attract and retain learners (Plank & Sykes, 2003). Exceptions do exist, with some countries showing little enthusiasm for school choice policies, however, increasing pressure to give parents more choice is intensifying (Plank & Sykes, 2003).

In order to highlight the international perspective of school choice I have decided to explore three industrialized capitalist countries (United States of America, Australia, United Kingdom) and one developing country in Africa (Ghana) to provide a reference point for the South African context.

2.2.1 The United States of America (US)

In the US more than half of the states offer a variety of school choice programmes to qualifying parents. The Friedman Foundation for educational choice founded in 1996, is a non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing Milton and Rose Friedman's vision of school choice. According to the Friedman Foundation (Forster, 2013; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013), the most well-known form of school choice in the US is that of school vouchers. Vouchers give parents the ability to redirect their children's education funding to a participating private school to pay for partial or full-time tuition. There are currently twenty-six such voucher programs operating in fifteen states across the US. Education savings accounts commonly referred to as ESA's, make up another form of school choice in the US. This programme allows parents to withdraw their children from public schools and receive a deposit of public funds into a government-authorized savings account. These funds can then be used to cover private school tuition and fees, online learning programs, private tutoring, educational therapies, college course costs, and other higher education expenses. Five such ESA programmes presently exist. An additional school choice programme functioning in the US is tax-credit scholarships. This school choice programme allows taxpayers to receive full or partial tax credits for donating to non-profit organisations that provide private school scholarships. The amount of tax credits distributed is capped at an amount determined by legislature, which, in turn, affects the availability and size of the scholarships. Lastly, along the same vein, US

parents are also able to receive state income tax relief for approved educational expenses. Expenses incurred for private school tuition, books, supplies, computers, tutors, and transportation all become tax deductible and lower a parents' total income tax liability. There are five individual tax credit programmes operational in five states at present. Parents are able to choose between public schools, charter schools (public schools that operate without the constraint of local and state regulations), magnet schools (schools that focus on a specific subject or follow a specific educational theme) or private schools (most of which are affiliated with a religious faith or denomination). According to the Friedman Foundation for educational choice (Forster, 2013; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013), these choice programmes are among the most prominent and successful reforms in the educational field. Their premise is that educational policy needs to embrace the American principle that people should have stewardship over their own lives and therefore should have the ability to make their own choices (Forster, 2013). In spite of these greater opportunities for access to learning in the US, Kelly and Scafidi (2013) confer that it is crucial to evaluate the reasons parents choose particular schools for their children, the information upon which they rely in doing so, and the policies and practices that empower parents.

2.2.2 Australia

Australian parents have a choice of sending their children to either a government, catholic or independent school. Each stream differs in its cost. Government schools are free, catholic schools charge modest fees and different independent schools charge different levels of fees, sometimes high, sometimes low (Kelly & Evans, 2004). Government schools have the largest market share of total student enrolments but has seen a decrease of late. Catholic schools have held a fairly constant share of learners, however, independent school enrolments are on the increase (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004; Kelly & Evans, 2004). These developments in Australian society illustrate that schooling has developed into a service industry with parents becoming customers in selecting a school for their child. This parental power of choice requires of schools to adopt marketing strategies to protect or acquire market share. In order to compete for market share,

schools need to understand reasons of parents for choosing or not choosing a particular school (Goh & Dolnicar, 2006).

2.2.3 United Kingdom (UK)

School choice in the UK is portrayed as a parents' right to express a preference for a particular school they would most like their child to attend (School Admissions – Gov UK, 2016). Throughout England various types of schools are available to choose from. They include community schools (who make up the majority of schools and are state funded), voluntary aided schools (also state funded but these funds are supplemented by different religious organisations) and foundation schools (state funded schools controlled by a governing body) (Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles & Wilson, 2010). Parents in exercising school choice must complete a common application form with their local education authority (LEA), on which they will nominate at least three schools of preference (Burgess *et al.*, 2010). The LEA will then assign learners to schools based on the Schools Admission Code of 2007. This code applies to all types of schools ensuring fair access for all and takes school admission criteria and availability of space into account (Burgess *et al.*, 2010). The first priority in admission is given to children with special educational needs, next children who are looked-after by the local authority, then children with siblings who already attend the school. Finally, children living closest to the school are given the next priority and then parental preference may translate into a place at a desired school (Burgess *et al.*, 2010).

2.2.4 Ghana

Education in Ghana has been marred by history and many reforms have been implemented over the years. The latest educational plan was finalised in 2007 and the aim is to provide universal free primary education (Longfield, 2011). The government, however, supports the notion of public schools with school fees, uniforms and free school feeding programs. When it comes to school choice, most Ghanaians have relatively easy access to both primary and secondary public schools, with an additional option of international schools and private schools

(GhanaWeb, nd). There exists a notion of a wider range of choice available to parents in the developing world since different curricula options and syllabi is not always rigidly controlled by the government and this is most certainly true for Ghana. Low cost private education is extensively available and accessible to more than just the wealthy in Ghana (Longfield, 2011). International schools come at a cost that most parents are unable to afford, however there has been a large increase in the number of low fee private schools and enrolment in these schools, even in some of the poorest areas throughout Ghana (Longfield, 2011). These private schools in general outperform government public schools (Tooley, Dixon & Amuah, 2007). The public school system is modelled on a traditional British school system, and after junior high school learners may choose to go into different streams at senior high school. These streams comprise of general education and technical, vocational and agricultural and training or learners may enter into an apprenticeship scheme. International schools offer teaching and facilities more in line with that of Europe or North America and they follow various foreign curricula (Holdsworth, nd). Enrolment and attendance is haphazard in public schools as many families are unable to afford school fees and uniforms and there is no way to enforce attendance since there are not enough teachers and facilities available to accommodate all learners in Ghana (GhanaWeb, nd). The ability of lower income or uneducated parents to make rational and wise decisions about the education of their children is thus a concern raised by the availability of choice.

Amidst the diversity of school choice programmes available to parents, it is held that the move to increase choice and competition in the education system is unlikely to be reversed and thus the challenge that faces policy makers is to devise policies that harness the power of choice and competition to bring about improvement in the educational opportunities provided for all children (Plank & Sykes, 2003). Having thus demarcated the international perspective, a discussion of the South African education system, its history and the essence of school choice in the South African context will now follow. This will provide the appropriate background to understanding school choice in South Africa and what it entails with respect to parental choice and the role of the school principal in the management of South African schools.

2.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.3.1 Historical overview (pre-1994)

Systems of education throughout the world have developed over generations. These systems have been influenced and shaped by not only theories of education but also by particular social, political and economic factors (Hartshorne, 1999). South Africa is no different and has experienced and is still experiencing a process of significant educational change. In order to appreciate the dynamics of the South African educational system in which school choice takes place, it is essential to understand the background to its development. In arriving at this brief historical overview, the following websites and articles have been considered and consulted:

- The evolution of education policy in South Africa (Hartshorne, 1999);
- Bantu Education (<http://overcomingapartheid.msu>);
- Various authors interpretations of the South African school system from (<http://users.iafrica.com>).

What thus follows is a narrative of my interpretation and understanding of the unveiling of events leading up to educational reform in 1994.

Like many aspects of South African history, apartheid² ideas, theories and practices fashioned South African educational policy. Before 1953, many black African people attended schools set up by religious organisations and received the same quality education white children received in state schools. Following the Bantu Education Act (No. 47) of 1953, the government tightened its control over religious schools by eliminating almost all financial aid thus ensuring that economic power and political privilege remained in the hands of the white sector. The Bantu Education ideology was founded on the principles of Christian National Education (CNE) introduced by the National Party as the guiding philosophy of education. The basis of this system was that a person's social responsibilities and political

² An official policy of racial segregation formerly practiced in the Republic of South Africa, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against non-whites from 1948 to 1994.

opportunities were defined by a person's ethnic identity. As such CNE advocated separate schools for each of South Africa's population groups (whites, black Africans, Indians and coloureds). Segregated education disadvantaged all non-white groups but was particularly devastating for black Africans.

Bantu Education managed by the Minister of Native Affairs, was aimed at providing black Africans with the minimum educational skills necessary to be engaged in semi-skilled labour regardless of an individual's abilities or aspirations. Unequal access to schools, unequal educational opportunities, inadequate funding, inadequate facilities, shortage of educational material and inadequately qualified teaching staff were the products of this system that was held in vast contrast to white education at the time. The breaking point came in June 1976 with the advent of the Soweto youth uprising. The violence and loss of life experienced on that day was a direct result of people's rejection of the provision of an inferior education, coupled with their resistance to the "Afrikaans medium decree", in which the use of both English and Afrikaans was made compulsory for certain key subjects in schools. Although the inevitable 1976 uprising was sparked by language issues, the underlying causes of the student revolt are rather to be found in the segregation and general inferiority of black African education, the discrimination in terms of finance and resources and the political ideologies of 'Bantu society', 'Bantu economy' and 'Bantu culture'. Despite this seemingly water-shed incident, the South African government in its 1983 White Paper on education coined the slogan 'equal but separate' and segregated, discriminatory education systems continued.

The period 1984 - 1990 saw South Africa's education system controlled by a number of different education departments. Each of the three houses of parliament (white, coloured, and Indian) had an educational department for their specific racial group and each of the 10 Homelands³ had its own education department. In addition to this, the Department of Education and Training was set up to be responsible for black African education outside of the homelands. Education was

³ A Bantustan (also known as Bantu homeland, black homeland, black state or simply homeland) was a territory set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia), as part of the policy of apartheid.

compulsory for all racial groups, but at different ages, and the law was enforced differently. Government spending on black African education was substantially increased during the late 1980's but the backlog as a result of the inequality of the past was already massive. The quality of education offered by the different departments of education differed vastly and the disruption of schooling and the breakdown of the learning environment were worse than at any time in the history of black African education.

From 1991 in an attempt to rectify this inequality of education and in anticipation of democracy, Government introduced the Clase Models. White schools were required to select one of four new admission policy "Models" A, B, C or D (see footnote 1 in Chapter 1). These models gave white parent communities the choice of retaining the status quo of segregated education or adopting one of the models that gave them control over admissions in their schools. Model C was a semi-private structure, which offered increased autonomy for the school but resulted in decreased funding by the state. By 1993, 96% of all former white schools became Model C schools governed by school governing bodies. The Clase Models were abolished by the post-apartheid government in 1994 but the term is still commonly used to describe former white-only government schools even to the present day.

The majority of South African parents today making school choice decisions, are a product of the apartheid era of education and as such carry either the scars or privilege of this ideological framework. The removal of formal barriers to discriminatory admission in schools was hailed by the people of South Africa, and in particular by the previously disadvantaged as the end to old apartheid educational practices. Subsequently, educational migration has become a trend where black African and coloured learners have moved to former Indian and white schools, which during apartheid were better resourced than those designated for them in the day. In response to this, there has also been an evident flow of mainly white learners from ex-model C schools to private schools and so the migration has thus both a spatial and demographic character that is unique to South Africa as a result of apartheid policies (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001).

School choice therefore, is not simply a trend driven by the lack of local access to educational opportunities or by the motivation to gain access to educational opportunities that are perceived to be better, but is a problem in South Africa that is deeply ingrained in history, politics, economics and social intricacies (Maile, 2004).

2.3.2 Educational transformation (post-1994)

1994 heralded a new democratic order in South Africa that brought hope of a new era with equal opportunities for all. The political thinking of 1994 was to abolish all the old that had been systemically linked with apartheid and to introduce new policies in all the various spheres including that of education (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). Consistent with South Africa's new constitution, the African National Congress (ANC) led government abolished the existing racially defined departments of education and established a single education system (Fiske & Ladd, 2003). The rationale for this move was that the racially divided educational departments had to be restructured into nine provincial departments in terms of the Constitution of South Africa (South Africa, 1996) with an over-arching national department to provide coherence of policy and philosophy. According to Malada (2010), many tried and tested basic principles of education from the previous system that had been excellent even though they might have had flaws and room for improvement, were discarded instead of being assessed for what was good and building on that. Education was viewed as the key to social, economic and political change. It was felt that a new system of education was necessary which would promote critical and creative thinking, problem solving, a system that would encourage learner innovation and a system that would produce productive, skilled and informed citizens equipped with life skills. The result was Curriculum 2005, an Outcomes-based Education (OBE) approach that had already failed dismally in many other first world countries (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). The main reason for this radical change was that policy-makers wanted to move away from the apartheid curriculum and address the laudable outcomes of skills, knowledge and values for social justice, equality and development (Spren & Vally, 2010). Curriculum 2005 was launched in March 1997 and was intended to be phased in progressively so that it would cover all sectors of schooling by 2005. In 1999 after

just two years of implementation and amidst much criticism, the newly appointed Minister of Education, was prompted to initiate a review of Curriculum 2005, which led to what became known as the “Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)”. Despite the changes brought about by the review, by 2006 it was clear that OBE as a social experiment had failed. Much of the curriculum and classroom research in South Africa pointed to the need for curriculum documents to describe much more clearly the sequence and progression of knowledge within the various disciplines (Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). As curriculum problems persisted radical changes were once again planned for the period 2012 – 2014 with the introduction of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). As to whether these changes will bring about the desired change that is sought is still to be determined.

2.3.3 Educational transformation and school choice

Although education during the pre-1994 dispensation was plagued with many problems, educators perceived the OBE approach to education as being far more problematic (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012) and as such government leaders, teachers in general and the public have lost confidence in the public schooling system (Malada, 2010). In 2011, 65% of Grade 3 learners were not competent in literacy, 72% were not meeting the standard in languages and 70% were not able to do basic mathematics (Lansdowne, 2011). Granted these dire statistics, it should be noted that for some ex-model C schools, the implementation of Curriculum 2005 was quite the opposite to that of what was experienced by most other schools in the country. The post-apartheid curriculum for these schools merely formalised long-standing practices that had been the norm in the past (Harley & Wedekind, 2004), and the Curriculum 2005 review found that ex-Model C schools were having less difficulty implementing the curriculum and were instead, setting the pace for state education. Ironically the newly proposed educational model of Curriculum 2005 that was supposed to be focused on the upliftment of the many previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa in hindsight, seemed to have benefited the wrong sector of the population (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). As a result, inequalities between schools still exist today and many have maintained both their

racial and economic character of the apartheid years (Du Toit, 2008). Jansen and Taylor (2003) describe three main reasons for this situation. Firstly, the sheer extent of the backlogs in apartheid education require a much greater investment than has been achieved through existing levels of budgetary allocation. Secondly, ex-Model C schools have the capacity to leverage private funds from middle and upper-middle communities to supplement government grants in the form of school fees and thirdly, the management incapacity of provincial education departments to deliver on allocated budgets to schools have exasperated the inequalities. In response to this continued inequity, many township⁴ children and their parents are clamouring to get into ex-Model C schools (Van der Merwe, 2012) while at the same time there is also an increase in the amount of children and parents seeking out private schooling as an alternative to poor quality teaching and learning evident in many existing public schools today (Malada, 2010). The current school choice movement in South Africa has thus been brought about not only by the country's foregoing history but also by the inefficient management of and bumbling changes to the curriculum that have further disabled the education system by government.

2.4 CONTEXTUALISATION OF IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

From the historical synopsis above, it is evident that the role of school choice in South African society has changed dramatically since the advent of democracy. Historically (pre-1994), the majority of parents were not actively involved in making choices regarding the schools their children would attend. This was simply determined for them by legislation and children were enrolled in schools by residence, language and/or by colour. Presently, as an outcome of democracy, school choice has become a reality in the South African education system and this has manifested itself in the ability of families to choose which schools to send their children to rather than relying on the more traditional methods of allocating children to schools as was carried out in the past. As such the concepts 'school choice',

⁴ In South Africa, the terms township and location usually refer to the often underdeveloped urban living areas that, from the late 19th century until the end of apartheid, were reserved for non-white residents, namely black africans, coloureds and Indians).

'quality education' and 'school management' need clarification in the South African context.

2.4.1 School choice

Choice is a socially and culturally constructed concept that has different meanings for different families. In South Africa, the choice of a school has a legal foundation as formulated in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996(d)). According to section 29 of the Constitution, everyone has the right to receive an education in a public educational institution of their choice, where the education is reasonable practicable and in the language of their choice. School choice therefore in this study will be defined as the process through which South African learners and or their parents go, when they choose one school over another born out of a vision to provide a quality education. As such it is a policy reform idea developed to increase the involvement of parents in responsibly schooling their children by giving them ownership of the task (Lamdin & Mintrom, 1997). In this context, factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies surrounding this task are the central issues that involve South African parents in their children's education.

2.4.2 Quality education

Quality in the context of education is not an easy concept to clarify. Quality is a perceptive term that means different things to different people. What is clear is that perceptions differ and that quality education is by no means one-dimensional and as such needs to be investigated in this manner. The school is a social organization or entity and as such it has specified objectives, the chief of which is to impart quality education to its learners (Hedges & Schneider, 2005). What then are those aspects that ensue a meaningful, worthwhile, responsive learning experience for children that South African parents should take into consideration when exercising school choice? UNICEF (2000), defines quality education as a complex integration of five quality dimensions including learners, learning environments, content, processes and outcomes. This definition allows for an understanding of school choice as a

complex system embedded in a South African political, cultural and economic context relevant to this study.

2.4.3 School management

Parents in South Africa are increasingly making decisions regarding which schools to send their children to and thus it becomes important for school principals to know what parents want and expect from schools in providing a quality education for their children. The term 'management' encompasses an array of different functions including planning, organising, staffing, leading or directing and controlling of one or more people or entities (Erasmus, Strydom & Rudansky-Kloppers, 2013). These functions are undertaken to impart quality education as previously noted. Schools have their own human, financial and physical resources which need to be managed. The manner in which a school is managed and controlled in South Africa is vested according to section 16 of the Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)), in the School Governing Body (SGB). The school principal by virtue of section 23(1)(b) receives automatic membership to the governing body and has the ability to contribute to all the functions of the governing body. School management therefore, in establishing how they promote themselves as quality providing institutions for the purposes of this study, will be broadly classified into four areas of thought as defined by Kuttyta (nd) in his definition of management. These include:

- *Process School:* Management is defined in terms of functions undertaken by the SGB and principal in an integrated way to achieve school goals and purposes.
- *Human Relations School:* Management emphasises the human aspect of the school and conceives it as a social system principally concerned with relations between people.
- *Decision School:* Management as a rule-making and rule-enforcing body.
- *System and Contingency School:* A school like any living organism must adapt itself to its environment for survival and growth. Thus, management involves designing a school adaptable to changing markets, technology and other critical environmental factors.

This classification fits well with the theoretical context of this study as it accentuates the systems theory of organisations that are organic and open, consisting of interacting and interdependent parts and having a variety of goals (Cole, 1996). School managers in this context are to maintain balance among the conflicting objectives, goals and activities of various role players that make up the school.

2.5 THEORETICAL CONTEXT FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

To engage the aforementioned issue and to theorise and investigate school choice and the decision-making involved, I have chosen to utilise an activity theory perspective coupled with choice theory to inform my research.

To do this, I drew on Engestrom's (1987) formulation of second generation activity theory, or Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as coined by Michael Cole (1996). CHAT is a cross-disciplinary framework for studying how humans purposefully transform natural and social reality, including themselves, as an ongoing culturally and historically situated, materially and socially mediated process (Roth, Radford & Lacroix, 2012). Stated differently, CHAT is a theoretical framework which helps to understand and analyse the relationship between the *human mind*, that is what people think and feel, and *activity*, defined as what people do. Among the overwhelming research on decision-making, I decided to engage with Choice theory as developed by William Glasser (1998) as it complements the empirical possibilities of CHAT. In the late 1970's Glasser was introduced to control theory systems through the writings of William T. Powers and he applied Powers' knowledge of how systems work to the field of human behaviour which gave birth to Choice theory.

The combined use of CHAT and Choice theory will allow me to engage in explanatory critique which will help me to reveal how school choice decisions are made. Explanatory critiques will reveal underlying causal mechanisms structuring learning in activity systems which will allow me to build on historical and evolving developments in school choice.

2.5.1 Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) explained

CHAT traces its origins to the dialectical psychology of Lev S. Vygotsky, Aleksei N. Leontiev and Aleksandr Luria. In a radical departure from behaviourism, and over time, these Russian theorists formulated the concept of activity by bringing together the notion of history and culture in the understanding of human activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In more recent years the implications of activity theory have been promoted by the work of Yrjo Engestrom and Michael Cole. As such, CHAT has evolved through what has been described as three generations of research.

2.5.1.1 The three generations of CHAT

First generation CHAT is centred on Vygotsky's theory of mediated action. Mediated action involves an interaction between the individual, mediating artefacts/tools and social others in an environment (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Vygotsky contended that through these interactions individuals were able to find new meanings to their worlds through the social formation of their consciousness (Wertsch, 1981). This idea of semiotic mediation is embodied in Vygotsky's famous triangular model (Figure 2.1) which features the Subject (the individual engaged in activity), Object (the goal of the activity), and Mediating Artefact or tools (which could include social others, prior knowledge or anything that contributes to the mediated action experiences of the subject within the activity). First generation activity theory has thus been used to understand individual behaviour by examining the ways in which a person's objectivised actions are culturally mediated. The limitation, however, of this generation was that it was solely focused on the individual.

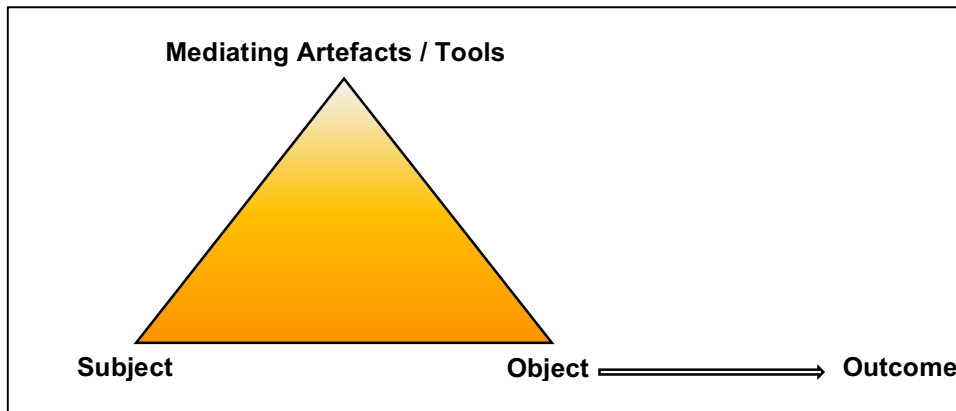


Figure 2.1 First Generation CHAT (Vygotsky)

Source: Yamagata-Lynch, (2010)

Second generation CHAT moves beyond Vygotsky's individually focused system to Leontiev's collective model and Engestrom's development of the activity systems model. Second generation CHAT expands the unit of analysis to include collective motivated activity toward an object making room for understanding how collective action by social groups mediates activity (Kaptelinin, 2005). In this manner the triangular model (Figure 2.2) is extended to include community (the social group with which the subject identifies while participating in the activity), rules (the formal or informal regulations that can constrain or liberate the activity and provide the subject guidance on correct procedures or acceptable interactions with other community members) and division of labour (how tasks are shared among the community). The resulting collective activity system includes the social, psychological, cultural and institutional perspectives indispensable to understanding the separate actions of individuals. Second generation CHAT thus epitomises what Engestrom argues are the deep-seated material practices and socio-economic structures of a given culture (Engestrom, 2001). Challenges to second generation CHAT, brought about questions of diversity and dialogue between different traditions and perspectives. Fundamentally, it was postulated that once the lives and biographies of all the participants and the history of the wider community had been taken into account, multiple activity systems needed to be considered.

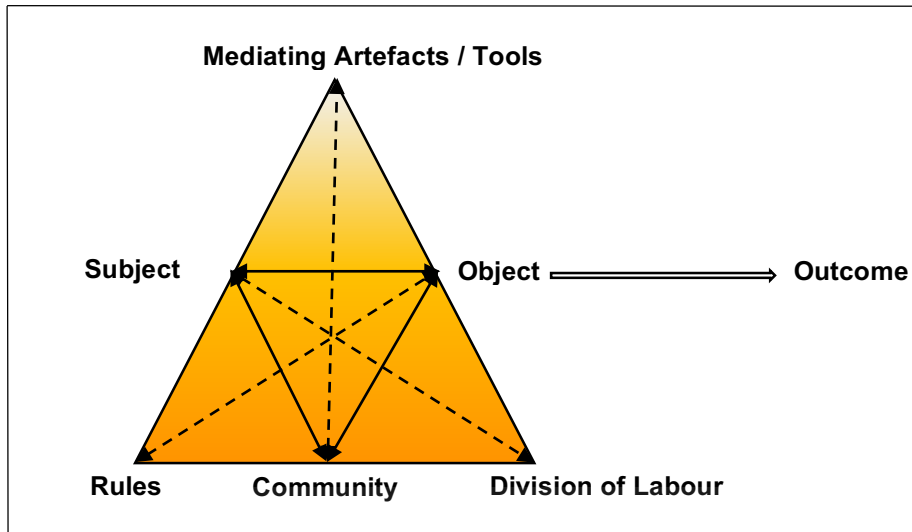


Figure 2.2 Second Generation CHAT (Leontiev & Engestrom)

Source: Kaptelinin, (2005)

As such Engestrom proposed a third generation CHAT, necessary to develop conceptual tools to understand dialogue, multiple perspectives, and networks of interacting activity systems (Engestrom, 2001). Third generation CHAT (Figure 2.3) is the application of Activity System Analysis (ASA) between multiple activity systems where the investigator takes a participatory and interventionist role in the participants' activity to help participants experience change (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

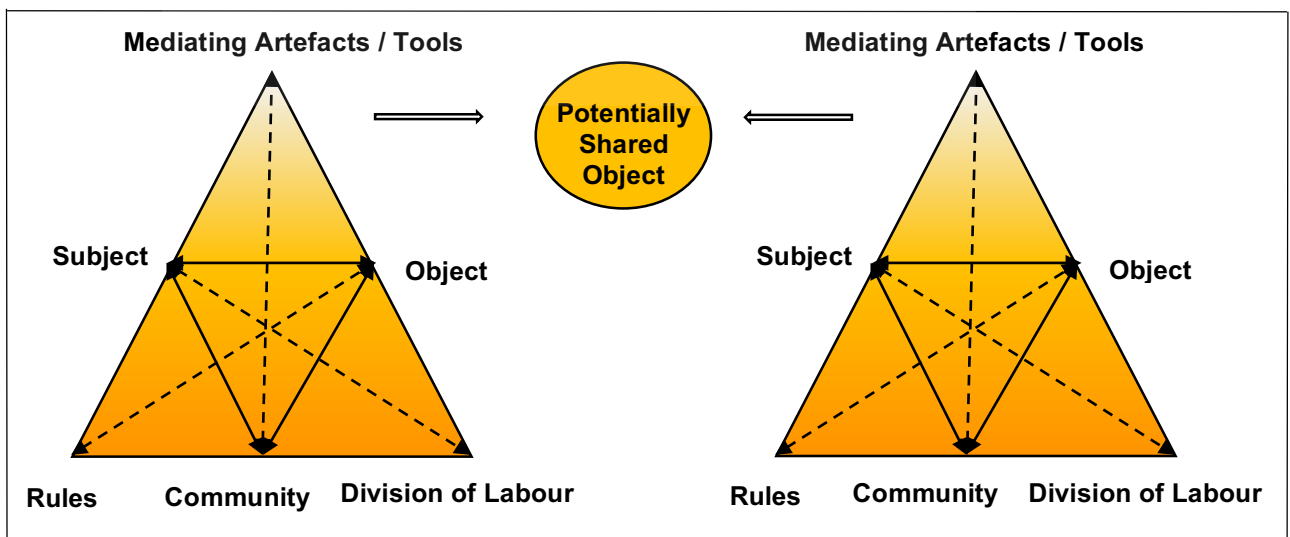


Figure 2.3 Third Generation CHAT (Engestrom)

Source: Yamagata-Lynch, (2010)

To summarise, CHAT is an epistemological theory that posits that learning takes place through collective activities that are purposefully conducted around a common object (Mukute & Lotz-Sisitka, 2012). It uses systems-based thinking to gain insights about the real world and is based on the proposition that learning is a social and cultural process that draws on historical achievements (Mukute & Lotz-Sisitka, 2012).

2.5.1.2 CHAT and school choice

At this point, although CHAT has been introduced as the theoretical framework to identify and describe the relationship between school choice and the decision-making involved by parents in this process, it has not yet been explicitly explained. Let me do so now. My focus for the use of CHAT will be on the descriptive nature of second generation activity theory as an analytical tool for understanding the complex decision-making learning situations that can be observed in the South African educational setting. In so doing decision-making by parents is captured in the triarchic model depicted in Figure 2.4.

Within this model, subjects are participants in an activity, motivated toward a purpose or attainment of the object. The object can be the goal or outcome of an activity, the subject's motives for participating in an activity, or the material products that subjects gain through the activity. Activity systems are organised around an object of activity and this is what distinguishes one activity from another. I identify parents engaged in school choice decision-making as the subject of the model, with school choice being the object of activity. Since a subjects' interpretation of the object will be shaped by the social practices of the situations in which the object is located, tools are defined as socially shared cognitive or material resources that subjects can use to attain the object. For school choice these include the myriad of factors that could influence a particular person's choice of school as each individual taking part in the activity will have a slightly different view and interpretation of the object and purpose of the activity. I unpack these in the form of factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies involved in the decision-making process. This upper part

of the triarchic model thus represents individuals and their collective actions embedded in the activity system.

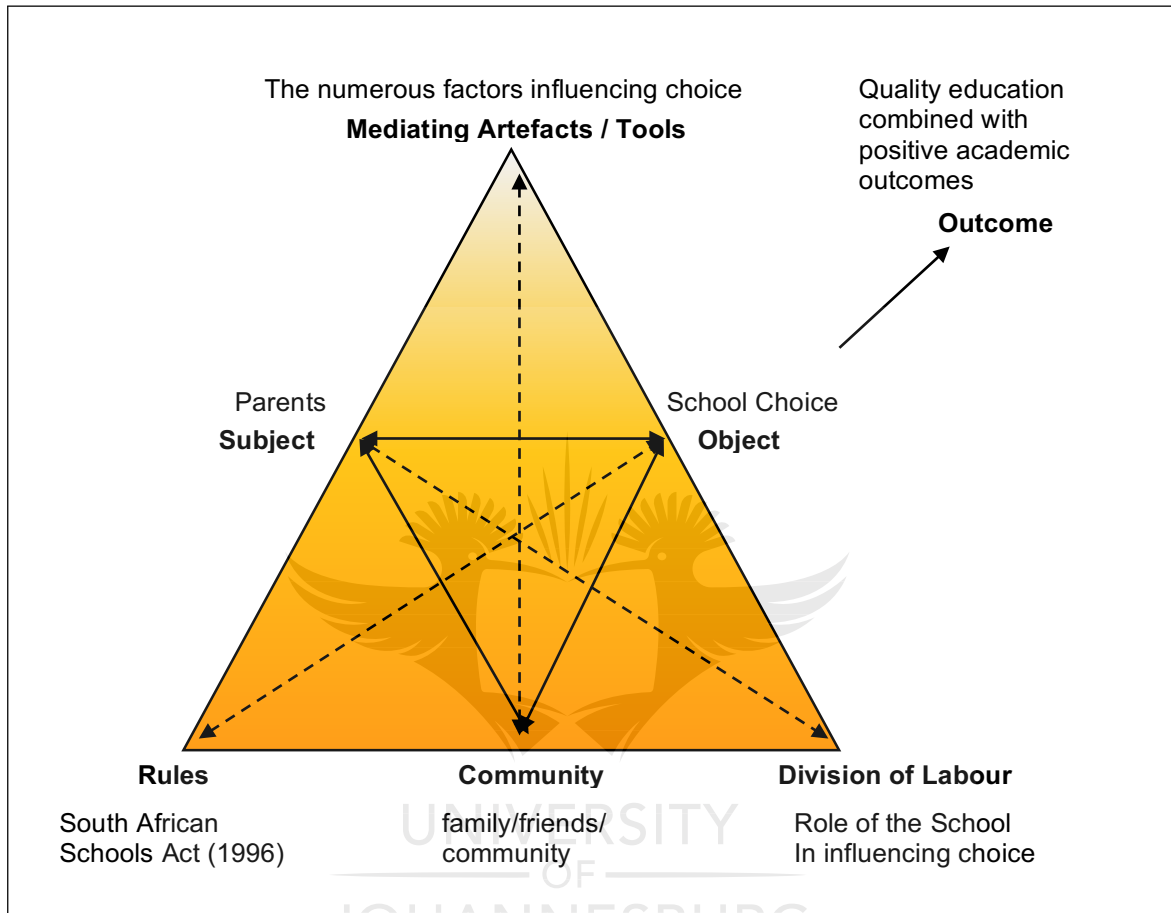


Figure 2.4 Parental school choice as an activity system

Source: Adapted from Cultural-historical activity theory. (2016)

The lower part of the model describes how activity can only exist in relation to rules, community and division of labour, as these societal dimensions effect the systemic organisation of human activity. In this sense, informal or formal rules regulate the subject’s participation while engaging in activity. Rules provide direction so that a subject can participate effectively as a member of a community and symbolise power and constraint. The rules element of my system makes reference to a number of policy initiatives which provide the boundaries for school choice, the most important being the South African Schools Act (1996(a)). Community refers to the social group or organisation to which subjects belong while engaged in activity.

Community also depicts the activity setting or physical environment in which activity is carried out. Because community includes multiple points of view, traditions and interests, for the purpose of school choice, I explore the diversity of South African society as impacted by apartheid. The division of labour is the shared participation responsibilities in the activity determined by the community. In my explanation with respect to this element, I look at the role of the school and school principal in influencing parent's decision-making processes with regards to school choice. Finally, the outcome is the consequences that the subject faces because of their actions driven by the object. To achieve outcomes subjects are required to work collaboratively to resolve the systemic contradictions that can emerge. These outcomes can encourage or hinder the subject's participation in future activities. As such, I postulate from chapter 1 that the desired outcome of participating in decision-making for school choice for parents is the perception of quality education combined with positive academic outcomes for their children.

The strengths of using CHAT are that it is grounded in long historical roots and it offers a philosophical and cross-disciplinary perspective for analysing diverse human practices as development processes in which both individual and social levels are interlinked. Figure 2.4 displays how relations between the subject and object are not direct but rather mediated by artefacts, rules, community and division of labour. The arrows between components indicate that they are not static components existing in isolation from each other, but are rather dynamic and continuously interacting with each other and as such define the activity system.

It thus becomes clear that individual parent decision-making is not only embedded within the activity system, but is also continuously influenced by tensions and interactions between the other elements of the system. I argue that the primary contradiction/tension that echoes through the entire activity system are the challenges or barriers experienced by parents when exercising choice.

2.5.1.3 Contradictions and disturbances regarding CHAT

Human activity can trigger tensions caused by systemic contradictions (Cole & Engestrom, 1993). These tensions arise when the conditions of an activity put the subject in contradictory situations that can preclude achieving the object or the nature of the subject's participation in the activity while trying to achieve the object (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The object itself is internally contradictory as there are different perspectives about it and as such it keeps the activity system in constant instability. Instability in the activity system is demonstrated through contradictions and disturbances. Contradictions can occur within elements of the activity system or between the different elements in the triarchic model. Engestrom (2001) contends that it is through solving these contradictions that learning emerges. Four categories of contradictions in CHAT are identified by Engestrom (1987). They include:

- Primary contradictions – These refer to the inner contradictions within each of the elements encapsulated by the activity system such as rules or artefacts or the object etc.
- Secondary contradictions – These occur when there is tension between one element of the activity system and another. For example, between rules and community or rules and division of labour.
- Tertiary contradictions – These appear when an old activity system clashes with a more advanced model that has come about as a result of participants resolving contradictions.
- Quaternary contradictions – These manifest when activity participants encounter changes to an activity that result in creating conflicts with adjacent activity systems.

Disturbances are deviations in the observable flow of interaction in an ongoing activity (Cole & Engestrom, 1993). Disturbances relate to personal and interpersonal crises and affect individual short-term actions. Disturbances according to Olavarria (2013) appear in the form of:

- Errors or mistakes - These are essentially unintended deviations from rules or procedures.
- Disagreements, conflicts or misunderstandings that rupture communication
 - Disagreements are social interactions where views and behaviours become incompatible. Conflict arises when these incompatibilities are exposed and participants feel negatively affected by other participants.
- Public criticism - These are wrong or unfair accusations, gossips or complaints that are motivated by a lack of trust.

In some circumstances the activity may collapse altogether as a result of these tensions, contradictions and disturbances and the subject may not be able to attain the object. In other instances, subjects may attain the object but be dissatisfied about how they attained the object (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). With respect to school choice, I will use these four levels of systemic contradiction and three types of disturbances to document and analyse the challenges or barriers parents experience in making school choice decisions.

From the preceding explanation and discussion, CHAT has offered a theoretical lens for understanding human activity in real-world situations that address the complexities of human activity in natural settings aimed to advance both theory and practice. Core ideas of CHAT are that humans act collectively, learn by doing, and communicate in and via their actions; humans make, employ, and adapt tools of all kinds to learn and communicate; and community is central to the process of making and interpreting meaning, and thus to all forms of learning, communicating and acting (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006). These core ideas of how systems work, underpin human behaviour in the field of Choice Theory.

2.5.2 Choice theory explained

With decisions touching everything we as humans do, Glasser's Choice theory (1999) posits that an individual's behaviour or choices they make are driven by a never ending quest to satisfy five genetically driven needs and four fundamental psychological needs. Choice theory contends that human beings are internally

motivated as opposed to being shaped by external rewards and punishment and as such have some capacity to make choice and exercise control over their lives. Choice theory represents an alternative to behaviourism and continues to evolve to address more complex situations. A basic understanding of Choice theory requires some knowledge of five key concepts.

2.5.2.1 The Five key concepts of Choice theory

Choice theory, as depicted in Figure 2.5, states that individuals are always motivated by what they want at a particular moment in time. The five key concepts that drive human behaviour according to Glasser include basic needs, the quality world, reality and perception, the comparing place and total behaviour. Sullo (2011) in explaining choice theory, suggests that all human behaviour is purposeful and motivated by one's incessant desire to satisfy basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, breathing, personal safety and security. These needs, often termed 'survival needs' are woven into our genes and are thus genetically driven. Correspondingly the strength of each need would vary from person to person in influencing the choices they make.

The second key concept of Choice theory suggests the existence of a quality world. Here Sullo (2011) explains that each person develops a unique quality world that becomes the source of all motivation. Starting from birth and continuing throughout our lives, each person places significant role models, significant possession's and significant systems of belief into a mostly unconscious framework that Glasser called one's 'quality world'. Where basic needs represented nature, the quality world represents nurture. As individuals live their lives and interact with others, they build up this unique quality world and add and delete to it as time prevails, the people, activities, values, and beliefs that are most important to them. Everything that one places into this quality world is need satisfying and expresses an image of a person's perfect existence that one would aspire towards (Glasser, 1999; Sullo, 2011; Doring, 2017).

With regards to the concept reality and perception, Choice theory contends that even though we live in the real world, what matters is one's perception of reality. An individual's perception of reality is created from filtered information or experiences that pass through three distinct filters including the sensory filter, the knowledge filter and the value filter. Because of these filters different people may witness the same event or participate in the same activity and develop radically different perceptions. Whether one's perceptions are correct or incorrect, individuals base their behaviour and thus choices on what they perceive to be real (Glasser, 1999; Sullo, 2011; Doring, 2017).

Accordingly, the purpose of all behaviour is to create a match between what an individual perceives and what they want. When there is a match, behaviours chosen will be maintained. When internal discomfort is experienced as a result of a mismatch, then individuals will automatically search for new behaviour that will create the perception they want. This in essence is the forth key concept of Choice theory and is referred to as the comparing place. Glasser (1999) posits that people continuously compare and contrast their perceptions of people, places and situations immediately around them against their ideal images created in their quality world framework. Subconsciously individuals constantly try to calibrate these real world experiences with that in their quality world expressed as behaviour.

Behaviour, the final component of Choice theory, or total behaviour in Glasser's terms, is made up of four components namely acting, thinking, feeling and physiology. Glasser (1999) suggests that individuals have considerable control or choice over acting and thinking but little ability to change feelings or physiology directly as these are more sub-conscious. All four components however, are closely intertwined and choosing to act and/or think differently will affect and automatically change one's feelings and physiology.

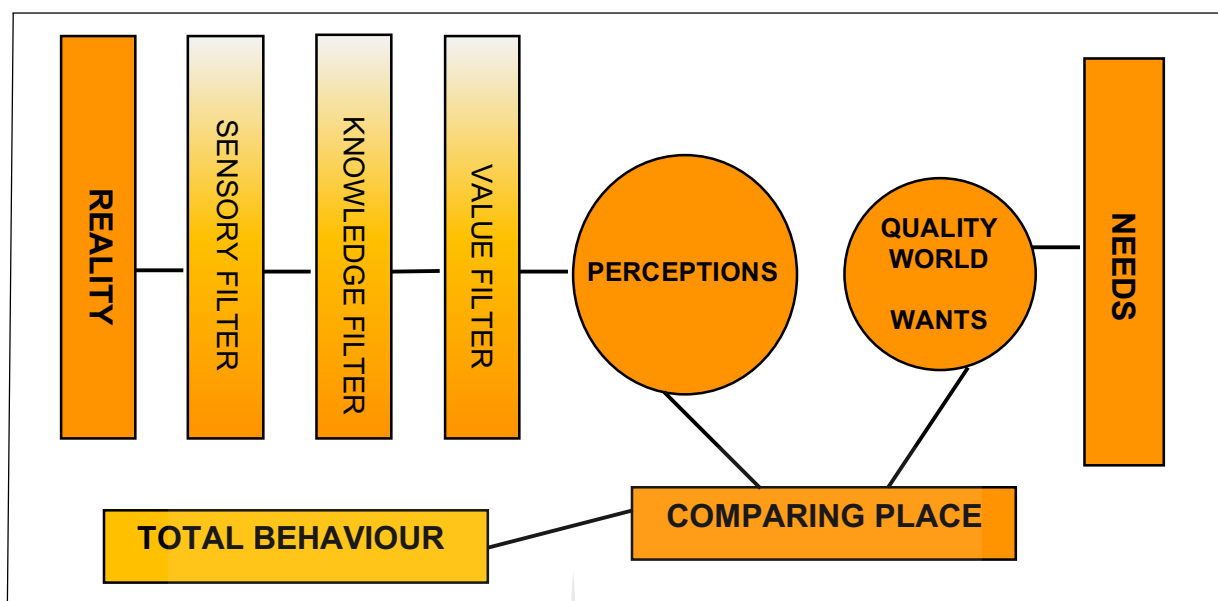


Figure 2.5 Choice Theory

Source: Sullo, (2011)

Practitioners of Choice theory help people choose responsible actions and thoughts that lead them to feel better and positively impact their physiology. In this way Choice theory lends itself to school choice as all choice systems depend on parents choosing schools and how such choices are made is crucial.

2.5.2.2 How Choice theory impacts school choice

In essence the effectiveness of school choice hinges on parents making sound choices. Parents have unique feelings and perceptions regarding the different types of schools available from which to choose in the distinctive South African educational environment as evolved over time. These perceptions according to Choice theory influence the choices parents make in the quest to meet their basic needs and compare their perception of reality versus the pictures of their individual quality worlds of what they want in an educational sense. This manifests itself in the myriad of factors influencing school choice. The role of the school in this dilemma is to create shared quality world pictures with parents through communication and building positive relationships with them to enable them to see

that they are providing quality learning experiences where children can demonstrate success.

Decision-making is a process, a series of value judgements, a sifting of information and a weighing of options influenced by different factors (Longfield, 2011). Accordingly, the combined use of CHAT and Choice theory gives me the opportunity to uncover causal mechanisms structuring learning in activity systems that would otherwise be invisible. Applying a theoretical context of this nature provides me with a structure for the investigation since parental decision-making can be seen not only to be an action but an action continuously influenced by tensions and other elements making up the social construct of a parent.

In the wake of the theoretical context for school choice and having understood the background in which South African school choice takes place, let me now move my attention towards a detailed analysis of how school choice can be manifested in terms of parental influencing factors, strategies, anxieties and aspirations and how these can be operationalised into the management of schools influencing school choice by school principals.

2.6 SCHOOL CHOICE

Advocates for school choice have based their claims on a variety of diverse arguments. Two such arguments that are of relevance to my study include firstly, the assumption that parents the world over, are dissatisfied with government as a result of burdensome taxation and widespread perceptions of inefficiency, waste and sometimes corruption (Plank & Sykes, 2003). A further argument, following on from this, is the cry of unequal distribution of educational resources and opportunities in the government controlled school system. As such, it is argued that parents must be permitted to escape from the inadequate and unsuccessful schools in which geographical zoning and bureaucratic regulations have trapped them (Plank & Sykes, 2003). School choice is thus discernible but what influences the school choice decision is crucial in developing an understanding of the concept for the benefit of both parents and schools.

Much of the debate and empirical evidence relating to school choice is located in a First World context. South Africa, which is partially a Third World country thus needs to be expanded to include the social and economic dynamic unique to South African society. Democracy, as described earlier in the history of South African education, has opened the door to many possibilities and post-1994 parents have started to formulate their own ideas and preferences of what they think the ideal school should be and offer their children (Venter, 2011). A concern associated with this new found freedom is the 'ability' of parents to make informed choices. The South African Department of Education (DoE) in its 1999 annual report acknowledges this concern and indicates that, quite often parents are enticed by false expectations and as a result make poor choices if they have little experience of education or are of limited financial means' themselves. The challenge therefore of this study is to examine the factors influencing school choice so as to empower South African parents in making more informed choices and making principals reactive to these.

2.6.1 The demographics of school choice – Who chooses?

Research indicates that parents who actively choose schools are better educated, have higher levels of income and are less likely to be unemployed than non-choosing parents (Bosetti, 2004:391). In addition to this, school choice policies seem to favour middle and upper income families (Plank & Sykes, 2003). In essence, research points out that well-off parents seek strategies to maintain their children's privileges while aspiring parents seek strategies to escape from the schools to which their children are assigned in the quest for better opportunities (Carnoy & McEwan, 2003; Walford, 2003). Poor families it seems, are less likely than higher income families to take full advantage of opportunities to choose their children's schools (Carnoy & McEwan, 2003; Walford, 2003). Accordingly, the reasons for this accordingly are two fold. Firstly, poorer families lack equal access to information about schooling options, they cannot afford the cost of transportation and possible voluntary or compulsory school fees and they may be reluctant to send their children to schools where they feel unwelcome (Hastings, 2005; Carnoy & McEwan, 2003; Walford, 2003; Burgess *et al.*, 2010). School choice therefore does not give parents of all classes genuine power to choose and although some school

choice policies in some countries, including voucher systems and exemption of school fees, offset some of these disadvantages, the inequality is still evident (Carnoy & McEwan, 2003). A second reason choice policies favour wealthier families, is often because of the power given to schools to implement their own admission policies. Schools that are able to be selective in their learner intake have an incentive to enrol learners who are the least costly to educate from their application pools, and this strategy discriminates against poorer families (Plank & Sykes, 2003; Burgess *et al.*, 2010).

Goldring and Rowley (2006) in a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), confer with the above information and add to the literature by indicating that parents who participate in school choice differ from non-choosers in five important ways. These include differences in demographics, satisfaction with previous school, parental involvement, educational priorities, and social networks. Demographic differences are measured in terms of parental education, family income and race. The literature points out that parents with higher levels of educational attainment tend to believe that education is important, are more familiar with types of schools on offer, and as such are able to make more informed decisions. The research also alludes to a direct correlation between high levels of education and high levels of income. Accordingly, parents with increased access to resources are able to choose from a wider pool of educational opportunities. Race, in this particular study, finds that racial minorities on average possess less resources, and as a result are less likely to choose schools with costs associated with them (Goldring & Rowley, 2006).

Satisfaction with previous school indicates that parents might choose to move from a school because of dissatisfaction experienced with their children's education prior to participating in school choice. Also parents that have chosen a school for their children tend to be more satisfied with that school than if they were assigned to it. Parents who participate in school choice, by nature of this participation, are more likely to be involved in their children's education compared to those parents who do not participate in choice mechanisms. Choosers, are also inclined to place more emphasis on educational priorities that are associated with academic outcomes

such as student achievement and are also more likely to have social networks that facilitate participation in the process of school choice than those of non-choosers.

South Africa presents itself with a similar state of affairs. According to Sekete, Shilubane and Moila (2001), choice of perceived 'better schools' is limited to the middle class as most of these schools are found in formerly white suburbs. Because of the legacy of apartheid's Group Areas Act (1950), school choice in South Africa is delineated largely in terms of class. Hoadley (1999) thus questions whether parents from formerly black communities do in fact have a fair choice of schools in these neighbourhoods. With regards to satisfaction, multiple research indicates that South African parents move away from certain schools in the hopes that they might be more satisfied in alternative school environments (Maile, 2004; Sekete et al., 2001; Msila, 2009; Hoadley, 1999). Learner migration according to Patterson and Kruss (1998) extends from pre-school to tertiary education and is not bound by any specific factors except the desire by parents for equal opportunity through schooling. South African democracy has resulted in enhanced parental involvement in education across the board and parents send their children to schools they think will serve their best interests (Msila, 2009). Many parents, however, still keep their children in historical black township schools because of economic reasons. In connecting with academic outcomes and social networks in the South African context, Lombard (2007) attests that parents exercise individual preferences for school choice. Consequently, school choice becomes a multifaceted phenomenon that needs to be unpacked from different perspectives. Although much of the literature mentioned focuses on parents exercising choice, it must be mentioned that many parents for many different reasons do not appear to have the disposition or motivation to engage in choice strategies. These parents are not involved in their children's education and thus are isolated by choice from the concept (Bosetti, 2004).

Having thus established globally and nationally, that school choice seems to be limited to middle-class families who have a predisposition to being involved, have clear educational priorities for their children and are socially connected, the next

question to ask is “What for these parents is considered to be important factors in their school choice decision-making?”

2.6.2 The different reasons for choosing a school – Why parents choose?

Internationally, as already mentioned school choice takes on a slightly different context to that of South Africa. What however is evident in the preceding sections, is that factors that drive decision-making for parents the world over have commonalities. School choice policies have among others emerged in response to changing educational preferences amongst parents. This flows from an ever increasing parental concern of the powerful connection between educational attainment and occupational success (Plank & Sykes, 2003). As a result, parents have become increasingly concerned that they cannot secure a quality education for their children at the public schools to which their children are assigned. Tired of being told by politicians to be patient and to support the efforts to improve local public schools, many parents are demanding greater access to other learning opportunities (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). That being said, any meaningful discussion of parents’ preferences in choosing the most appropriate education for their children can take place only in the context of the difficult social and cultural conditions facing families in modern society today (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). Depending on the academic, social and cultural needs of their children, parents have a variety of reasons for preferring one education model or school to others. In addition to this, parents themselves, including their own background, gender, education and ethnicity also influences the choices they make (Friedman, Bobrowski & Markow, 2007:279). As a result of the myriad of influences that come to the fore in school choice literature, and in an attempt to highlight the specific choice factor research considered in this study, I have attempted to categorised the different choice factors of parents when choosing a school for their children to attend as consisting of:

Academic factors - These factors focus on concerns surrounding classroom teaching and learning, class size, the curriculum, the academic performance of the school as determined by examination results and opportunities for extracurricular activities;

Physical factors - Here the aesthetics of the school, its sports fields, courts and equipment, classroom, teaching and learning equipment, and school uniform are considered;

Social factors - Social factors encompass a variety of issues relative to human resources at the school, including the training and experience of the principal and staff, governance, leadership and level of parental involvement. It additionally includes child related factors pertaining to the happiness of the child and also cultural issues, incorporating the schools' medium of instruction, discipline structures, ethos, tradition, ethnic make-up and religious affiliation if any, that could dictate parental satisfaction for a particular school;

Geographic factors - This factor is made up of firstly, the location of the school from a logistical point of view and secondly, the general environment in which the school finds itself. Aspects such as safety, proximity to green space and feeder areas all come into play and these factors lend themselves to the socio-economic issues incumbent with school choice. Of significance in this factor are issues associated with distance to and from school and transportation; and finally

School factors - School factors encompass a host of both administrative and image or reputational aspects associated with a school. Features embracing public opinion, ease of admission and costs form part of this evaluation criteria.

I have done this specifically for the purpose of bringing cohesion to the topic in an endeavour to highlight commonalities. What follows is an exposition of the different criteria parents take into consideration when faced with the school choice decision both internationally and in South Africa.

2.6.2.1 The United States (US) model

In a survey administered to Georgia parents for the Friedman Foundation for educational choice in the US in 2013, key findings, indicated that the top five reasons why parents chose a private school for their children to attend included;

better school discipline, better learning environments, smaller class sizes, improved school safety and more individual attention for children (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). What is interesting is that this research is similar to a South African context, and was conducted as a result of frustration expressed by parents of the failure of local public schools being able to educate their children adequately and their desire to consider alternative systems of delivery (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). In an effort to further explore the dynamics of public versus private school choice in the US, and in a paper presented at the annual meeting of the AERA in 2006, it is further noted that American parents exercise choice in accordance with the priorities they place on academics, convenience or issues associated with the distance to and from school, and that of transportation, school characteristics, including school size, school neighbourhood, ethnic composition and safety (Goldring & Rowley, 2006). Goldring and Rowley's research suggests that parents in the US are not so much 'pushed' out of public schools because of dissatisfaction, but are more likely to be 'pulled' towards private schools because in these schools the level of parental involvement and the amount of parent communication is more easily facilitated and this is something that American parents value. A similar situation is evident in the South African context, where private schools are perceived to be 'better' than government schools in almost all dimensions and accordingly, many South African parents who are dissatisfied with the government system and have the means to do so, will opt to send their children to private schools (Immelman, 2013). The combined key findings from the above mentioned studies in the US are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Parental choice factors in the US

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Academic factors	Student academic achievement
	Class size
	Individual student attention
Physical factors	Learning environment
Social factors	Discipline structures
	Parental involvement
	Ethnic composition

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Geographic factors	Student safety
	Transportation
	Distance to and from school
	School neighbourhood
School factors	None from the above two studies

Source: Kelly and Scafidi (2013); Goldring and Rowley (2006)

2.6.2.2 Australia

In Australia, a study investigating choice determining factors for primary school parents (Goh & Dolnicar, 2006) found that proximity of school to home was the most frequently stated choice reason, with academic and religious reasons following. Reasons why parents avoid certain schools were poor discipline, far distance from school, transport difficulties and poor academic performance. Also of interest is that friends and relatives were found to be the two most important reference groups influencing parental school choice. In an effort to disseminate whether different parental factors came to the fore when choosing an independent school, I examined a study conducted in 2007, by the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) to explore the factors that affected school choice among parents in terms of the educational outcomes they desire. In this study parents identified educational excellence, good teachers, a supportive caring environment, and good facilities as significant factors that influenced their decision-making. Findings from both these studies suggest that parents have a range of priorities that differ according to individual circumstances and use more than just one factor in determining their choice of school (2008). The combined key findings of these Australian studies are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Parental choice factors in Australia

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Academic factors	Student academic achievement
	Supportive & caring teaching
Physical factors	Good facilities
Social factors	Religious affiliation
	Good teachers
Geographic factors	Distance to and from school
School factors	None from the above two studies

Source: Goh and Dolnicar (2006); ISCA (2008)

2.6.2.3 United Kingdom (UK) model

In the UK, the Department of Quantitative Social Science (DoQSS) within the Institute of Education at the University of London (2010) set out to answer two key questions of parents in the choice dilemma. They were firstly, what characteristics are British families looking for in a school? and secondly, do preferences differ between families in terms of their socio-economic status? Since parents' choices of schools are inadvertently affected by the admission criteria implemented by schools, this study set out to distinguish between constraints, being that which is available to choose from and preferences, being that which parents would prefer, all things being equal. The results show that the three main factors British families care about in their school choice decision making are academic attainment, school socio-economic composition and travel distance. Preferences did not differ greatly between parents from different socio-economic groups and findings suggested that parents were willing to travel long distances for high academic standards (Burgess, *et al.*, 2010). Findings from this study are presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Parental choice factors in the UK

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Academic factors	Student academic achievement
Physical factors	None highlighted in this study
Social factors	Schools socio-economic composition
Geographic factors	Travel distance
School factors	None highlighted in this study

Source: Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, and Wilson (2010)

2.6.2.4 Ghana

Closer to home on the African continent, David Longfield (2011) investigated five different schools in the northern suburbs of Accra, Ghana. In determining the key factors that Ghanaian parents use in making the decision about where to send their children to school, it was found that academic factors appeared to have an important significance, with the quality of English teaching and learning also paying a central role. Location proved to be crucial for many parents and many appeared to be influenced by the Christian religious basis of the school. Furthermore, costs were found to be prominent and the curriculum a major factor in decision-making. Good school discipline, good school reputation and class size were also notable as important factors for parents. Children and their desires or likes in this study appeared to have very little influence on the decision-making process and possibly speaks to the culture of Ghanaian society. Findings from this study are presented in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Parental choice factors in Ghana

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Academic factors	Student academic achievement
	Curriculum
	Class size
Physical factors	None highlighted in this study

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Social factors	English medium of instruction
	Religious affiliation
	Discipline
Geographic factors	School location
School factors	Cost
	School reputation

Source: Longfield (2011)

2.6.2.5 South Africa

In a study conducted by Msila (2009), where school choice and intra-township migration was examined in South Africa, parents who were choosing certain schools over others cited in order; good Grade 12 results, good management, discipline, reputation and history, and teachers' dedication as the reasons for their choices. Also of significance was that the majority of parents in this study wanted schools that could teach their children to speak English well, thus preparing them to be able to acquire better paying jobs in the future. It was found that even parents with a low level of education appeared to know what they expected from effective schools. Negative pointers that repelled parents from certain schools included; teachers and learners leaving school early, smoking of learners in school uniform, and teachers arriving at school late.

In another South African study (Lombard, 2007), research was conducted to determine the reasons why educator-parents based at township schools transfer their own children from township schools to former Model C schools. Lombard (2007:50-54) identified 10 emergent themes. "Discipline", "better quality or a higher standard of education", "English proficiency", "status or prestige", "the availability of resources, facilities and equipment", "educator commitment", "a stable teaching and learning environment", "school management", "residence/relocation" and "freedom of choice" were all incorporated in the findings. Remarkably the research results

showed that the reasons for school choice correlated with both the non-scientific information or general perceptions held by the public and formal available literature that relied heavily on reasons associated with quality education. Among these is that of Woolman and Fleisch (2006:53-56), who maintain that “Parents are capable of making choices that optimise the potential for positive outcomes for their children” and that “parents who exercise their right to schools will move their children from schools with large proportions of poor and disadvantaged learners into schools with more advantaged learners”. The combined key findings of these two studies are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Parental choice factors in SA

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Academic factors	Student academic achievement
Physical factors	Good facilities
	Good learning environment
Social factors	Discipline structures
	Good school management
	Good teachers
	English medium of instruction
	Freedom of choice
Geographic factors	School location
	Transportation
	Distance to and from school
School factors	School reputation
	Status and prestige

Source: Msila (2009); Lombard (2007)

2.6.2.6 Taiwan

Although I have not considered the Taiwanese school choice system in detail, I found it interesting that similar findings are also true for Taiwan. Much like South Africa, Taiwan has a compulsory education system with a neighbourhood school

attendance plan, and children are assigned to a school, based on their area of residence (Hsu & Yuan-fang, 2013). Of late, it is reported, that many schools in Taiwan have seen a drop in enrolment and an increased tendency on the part of parents to seek 'out of district schools' which they perceive to be better for their children (Hsu & Yuan-fang, 2013). The research that explored factors affecting parental choice of junior high schools, found high positive correlations between among others, a school's educational environment and facilities, its educational philosophy or curriculum, and a school's specialities, which referred to all aspects of teaching and learning including management, leadership and administration, as being influential factors in parental choice (Hsu & Yuan-fang, 2013). These findings are presented in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Parental choice factors in Taiwan

Choice Categorisation	Parental Choice Factors
Academic factors	Curriculum
Physical factors	Good facilities
	Good learning environment
Social factors	Good school management
	Good teachers
Geographic factors	None highlighted in this study
School factors	School administration

Source: Hsu and Yuan-fang (2013)

From the above studies, a pattern is clearly distinguishable and parents across the world give the impression that they are able to distinguish between schools of varying quality and as such respond positively to this by wanting to send their children to these said schools that are perceived to be better with the aim of enhancing the educational outcomes of their children (Goldhaber, 1999). In essence, parents are drawn to a school of their choice as a result of its positive attributes, and likewise different negative factors deter them from choosing other schools (Longfield, 2011).

To summarise, it seems that different parents are motivated by different factors. Parental decision-making is thus a far more complex phenomena and is part of a social process influenced by many noticeable properties including, social class, social networks, personal values, desired goals for education, and many other unobserved factors that are difficult to measure (Bosetti, 2004).

Having ascertained some possible reasons for parental school choice, the next facet to take into account in this study is to determine what information parents consider when participating in the school choice decision-making process.

2.6.3 Parental strategies for school choice – How parents choose?

Choosing a school has become a complicated process in which local knowledge, interest in education, and motivational levels of both parents and children have become vital processors (Plank & Sykes, 2003). In disseminating strategies for school choice, the OECD, suggests that often this process is restricted by school admission criteria, family income and access to information (OECD, 2012). As such, the concept of **sources of information** necessary to engage in school choice decisions comes to the fore.

When strategising which particular school to attend, research has shown that better-off parents are more likely to exercise school choice, as they have more information and resources available to them (Bosetti, 2004). Information is the precondition for choice. Making choices requires the knowledge of information. For an individual to make an informed choice, they must be fully informed as to the alternative positions available to them (Maile, 2004). After gauging information through school visits and word of mouth better-off parents usually enrol their children in high quality schools with populations ethnically similar to their own (Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005). Goldring and Rowley's research (2006) suggests that as a result of this, there is a social class creaming as parents with wider social networks and more access to information are more likely to participate in choice processes. In contrast, more disadvantaged parents tend to exercise choice less and send their children to their local neighbourhood schools (Bosetti, 2004). Goldring and Rowley's research

(2006) finds that the reason for this is that higher status groups have greater cultural capital and fewer market constraints. This provides them with an advantage over the poor in the choice system. Corroborating research has found that less educated families may face more difficulties in gauging information required to make informed school choice decisions (Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005). As such parents with a better-off background are more likely to gather information and gauge a school's reputation through visits to the school and word of mouth with others of similar values, concerns or experiences in making decisions (Woods, Bagley, & Glatter 1998; Bosetti, 2004). These parents also tend to avoid schools with a significant number of disadvantaged learners and research suggests that parents are concerned with school demographics in their information gathering and choice making (Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005; Goldring & Rowley, 2006). In South Africa, Hoadley (1999) found that even in working class communities, there exists an informal, local information network, which informs learners and parents of the more and less desirable schools operating in the community. Subsequently, Hoadley notes that although the working class may be disadvantaged, in no way do they appear to be disinterested or disconnected from the educational market as such.

From the above discussion, it is clear that many parents, rely on their social networks for information regarding school choice. In Bosetti's research (2004), parents were asked to indicate the top three kinds of information they used in making their decision about which school to send their child/ren too. These top sources of information featured; talks with friends, neighbours and other parents, talks with teachers, principals and/or guidance counsellors, and visits to schools. Only a small percentage of parents use the school newsletter to inform their decision. Similar findings were found in Longfield's Ghanaian study (2011), where respondents indicated that they had found out about the school from their neighbours, friends, pastor or fellow church members. Clearly personal acquaintances and recommendations by word are tremendously influential sources of information globally. Given that social networks thus seemingly play such a critical role in informing parental decision-making, the accuracy and quality of this information is an aspect that needs to be considered.

The process of strategising or deciding which school to choose for one's child is often situated in the dynamics of the family and choice can thus be best conceived as a '**family activity**' (Woods, Bagley, & Glatter 1998:118). Parental preferences are to a greater or lesser extent socially influenced and subsequently, the existing school system and the efforts of schools to convey a positive image to parents and children become variables that influence decision making (Bosetti, 2004). A question thus, that needs to be asked is, "Which parties participate in the school decision-making process?" This question yields important information for schools with regards to whom they should communicate with in promoting themselves as viable choice options. In a study conducted by Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998), parents indicated overwhelmingly, that they and their child together decided on the school of their choice. This finding was found to be true regardless of social class and it can thus be assumed that parents and children together strive to achieve a close match between the character of the school and that of their own educational preferences or needs (Plank & Sykes, 2003). In South Africa, however, Hoadley (1999) in investigating school choice in the working class context, found that learners choose the schools themselves without parental involvement. According to a principal of one of the researched schools, parents are mostly involved only in choice at the transition stage between primary and secondary school. Thereafter, choices beyond this initial level are made by learners themselves. In Longfield's Ghanaian study (2011), a key finding that was highlighted was that children in no way were part of the school choice decision-making process. Consequently, this conflicting literature is thus an issue that needs consideration in the South African context.

A further aspect to be considered in disseminating school choice strategies, is the **type of school** sought by parents. As already discussed in Chapter 1, parents in South Africa have a choice between public schools, private schools and home schools. Home school parents choose home schooling primarily because they want to protect their children from secular godless education or unsafe and other negative school environments (Ishizuka, 2002). In the South African context, school choice between public schools and private schools is inextricably bound up with overcoming the legacy of apartheid and racism (Pampallis, 2003). Although parents

may be concerned about equity and integration and may support their local or neighbourhood school, they at the same time seek the best education for their children (Raveaud & Van Zanten, 2007). Parents exercising school choice in South Africa at present, in reaction to the quality of education being offered, have changed the distribution of learners across different schools. Schools no longer typically reflect the social aspects of a community but rather a diversity of race, class, wealth and religion (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001). This has both positive and negative consequences.

From a positive perspective school choice has extended privilege to all, as it has enabled children from poor families to attend effective schools. However, there is a paradox to school choice in that for meaningful choices to be available to some parents, schools need to deny choice for others (McGhan, 1998). This is evident in the trend of oversubscribed schools to be selective in their admission process. What results is a “creaming” of those who are easier to teach, and thus abler to learn. In doing so, it effectively weeds out learners with low performance (OCED, 2012). This exacerbates inequality. Choice is unavoidably a political process. The moment parents and children choose between schools, they enhance imbalances between schools and accentuate differences between poor and affluent schools (Msila, 2011). This is an unfortunate reality and the impact of learner migration is felt not only in schools for which there is a scramble for enrolment but also in the schools that are left behind. As already noted, families that are more educated and have the financial means are more likely to exercise school choice. In doing so, they in essence deprive schools that have the most need of both, the financial resources and human capacity they could offer (Pampallis, 2003). The fact that many of children of politicians and both the middle and professional classes do not attend under-resourced schools in the public schooling system in South Africa, should also not be overlooked, in terms of the bleeding of social capital out of this largely impoverished sector (Hoadley, 1999). This effects the possibility of seeing improvements in the quality provision of this sector and impacts on the capacity of parents to participate in and influence the management of the school. This in turn affects the school’s policy and cycle of change, all of which are anxieties for parents when exercising school choice particularly in South Africa.

2.6.4 Anxieties associated with parental choice – What parents fear?

Anxiety can be described as an abnormal or overwhelming sense of apprehension, fear or doubt concerning the reality and nature of an issue, and the self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with the said issue (anxiety., nd). South African parents are disenchanted with government's ability to provide a consistent quality education for its youth and much anxiety is associated with this (Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011; Reprobate, 2012; Modisaotsile, 2012). Research suggests (Woods, Bagley & Glatter, 1998; Hoadley, 1999) that one of the anxieties associated with school choice is the perception of whether parents in fact see themselves as having a choice?

As already noted in Chapter 1, a huge divide exists between what is termed as functional and dysfunctional schools in South Africa (Fleisch, 2008; Van der Berg, 2008; Taylor & Yu, 2009). The underlying principles of public education are those of a semi-private system, realised to different degrees depending on the capacity of the parent community to pay fees and make other contributions (Hoadley, 1999). Functional schools are privileged by virtue of the fact that they are mostly located in former middle class white suburbs, and as such are able to set higher fees due to the composition of the school community (Hoadley, 1999; Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul & Armstrong, 2011). Dysfunctional schools, which unfortunately constitute the vast majority of public schools, are located in working class areas, are grossly under-resourced and assume this state relative to the economic level of the community they serve (Hoadley, 1999; Van der Berg, *et al.*, 2011). Consequently, the South African educational system is depicted as an ecosystem effectively consisting of two differently functioning sub-systems. Functional schools today cater for a far more diverse population and it is in this sub-system, as an advent of democracy in South Africa, that has led to a scrambling for enrolment in the context of parents exercising choice (Maile, 2004). The problem, however, is that school choice in South Africa today has largely to do with locality and whether learners are economically in a position to make choices beyond the borders of their locality (Hoadley, 1999). School fees are not the only costs associated with South Africa's educational system. Travelling costs, textbooks, stationery and school

uniforms are additional burdens placed on parents. Furthermore, many schools employ additional teachers in governing body positions, where the salaries of these teachers are paid for by the school rather than by the Provincial Education Department (Maile, 2004; Du Toit, 2008). Consequently, choice opportunities are not evenly distributed socially (Hoadley, 1999) and the main anxiety parents experience in this context, is firstly whether they in fact have ***schools to choose from*** and secondly, whether they will be able to afford the choices they make. In essence the higher the socio-economic level of an individual the greater their choice opportunities and this is the result of the commodification of education that more money buys a better education (Hoadley, 1999).

Money or financial resources, effectively managed by the school principal, allows a school to provide children with the necessary quality learning resources and facilities required to improve their chances of a successful future (Blake, 2008). All South African public schools for this purpose are categorised into five groups called quintiles. A school's quintile ranking is determined nationally according to the poverty of the community surrounding the school, as well as, certain infrastructural factors (Mestry & Bisschoff, 2009). Schools in quintile 1, 2 and 3 have been declared no-fee schools, while those in quintiles 4 and 5 are fee paying schools. Funding received by the South African government who have the responsibility to provide for public schools, is determined by a school's quintile ranking (South Africa, 1998(c)). Schools in quintile 4 and 5 are considered to be the 'least poor' and as a result of their poverty index have to raise additional school funds in the form of school fees to supplement the contribution received by the state. As such, the additional funding needed to manage the school is planned for in the budget and fee setting process of the school and presented to a meeting of parents to vote on (South Africa, 1996(a)). Often, however, as a consequence of parents exercising school choice, a school's quintile ranking does not work in its favour. A major criticism of the national data used to determine a school's ranking, is that it does not take into account the demographics of the school. There are schools thus, that as a result of democracy, do not draw their majority enrolments from the local area, and as such educate significant numbers of children from families who due to their economic status are unable to meet the fee arrangements of these schools (Grant,

2013; Mestry, 2014). The occurrence of this puts a tremendous amount of financial pressure on these schools and fee paying parents alike. Subsequently often parent's **socio-economic status** is an anxiety that is debilitating and is largely informed by the material environments which constitute and constrain the lives and opportunities of families (Hoadley, 1999) in making school choice decisions. Accordingly, the perceived benefits relating to academic performance, quality of teaching and availability of educational, sporting and cultural facilities need to be weighed against the higher costs of schools which render these benefits (Du Toit, 2008). In South Africa, because parents have such a strong belief in education as a liberator from poverty, are as such, more than willing to sacrifice and pay more than they can afford to attend certain schools (Maile, 2004).

An associated anxiety for parents is the issue of **oversubscription at schools**. As already noted, school choice in the public domain in South Africa operates within the context of the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)). Although the Act is based on the premise of neighbourhood schools, parents are not compelled to enrol their children in the nearest school to their residence (Mestry, 2014) and this has had a compounding effect on the migration of learners in search of quality education. Often choice is restricted by virtue of the fact that the school chosen was the only option available as a result of all other schools being full. This was a finding in Hoadley's study (1999) and in this context the availability of school places, and the 'filling up' of certain schools ahead of others needs to be considered. Some parents and learners are better positioned to choose schools than others due to among others, residential location and lack of access to local knowledge about schools and admission processes (Hoadley, 1999). Consequently, the anxiety associated with this dimension is whether the school that parents have chosen for their children will actually be able to accommodate them in terms of numbers and space. This anxiety is further compounded by a school's selection of learners or its admission policies. Despite legislation (South Africa, 1996(a)) that states that no student may be excluded from a school, learners still compete for places in perceived to be better schools and often have to settle for schools that still have vacancies that are not their first choice (Hoadley, 1999).

Similar anxieties were recognised in the findings presented by Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998), in establishing parental perspectives on choice in the US. In this study parents were asked how many schools they were realistically able to choose from and whether they considered that they had a real choice between schools. Parents in this study who felt they had no real choice, indicated three main problems resulting in anxiety. Firstly, “availability of schools”. This finding highlighted the fact that over-subscribed schools often had to turn parents and learners away who then only had unpopular or undersubscribed schools to choose from. These schools were in some instances associated with a poor reputation, poor state of buildings, drug problems and bullying. The second problem noted was “admission arrangements”. Parents’ comments here focused on the fact that over-subscribed schools gave priority to children living in the defined catchment area and as such parents living outside this area perceived this as negative free choice. A third issue causing anxiety brought to the fore by this study was that of “transport or distance”. Here parents expressed difficulties and inconvenience with regard to getting to and from school, lack of private or adequate public transport, travelling time involved with distance and the concern of children’s safety in travelling long distances on their own (Woods, Bagley & Glatter, 1998).

These are just some of the anxieties parents, both in South Africa and internationally experience when making school choice decisions. What is evident though and a source of constant anxiety in South Africa is that of the quality of education and that it varies widely from one community to another. This inconsistency is troubling especially in terms of the aspirations parents have for their children.

2.6.5 Aspirations of parents regarding school choice – What do parents want?

Just as no two children are identical, no two families will have the same definition of an ideal school. Preferences regarding indicators such as discipline, ethos, facilities, school size, etc. will vary with each family (Bainbridge & Sundre, 1991). What is clear is that all parents increasingly face the decision about where to secure the best education for their children, and this decision pertaining to the education of

a particular child is an original one. When parents exercise their personal responsibility to decide what is in the best interest of their child in the context of the various conditions to which they and their child may be subjected to, then this is the acceptance of their calling as parents (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). Accepting this responsibility to pursue the universal aspiration to do what is in the best interests of their child, places parents in a transcendent perspective. All parents tend to want their children to be educated in an environment that allows them to excel and develop confidence in their abilities (Bainbridge & Sundre, 1991). This aspiration seems to be true for both the developed and developing world. In Ghana, parents indicated that they were looking for the best possible education for their children, that they were interested in their children's education and that they were looking for a school where their children could learn the most (Longfiled, 2011). In South Africa, choice matters for poor parents because it gives them hope when they select their ideal schools. Many parents confined to a life of poverty and squalor, see education as an opportunity to free their families as they invest in their children's education. As such, parents hunt for schools with high pass rates and look at education and success in economic terms (Msila, 2009). As noted in the previous section, however, the anxiety of whether these parents will be able to afford these schools is a concern.

An issue of interest in this regard is the consideration of whether school choice can and does lead to improvements in academic performance. Numerous studies show that there is no evidence that increased choice leads to increased examination success (Plank & Sykes, 2003; Walford, 2003; Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005). What, however, is evident is that choice has led to a narrowing of the focus of schooling onto examinations or academic achievement. Principals often speak of the attractiveness of their schools in terms of academic progress and examination results. These have become the major and widely accepted currency of 'good schools' in the climate of enhanced emphasis on school choice. Schools it seems judge themselves according to examination results and expect parents to do the same (Hoadley, 1999; Walford, 2003). The perception then of parents that some schools provide a better education to others based on academic success is difficult to validate as often those schools that perform have selective learner intakes

weeding out children with low performance and consequently skewing the results. This perception was ratified by a study in Scotland where Willms (1997) found that the ranking of schools based on unadjusted examination attainment is deceiving as the results do not take account of the ability and background of learners when they enter school. Comparisons of this nature were found to be unfair to schools in low socio-economic areas since they misrepresent the gains in learning achieved. Accordingly, these comparisons can incorrectly suggest that the quality of teaching and the standards attained are inferior, where in fact in some cases these schools are providing above-average teaching and educational practices (Beavis, 2004).

Given the priority parents place on academic achievement, it is also important to note that parents' specific wants change according to each stage of their children's schooling. For instance, in a study conducted by the Independent School Council of Australia (ISCA) in 2008, it was found that the significant outcome for primary school was "to learn essential reading, writing and numeracy skills" necessary to provide children with a sound educational foundation (ISCA, 2008: 5). At the secondary school level, the significant outcome changed "to be able to think for themselves and gain confidence" which are important interpersonal skills (ISCA, 2008: 5). Longer term significant outcomes in general were for children to "be prepared for employment", a vital skill necessary to interact in society as an adult (ISCA, 2008: 5). It is evident from the above that the basic aspirations of parents regarding school choice are for a well-rounded education with a strong emphasis for their children to be equipped by schools with the skills they need to meet challenges for later stages of their lives.

A further issue worth noting is that parental satisfaction appears to be higher among parents who actively choose schools than among those who do not (Goldhaber, 1999; Bosetti, 2004). In Bosetti's research (2004), parents were asked to give an overall rating for their school. Moreover, they were asked, given what they now knew about the school, having had their child attend, would they still choose the same school? Over 75% of parents indicated that they would choose the same school again and this suggested a fairly high level of satisfaction. Parents reasons

for choice are important predictors of their level of satisfaction, influence and involvement.

Having sufficiently discussed the various factors, strategies, anxieties and aspirations influencing parental school choice, a central theme which becomes evident is that of “quality”. All parents, it seems desire quality education. As such, no study with respect to school choice can be complete without contemplating aspects surrounding quality education and especially so in a South African context.

2.7 QUALITY EDUCATION AND SCHOOL CHOICE

Quality in the context of education is not an easy concept to clarify and thus there is a need to explore school choice in the context of access, equality, and opportunity. South African schools today as a means to educational reform, face increasing pressure to matriculate learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values critical for informed, productive, ethical and responsible participation in the formal and informal economic sectors (Reprobate, 2012). This is essential for social transformation in ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population (DBE, 2011). Apartheid is to blame for some of the ills in education at present in South Africa, however, there is ample evidence that government policy, lack of accountability and inaction have contributed to the situation (Reprobate, 2012). It has been established that a number of factors or problems hinder learners from receiving a good standard of education in South Africa. These include poor teacher training, unskilled teachers, lack of commitment to teach by teachers, poor parental involvement, a shortage of resources necessary for teaching, weak functioning governing bodies and poor leadership in schools (Modisaotsile, 2012). Foster (2013), substantiates that the overall performance of a school is affected by countless factors. Corruption, fraud and maladministration are rife in many provincial educational departments. Subsidies are misappropriated or in some cases not spent at all. At the core lies a lack of accountability and the incompetence of administrators who seem not to be qualified for their positions (Reprobate, 2012). It follows therefore, that the assumption that just one factor like

that of school choice in making a significant difference is unfounded. Foster (2013) goes on to say that the only way school reform can work is to break the government monopoly on education since within the government system no meaningful accountability for performance occurs. When parents are able to choose which schools their children will attend, schools have to be more accountable to parents than would otherwise be the case (Plank & Sykes, 2003). Many children in South Africa have not yet enjoyed the promise of equal and quality education for all as encapsulated in the various legislative documents. Black parents now seemingly have more options yet the choice generally entails much financial sacrifice (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014:2). Improving the quality of school education has become a matter of priority for economic growth, national competitiveness, and equality of economic opportunity, but what is quality education?

2.7.1 What is quality education?

Quality determines how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits (Grima, 2008). Quality is a perceptive term that means different things to different people. From a school choice perspective, for some parents and children, it could be seen as the sum of all factors related to student happiness and enjoyment of the learning environment. For others it could be focused on academic outcomes and future benefits. For principals it could be the same. What is clear, however, is that perceptions differ and that school quality is by no means one-dimensional and as such needs to be investigated in this manner.

The school is a social organization or entity. As such it has specified objectives the chief of which is to impart quality education to learners (Hedges & Schneider, 2005). It has its own human, financial and physical resources which need to be governed for the purpose of providing quality education to its clientele. But what are considered to be the basic requirements of quality education? What are those aspects that ensure a meaningful, worthwhile, responsive learning experience for every learner that parents should take into consideration when exercising school choice? As already noted, UNICEF (2000) defines the concept in a paper entitled

“What is quality education?” as a complex integration of five quality dimensions including learners, learning environments, content, processes and outcomes. Subsequently, as I unpack this definition in the following sections it becomes clear that school choice in South Africa is bedded in a political, cultural and economic context.

The first aspect of the definition that comes to the fore is **quality learners**. In the paper, UNICEF (2000) contends that the quality of children’s lives before beginning formal education greatly influences the kind of learners they can be. Research by Anita Gurian (n.d.), suggests that a home environment that encourages learning is more important than parents’ income, education level or cultural background. Active involvement by parents in their children’s education from an early age brings great rewards and can have a significant impact on future educational achievement. There are many good reasons why parents should be involved in their children’s education. Unfortunately in South Africa, evidence suggests poor parental support and a lack of participation in children’s education at home (Modisaotsile, 2012). This could be attributed to the fact that many parents themselves have never attended school, nevertheless parents have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that their children are at school and that their homework is done (Modisaotsile, 2012). The greatest resource any classroom teacher can utilise is the parents and this simply means for parents to take an interest in all aspects of their child’s school activities (Cameron, 2009). As such, parents can choose to either have the power to take command and work towards the wellbeing of their children, or they can choose to remain powerless and leave their children worse off. Good school performance is linked to the participation of all stakeholders in education. These include among others parents and so healthy children with positive early learning experiences and supportive, involved parents are the most likely to succeed at school (UNICEF, 2000; Modisaotsile, 2012).

The next aspect in the definition is **quality learning environments**. Here physical, psychosocial and service delivery elements of the school are explored. UNICEF (2000) asserts that the way a school building presents itself is an indication of other school quality issues, such as the presence of instructional materials, working

conditions and the ability of teachers to undertake certain instructional approaches. When evaluating a learning environment it needs to be determined whether the environment is healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and if it provides adequate resources and facilities in terms of parental expectations (UNICEF, 2000). In addition, class size, the ratio of children to teachers and the provision of extra-curricular activities are likewise imperative for quality provision. From a psychosocial point of reference, evidence of the school's climate in terms of being welcoming, organised and well-managed need to be sought as these additionally contribute to educational quality. Democracy in South Africa has led to the restructuring and transforming of the education system. While the Education Department has implemented funding systems that are to result in the allocation of more resources to previously disadvantaged schools to provide quality learning environments, it is unlikely that these funds will enable the targeted schools to reach the levels of resources (both physical and human) enjoyed by those who received preferential treatment under the Apartheid system (Maile, 2004; Du Toit, 2008). The legacy of Apartheid is thus still conspicuous in townships and rural schools. These schools are still inadequately resourced, learners are still without textbooks, classes are still over-crowded and a poor culture of teaching and learning is still evident (Maile, 2004). Consequently, more children, whose parents have the means to do so are moving to former Model C and private schools in search of the above defined quality learning environments (Maile, 2004).

Quality content in the definition refers to the school's curriculum. In general, according to UNICEF (2000), a quality school curriculum should emphasise deep rather than broad coverage of important areas of knowledge and should be based on clearly defined learning outcomes. Assessment of the curriculum should take place in terms of whether it includes content and materials that work towards the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy, skills for life, and general knowledge in areas such as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and good citizenship. In South Africa, Maile (2004) contends that learners are attracted to schools with new information technologies and innovative programs that offer specialisation, innovation and follow a curriculum that has the ability to add value to the pool of prospective workers to avert economic problems

of unemployment in the future. It is generally accepted that literate and educated people are better situated to obtain appropriate formal employment. Annual National Assessments (ANA's) in South Africa, have found low levels of literacy and numeracy for Grade 3 and 6 learners (Bloch, 2011; Spaul, 2011). Without secure foundations of numeracy and literacy, learners will never be able to obtain the high level of skills required by a nation to address poverty and inequality for development and growth (Modisaotsile, 2012). As already noted parents hunt for schools with high pass rates and look at education and success in economic terms (Msila, 2009). Consequently, this is a choice factor that rates highly for South African parents.

Following content in UNICEF's definition is **quality processes**. Educational processes encompass a number of aspects, but in essence UNICEF (2000) speaks of how teachers and principals use inputs to frame meaningful learning experiences for children. The principal, their qualifications and their management and leadership style essentially spills over into all operations of the school contributing to the ethos of the school. This combined with quality teachers who have a high command of both their subject and pedagogy will determine the quality of education being offered by the school. The importance of a dedicated, committed, passionate teacher in the classroom cannot be stressed enough and this links closely to the teaching and learning processes employed at the school. These should be flexible and help children build on prior knowledge to develop attitudes, beliefs and cognitive skills, while at the same time expanding their knowledge base and taking place in well-managed classrooms. In South Africa, studies show that parents know or can perceive when a culture of teaching and learning has waned in certain schools (Msila, 2009). This then in effect becomes the distinguishing factor between effective and ineffective schools and is the outcome of management issues. The core purpose of educational management as pointed out by Thurlow (2003), is to facilitate effective learning through effective teaching. Based on the number of ineffective schools throughout South Africa, many principals it seems are not appropriately skilled or trained in school management and as a result many parents are able to see these shortcomings and choose to look for better performing schools with a better culture of teaching and learning (Lethoko, Heystek & Maree, 2001).

In making a quality school choice decision, one has to be aware of the critical relationship between intended school **quality outcomes** and how these interplay with the quality of the environment, content and processes, the other dimensions of the definition. Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills, attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and a positive participation in society should be part of the schools vision and mission. These are the expected effects of the educational system that parents attach importance to when making school choice decisions. Unfortunately, much research points to the low quality of education presently on offer at many schools throughout South Africa (Bloch, 2011; Modisaotsile, 2012; Reprobate, 2012). This situation seriously constrains the ability of the education system to provide a pathway out of poverty for poor children (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011). Lombard (2007) asserts that the desire for better or quality education is the driving force of learner migration in South Africa. The trade-off of this unfortunately, is that many parents are losing ownership and participation of their children's learning because of distance from home, transport, time for meetings and language used in meetings (Maile, 2004). Within this context there is thus a need to place an emphasis on the human rights of learners in terms of access to schools that will provide them with a quality and functional education.

2.7.2 Access to schools of choice

School choice in the context of access is governed by the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)). As already noted the Act is based on the premise of neighbourhood schools or feeder schools, meaning that feeder areas for schools are demarcated by provincial legislation and do not need to be geographically adjacent to the school (South Africa, 1998(b)). Across the country, poor children and children of colour are trapped in inferior schools (Kozol, 2005). Many are assigned to neighbourhood schools that are poorly funded (Bifulco, 2005) and have the most inexperienced teachers since the experienced and well-qualified teacher chooses to teach in schools of high quality and where there are promotional opportunities. It is often a lack of transportation which prevents these parents from moving their children out of the inferior neighbourhood schools (Blank, Levine & Steel, 1996; Nelson, Muir & Drown, 2000). It is also highly likely that these same

parents cannot afford housing in neighbourhoods with better schools. These facts, widely agreed upon by scholars across the political spectrum, contrast sharply with the belief that “all children, regardless of where they grow up or how much money their parents earn, should have access to schools of high quality” (Bell, 2009:191).

Quality education is supposed to equal better facilities, more qualified staff and a smaller number of learners per class (Venter, 2011). This situation often results in higher school fees. As such, many children whose parents cannot afford these high fees are excluded from these schools that offer better educational resources (Ndimande, 2006:145). For those parents that have the means, locality does not appear to be a decisive criterion in the choice of schools. According to Sekete, Shilubane and Moila (2001) considerable sacrifices in terms of geographical convenience are made by parents of migrating learners in that they are prepared to pay to travel long distances in search of ‘perceived better’ education. It seems that dissatisfaction with schools in local areas is the driving force for this migration (Maile, 2004).

Considering the persistently poor quality of instruction and general state of townships schools (Bloch, 2009), where many parents due to socio-economic reasons are trapped, in the context of access, parents must be permitted to escape these inadequate and unsuccessful schools (Plank & Sykes, 2003). How likely this is, however, is a question to be contemplated. According to Business Day (2013), the rise of low-fee private schools could be construed as the solution for poor parents disillusioned with government schools. The problem in South Africa though, by international standards, is that the cost associated with the low-fee schools are still too expensive. This affordability issue in the article, raises the question of government subsidies. If South Africa is to join the ranks of developing countries with higher standards of schooling performance, and with good schooling available to the poor, it will need to review the ethics and the practicalities of national and provincial education funding. In poor communities, where public schooling is described as dysfunctional, the development and expansion of low-fee private schools is thus a trend to be welcomed and encouraged not only for the value adding and cost saving to the government but also for the recognition and need of

partnerships and collaboration to improve the quality of the education system as a whole (Anon, 2013).

Reprobate (2012) asserts that South Africa cannot afford any form of educational snobbery, where communities with performing schools try to protect themselves and remain exclusive. By the same token, they also assert that communities with underperforming schools would be betraying the future of every child in that community if they continue to support governments that do not hold themselves accountable as this creates environments that are conducive to mediocrity, corruption and non-delivery of essential services. These attitudes, according to Reprobate (2012), will simply cause greater damage to the country's economy and thus contend that what is needed is an egalitarian push for excellence and equal access.

2.7.3 School choice and equality

School choice in the context of equality, rests on the notion that the set of schools from which parents choose must at least have some good school options in it. If parents' choice sets only contain underperforming schools, then their children will still be trapped in inferior schools (Bell, 2009:191). Equality can also be restricted by school admission criteria, family income and access to information (OCED, 2012). Evidence of this is also apparent in South African schools. As already noted, research has shown that oversubscribed schools are selective in their admission and tend to cream or skim learners who are easier to teach and more able to learn, effectively weeding out learners with low performance (OCED, 2012). School choice thus can increase differences between schools in terms of performance and socio-economic background and this enhances segregation by ability, income and ethnic background causing greater inequalities across education systems (OCED, 2012). Du Toit (2008) concurs with this finding and states that racial stratification with regards to school choice is thus being replaced by social stratification and rather than creating equity, school choice is widening the gap between rich and poor in South Africa. Furthermore, Pampallis (2003) notes that the vast majority of children living in South Africa are black and poor. They live in rural or peri-urban areas or in townships, where they have little opportunity of exercising the right to

school choice. By and large they attend schools that cater exclusively to black learners and although there are exceptions, for the most part, they are poorly resourced, have larger classes and are staffed by less-well educated teachers than ex-model C schools (Pampallis, 2003). Consequently, simply giving parents the opportunity to choose from from a set of only underperforming schools will not produce the equity gains that school choice promises and so equality and opportunity thus point to a deeper problem of quality.

2.7.4 School choice and opportunity

School choice in the context of opportunity reflects additional influences that affect education and thus influence the decision-making of both children and parents with regards to school choice in South Africa today. These include poverty, HIV/AIDS and language issues.

With regards **poverty** and in terms of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996), the country is divided into nine provinces, each with its own legislature, premier and provincial Members of Executive Councils (MEC). Some of these provinces suffer extreme poverty and the need to alleviate poverty is very high on the country's socio-economic agenda. Often the prevalence of poverty is manifested in schools and it is true that close to half of South Africa's schools have a shortage of classrooms, 2.3 million learners attend schools without water and 6.6 million attend schools without toilet facilities (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). In addition, it is indicated that only 10% of primary schools and around a third of secondary schools have recreational and/or sports facilities (Steyn, Steyn, De Waal, Wolhuter, 2011.) Accordingly, for many children and parents, obtaining a worthwhile education is seen as an opportunity to escape from poverty and this is a driving force for school choice.

HIV/AIDS impacts education in a number of ways. Jansen and Taylor (2003) content that HIV/AIDS erodes both participation and quality gains in terms of education policy reform. From a participation perspective, they explain that gains that resulted from reform attempts to broaden access to primary, secondary and

tertiary education have been eroded in that more and more children either die or drop-out of school because of personal illness or family illness. To add to this, it is a well known fact that many children in South Africa are not only heads of households, but face social problems including hunger, poverty and violence as a result of either being personally afflicted by the disease or by being affected by the disease (Sprenen & Vally, 2010). Furthermore, quality gains according to Jansen and Taylor (2003), have also been eroded on the premise of the availability of trained and experienced teachers to deliver curriculum reform where in fact more and more are leaving the education system because of illness or death. As of 2004, 12.7% of all teachers across South Africa were found to be infected with the virus (Malada, 2010). These socio-economic problems have an unprecedented and devastating influence on academic achievement (Howie, 2004) and there is a directly proportionate migration of children to and from schools in this respect.

Language has frequently been used as an instrument of policy in education (Hartshorne, 1999). The use of vernaculars in South Africa has an unfortunate history associated with apartheid and the Bantu education system described earlier. As a result of a historically rooted fear of being kept marginalised and subservient, many parents are suspicious of schooling via the mother tongue (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). Language thus remains a highly controversial and emotional aspect (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). It remains an anomaly that in post-apartheid South Africa, English rather than any of the indigenous languages is favoured as the language of teaching and learning (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). The reason for this, according to Maile (2004), is that parents feel proud when their children speak English fluently. To them it is a means to develop their children and to move higher up the social ladder. To cater for South Africa's diverse population, the Constitution (South Africa, 1996(d)) provides for 11 official languages. The Constitution, clearly states that all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and equal use where practical and that everyone has the right to use language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice. In spite of these provisions, there is a marked move towards unilingualism in the public sector (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). In educational terms, this means that mother tongue instruction continually gives way

to English in the interests of upward social mobility since it is seen as the language of political and economic freedom (Maile, 2004).

From the above it is thus clear that school choice in South Africa is compounded by issues of race, class, language and locality, which serve as indicators of inequality of opportunities for some despite the enabling legislation and policies to increase access to education for all (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001). Clearly the basis upon which parents make choices with regards to their children's schooling is not simple, but stems from their knowledge of the past and the goals that they entertain for their children's future (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014:4).

Having established what quality education is and how access, equality and opportunity influences parents, the school and principal's role is another imperative aspect that needs to be considered in understanding the dynamics of school choice. It is clear from the preceding sections that parent's perceptions are influenced by a number of factors and accordingly these have an impact on the choices they make. For the principal, it is thus essential to understand the educational needs, preferences and viewpoints of parents in order to satisfy them and bring together the five dimensions that contribute to educational quality. Township schools in South Africa in particular, need to learn from this, for these schools will hardly improve if they cannot understand what parents perceive as good practices of performing schools (Msila, 2009). Principals therefore require knowledge, resources, commitment and a willingness to change. The influence of school marketing in communicating quality providing institutions to parents, is thus, an important element that needs to be unpacked in terms of shaping parental school choice in the context of this study.

2.8 THE SCHOOL'S INFLUENCE ON PARENTAL SCHOOL CHOICE

The main components of a developed economy are a countries industrial, agricultural and service sectors. The size and importance of the service sector is increasing and this is a trend of both developed and developing countries (Lovelock, Wirtz & Chew, 2009). A service is the result of applying human or mechanical efforts

to people or objects (McDaniel, Lamb & Hair, 2012). Education can be regarded as a service since it is essentially intangible, inseparable, variable and the purchase of this service is an interactive process aimed at creating customer satisfaction and not ownership (Immelman, 2013). Subsequently, the marketing implications of education as a service is a complex phenomenon that complicates the school choice decision for parents and is crucial for principals to ensure that it is perceived as a quality institution with an image that is as positive as possible.

2.8.1 School Marketing

The manner in which a school is managed and controlled is vested according to section 16 of the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)) in the school governing body (SGB). The school principal by virtue of section 23(1)(b) receives automatic membership to the governing body and has the ability to contribute to all the functions of this said body. One of these said functions is marketing. The opportunity for schools to market their attributes has arisen as a result of the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)), and it seems that ex-model C schools are the standard bearers of what the South African government can provide in partnership with a committed parent body and broader school community (Williams, 2011). In an effort to attract parents to enrol their children in a particular school, the principal should be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to manage the school and survive the new competitive environment. The key to this success is through prioritising the marketing of their programmes and activities (Oplatka, 2007).

As a point of clarity and for the purpose of this study, a school is defined as a public school or an independent school which enrolls learners in one or more grades under the governance of a School Governing Body (SGB) and principal (South Africa, 1996(a)). The function of the principal and governing body in section 20(1)(a) is to promote the best interests of the school including that of school marketing. Consequently, for the remainder of this chapter the term 'school' and 'principal' will be used synonymously. When speaking of the school, I am doing so in the view of

it being a juristic person, with legal capacity to perform its functions under the management of the school principal (section 16(3)) and governing body.

Marketing in an educational context is concerned with managing the relationship between the school and its clients. Bisschoff, Du Plessis & Smith (2004), define marketing in education as the means by which the school actively communicates and promotes its purpose, values and products to learners, parents, staff and the wider community. Schooling in South Africa, as a result of choice, is shifting from a government-supported initiative driven by professionals towards a market-driven service (Immelman, 2013). Schools today are under financial pressure to improve quality and deliver effective teaching and learning to their clientele. As the school market changes and becomes more complex and more crowded, the need to listen to ones' community, and to communicate what the school does well becomes very important. It is thus imperative for schools to design and implement a dedicated marketing plan. Although this appears straightforward, this process is complicated by the unique characteristics of services that distinguish themselves from products.

2.8.1.1 The unique characteristics of a school as a service

The first distinguishing characteristic is that of *intangibility*. Service intangibility refers to the fact that a service, unlike a product, cannot be touched, seen, tasted heard or felt (McDaniel, *et al.*, 2012). This aspect of a service makes it more difficult for the school to communicate the benefits of the education it offers to parents and additionally increases the risk of the purchasing decision for parents since it is difficult to test or experience the education before buying. As a result, school marketing often relies on tangible cues to communicate the nature and quality of the education it offers in the form of printed prospectuses, brochures, flyers and the schools website (Bisschoff *et al.*, 2004). The facilities from which services are delivered are additionally a critical tangible part of the total service offering. Messages about the organisation are communicated to customers through elements such as the décor, the clutter or neatness of service areas, and the staff's manners and dress (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Reflecting this idea, schools

periodically engage in open days where prospective parents are offered a look and feel of the school in an effort to overcome the negative impact of intangibility.

Products are produced, sold and then consumed. In contrast, services are first sold, then produced and usually consumed simultaneously. In other words, their production and consumption are inseparable activities (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). **Inseparability** is a distinguishing characteristic of services that reflects the interconnectivity between the service provider and the customer involved in receiving the service. This interaction is defined as a critical incident since customers have the opportunity to provide input into their service experience and outcome (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). In a school environment this can be illustrated through parent/teacher communication. In many South African schools currently, parents want to be able to communicate directly with teachers via email or telephone to provide feedback on educational services immediately rather than relying on the traditional parents evening opportunity arising only on a termly basis (Immelman, 2013). Schools need to tune themselves in to this parental desire and adapt accordingly. Services are also inseparable from the perspective of the service provider. This means that the quality of service that an institution is able to deliver depends on the quality of its employees. This brings up the issue of variability.

Service **variability** refers to the fact that the quality of services depends on who provides them as well as when, where and how they are provided. People are unique and therefore service provision tends to be less standardised and also unique to the person providing the service. Employee selection and training help to increase consistency and reduce service variability (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). From an educational perspective, different schools have different educators all with different levels of commitment, passion, ethics and general sense of responsibility and accountability. As such it is crucial from a school marketing point of view to recruit and select the best possible candidates for positions in the school that will work towards the values and ideals of quality service provision rather than detract from them.

The service of education, as a result of parental choice, will not be able to survive in the market place without effective marketing planning.

2.8.1.2 Marketing planning for schools

Many parents have a negative view of education and it is through marketing or school promotion that these perceptions can be changed. Effective promotion in the educational context is communication that informs, persuades, and reminds potential parents of a school in order to influence their opinion or elicit a response towards that school (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). This is preceded, however, by a sound marketing plan.

Marketing planning for schools as depicted in figure 2.6 involves designing activities related to marketing objectives in the changing educational environment and forms the basis for all marketing strategies and decisions that follow (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). The creation and implementation of such a marketing plan will allow the school to achieve its marketing objectives and succeed, however, the plan is only as good as the information that it contains.

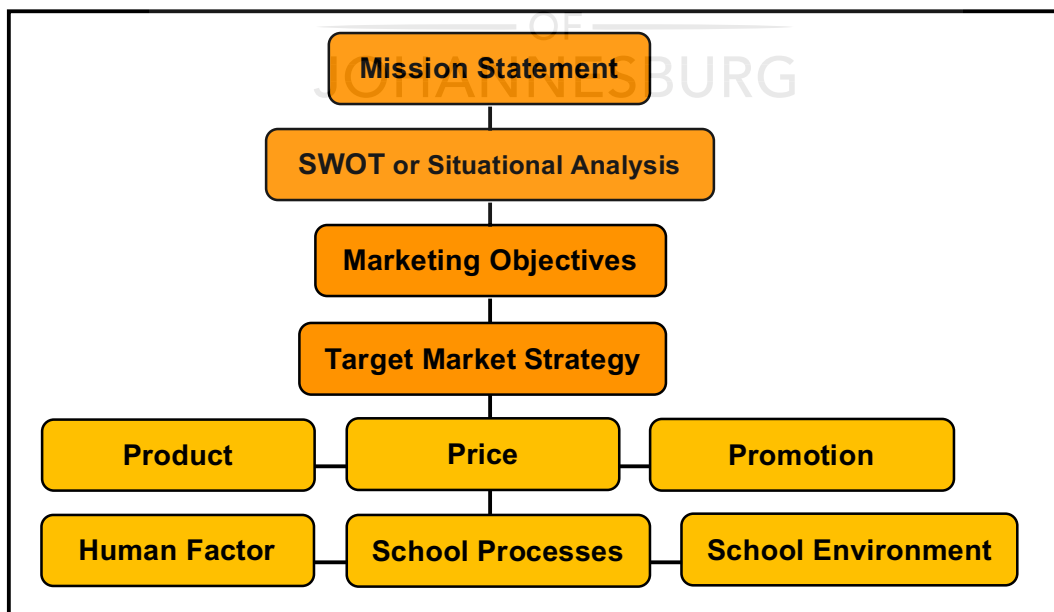


Figure 2.6 Elements of a School's Marketing Plan

Source: Adapted from McDaniel, Lamb and Hair, 2012:36

The foundation of the marketing plan is the school's **mission statement**. The way the school defines its mission will profoundly affect its success. A mistake that many a school makes with regards to their mission statement is that schools often define themselves in terms of the education they offer rather than in terms of the benefits parents seek. This study will provide valuable information to schools regarding what parents want and in so doing schools will be able to market themselves appropriately and influence parents in their decision-making.

Before the details of a marketing plan can be developed the school must understand the current and potential environment in which it will market itself. This involves identifying internal strengths and weaknesses and also examining external opportunities and threats through conducting a **situational analysis** (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Strengths and weaknesses of the school could be attributed to its history, its ethos and tradition, its achievements both academically and on the sports field, the quality, skills, capabilities and turnover of its staff, cost, size, public image and availability of technology. This analysis is necessary to establish the existence of a competitive advantage. A competitive advantage is the set of unique features a school has and offers that is perceived to be superior to that of any other school. If such a competitive advantage exists, then the school should use this to its advantage in school promotion. The collection and interpretation of information about forces, events and relationships in the external environment that may affect the future of the school is also vitally important. Aspects including: "What major social or lifestyle trends will have an impact on the school?", "What impact will forecasted trends in the size, age, profile and distribution of population have on the school?", "What major trends in taxation and income sources will have an impact on the school?", "What laws are being proposed, and what political changes are taking place that could affect the school?", "What other schools are competing directly with the school and how effective are they?" and "What major technological changes are occurring that are affecting the school?" need to be ascertained (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012:38). Of course for each of these questions the school also has to ask itself what action is it taking in response to these changes and these need to be set as marketing objectives.

A **marketing objective** is a statement of what is to be accomplished through the marketing activities. They need to be realistic, measurable, time specific and comparable to a benchmark to be useful (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, they should flow from the school's mission statement and should represent the priorities of the school. Once again, the main objective of the school should be to maximise parent satisfaction.

A school's mission statement, its situational analysis and stated marketing objectives will form the basis of its marketing strategy. Interestingly, in a study conducted to explore the practice of school marketing in an educational organisation, it was revealed that most school managers and staff do not have a coherent marketing ideology or practice and they do not make use of marketing research, strategies or plans (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004). This could be a major flaw for school management as it is only through sustained support from parents, teachers, the local community, former learners and other stakeholders that schools are able to offer quality environments and quality education to its clientele (Hepburn, 2015).

2.8.1.3 A school's marketing strategy

A marketing strategy involves the activity of selecting and describing one or more target markets and developing and maintaining a marketing mix that will produce mutually satisfying exchanges with those target markets (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012).

With respect to the **target market** and for schools, this means identifying a group of individuals (parents), who share one or more characteristics and therefore may have relatively similar needs (they all have children of school going age and need a school to send their children too). For the target market to be useful it must be fully described in terms of demographics, psychographics, buyer behaviour, ethnicity, economic capacity and technological ability where necessary. Three important questions schools should ask themselves of the target market is, "What benefits does our school offer these parents?", "How do these benefits compare to

what other schools are offering?” and “How do parents find out about and decide to choose our school?”

The **marketing mix** is the term used to describe the unique blend of marketing tools designed to produce mutually satisfying exchanges with the target market (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). The principal, as marketing manager of the school needs to devise a marketing strategy to gain advantage over competing schools while at the same time best serving the needs of parents. By manipulating elements of the marketing mix, a school can fine-tune parental offerings and achieve success. These elements of the marketing mix include *product strategies*, *pricing strategies* and *promotional strategies* as well as issues surrounding *the human factor*, *school processes* and the *school environment*. All are central to service marketing and need to be considered (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012:47). Although distribution strategies also form part of the marketing mix, in the context of a school, location of the school is assumed to be already set, and the provision of the service, being education, is confined to the classroom. As such distribution will be excluded as a tool for principals to use in marketing their schools.

2.8.1.3.1 Product strategies for schools

The product offering is the heart of an organisation’s marketing program (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). For schools, this is the educational experience offered to learners attending the school. This includes everything, both the favourable and unfavourable aspects that a student experiences in the exchange. When people buy products they do so not only for the benefits sought but also for what the product means to them with regards to status, quality and reputation (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). This is most certainly the case with education since it is a service that is intangible.

Accordingly, the image of the school and the way parents and learners believe others will view their school choice decision are significant. As a result, branding is the main tool principals have at their disposal to distinguish their school from others. The most successful schools are those that develop coherent, competitive and compelling brands (Speirs, 2007). A strong educational brand is one where

everything that happens in the school, often quite subtly, reinforces the brand identity (Immelman, 2013). Part of this strategy is to work with brand personas to ensure all marketing works towards getting a positive message out to the community (Buscall, 2014). Many schools have been successful in establishing their brand. It follows therefore that these schools are familiar to parents and indicate perceived quality. It is this brand identity of perceived quality that influences parents when making a school choice decision and quite often is associated with price.

2.8.1.3.2 Pricing strategies for schools

Price is that which is given up in an exchange to acquire a good or service (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). In a school context, price is related to the cost of attending a particular school in the form of school fees for parents. Research indicates that in general people infer quality information from price and this seems to occur for all types of products but reveals itself more strongly for some, education as a service being one of these (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). In other words, when a purchasing decision involves uncertainty, as does school choice, consumers or parents tend to rely on a high price as a predictor of good quality. In the absence of other information, people typically assume that prices are higher because the provider of the service has more expertise. This is not always the truth but is a perception that many people associate with. This is also true of school choice. Price has also been found to provide a means to gain social status and is an indicator of prestige (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). For example, some parents may choose to send their children to an expensive private school not because of their quality perceptions per se, but because of their perception that attendance to such a school will signal prestige and wealth to others. Hedonistic consumption may also result from purchasing high priced products and services. Hedonistic consumption refers to pursuing emotional responses associated with using a high priced product or service. High prices for these consumers is a means of affirming their own self-worth and to satisfy their ego's (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Such hedonistic consumption could also be attributed to the school choice decisions parents make.

From a marketing perspective price is the most flexible of the marketing mix elements that managers can work with (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Essential to the marketing of any product or service, including that of education is a price strategy. A price strategy is a basic long term pricing framework, which establishes the initial price for a product or service and the intended direction for price movements over time (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). As already established, price, in the form of school fees or tuition fees is influenced by the subsidy a school receives from the Department of education. As such, school principals have important tactical and strategic decisions to make regarding among others, the average level of school fees to be charged, possible discount structures to be implemented and terms of payment. Key determinates of these decisions include firstly, the operating cost of the school. Funds provided by the provincial legislature (South Africa, 1996(a): Section 12) are often insufficient for schools to deliver the quality education purported in policy documents and therefore the states contribution needs to be supplemented. These additions mostly take the form of school fees and principals therefore have an integral part to play in the management of a school's resources in an effort to promote the best interests of the school and to strive to ensure the provision of quality education (Blake, 2008). Parents in public schools that have been declared as fee paying schools are given the opportunity to vote on these fees. This brings up the second determinant of price that the school principal together with the school board or school governing body needs to negotiate. This is the amount that parents are prepared to pay for school fees or tuition and is influenced by their socio-economic status. The third determinant of price, that needs to be taken into consideration is, how these fees relate to other schools' fees or tuition rates in the community. As a result, school principals need to have a good understanding of both the demographics of potential parents and knowledge of competitor schools, so as to set a fee that is not too high or too low, but is one that equals the perceived value of the educational service to parents (Immelman, 2013). It goes to say that schools may offer good quality education at the right price, but if parents are not aware of these services and costs, they will not consider the school as an option in their decision-making strategy. Thus, it is essential for schools to promote themselves to prospective parents.

2.8.1.3.3 Promotional strategies for schools

The foremost manner in which to influence parental school choice decision-making is through continuously informing, educating, persuading and reminding parents of the benefits of attending a particular school. This can be achieved via the implementation of a school promotional strategy. Promotional strategy is closely related to the process of communication and thus uses several elements in communicating with the target market (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). A combination of these elements is called the promotional mix illustrated in figure 2.7 and may include advertising, public relations, sales promotion, events and experiences, word of mouth and personal selling. Ideally, marketing communication from each of these elements should be integrated, meaning that the message reaching the consumer should be the same regardless of whether it is in the form of an advert, a newspaper article or a sponsored event.



Figure 2.7 Elements of the Promotional Mix

Source: Adapted from McDaniel, Lamb and Hair, 2012:479

Almost all organisations selling a good or providing a service use some sort of advertising whether in the form of a massive campaign or a simple advert in the newspaper. This is the first element of the promotional mix as illustrated in figure 2.7. **Advertising** is any form of impersonal paid communication, with the aim of influencing people to think or act in a particular way with regards to a specific product or service (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). As noted earlier, the major goal of a school in terms of its marketing plan is to build and promote its image.

As a result, the type of advertising that school principals should engage in to elicit a positive school choice decision is advertising that does not really ask parents to do anything but maintain a favourable attitude toward the school and its services. In order to be successful in this endeavour, principals need to make a clear decision regarding the choice of medium or channel to be used to convey this message effectively to parents (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). In the South African context, as far as could be established, schools make use of newspapers (both national and local), magazines, radio and outdoor media in an attempt to influence parents.

Newspapers are generally a mass-market medium and therefore may not be the best vehicle for schools to reach their target market, however, local newspapers can be used to good effect to advertise the benefits associated with attending the school. The cost of advertising in magazines is usually high in comparison to other forms of media. Accordingly, for schools with limited funds this type of advertising is usually out of the question, nonetheless, schools can successfully promote their image by advertising in selected magazines targeted to specialised audiences (Immelman, 2013). Radio is a good medium for school advertising as a result of its ability to target specific demographic groups. Radio listeners also tend to listen habitually at predictable times and so advertising can be scheduled at a time that would ensure high impact listening. The publicising of school fundraising events can benefit greatly from this type of advertising. Finally, outdoor media in the form of school giant and mini billboards, giant inflatables, skywriting, vehicle signage and street pole advertising is very popular for school promotion. The main reason for this is firstly its relatively low cost and secondly, it is ideal for promoting services and directing consumers to local business and institutions (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012).

In this way parents are continuously informed and reminded about the school and this may result in persuasion to choose this school when making a school choice decision.

Following advertising is **public relations** as a promotional tool. Once again the aim of public relations is to maintain a positive image of the school or organisation in the form of generating favourable publicity. In the context of the school, publicity is public information about a school appearing in the media as a news item. This type of publicity is generally not paid for, but can be tremendously beneficial. Examples include the placing of positive, newsworthy information in the newspaper to attract attention to the school, its achievements or a person associated with the school. Principals as marketing managers use this to great effect to publish excellent sport or academic achievements, fundraising initiatives or even to publicise community outreach programmes that the school has supported or is involved with. All publicity of this nature serves to influence the perceptions parents have of schools and accordingly their school choice decisions.

Sales promotion unlike public relations, is marketing communication which provides an incentive and motivates consumers to purchase a good or service immediately, either by lowering the price or by adding value to it (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Much of the sales promotion techniques used in general marketing in their pure form (coupons, rebates, premiums, loyalty programs, sampling etc.) do not really align themselves with the promotion of a school. Nevertheless, variations can be used successfully. Some examples include school bursaries being offered to learners for excellence in sport, academic or cultural spheres or discounts in school fees for more than one child attending a school. For those parents whose children qualify, these incentives would most certainly influence school choice decisions. Sales promotion often forms part of the personal selling process.

Personal selling is described as the direct personal presentation of a message to consumers in order to persuade them to purchase a service (Siguaw, 2005). Kotler and Keller (2012) describe personal selling as sales presentations and fairs or trade shows. The major advantage of personal selling is that it provides a detailed

explanation of a product or service to the potential customer. Moreover, the sales message can be varied according to the motivations and interests of each prospective customer. When a prospect has questions or objections, a representative is right there to provide explanations and gain customer satisfaction (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). A school open-day is an excellent example of personal selling in the educational context. Principals, after delivering a general presentation to prospective parents, have the ability to appoint representative staff to take groups of parents on a school tour, answering questions and catering for the interests of these parents individually. Open-days in general, take place on an annual basis and are very popular with parents in terms of getting a feel for a school in influencing the making of a school choice decision. School exhibitions in public locations are also examples of personal selling. Principals and their staff, once again have the ability to use the exhibition to engage with parents on a one-to-one basis in an effort to persuade parents to choose their specific school for their child or children.

Closely linked to open days and exhibitions is that of **events and experiences**. The objectives of these are for companies to identify with their target market, increase exposure to their brand, reinforce brand image and enhance corporate image (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In the context of school marketing, an example would be where a school decides to host a sports or arts festival in the area to draw attention to itself, its values and its facilities. For parents, having children participating in these events, gives them exposure to the school, its ethos, get them talking about the event and could influence future school choice decisions.

Word of mouth, the final element of the promotional mix illustrated in figure 2.7, is the number one way that prospective parents first learn about a school. In order for positive word of mouth to occur, parents must be talking about a school and doing so in a positive way (Hepburn, 2015). Word of mouth involves activities (like that of a sports or arts festival above) that are likely to encourage consumers to talk about a product or service to their friends and neighbours, setting in motion a chain of communication that could branch out through the whole community (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Each activity, regardless of how small or unimportant, could escalate through word of mouth to create strong and positive brand images and beliefs.

Word of mouth is a promotional tactic that cannot be ignored in the current marketplace by all organisations including that of schools. In order for it to be positive and valuable it must be tactically and systematically organised through identifying influential individuals, winning their support, and providing pertinent information to them to spread via word of mouth (Mason & Staude, 2007). The problem however is that word of mouth has moved online. The challenge for principals is how to infiltrate parent's social networks to provide useful and accurate information to help parents make appropriate decisions regarding their children's education (Bosetti, 2004). Many parents who are the key decision makers when it comes to school choice are active on social media platforms like that of Facebook. Social media of this nature is significantly powerful and influential as it not only voices the opinions of consumers regarding products and services, but also allows them to interact with brands in an informal personal way and on their own terms (Shahim, 2011). Social media discussions have become one of the biggest ways in which people connect with those that they trust. As a result, traditional marketing activities like that of adverts in the local newspaper are no longer enough. Recommendations, suggestions and advice from friends and family have all gained importance in the buying decision processors of consumers and this is also true for that of school choice (Kalpaklioglu & Toros, 2011). This means that all schools should definitely have some sort of presence on Facebook or Twitter, as this will allow the school to share its unique school experiences with others who are interested in the school. It also creates a way for prospective parents and current parents, educators and the community to stay in touch with one another, all the time building the school's brand (Immelman, 2013).

Because marketing has moved online and in so many forms and channels, in many ways principals need to be adept online marketers and communicators, as well as educationalists (Buscall, 2014). The schools' website and cell phone applications are among these important online mechanisms necessary for communicating with parents. Both are strong promotional tools effective for influencing parental choice. The schools' website is often the first place potential parents or families get an overall feel and basic appreciation of a learning facility (Foster, 2010). As such it is crucial for the principal to place the correct information on the homepage of the

website. First impressions are critical and thus this home page should include enticing photos, the school's logo, motto, mission, contact details and any news worthy information (Foster, 2010). It is vital of course, that this information should be kept accurate and updated regularly for it to be meaningful to prospective and current parents. Cell phones are just as important, and in today's day and age where most phones are web-enabled, even more so (Buscall, 2014). The "school communicator" is one such lightweight application that once downloaded provides information directly to parents from their specific school. Relevant information can be uploaded by the school to the platform and the application automatically makes this information available to parents (School Communicator, 2012). Communicating effectively online also allows a school to compete more effectively for highly qualified human resources (Buscall, 2014).

2.8.1.3.4 The human factor

In the marketing mix for schools, the human factor makes reference to both customers and employees of the school (i.e. parents and staff). Marketing entails an understanding that organisations have many connected stakeholder 'partners', including employees, suppliers, customers and society at large. The building of long-term mutually rewarding relationships with these parties is crucial to success (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Relationship marketing depends on customer-oriented personnel, effective training programmes and teamwork. This is also true for educational contexts. For a school to be focused on building relationships with parents, all staffs' attitudes and actions must be customer oriented. A teacher may be the only contact a particular parent has with the school. In that parent's eyes, the teacher is the school. The same holds true for administrative staff, management and support staff. Any person, department, or division that is not customer oriented weakens the positive image of the entire organisation (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). It is therefore imperative that all staff members employed by the school, understand their role as a marketing ambassador (Immelman, 2013). If this is unclear, training in customer service and relationship building as well as teamwork can be of value. Individual job performance, organisational performance, product value and customer satisfaction all improve when people begin to support and assist one

another and emphasize cooperation rather than competition (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). If schools, through the above, are able to create better relationships with parents, teachers, the local community (business and media), former learners and other stakeholders, they may be in a better position to offer quality teaching and learning environments as a result of the support they receive from these respective parties (Hepburn, 2015). This positive flow of information may in turn also help parents make more informed school choice decisions.

2.8.1.3.5 School processes

Process comprises a functional activity that assures service availability and quality. It also refers to the actual procedures, mechanisms and the flow of activities by which a service is delivered (Immelman, 2013). In a schools' context, the admission procedure, the schools code of conduct and disciplinary procedure as well as the general teaching and learning processes employed at the school make up the various school processes that have the ability to influence parental choice.

2.8.1.3.6 The school environment

The school environment refers to the setting in which educational services are delivered and in which parental interaction takes place during the service encounter (Immelman, 2013). The way in which a school presents itself helps determine its image and positions it in a parents' mind. Physically it has the ability to be an indicator of other school quality issues such as the presence of instructional materials, working conditions for teachers and learners and the ability of staff to undertake certain instructional approaches. From a psychological point of reference, it can provide evidence of good management and being an organised and productive place of learning (UNICEF, 2000). The main element in presentation is that of creating an atmosphere. Atmosphere is the overall impression conveyed by a school's physical layout, décor and surroundings. The atmosphere can create a relaxed or busy feeling, a sense of luxury or efficiency, a friendly or cold attitude or a sense of organisation or clutter (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). External attributes include parking, signage, landscaping, exterior design, sports grounds and facilities.

Interior attributes include interior design, equipment, classrooms and general layout of these. Other means by which school's present themselves include business cards, stationery, billing statements, reports, employee dress codes, school uniforms, brochures and web pages (Bisschoff *et al.*, 2004: 96-97). Employees, fixtures, sound, odours and visual factors in addition have an influence in creating atmosphere (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). These also hold true for a school. Staff members as already mentioned are often viewed as the face of the organisation, therefore they at all times need to be neat, friendly, knowledgeable and service oriented in conveying the school's atmosphere. Fixtures used in the school can be elegant (rich woods) or trendy (chrome and smoked glass), but need to be consistent with the general atmosphere the school is trying to create. Sound, although its use is unconventional throughout the school, can be used to great effect in the school's reception area. Music has the ability to control the pace of this area, can create an image and can attract or direct parent's attention. This combined with a pleasant odour or smell can also either stimulate or detract from parental choice. Finally, colour can create a mood or focus attention and therefore is an important factor in atmosphere. Red, yellow and orange are considered warm colours and are used when a feeling of warmth and closeness is desired. Cool colours like blue, green and violet are used to open up closed-in places and create an air of elegance and cleanliness. Colour together with lighting have an important effect on atmosphere and parental perceptions. The school environment affects the emotions of parents when receiving the service as well as the evaluation of the service (Verma, 2008). Consequently, it can have a profound effect on school choice.

Above are the foundations of a successful school marketing plan. The recipe for success is based on an understanding of not what schools think they provide, but rather what parents think they are buying into. It is this perceived value that defines a school and a principal's responsibility, together with the help of the entire staff, to consistently deliver this unique experience that competing schools cannot match and that satisfies the intentions and preferences of targeted parents. If parents are to be construed as consumers, the circumstances constraining their choices must be understood. Parental decision-making behaviour, as such, does not occur in a

vacuum and underlying cultural, social, individual and psychological factors strongly influence the decision-making process.

2.9 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PARENTAL SCHOOL CHOICE DECISION-MAKING

All choice systems depend on parents choosing schools. How parents make these choices is crucial as the effectiveness of choice policies in allowing good schools to flourish and bad schools to go out of business pivots on parents making sound choices (Betts & Loveless, 2001). The problem that exists is that parental preferences are constantly changing. This is a result of the collective, subtle and complex influences of society, culture, perceptions and institutional perspectives previously described in the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) model and that of Choice theory. The role of the principal and schools in this context, is the expectation for them to be responsive and bring about change aimed at influencing parental school choices. The potential for schools to be consumer responsive, however, is also set in the public market and this includes educational regulations and policy that impinge upon schools (Woods, Bagley & Glatter, 1998). Consequently, the field of consumer behaviour focuses on the understanding of why and how individuals and groups engage in consumer activities, as well as how they are affected by them. Consumer behaviour, or in the context of this study, how parents engage in the decision-making process of choosing a school for their children, and how this is influenced by CHAT and Choice theory is thus central to the process of making and interpreting meaning in the school choice dilemma.

When consumers spend money on products or services, they generally follow a five step process comprising of need recognition, an information search, evaluation of alternatives, a service encounter and a post-purchase behaviour phase as depicted in figure 2.8 (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). For the purpose of this section the term 'consumer' will refer to the parent/s engaged in the decision-making process of choosing a school for their child or children. These five steps represent a guide for studying how parents make decisions and allow for an analysis of a parents emotional, mental and behavioural response, determined by or following this

process. It is important to note that although this process is depicted as one step following another, decisions do not always proceed in order through all of these steps. Schools and principals will benefit from this information in terms of having the necessary understanding to develop a well defined school marketing mix as described in the previous section.

2.9.1 The consumer decision-making process

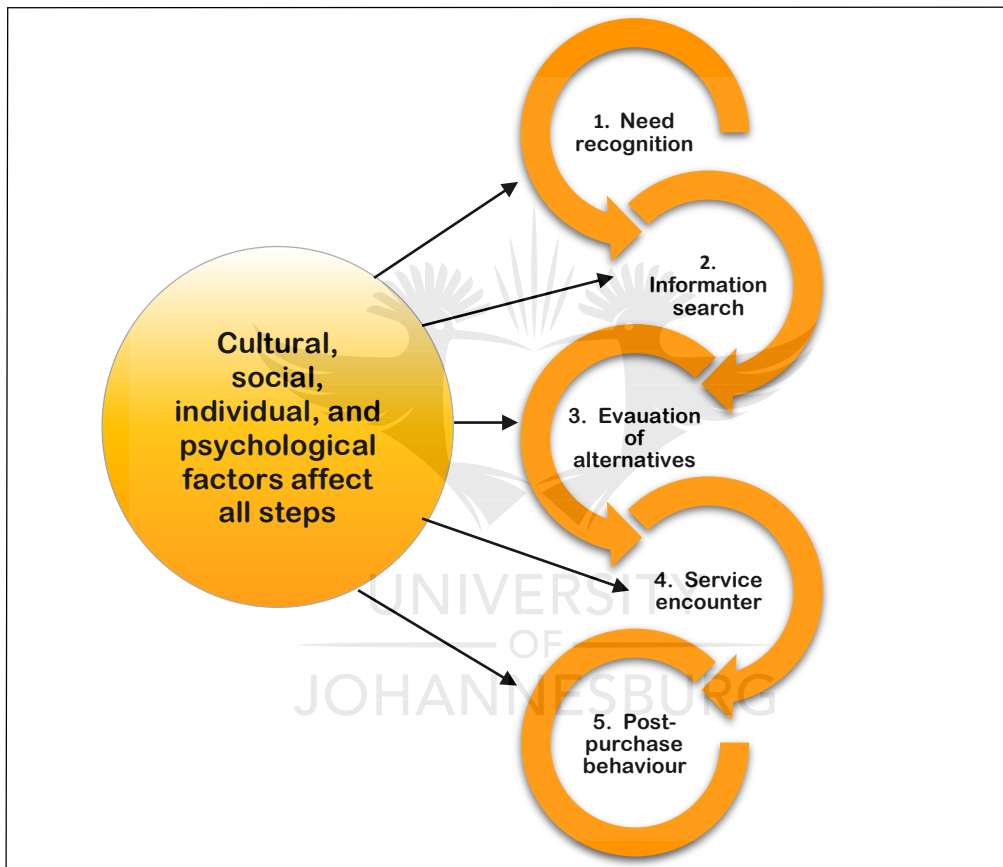


Figure 2.8 The Decision-Making Process

Source: Adapted from McDaniel, Lamb and Hair, 2012:189

2.9.1.1 Need Recognition

The decision-making process begins when parents are faced with an imbalance between the actual and desired states of education as perceived by them and this arouses and activates the process. What parents want in terms of education is the way they go about addressing their need (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Parents usually

recognize an unfulfilled need when the current service or school they are attending is not performing properly or they become aware of another service or school that seems superior to the one they currently attend. According to Choice theory, the purpose of all human behaviour is to create a match between what an individual perceives and what they want. Parents as a result of their own unique experiences in life, develop a unique quality world or idea of education and what a school should offer, that then becomes the source of their school choice motivation (Sullo, 2011). Once a need or problem has been recognised, parents will thus be motivated to search for solutions to try and calibrate the mismatch of their perceptions. In Choice theory, Glasser (n.d) refers to this as the comparing place where individuals base their behaviour and choices on what they perceive to be real. It is also at this need recognition stage that parents will experience their first primary contradiction or tension as described by CHAT since school choice as the object of activity, is itself internally contradictory as there are many different perspectives about it. As such, parents will be confronted with many views which might differ from their own that could hamper the achievement of their choice outcome, being quality education. This stage of decision-making is also constrained by the rules element of CHAT, where school choice can only take place within the boundaries of the South African Schools Act (1996(a)). After parents have recognised this perceived need associated with quality education they will begin to search for information as to the whereabouts of alternatives in an attempt to satisfy this recognised need.

2.9.1.2 Information search

An information search can occur internally, externally or both. In an internal information search, parents will recall information stored in their memory. This stored information will mainly stem from a previous personal experience (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012) and could equate to a parent having visited a school perhaps earlier in the year at a sports or cultural function or the like. An external information search occurs when parents seek information from the outside environment and could include personal sources, public sources, marketing sources and experiential sources (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Parents in considering these various sources in an attempt to find a solution to their perceived school choice need, find themselves

operating within the community and division of labour elements of CHAT. Personal sources or word of mouth, refer to the social groups parents belong to, and the information shared or recommended by friends, family and reference groups have the ability to influence parental decision-making with regards to school choice. Public sources incorporating blogs, bulletin boards, web sites and government agencies may also be consulted, where these are believed to be honest, reliable and credible. In addition to community embracing the social group to which parents belong, it also depicts the physical environment (Engestrom, 2001) in which school choice takes place and this is where experiential sources find their place. Experiential sources of information for parents include open days at various schools, as well as exhibitions or shows highlighting different school alternatives. Because community includes a multitude of view points, traditions and interests, parents will once again experience tension and contradictions as described by CHAT as a result of possible disagreements, conflicts or misunderstandings between social groups (Olavarria, 2013) while participating in school choice. The division of labour element of CHAT was previously defined as being the role of the school and school principal in influencing parents decision-making. It is in this dimension that marketing as a source of information comes to the fore. Advertising, sales promotion in the form of bursaries or discounts and the internet are all sources of information that parents consult in locating alternatives necessary for need satisfaction. From a Choice theory perspective (Glasser, n.d.), the extent to which parents will conduct an external search of information depends on the perceived risk of the school in terms of its associated costs, a parent's knowledge of education, previous experience of school in general, level of interest in education and confidence in one's decision-making ability (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). A parent's information search at this stage of the decision-making process should yield a group of school possibilities termed a consideration set. It is from this set that parents will further evaluate the alternatives in arriving at a choice.

2.9.1.3 Evaluation of alternatives

At this stage of the decision-making process, the developed consideration set of schools and the presented attributes of each alternative may now be considered

suitable or unsuitable (Loverlock & Wirtz, 2011). Parents will use the information stored in their memory and obtained from outside sources to develop a set of criteria to assist in the evaluation and comparison of possible school alternatives. In the context of school choice this is described as the various choice factors that could influence a parent's choice of school. These choice factors or evaluation criteria refer to all the features or characteristics that parents are looking for when choosing a school for their children. CHAT describes this set of evaluation criteria as mediating artefacts or tools which include social others, prior knowledge or anything that contributes to the mediated action (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In evaluating alternatives, parents will not only develop the evaluative criteria but will also determine the relative importance of each choice factor in assessing each school (Wells & Foxall, 2012:153). A number of choice factors have been highlighted in section 2.6.2 and it has been established that factors that drive decision-making for parents the world over have commonalities. Through the process of weighing up advantages and disadvantages concerning important school attributes, parents may experience secondary contradictions as portrayed by CHAT when there is tension between the various elements of the activity system. Accordingly, it becomes clear that decision-making is not only embedded within the activity system, but it is also continuously influenced by tensions, contradictions and interactions between elements in the system.

2.9.1.4 Service Encounter

Ultimately step 1, 2 and 3 of the decision-making process culminates in the parent making a school choice decision and pursuing that choice. The service encounter stage usually begins with an action by the parent such as submitting an application form for admission. Parents actions will once again take place within the constraints of the rules and division of labour elements as portrayed by CHAT (Figure 2.4). In this stage rules take the form of formal regulations as applied to admission procedures for public schools as depicted by the Admission policy for ordinary public schools (South Africa,1998(b)). For private schools this means the school specific admission procedure which may include an enrolment deposit. It is at this stage that parents might experience challenges or barriers to exercising choice. In

some circumstances the decision taken may collapse altogether as a result of these barriers. Examples could possibly include a change in the attitude of significant others regarding the choice, the surfacing of a new or unexpected factor that was previously not considered, a change in a personal economic circumstance or the sudden availability of a previously unavailable alternative (Immelman, 2013). Withstanding these challenges or barriers, parents will make a school choice decision and have certain expectations in the form of outcomes that the selected school must meet. For this study I posit this to be the perception of quality education combined with positive academic outcomes for their children.

2.9.1.5 Post-purchase behaviour

The final stage of the decision-making process comes to fruition when parents evaluate the service performance of their chosen school by comparing their expectations with that of their perceived experience (Loverlock & Wirtz, 2011). Cost incurred is usually an important predictor of expectations. How well these expectations are met determines whether a parent is satisfied or dissatisfied with their choice. When parents recognise an inconsistency between their values or opinions and their choice actions, they tend to feel an inner tension called cognitive dissonance. Parents will try to reduce this dissonance by justifying their decision. They may do this by seeking new information that reinforces positive ideas about their choice, avoid information that contradicts their decisions, or revoke the original decision by removing their child or children from the chosen school and starting the process again from the beginning (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012).

As previously noted, the decision-making process does not occur in a vacuum. As a result, understanding the factors that influence the decision-making process is important to understanding what decisions are made and why they are made. Essentially what I am alluding to is that factors that influence the school choice process for parents may impact the outcomes and are therefore important in making meaning. There are several important factors that influence decision-making and these have an effect on parents from the time they perceive an unfulfilled need through to post-purchase behaviour.

2.9.2 Factors influencing consumer buying decisions

Factors that affect 'consumer' or for the purpose of this study, parental decision-making are depicted on the left hand side of figure 2.8. Marketing research indicates that there are four main types of factors influencing consumer behaviour (Perreau, 2016; McDaniel *et al.*, 2012; Cant, 2010). They include, cultural factors, social factors, individual factors and psychological factors. These factors influence parents in terms of the school choice decisions they make for their children. Each of these unique, inherent qualities are briefly discussed below to illustrate the influence of the various factors on the decision-making process of parents.

2.9.2.1 Cultural factors

Of all the factors that affect parental decision-making, the cultural factors of value, subculture and social class exert the broadest and deepest influence (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). **Culture** comprises a complex system of values, norms and symbols which have developed in society over a period of time and in which all its members share. The cultural values, norms and symbols are created by people and are transmitted from one generation to another to ensure survival and also to facilitate adaptation to the circumstances of life (Cant, 2010). Each cultural group is composed of several **subcultures** with which people can identify (Perreau, 2016).

There are four main subcultures, categorised according to nationality, religion, race and geographical area of residence. Smaller subcultures can also develop according to language, age, interest and sometimes occupation (Cant, 2010). A parent's value system, as influenced by their culture and subculture, have a great effect on school choice decision-making. In previous sections of this thesis, much has already been written on how the South Africa culture is expressed in terms of school choice as a result of apartheid school policy for all subcultures. It has also been previously noted that much of these choices has to do with **social class** in the South African environment where education is seen as the liberator from poverty. Cultural factors as well as social factors (unpacked below) take effect in the lower part of the CHAT triarchic model (Figure 2.4) and form part of the collective activity

surrounding the rules, community and division of labour elements in the activity system. In decision-making all people are influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the actions of others with whom they come into contact. Parents as consumers are human beings and as such have a need to be affiliated with other groups in the social environment in order to satisfy their social needs and to make socially acceptable school choice decisions.

2.9.2.2 Social factors

Considering the fact that an individual can belong to many different groups, one can appreciate the degree of social pressure placed on the economic activities of an individual (Cant, 2010). This is also true for school choice as many parents seek out the opinion of others to reduce their uncertainty. The school to which a parents' child attends, holds social significance and often parents succumb to the pressure of social influences from family, reference groups and opinion leaders in terms of their decision-making. Of all the groups to which a parent belongs, **family** is the one with which they maintain the closest contact and interaction (Cant, 2010). Family forms an environment of socialisation in which an individual will evolve, shape their personality, acquire values and also develop attitudes and opinions on various subjects (Perreau, 2016). Education is one such subject and accordingly, perceptions of the family will generally have a strong influence on the school choice decision-making process. Families act as a decision-making unit when they attempt to satisfy individual needs from one shared source, being the family income. As a result, this leads to consultation and joint decision-making among family members where often individual needs have to be subordinated to those of others. Other than family, a **reference group** is another social group to which a person belongs and is influenced by (Cant, 2010).

Reference groups come about as a result of interaction between people as a result of place of residence, work, hobbies, leisure activities and the like (Perreau, 2016). A reference group is a set of people with whom individuals compare themselves for guidance in developing their own attitudes, knowledge and or behaviour. Thus, parents will use other people in their reference group, as a source of information for

arriving at and evaluating their own beliefs about education and what schools should look like and offer. Literature typically distinguishes between three types of reference groups: membership groups, aspirational groups and dissociative groups (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012:207). The activities, values and goals of these reference groups directly influence consumer decision-making and are subject to distinctive norms of behaviour that members are expected to conform to in order to avoid sanctions (Cant, 2010). Membership groups are groups to which an individual currently belongs, for example friends or a social club. In the context of school choice, the opinions, actions and decisions taken by that of friends, is substantial in parents forming certain values, attitudes and behaviour patterns related to choosing a particular school for their children.

Parents can also be influenced by groups that they do not yet belong to, but wish to be a part of (Perreau, 2016). This is called an aspirational group. Groups of this nature usually have a higher status or level of acceptance among peers. An example of this type of influence on parental school choice is when parents aspire for their children to attend a private school rather than that of a public school in an attempt to belong to this group. On the other end of the spectrum, parents are also able to encounter dissociative groups which influences their decision-making. Here parents will intentionally avoid or try to maintain a distance from this group for fear of being associated with the norms of the group (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012).

A final influencing social factor is that of **opinion leaders**. Opinion leaders are individuals or group leaders in a reference group who have a strong influence on consumer decisions, because consumers trust their advice and opinions regarding products and services (Immelman, 2013). With regards to school choice, opinion leaders that parents listen to and value could be the school principal, the school's educators, or even existing parents that already have children attending the school. In essence an opinion leader could be anyone who advocates the particular school through interpreting and evaluating school information and then relays either acceptance or rejection of the information to other parents (Cant, 2010). Social factors as a whole make up the 'community' element of the CHAT activity system as they refer to the social group or organisation to which 'subjects' belong while

engaged in activity and also depict the activity setting or physical environment in which decision-making takes place. The degree to which social factors are able to influence the school choice decisions parents make, depend on each individual parent as identified by their unique personal characteristics and their willingness to be influenced.

2.9.2.3 Individual factors

The 'subject' of the CHAT activity system (Figure 2.4) was identified as parents engaged in school choice decision-making. Accordingly, a parent's school choice decisions are influenced by their **gender**, age, life-cycle stage, personality, self-concept and lifestyle. Mothers and fathers have distinct cultural, social and economic roles to play as denoted by society. Their **age** and **stage of family life-cycle** in addition, also influences their values, lifestyle, activities, hobbies and consumer habits. All these have an effect on and influence a parents respective decision-making processes with regards to school choice (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Each parent has a unique **personality** that is the product of constant interaction between psychological and physiological characteristics. It emerges as consistent behaviour with respect to the way individuals respond to their environment and materialises into some traits such as confidence, sociability, autonomy, charisma, ambition, openness to others, shyness, curiosity and adaptability (Perreau, 2016; Cant, 2010).

Self-concept is the image an individual has of themselves or would like to have and includes attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and self-evaluation. This relates directly to the second key concept of Choice theory, where Sullo (2011) explains that each person builds up through interaction an idea of a perfect existence that becomes the source of all motivation. This greatly influences the choices parents make as seldom would they be associated with products or services that may jeopardise their self-image (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). This is also true for the school they choose for their children to attend. Personality and self-concept are reflected in a parent's **lifestyle**. A lifestyle is a mode of living as identified by a person's activities, interests and opinions (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). In essence, it is the way parents live, how

they enact out their self-concept and is determined by past experiences, innate characteristics and current situation. All parent's lifestyles differ and as a result, it provides descriptions of behaviour and purchasing patterns, especially in the way individuals spend their time and money (Cant, 2010). Accordingly, it would additionally influence school choice in terms of among others affordability, price sensitivity and the social value attached to a specific school. A parent's school choice decision is further influenced by psychological factors.

2.9.2.4 Psychological factors

The psychological factors of motivation, perception, learning, attitudes and beliefs are considered to be internal determinants to parental decision-making. These factors are what consumers use to interact with their world and they are the tools they use to recognise their feelings, gather and analyse information, formulate thoughts and opinions and take action (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). They are also affected by a person's environment. Accordingly, they can be associated with the five key concepts of Choice theory and that of CHAT.

Motivation activates behaviour intended to satisfy an aroused need and is what drives parents to seek out, evaluate, and make decisions related to school choice. Motivation is usually subconscious and is difficult to measure (Perreau, 2016).

Perception can be defined as the process by which people select, organise and interpret stimuli through their five senses into a meaningful and coherent picture (Lindstrom, 2005). It is a unique individual factor and as such parents will with respect to similar information, and under identical conditions, select and interpret information in different ways from one another. This is referred to as selective distortion (Perreau, 2016) and it leads parents to interpret situations in order to make them consistent with their beliefs and values. It is these perceptions, according to Choice theory, that influence the choices parents make in an effort to meet their needs and compare their perception of 'reality' versus the pictures of their 'quality worlds' or what they want in an educational sense. Each parent will every day face thousands of sensory stimuli that is impossible to consciously process, therefore they use selective attention or exposure to decide which stimuli to notice

and which to ignore. Parents will naturally be far more attentive of stimuli related to a need and fittingly will pay more attention to all educationally related aspects. Closely associated is selective retention. Here parents will only store and remember information that fits with their existing personal feeling or beliefs (Perreau, 2016). In this way parents will form a perception of a school by just looking at a web site or reading a school related article or even physically taking in the school and its learners as a result of driving past.

A parent's ability to learn also influences their decision-making. **Learning** can be defined as "the result of a combination of motivation, attention, experience and repetition" (Cant, 2010:109). Learning takes place through action and it is a continuous process where parents acquire knowledge and experience through trial and error of both their own encounters and that of others. From CHAT it is thus reiterated that individual parental decision-making is not isolated but continuously influenced by tensions and interaction with all other elements of the triarchic model (figure 2.4). Through learning and its relative influences, parents develop **beliefs and attitudes** that are closely linked to their values. These positive or negative feelings will influence the assessment of an object and lead to a predisposition to act in a certain way toward that object (Perreau, 2016). Thus, when parents act, they learn and this process of experience and practice creates changes in behaviour (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Hence, if parents have suffered a negative encounter with a school or person associated with a school, then they will associate this negative experience with that school and in this way school choice decision-making will be affected. Beliefs and attitudes form part of an individuals' personality, are generally well-anchored in a parent's mind, and are difficult to change.

From the preceding section, it is evident that an individual is led and influenced by their culture, sub-culture, social class, membership groups, family, personality and psychological factors experienced in their societal environment (Perreau, 2016). A clear school choice decision for parents is the result of the influence of these many factors. School principals, through identifying and understanding these factors have the opportunity to develop a school marketing mix that is more in line with the needs and ways of thinking of parents.

2.10 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

In an attempt to satisfy the changing needs of parents, school principals need to understand their consumers and their consumption behaviour. A thorough knowledge and understanding of the factors that influence parents and how and why they respond to marketing stimuli is crucial if schools are to remain competitive in the modern environment of parental school choice. Schools in order to survive and thrive need to attract and retain parents by satisfying their needs through the offering of some sort of perceptive value. This value, that must be perceived to be meaningful, needs to be communicated effectively to parents through the development of the school marketing mix. For this marketing strategy to be successful it must take cognisance of the dynamic interaction between parental decision-making and the environment of school marketing in order to determine which parents to target, how to best position the school offering and which marketing tactics to use the most successfully.

2.10.1 Cultural factors

South African society is fragmented into many **cultural groups** and subgroups and this complicates the task of the school principal in terms of determining parental needs to satisfy. Cultural factors are important as they will play a role in the perception, habits, behaviour and expectations of parents with regards to education (Perreau, 2016). Parents will be more receptive to marketing strategies that specifically target them and represent the values that are most important in their lives and school principal therefore need to be careful not to use symbols in their marketing mix, which can be interpreted incorrectly or differently. Effective communication will only take place if the theme of the advertising message reflects the cultural norms, values and symbols of the cultural group to which it is directed (Cant, 2010). This requires much research of parents and their educational needs and wants of a school as an organisation on the part of school principals. A parent's **social class** as shaped by their education, occupation, economic position, status and lifestyle can be related to every aspect of a marketing strategy by the school

(McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, for the purpose of this study principals should take note of the aspirations of middle class parents. Parents falling into this class aspire to a lifestyle of the more affluent, where attaining goals and achieving status and prestige are important (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). As such, this would be reflected in their school choice decision-making.

2.10.2 Social factors

Parents, as a result of social influences on consumer behaviour, will interact socially with family members, reference groups and opinion leaders to obtain information and decision approval (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). For school choice and developing an effective marketing strategy, school principals should consider the role differentiation between **family** members. This is an important aspect in terms of to whom the marketing mix should speak to. If the marketing communication is to be directed at the 'influencer' it would be the person who implicitly or explicitly influences the final decision (Cant, 2019:114). For school choice in most cases this would be the child. If alternatively, communication is intended for the 'decision maker' or the person who will actually choose between alternatives and make the decision then this should speak to the parent/s. A school marketing mix designed for children versus parents is one that is significantly different and therefore needs consideration.

For the purpose of understanding parental decision-making processors, **reference groups** provide three important implications for school principals. Firstly, they serve as an information source and influence parental perceptions. Secondly, they affect a parent's aspirational levels and thirdly, they either constrain or stimulate parental behaviour (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). Every parent is a member of several different reference groups and is influenced by these groups as well as by the **opinion leaders** in them. Marketing research has indicated that information does not flow directly from the mass media to individual consumers but is channelled through a person to validate the product or service and then communicate this to the group (Cant, 2010). Opinion leadership is a casual, face to face phenomenon and is usually inconspicuous and so locating opinion leaders for a school can be a

challenge. Consequently, school principals need to go about creating opinion leaders. In the current technological and social media environment, social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter can be the ideal place to identify true opinion and locate opinion leaders for schools.

2.10.3 Individual factors

Although the least useful concept in the study of consumer behaviour, decision-making is influenced by the individual characteristics of consumers or parents. Since these factors address the way parents outwardly express their inner-selves in their social and cultural environment, it is important for school principals to identify, understand and analyse the criteria and personal factors that influence school choice (Perreau, 2016). These reveal themselves in the 'tools' element of the CHAT activity system and include the myriad of factors that could influence a particular parent's choice of school. Specifically, school principals with regards to the school marketing mix, need to work on developing an image and personality of the school that conveys the traits and values (real or desired) of the parents they are trying to target. In so doing school principals additionally need to be aware of the non-traditional life-cycle paths that are common in current society (divorced parents, lifelong singles with children, mixed race families and single gender families with children) and provide insights into the needs of these parents as well (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012).

2.10.4 Psychological factors

With respect to the manner in which psychological factors influence school principals in their development of a school marketing mix, **motivation** is the starting point. Research indicates that to attract consumers, marketers should try to create, make conscious or reinforce a need in the consumers' mind so that they develop a purchase motivation (Perreau, 2016). For school principals this is easy since quality education is inherently a need to which parents are seeking a positive solution through the process of choosing the best possible school for their children. The **perception** of a situation, such as that of education, at any given time may

determine if and how a parent will act. As such, school principals need to firstly go about identifying the important attributes of price and quality that parents want in a school. Next they need to design signals in their marketing mix to communicate these attributes (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). An important aspect to take note of is that often consumers will relate the concepts price and quality with one another. To this end parents could perceive that a higher price associated with a school indicates a better quality school. Although unfounded, this is a real perception that needs consideration. As a result of selective exposure and the massive amount of stimuli to which parents are exposed to, school principals need to strive towards a marketing mix that is new or out of the ordinary as parents would be more likely to be attentive and remember this. Since **learning** takes place through the combination of action, experience and repetition, service provision must result in positive reinforcement and the marketing message must be repetitious (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). School principals must therefore ensure that they have satisfied parents that are happy to attest to this and schedule a continuous stream of messages that communicate positive reinforcement. Finally, although **beliefs and attitudes** are fairly set in a consumers' mind, it is still important for school principals to identify, understand and analyse the positive attitudes and beliefs as well as the negative ones so as to see how to adjust the marketing mix in order to get consumers to change their perception should this be needed.

From the above, developing an understanding of consumer behaviour is not a simple task for school principals. Parents may state their needs and desires but still act differently and they may respond to influences that change their decisions at the last minute. That being said, school principals should nevertheless seek to understand as much as possible in terms of the mental processors that yields decision-making and subsequently school choice, since many commonalities occur and all parents tend to follow more or less the same course of action when decisions are taken.

2.11 SUMMARY

This chapter has shown the need for a study that focuses on parental decision-making for school choice in a South African context that stems from consequences of apartheid policies. Parents desire to be informed education consumers regardless of social situation or circumstance and have many reasons for making the choices they do. These include academic, physical, social, geographic and school specific. Often the choice is not only a matter of accessing better resources but additionally involves making trade offs. The chapter further introduced CHAT and Choice theory as the theoretical framework to identify and describe the relationship between decision-making and South African history in the quest for perceived quality education and positive academic outcomes. Often the individual choices South African parents make are not so much about the reasons for choice but more about the constraints within which their choices are made. The schools influence on parental school choice through marketing was also explained. Marketing entails processes that focus on delivering value and benefits to customers. It uses a combination of product, price and promotional strategies to provide customers with the service, ideas, values and benefits they desire. The chapter was brought to an end by means of a section explaining the consumer decision-making process and the various cultural, social, individual and psychological factors influencing both consumers and school principals in their decision making. As a concluding comment, school choice by itself cannot be seen as being inherently good or bad. Some research has pointed to school choice as the civil rights struggle of the new century. Other research, sees it as a way to preserve family values or provide the curriculum and instruction parents think best for their children. Others still, the ability of school choice to improve both efficiency and equity in schools. All hold rational views and all hinge on a number of key issues including equality, access and opportunity.

Consequently, having established the reference framework for school choice, I am now in a position to move on to my own research, which is to investigate and identify the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies that influence parents when choosing a school in which to enrol their children with the intention to strengthen

their decision-making capacity and generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in marketing their schools in the South African context. What follows in the next chapter is an explanation of the research design and methodology used for this particular study.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review in Chapter two formed the bedrock of the structured questionnaire that was used to probe the perceptions of South African parents and school principals with respect to school choice. Furthermore, in arriving at an understanding of what is meant by school choice and how schools are marketing themselves as quality providing institutions, Chapter two ventured to locate school choice in South African within the broader framework of the concept on a global scale.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide clarity with regards to the research design as well as to outline the methodology used in this study for the purpose of data collection. According to Malhotra (2007), research design includes a number of components as depicted in figure 3.1 and these aspects will guide the discussion that follows in terms of the specific research design for this particular study.

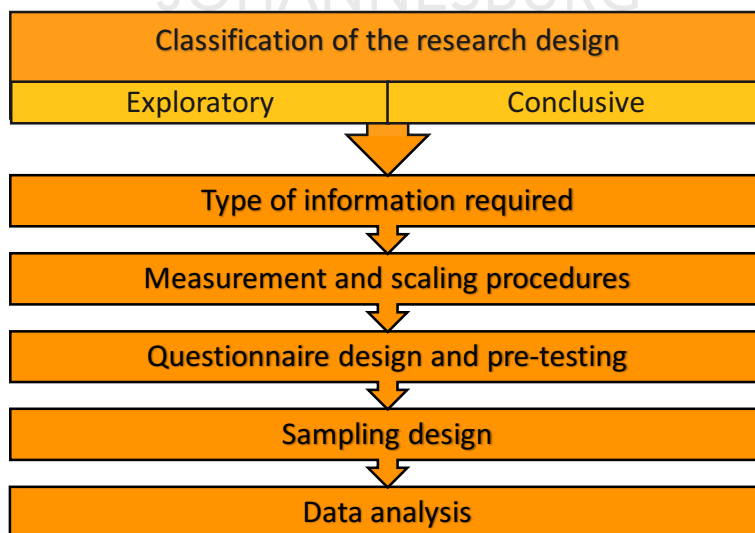


Figure 3.1

The components of research design

Source: Malhotra (2012:41)

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A research design is a road map for conducting research and provides details of each step in the research process (Malhotra, 2012). Put another way, it is an outline, framework or plan for the research project and is used to guide the collection and analysis of data (Wiidd & Diggins, 2009). As such, a research design is the structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research questions put forward by the researcher in chapter one (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The next section logically unpacks figure 3.1 and describes the research design I decided to use to operationalise this study.

3.2.1 Classification of the research design

According to Malhotra (2012), there are two broad types of research designs that classify research. A research design could either take on an exploratory or a conclusive character. Exploratory research is a loosely structured type of research whose aim is to obtain a better understanding of a problem and is not intended to provide conclusive information to determine a specific course of action (Zikmund & Babin, 2010). Based on this explanation, my research study did not fit the exploratory classification as the intention for my study was to strengthen parents decision-making processes and to generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in providing a quality education as perceived by parents. Consequently, this study follows the conclusive research design with a post-positivist paradigm. As opposed to exploratory research, conclusive research is more structured and is based on the assumption that the researcher has an accurate understanding of the problem, and that the information needed for addressing the problem can be clearly specified (Malhotra, 2012). The objective of conclusive research is to test specific hypotheses and to examine specific relationships. In order to achieve this, representative samples are used to collect data that is then analysed with statistical techniques (Malhotra, 2012). My research study matched this descriptive research design and within this paradigm allowed me the opportunity to collect data from parents who had just made a school choice decision or where about to do so with

the aim of developing explanations for relationships and describing trends in terms of responses from parents regarding school choice.

3.2.2 Type of information required

The literature review in Chapter two focused on clarifying the concept of school choice in the South African context and as such provided the type of information needed for the research design. Malhotra (2009) recommends that the information required for the research design should focus on the problem, the analytical framework, the research questions and hypotheses for the study. Accordingly, Chapter two unpacked and presented information pertaining to the above from a range of secondary sources including relevant books, journal articles and the internet. Since research on school choice and factors parents consider when making school choice decisions in South Africa is fairly limited, there was a strong justification to collect new information to obtain evidence to answer the research questions set for this study and to allow for both, the contextualisation of data and the identification of more generalizable patterns. In order to obtain this new information it was decided to make use of quantitative techniques. Quantitative refers to any approach to data collecting where the aim is to gather information that can be counted or measured in some form or another (Verma & Mallick, 1999). Consequently, a quantitative study making use of drop-off self-administered questionnaires as a survey technique, was used to establish the perceptions of parents and school principals regarding their decision-making processes with respect to school choice and how schools influence these decisions. For this reason, my research study can thus be described as quantitative research.

Quantitative research is used to gather information about people's attitudes, opinions, beliefs, demographics and behaviour. Information gathered from a sample of respondents can often be generalised to a population, provided certain data requirements such as given by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test are met (Field, 2009). The researcher's goal in quantitative research is objectivity, which implies that they avoid allowing their personal values, beliefs and biases from influencing the process of data collection and analysis. They therefore, typically administer

tests that require minimal personal interaction between themselves and the respondents (Keeves, 1997). Should interaction be necessary, for instance when conducting interviews, then they venture to standardize the process of interaction so that it is identical for every individual in the sample. The respondent's role in the research process on the other hand, is relatively passive since their function is to merely react to the researcher's questions and/or interventions (Borg, Gall & Gall, 1993).

The purpose of quantitative research is to make objective descriptions of a limited set of phenomena and also to determine whether the phenomena can be controlled through certain interventions. Thus, the initial quantitative study of a research problem typically involves a precise description of the phenomena and a search for pertinent variables and their interrelationships. Ultimately, a theory is formulated to account for the empirical findings (Borg *et al.*, 1993). Dzvimbo (1995) is in agreement with this but in addition asserts that deductive reasoning is fundamental to quantitative research.

Deductive reasoning assumes that a researcher should be able to proceed from general statements to statements that are more specific and which are objective and independent of human experience. The main principle underlying deductive reasoning is that generalisations or theories which come out of research may be applicable to a larger number of cases or situations (Keeves, 1997). The aim of such conclusions is to find general laws that are applicable to similar situations or populations represented by the sample that has just been investigated. Quantitative researchers assume that they can establish rules that would lead to reliable prediction and control of educational phenomena and view this as their function as they search for irregularities in the behaviour of people being sampled (Borg *et al.*, 1993:195). This search is aided by statistical analyses that reveal trends in the sample's behaviour. Researchers believe that such trends or laws are sufficiently strong to have practical value, even though they do not allow for perfect prediction or control.

In order to achieve the above and to make generalisations regarding parental school choice in South Africa, information gleaned from the literature review and items to measure variables that emerged as important determinates or factors in decision-making with regards to exercising school choice, was constructed and compiled into a drop-off self-administered questionnaire. This specific survey technique was chosen for a number of reasons as per Debois (2016). Firstly, highly trained fieldworkers were not a requirement for this technique as school principals, or educators were more than adequate to deliver the questionnaires to parents, requesting them to be completed and returned to school by a specific date. Secondly, response rates using this technique are usually high, as in this study children were accountable to principals and educators in terms of encouraging their parents to complete and return the questionnaires. Thirdly, lengthy questionnaires could be used without affecting the response rate, as parents could complete them at home at a time convenient to them and this technique was thus less time consuming than interviews. Questionnaires are in addition, a simple way to gather diverse responses to questions from a number of different people's opinions which was necessary for this study, and data arising out of the questionnaire could easily be captured and quantified with the use of a software package. The above reasons coupled with the cost effectiveness of the technique made it an obvious choice for this study.

3.2.3 Measurement and scaling procedures

Measurement can be described as an activity of obtaining meaning through the process of assigning numbers in a reliable and valid way to some property of a phenomenon (Zikmund & Babin, 2010). For numbers to be associated with specific characteristics of objects being measured, a one-to-one correspondence must exist between the two (Malhotra, 2012). Scaling is an extension to measurement and refers to procedures that attempt to determine quantitative measures of subjective or abstract concepts (McDaniel & Gates, 2010). It can be either unidimensional or multidimensional and involves the creation of a continuum upon which measured objects are placed (Malhotra, 2009). As such, the researcher was guided by the research objectives, questions and hypotheses (Table 4.30, 4.32, 4.34, 4.36, 4.38)

for this study, and had to decide what needed to be measured and what scales to use. To this end, two questionnaires were compiled, one for parents consisting of personal, attitudinal and behavioural questions to determine trends in their thinking with regards to school choice, and a second, for school principals with respect to their behaviour in terms of promotional mechanisms for school marketing and the administration of school admission. In both questionnaires a combination of nominal, ordinal and interval scales of measurement were used.

Nominal scale questions use numbers as labels or tags for identifying and classifying objects. This type of questioning is among the most commonly used in research and in this study were mainly used in section A of both the questionnaires to capture the personal and general information of respondents with regards to the school choice study.

Questions using ordinal scales, have the labelling characteristics of nominal scales that allow researchers to determine whether an object has more or less of a characteristic than that of some other object being measured. Questions of this nature were used in section B of the parental questionnaire to determine the three most influential factors, three most important sources of information, and three greatest obstacles to school choice as perceived by parents.

Interval scale of measurement questions contain all the information of ordinal scales, but in addition also allow for the comparison of differences between objects. In an effort to draw on these comparisons, some sort of a scaling technique is necessary. For the purpose of this study, a non-comparative five point and in some instances, four point Likert-type scale was used. Likert scales present respondents with a set of attitude statements to which they are asked to indicate whether they strongly agree or strongly disagree. In this way respondents are placed along a continuum with respect to their attitude towards a situation, person, object or institution (Malhotra, 2009). Parents, in communicating the extent to which a variety of factors influence their decision to choose a particular school in the parental questionnaire, could thus choose from a range between 1 – not at all influential, to 5 – extremely influential. Similarly, principals in conveying the extent

to which their schools used each factor to influence parents to choose their school in the principal's questionnaire, could choose between 1 – to no extent at all, to 4 – to a large extent. Questions in the parental questionnaire to determine sources of information and obstacles in making school choice decisions and in the principal questionnaire, the question to determine the extent to which promotional mechanisms are used to influence parents' decision making, likewise used scales with similar features that could measure a wide range of constructs and could easily be linked to factor analysis.

A final aspect to take note of with regards measurement and scaling is the use of single-item and multiple-item scale questions. A single-item scale involves collecting data about only one attribute of the object or construct being investigated and the respondent is asked a single question and offers only one possible response. A single-item scale design was used at the end of both questionnaires, where parents and principals alike were asked whether they believed that school choice influenced quality of education and academic achievement. Multiple-scale questions are based on the premise that a concept, respondent, or object might be better described by using several factors (McDaniel & Gates, 2010). As such these questions include several statements relating to the object or construct being examined. Each statement has a rating scale attached to it and the researcher will typically sum the ratings on the individual statements to obtain a summated or overall rating for the object or construct. This multiple-scale design was used to categorise reasons why parents choose and how this compared to what principals thought parents wanted when making school choice decisions.

3.2.4 Questionnaire design and pre-testing

The use of a questionnaire is the most basic instrument and most widely used technique a researcher can use to gather quantitative data when making use of a descriptive research design. A questionnaire is designed in order to obtain information from respondents and allows researchers to standardise data collection, thereby enabling them to analyse the data in a consistent and uniform manner (Malhotra, 2012). The design of the empirical investigation for this study as already

discussed was two drop-off self-administered questionnaires, one for parents and one for principals (Annexure B and C). These questionnaires were developed by the researcher by analysing the research objectives set in Chapter 1 and converting them into relevant questions after taking into consideration the literature review of school choice in Chapter 2. It is held that every question in the questionnaire should contribute to the information needed to serve the purpose of the study (Malhotra, 2012; McDaniel & Gates, 2010) and to this end, this process was assisted by the ongoing guidance and support of my supervisor and STATCON statistician. A cover letter explaining the objective of the study to respondents was designed and this constituted the start of the questionnaire. At a glance, respondents would thus know what the questionnaire was about. The cover letter also included a statement of anonymity, the researcher's contact details and an approximation of the amount of time it would take to complete the questionnaire. The items related to the study were then presented in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire designed for parents consisted of two sections. Section A comprised of 8 questions relating to the socio-demographic details of respondents. Questions were aimed to measure position in the family, age, marital status, home language, employment status, highest academic qualification, combined monthly gross income and population group. These questions were judged necessary to establish any demographic differences regarding the importance parents attach to choice factors when selecting a school for their children to attend. Section B consisted of 14 questions that investigated a number of relevant topics relating to school choice. Question 7 contained 45 items aimed to explore choice factors that might influence a parents' decision to choose a particular school. Parents were required to indicate the level of influence for each item using a five point Likert scale. Question 8 considered the relative importance of the top three choice factors from question 7, and parents were asked to rank their three most influential factors. Question 9 probed the sources of information parents might look into when making a school choice decision which contained 16 items to be rated. Once again parents were asked to list their three most important sources in question 10. Question 11, using 11 items, examined obstacles that parents might have encountered when making the school choice decision, and again in question 12, the three greatest

obstacles were asked for. The questionnaire concluded with two questions pertaining to how important parents felt school choice was when associated with educational quality and academic achievement.

The questionnaire designed for principals followed a similar chain of thought with some subtle differences. Section A consisted of 10 questions aimed to establish the biographical information of principals and their schools in terms of their gender, age, years of service, highest academic qualification, type of school, language of instruction, section 21 status and quintile ranking. Section B was specifically designed to determine how schools promote themselves as quality providing institutions and what principals thought the most important factors to influence parental school choice was. Question 1 consisted of 17 items and focused on the promotional mechanisms used to influence the decisions parents make regarding school choice. Question 2 scrutinised the factors that could be used by the school to influence parental choice and was made up of 38 items. These items bar a few, were the same items presented to parents in question 7 of the parental questionnaire and the purpose of this was to determine consistency of thought between parents and principals. Question 3 inspected issues surrounding the school's admission policy, and ended once again with the same two questions presented to parents regarding educational quality, academic achievement and school choice.

Both questionnaires ended with a voluntary request to provide contact details for a follow-up interview should the researcher deem this necessary. Every effort was made to ensure that the wording of questions was clear, unambiguous, unbiased, and that no generalisations, approximations or assumptions were made. These semantic issues together with determining the sequencing of questions and layout of the questionnaire was made possible by means of conducting a pilot study. The main purpose of a pilot study is, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (1997), to ensure that respondents have no difficulty in answering the questions and that there will be no problems in recording the data. The pre-testing of any questionnaire is a critical activity that should be conducted prior to administering the questionnaire for the specific purpose of the researcher to look for any misinterpretations by

respondents, lack of continuity if any, to determine whether any problems in terms of question content, wording and sequencing occur, to increase respondents interest levels in an effort to ensure that they are engaged and encouraged to complete the entire questionnaire and in general to look for ways in which to improve the overall quality of the questionnaire (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

In this study and for the purpose of the pilot, the initial questionnaire was developed and pre-tested on five parents and one principal to determine the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies in making the best possible school choice decision and how schools in turn influence this process. Each of the piloted respondents received a questionnaire to complete with the researcher at hand, and had the opportunity to ask for clarity or to indicate to the researcher any possible problems and/or misunderstandings with regards to the topic and the questionnaire. Based on the feedback received, some minor changes were made with respect to wording for example, the word 'Government' used to describe state schools was changed to 'Public' throughout both questionnaires, 'Monthly gross income' in the parental questionnaire was changed to 'Combined monthly gross income' and item twelve in the principal questionnaire was changed from 'External links with feeder schools' to 'Communication with feeder schools'. Having made these recommended changes, it was believed that the questionnaire was ready to be distributed to a final sample of parents and principals chosen for the study.

3.2.5 Sampling design

Sampling is the process of selecting a certain quantity of individuals for a study, referred to as a subset or sample, in such a way that these individuals become representative of the larger universe or population from which they were chosen. In this way the findings of the sample can be used in making estimates or generalisations of the larger group (McDaniel & Gates, 2012).

In selecting an accurate sample for this study, the first step was to define the target population. The object/s from which the researcher wanted to obtain information from was described as middle class parents who had recently engaged in or where

about to engage with the school choice decision. This included grade R, grade 1, grade 7 and grade 8 parents. The entity and extent where these objects could be found were defined as schools in the West Rand of Gauteng (Mogale City), South Africa with similar socio-economic status. Once this target population had been established, the next step was to decide on an appropriate sampling technique.

Researchers have one of two alternatives to choose from when deciding on their technique and they include either probability sampling or non-probability sampling. Probability sampling or random sampling is a sampling technique in which every member of the population has a non-zero probability or equal chance of being selected. Non-probability sampling, on the other hand is a more subjective technique that does not make use of chance but rather where objects are selected on the basis of personal judgement or convenience (Zikmund & Babin, 2010). For the purpose of this study, a non-probability sampling technique was chosen.

Participant selection was performed by way of purposive sampling of middle class parents and schools in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, specifically the West Rand (Mogale City). The schools selected by the researcher for the parent questionnaire included 1 early childhood development center, 1 public primary school that included a pre-primary grade, 1 private primary school, 1 private high school, 1 public high school and 2 home schooling units in the area. For the principal questionnaire, the principal at each of the above schools was asked to complete a questionnaire and then a decision was made to engage in a variation of respondent-driven sampling with the aim of increasing the sample size as the above did not present itself to be sufficient. The sample size for the principal questionnaire was considerably smaller than that of the parent questionnaire, but this was felt sufficient since the research regarding the perceptions of principals with regards to school choice was embedded in the main purpose of this study and was conducted purely to determine synergy between parent and principal perceptions and to point out some of the dynamics around school choice within the context of the study.

The reasons associated with the sampling technique for both questionnaires were firstly, cost effectiveness and secondly, because the researcher was able to include

the particular targeted sample that would be appropriate for the study as well as providing a variety of different school sets. Although these forms of non-probability sampling methods are subjective and do run the risk of being over-weighted in terms of accessibility, this can be overcome by the expertise and creativity of the researcher.

With the questionnaire finalised and the sample defined, what remained was to initiate the study. To operationalise the study, parent and principal questionnaires were handed out to principals of the various school subsets to distribute to specified respondents and to complete themselves were necessary. Table 3.1 summarises how the sampling plan materialised in terms of questionnaire handouts and return statistics.

In this study a response rate of 62% was realised for parents and 73% for principals. Although response rate itself is not reflective of survey quality, what is important is the reflective non-response bias. Non-response bias poses a threat to the reliability and validity of the study findings (Fincham, 2008). This research suffers from a non-response bias of 38% and 27% respectively for parents and principals. As these percentages are below 40% they are considered to be acceptable.

Table 3.1: Sample realisation rate

Parent Questionnaire			
Type of School	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage (%) returned
Early Childhood development centre	20	5	25%
Public primary school	200	156	78%
Private primary school	60	36	60%
Public secondary school	200	91	46%
Private secondary school	60	33	55%
Home school units	60	53	88%
Total	600	374	62%

Principal Questionnaire			
Type of School	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage (%) returned
Public Primary school	2	1	50%
Public Secondary school	20	16	80%
Home school	2	2	100%
Private Combined school	5	2	40%
Private nursery school	1	1	100%
Total	30	22	73%

The final phase of the research design is data analysis. At this point, the researcher will probe the extent of agreement between parents on the West Rand of Gauteng regarding reasons for their school choice and the possible influence of school marketing and the administration of school admission by school principals on this said choice through statistical analysis.

3.2.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is the research process where data collected through the questionnaire is converted into a format that can be read and manipulated by a computer software program to inform the research problem (Malhotra, 2012). This process called data preparation involves firstly, validating data. In order to validate the data, questionnaires need to be checked to ensure that the quality of the data gathered is correct and acceptable. Editing follows validation. Editing is the process where raw data is checked for mistakes by respondents (McDaniel & Gates, 2010). Validation and editing were performed by the researcher by physically going through each questionnaire to ensure that it was complete, consistent and correct. Those that were found to be incomplete, where some sections of the questionnaire were found to be unfinished and in other instances where it was clear that the respondent did not understand the survey, these questionnaires were disregarded and extracted based on the grounds of being non-usable. Coding the next step in data preparation, refers to the process of grouping

and assigning numeric codes to respondents answers to various questions (McDaniel & Gates, 2010). In this study pre-coding had already been applied in the design of the questionnaire and thus required no further attention by the researcher at this stage.

Once the above is satisfactory, data capture can commence. Here coded data is directly entered into a computer software package that enables the research analyst to manipulate and transform the raw data into useful information for data analysis (Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2006). For the purpose of this study, data was entered into the SPSS software package 15.0 by data capturers from STATCON at the University of Johannesburg after which it was cleaned. Errors often occur during data capture and the process of checking and rectifying these human errors is called cleaning (Wiid & Diggins, 2009). All of the above was conducted with the view of determining which of the indicators involved in the choice factors presented in the questionnaire were the best predictors for parental school choice.

In order to achieve and accomplish the above it was necessary to present the descriptive statistics, determine the distribution of results, ensure validity and reliability, state and test hypotheses and then to engage in factor analysis.

3.3 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

When one attempts to determine the perceptions of parents and principals using a structured questionnaire it is important for the instrument to be valid and reliable. Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. A measure is reliable when different attempts at measuring something converge on the same result every time (Malhotra, 2012). Joppe (2000) postulates, that an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as being reliable if the results of the study can be reproduced under a similar methodology. Reliability therefore represents the quality of a research instrument, in this case the questionnaire, in terms of its ability to measure variables consistently. This proves particularly problematic however, in the social sciences, simply because human behaviour and experiences are dynamic and continuously change over time

(Merriam, 1998). Even so, in this particular study the Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficient was used in order to determine the internal reliability of the questionnaire. By calculating this coefficient, it is possible to determine how each statement in the factor corresponds to the scale as a whole, as well as to each one of the other statements. These statistics provide an indication of the average correlation among all the items that make up the scale. Scales with a Coefficient-Alpha of between 0.80 and 0.95 are considered to have very good reliability as was the case for the questionnaire in this study. Reliability is necessary to make casual assessments about the research and to make statements about validity.

Validity, according to Joppe (2000), determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. This opinion is concurred by Malhotra (2012) and Nueman (2003) defines validity as the extent to which differences in observed scale scores reflect true differences between objects on the characteristics being measured, rather than systematic or random error. Validity as such is therefore not absolute and should be viewed as a matter of degree. In other words, in all types of research there is a measure of error or bias and at best one has to strive to minimize invalidity and maximize validity. Three types of validity can be differentiated (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Malhotra, 2012). For the purpose of this research, however, only content and construct validity will be clarified.

In order for an instrument to have content validity, it must show that it fairly and comprehensively includes the field it purports to include (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). To this end, items included in the structured questionnaire were carefully selected to ensure that they complied with the subject domain as presented in the literature review in Chapter 2. In addition to this, and in an attempt to improve the content validity, the questionnaire was also pre-tested and edited by my supervisor who is an expert in the faculty of education, and my statistician from STATCON, to ensure that the items in the questionnaire covered a representative sample of the behaviour domain.

Construct validity is the extent to which the variables under investigation are completely and accurately identified prior to hypothesising any functional relationships (Malhotra, 2012). In this type of validity, agreement is sought on the 'operationalised' form of a construct, which is abstract in nature. Thus anytime one translates a concept or construct into a functioning and operating reality and in order to establish construct validity, one would need to be assured that one's construction of an issue such as creativity, anxiety, intelligence and motivation agrees with other constructions of the same underlying issue (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The construct is the initial concept, notion, question or hypothesis that determines which data is to be gathered and how it is to be gathered. Thus, construct validity of the structured questionnaire in this study was investigated by means of an exploratory factor analysis in order to uncover the underlying structure of constructs. Factor analysis is a statistical data reduction technique used to explain variability among observed random variables in terms of fewer unobserved random variables called factors and for this particular study will be unpacked and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 where data is analysed and interpreted.

Once reliability and validity had been established, hypotheses could be formulated and tested.

3.4 HYPOTHESES

A hypothesis is an assumption or theory that a researcher makes about some characteristic of the population being investigated (McDaniel & Gates, 2010). To determine whether a result obtained in a sample is due to chance or whether it is a reflection of what is happening in the population, the researcher uses hypothesis testing. In this process, the researcher begins by constructing a hypothesis and proceeds towards proving this. In this study, use will be made of such statistical hypotheses and these will be examined in detail in Chapter 4. This section serves purely to describe the process involved in hypotheses testing.

A statistical hypothesis usually postulates the opposite of what the researcher predicts or expects. In this form it is known as a null hypothesis. The sample results

are due to chance alone and will be represented by the symbol H_0 . If the researcher thus expects that there will be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of married and single or divorced parents with regards to school choice, then the hypothesis will be stated in its null form to read:

H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference, between the mean scores of married and single or divorced parents with regards to school choice.

The alternative hypothesis occurs when sample results reflect what is happening in the population. In this form it is represented by the symbol H_a , will be stated as:

H_a : There is a statistically significant difference, between the mean scores of married and single or divorced parents with regards to school choice.

The null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis if a statistical significant difference is found between the mean scores of married and single or divorced parents concerning school choice.

For this study, to determine whether results obtained in the sample were due to chance or whether they were a reflection of what was happening in the population, the following will be hypothesised in Chapter 4:

- Differences between mothers and fathers with respect to their position in the family regarding school choice obstacles (Table 4.30)
- Differences with respect to parent's home language and the importance they attach to school choice factors (Table 4.32)
- Differences with respect to parent's combined monthly gross income and the importance they attach to school choice factors (Table 4.34)
- Differences with respect to parent's highest academic qualification and the importance they attach to school choice factors (Table 4.36)
- Differences with respect to parent's choice of type of school and the importance they attach to school choice factors (Table 4.38)

Before embarking on the analysis of the data derived from the questionnaires used in this study, mention needs to be made of the biographical details of respondents who participated in the study.

3.5 ANALYSIS OF SECTION A BIOGRAPHIC PROFILES

3.5.1 Parents

The biographical profile of middle class parents from the West side of Gauteng (Mogale City) who had recently engaged in or where about to engage in a school choice decision are indicated in the form of charts which denote the representative nature as well as discriminative information of parents making up the sample.

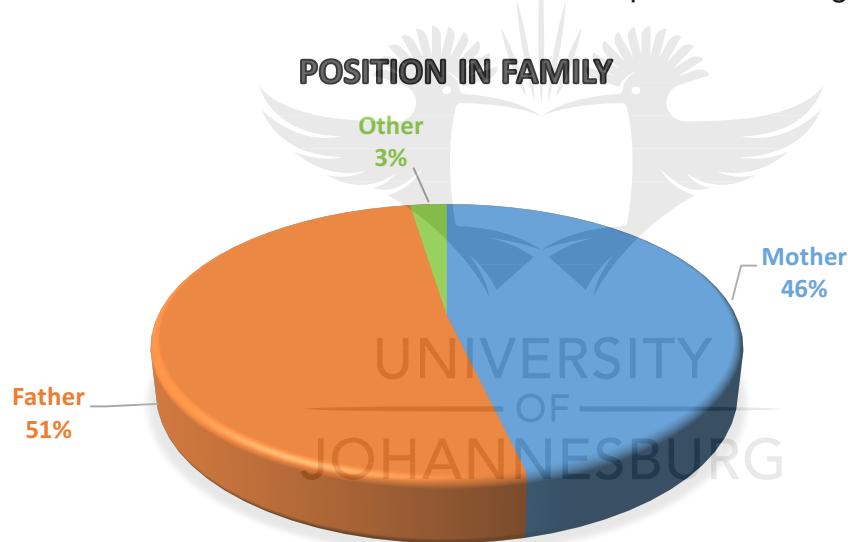


Figure 3.2: Position in family

Table 3.2: Position in family

POSITION IN FAMILY	Frequency	%
Mother	172	46
Father	190	51
Other	9	2
Missing	3	1
Total	374	100

This sample represents the status of parents and indicates that most respondents who completed the questionnaire were fathers at 51%. Mothers, however, came in relatively close with 46%, while grandmothers, guardians and uncles made up the 'other' category of 2%. From this data, there is no way to determine whether parents collaborated in providing answers to the questionnaire and as such no assumptions can be made with regards to who dominates the school choice decision. This was confirmed by the response to Question 1 in Section B of the questionnaire where parents were asked, "Who was involved in making the school choice decision?". 51% of respondents answered 'parents' and 41% indicated 'parents and children together'. It should be noted, from this data that no child-headed households formed part of the sample.

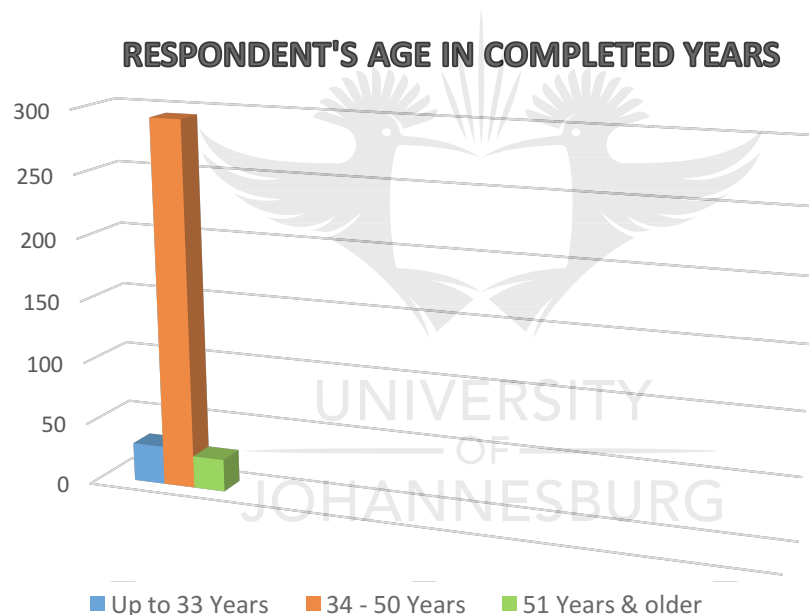


Figure 3.3: Age

Table 3.3: Age

AGE	Frequency	%
Up to 33 years	31	8
34 – 50 years	294	79
51 years & older	26	7
Missing	23	6
Total	374	100

The respondents' ages ranged from 23 years to 74 years. This sample representation indicates that the majority of parents surveyed (79%), were older than 33 years and were aged between 34 and 50 years of age. The average age of respondents was 41. This average age was seen to be representative since both parents of young children entering grade 1 (primary school) and parents of older children entering grade 8 (secondary school) formed part of the sample.

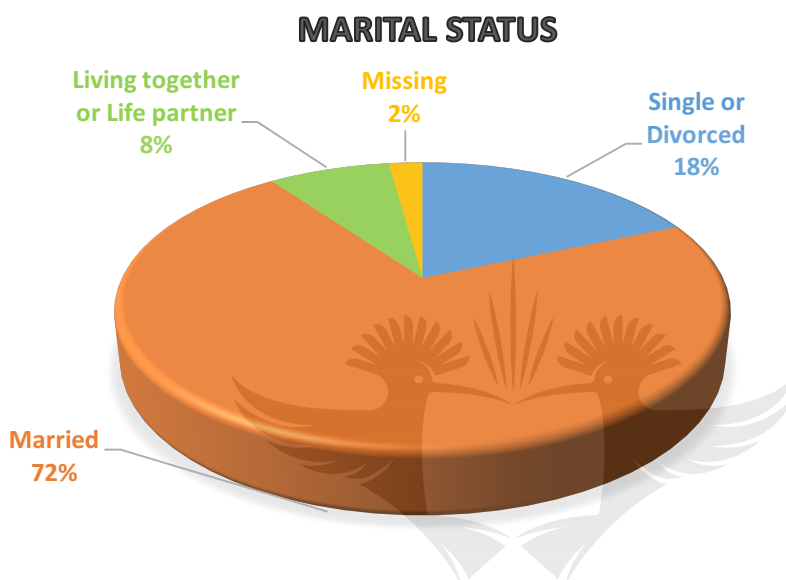


Figure 3.4: Marital status

Table 3.4: Marital status

MARITAL STATUS	Frequency	%
Single or Divorced	69	18
Married	268	72
Living together or Life partner	29	8
Missing	8	2
Total	374	100

According to Statistics South Africa (2011), 26.6% of the Mogale City population is married, 1.8% divorced and 11.4% living together as life partners. In my particular sample, the vast majority of parents surveyed indicated that they were married (72%) with 18% being single or divorced and only 8% living together or life partners. Being married and having two substantial incomes is essential to being part of the affluent middle class according to new research by the Roosevelt Institute (2011).

Consequently, based on the data displayed above, this sample of parents is thus thought to be representative of a middle class data set.

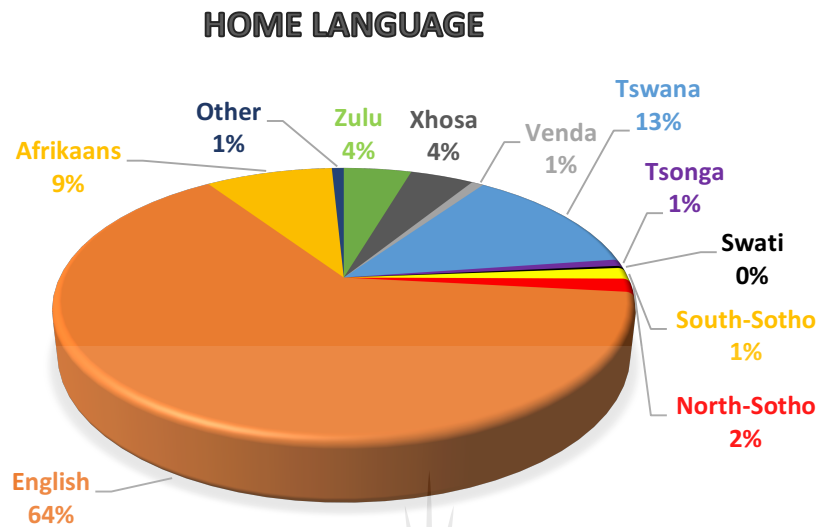


Figure 3.5: Home language

Table 3.5: Home language

HOME LANGUAGE	Frequency	%
Zulu	17	4
Xhosa	16	4
Venda	3	1
Tswana	49	13
Tsonga	3	1
Swati	1	0
South-Sotho	5	1
North-Sotho	6	2
English	239	64
Afrikaans	32	9
Other	3	1
Total	374	100

In this question respondents were asked to indicate their home language. Although all 11 official languages were listed, English dominated with 64%, next came Tswana at 13% and then Afrikaans with 9%. The 'Other' category indicated 1% of the sample having Gujrati and Shona as their home language. Interestingly of the

above parents sampled, 92% selected English as the preferred language of instruction for their children to be educated in question 6 of Section B. This data is in line with statistics for Mogale City (statssa, 2011), where the most common language is Tswana at 31% with Afrikaans at 16.8% and English at 9.5%. Other languages are present and together make up the remainder percentage.

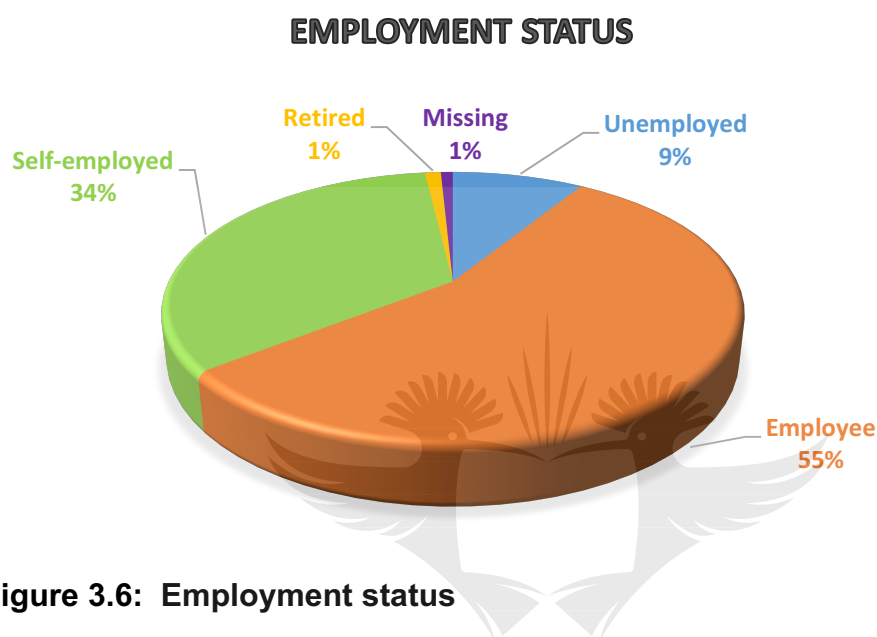


Figure 3.6: Employment status

Table 3.6: Employment status

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Frequency	%
Unemployed	33	9
Employed	208	55
Self-employed	126	34
Retired	4	1
Missing	3	1
Total	374	100

According to figures released by Statistics South Africa (2011), South Africa's unemployment rate peaked to 25.5% in the third quarter of 2015. In Mogale City, 134 635 people are economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work), and of these, 24.6% are unemployed. The majority of parents in this study described themselves as either being employed (55%) or self-employed (34%) with

only 9% of the sample unemployed at the time of the survey. As such, these statistics point towards an affluent middle class socio-economic status.

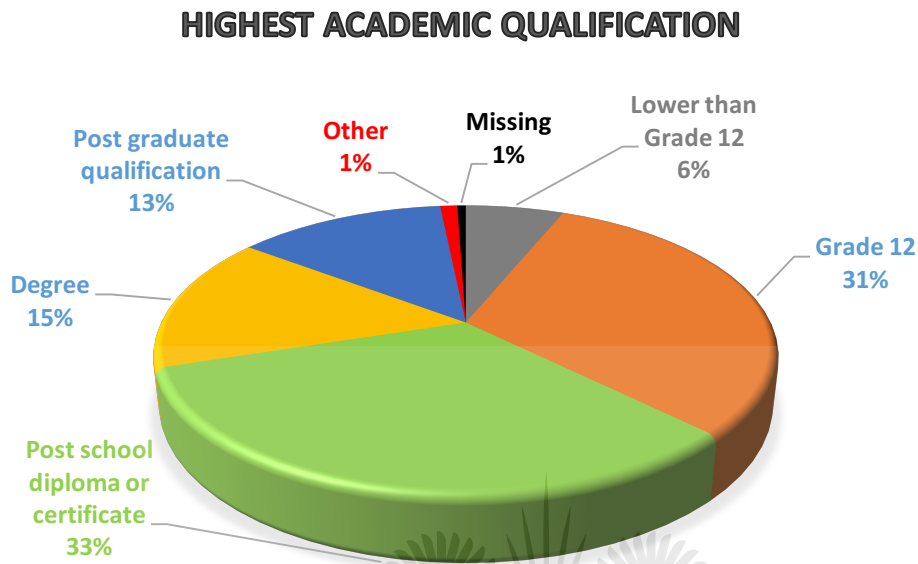


Figure 3.7: Highest academic qualification

Table 3.7: Highest academic qualification

HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	Frequency	%
Lower than Grade 12	23	6
Grade 12	117	31
Post school diploma or certificate	122	33
Degree	57	15
Post graduate qualification	49	13
Other	4	1
Missing	2	1
Total	374	100

In terms of respondent's level of education, the sample representation indicates that most parents surveyed have either a grade 12 (31%) or a post school diploma or certificate (33%). Only 15% of parents hold a degree and 13% a post graduate qualification. The 'Other' category specified a National Training Certificate (NTC) level 4 and a level 4 in Early Childhood Development (ECD). Both of these could have been placed in the 'Post school diploma or certificate' category. In terms of statistics for Mogale City, Statistics South Africa reports (2011) that 32.6% of the

population have completed grade 12, and 14.2% have some form of higher education. The data displayed above is in accordance with these figures and thus representative.

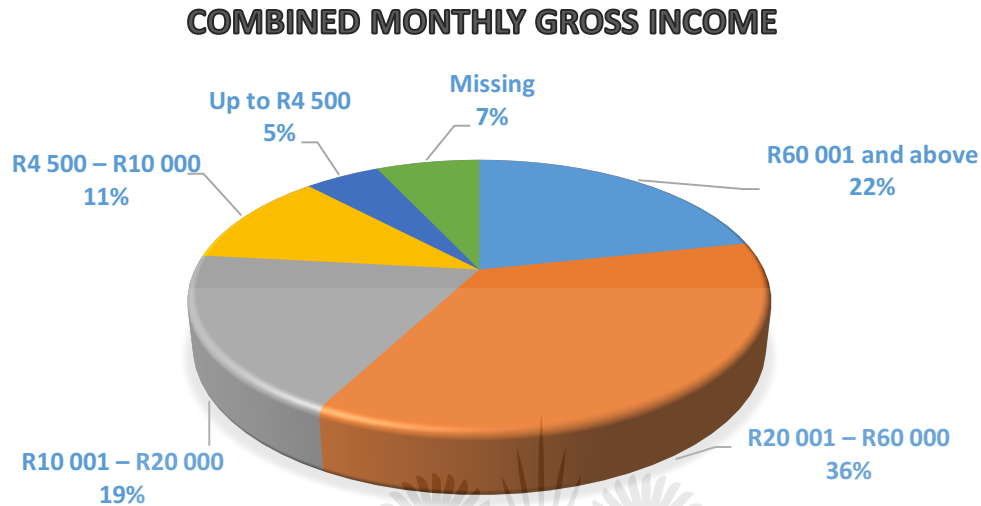


Figure 3.8: Combined monthly gross income

Table 3.8: Combined monthly gross income

COMBINED MONTHLY GROSS INCOME	Frequency	%
Up to R4500	19	5
R4500 – R10 000	42	11
R10 001 – R20 000	71	19
R20 001 – R60 000	135	36
R60 001 and above	81	22
Missing	26	7
Total	374	100

This question speaks towards the socio-economic status of respondents. As per Statistics South Africa (2011) for Mogale City, and in terms of average household income the following is evident. 3.6% of the population earn up to R4 800pm, 5.6% between R4 801 – R9 600, 14.2% between R9 601 – R19 600, 18.6% between R19 601 – R38 200 and 14.1% between R38 201 – R76 400. There are a number of different theories defining the middle class, and how much one needs to earn to fall into this category. Also, it is important to establish what is meant by middle class

in South Africa, as this definition is complicated because of the low average and median levels of incomes in the country and the very wide distribution of income (Visagie, 2013). The Collins dictionary (nd) defines the middle class as the socioeconomic class between the working class and the upper class, usually including professionals, highly skilled labourers', and lower and middle management. While this is true, in South Africa, economist Justin Visagie (2013) describes the middle class as a household of four persons with a total income of between R5 600 and R40 000 per month after direct income tax. In relation to the data displayed above, the percentages are therefore most certainly comparable and as such, the sample could be thought to be representative of an affluent middle class segment of the population.

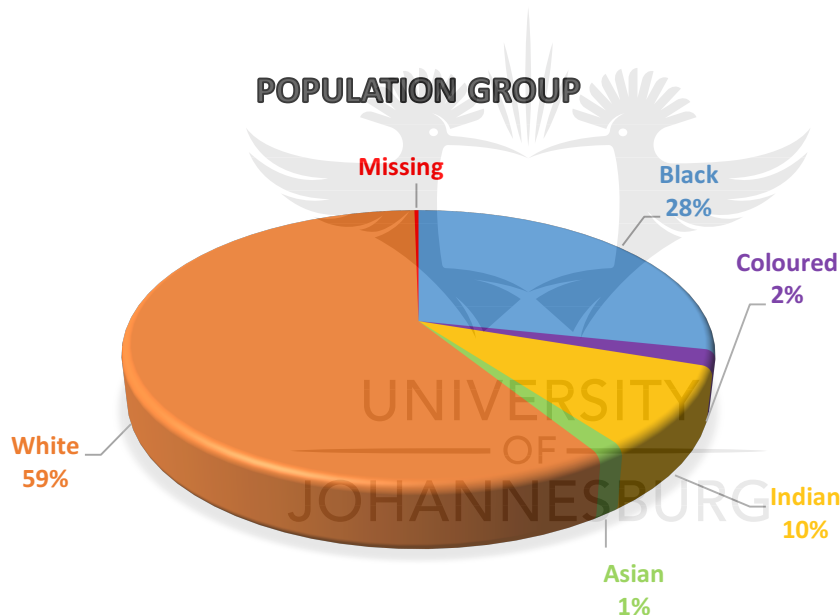


Figure 3.9: Population group

Table 3.9: Population group

POPULATION GROUP	Frequency	%
Black	106	28
Coloured	7	2
Indian/Asian	41	11
White	219	59
Missing	1	0
Total	374	100

The racial composition of the sample was ascertained using this question. Mogale city has a total population of 820 995 of people, of which 75.6% are black, 21% are white, 0,8% are coloured, and 2,2% are Indian/Asian. My Data revealed that approximately two thirds of parents surveyed were white (59%), with one third making up people of colour (41%). Of this 41%, 28% were black, 11% Indian/Asian, and 2 % coloured. Although not representative of the demographics of South Africa or the area, the sample does represent all population groups and is typical of parents at functional schools especially in Mogale City on the West Rand of Gauteng.

From the above charts and information, it was established that respondents provided a reasonably representative profile of middle class parents in Western Gauteng, South Africa. These parents are increasingly making decisions regarding where to send their children to school and thus it is important for Principals to know what parents want and expect from schools in providing a quality education for their children.

3.5.2 Principals

In order to gain insight to the demographic profile of principals in terms of their perception of school choice, section A of the principal's questionnaire established a number of details. These included information on gender, age, years of service, highest academic qualification, union status, and then specific aspects with respect to the school they managed. This information is summarised in Table 3.2 and is not to hold principal's representative, but rather to establish whether synergy exists between the perceptions of parents and principals regarding school choice.

Table 3.10: Demographic profile of Principals and the schools they manage

Variable	Overall	
Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	7	32
Female	15	68
Total	22	100
Years of Service	Frequency	Percentage %
Less than one year	2	9
1 – 2 years	5	23
3 – 6 years	2	9
7 years or longer	13	59
Total	22	100
Highest Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage %
Post school diploma or certificate	1	5
Degree	10	45
Post graduated qualification	11	50
Total	22	100
Union Status	Frequency	Percentage %
Does not belong to a union	5	23
Belong to a union	17	77
Total	22	100
Type of School	Frequency	Percentage %
Public Primary school	1	4
Public Secondary school	16	73
Home school	2	9
Other	3	14
Total	22	100

Variable	Overall	
Schools historic classification prior to 1994	Frequency	Percentage %
House of Representative school	2	9
House of Delegate school	6	27
House of Assembly school	3	14
Schools historic classification prior to 1994	Frequency	Percentage %
Department of Education and Training School	4	18
Don't know	3	14
Missing	4	18
Total	22	100
Section 21 Status of the school	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	16	72
No	1	5
Unsure	1	5
Missing	4	18
Total	22	100
Quintile ranking of the school	Frequency	Percentage %
Quintile 1	0	0
Quintile 2	2	9
Quintile 3	2	9
Quintile 4	0	0
Quintile 5	12	55
Missing	6	27
Total	22	100
Schools language of instruction	Frequency	Percentage %
Zulu	1	5
English	20	90
Afrikaans	1	5
Total	22	100

From Table 3.2, and of the principals that responded to the questionnaire, 32% were male and 68% female. This is fairly significant as in the past although females have always dominated the teaching profession, males were usually the ones promoted into management positions. This representation therefore could point to the fact that the gender bias in promotion that was evident in the past in South African schools is in a process of change.

The majority of principals at 66%, were aged between 40 and 55 years of age, while 17% were younger than 40 and 17% older than 55. I believe this to be representative as most educators being promoted into management positions must have worked themselves up through the various post levels in order to be eligible for these positions. 59% of the sample had served as a principal for 7 years or longer and as such it could be assumed that most were fairly established in their position as head of school and could thus provide valid and reliable information.

All principals in the sample had some form of tertiary education, with 50% having earned a post-graduate qualification. These are encouraging statistics in that principals it seems, do attach value to enhancing their qualifications to make them more effective in their positions.

With regards union status, 77% of principals belong to a union, while 23% did not.

A number of various school sub-sets that principals managed were included in the sample including, 1 public primary school, 16 public secondary schools, 2 private combined schools, 1 private nursery school and 2 home schooling units in the area. From the data, the sample is therefore over represented by secondary schools but since the object of the questionnaire was to determine principals perceptions of school choice it was felt that the difference between a primary school and secondary school principal would not make a difference. The majority of schools that principals managed in the sample were formerly House of Delegate schools (27%) designated for the Indian population group during apartheid. Next with 18% were former Department of Education and Training schools (for black children) and then House of Assembly schools (14%) which made provision for white children.

Interestingly 14% of principals did not know the historical status of their school prior to 1994 and 18% of principals did not complete the question. Thus it could be asserted that in fact 32% of principals did not know the classification of their school during the apartheid era.

The sample representation indicates that 72% of respondents were certain of their school's section 21 status (South Africa, 1996 (a): Section 21) and their ability to exercise financial freedom in certain aspects of financial management within the school. 28% however, of the sample either did not know their school's status, were unsure of the status or did not answer the question. This is a concern as sound financial management is integral to providing quality education.

Linked to a school's section 21 status is its quintile ranking. Here 55% of respondents indicated a quintile 5 ranking, indicating that more than half of the sample are classified as amongst the least poor of schools establishing a middle class socio-economic status.

Finally, the main language of instruction used in the schools investigated was English which is representative as this is the official medium of instruction as per the Department of Education in South Africa. Of interest is that one school depicted its medium of instruction as being that of Zulu.

3.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter a description of the empirical investigation as proposed by Malhotra (2012) was provided. It included an exposition of the research design, the type of information required, measurement and scaling procedures, questionnaire design and pre-testing, sampling design and the process to be followed for data analysis. Issues surrounding validity, reliability and hypothesis testing were explained. Charts and tables identifying respondents making up the sample were presented as well as the sample realisation rate of the questionnaire. Consequently, this has prepared the way for the application of the questionnaire and the statistical processing of the collected data.

In chapter four aspects of the data flowing from the statistical analysis will be examined, tabulated and interpreted.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three focused on the methodology used in this study to collect data, and provided an explanation for the design of the questionnaire as the instrument of research. From the analyses of the research groups' biographical details, it was established that respondents who had recently engaged in or were about to engage in the school choice decision, provided a reasonably representative profile of middle class parents in the Western Gauteng of South Africa from which data could be analysed.

In this chapter, items posed in the questionnaire to both parents and principals are analysed and discussed, and the results of the data analyses presented. Two fundamental goals drove the collection of data and subsequent data analysis. These goals were (1) to develop a base of knowledge regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for school choice in the South African context as perceived by parents, and (2) to determine whether these perceptions were consistent with those of school principals in terms of how schools market themselves. In response to the problems posed in Chapter 1 of this study, data was collected and subsequently processed. The general intention of the analyses was to strengthen parental school choice decision-making if necessary and generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in marketing their schools. Since the objectives were accomplished, the findings presented in this chapter demonstrate the potential for merging theory with practice. Subsequently, the following aspects will receive attention in this chapter:

- The ranking of questionnaire items and a discussion of some of the items posed to parents and principals.
- Factor analysis to facilitate the inquiry of the data.

- A comparison of two independent groups by stating the appropriate hypotheses and interpreting the statistical tests involved.
- Comparisons of three or more independent groups by stating the appropriate hypotheses and interpreting the statistical tests involved.

Before embarking upon an analysis of the data derived from the questionnaire, it is important to ascertain the items used in the structured questionnaire to garner the perception of parents and principals in terms of their behaviour, attitudes and actions that could influence school choice. The questionnaire designed for parents (see Annexure B), specifically questions 7 – 14 will be unpacked first in Section 4.2 and this is followed by the questionnaire designed for principals (see Annexure C) in Section 4.3. Factor analysis will follow in Section 4.4.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PARENTS

4.2.1 Factors influencing school choice

As already discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.4), the questionnaire designed for parents consisted of 14 items that investigated a number of relevant topics relating to school choice. Question 7, which followed the biographical information questions, contained 44 items aimed to explore choice factors that might influence a parents' decision to choose a particular school. It was decided to eliminate item 23 and item 25 from the analysis since the data collected from these questions only pertained to a few selective parents and was thus unreliable.

Parents were required to indicate the level of influence for each item using a five point Likert scale. These items were based on key factors, which were indicated as having an influence on school choice found in the literature review. In the event of there being an influential factor that had not been indicated among the 44 items as presented, parents were also able to choose an item labelled 'other' and specify any additional factor or factors.

The remaining 42 items with their respective mean scores are presented in Table 4.1. This is followed by a discussion of relevant items and how they relate to school choice.

Table 4.1: Items associated with factors influencing parental school choice in question 7

Item	Description from which Parents were asked to indicate the level of influence:	Mean Score	Rank Order
21	Child will be happy at the school	4,48	1
13	The safety the school offers its learners in terms of security	4,41	2
31	Quality of discipline in the school	4,35	3
3	The academic curriculum offered by the school	4,35	4
16	The training and experience of staff at the school	4,33	5
18	Quality of professional leadership in the school	4,26	6
9	Academic facilities offered by the school (classrooms, equipment, books, computer centre, library etc.)	4,26	7
44	The school's caring approach to teaching and learning	4,25	8
33	The safety of the neighbourhood in which the school is located	4,25	9
4	The school's academic performance in terms of exam results	4,19	10
17	Quality of school governance	4,17	11
42	The school's reputation	4,14	12
15	The training and experience of the principal at the school	4,11	13
26	The school's medium of instruction	3,99	14
32	Location of the school (close to home or on my way to work)	3,92	15
2	Size of classes (i.e. the number of children in a class)	3,88	16
22	Child preferred the school	3,86	17
5	The school's performance in Annual National Assessments (ANA)	3,81	18
19	Level of parental involvement in the school	3,81	19
7	Opportunities for extracurricular activities	3,76	20
6	Assessment body of the national senior certificate	3,76	21
43	The school's involvement of parents	3,75	22
27	The school's established traditions	3,72	23
8	The external state of school buildings and grounds	3,69	24

Item	Description from which Parents were asked to indicate the level of influence:	Mean Score	Rank Order
10	Sporting facilities offered by the school (fields, courts, equipment etc.)	3,60	25
30	The school's religious ethos	3,35	26
39	School fees	3,34	27
34	The proximity of the school to green space	3,24	28
1	Size of the school (i.e. the total number of learners)	3,22	29
11	Aesthetics of the school reception area	3,20	30
36	Opinions of other parents regarding the school	3,17	31
28	Ethnic/racial make-up of the school	3,08	32
37	The school's standard of achievement in sport	3,06	33
12	School uniform	3,05	34
35	I/we fit into the school's feeder area	3,05	35
38	Ease of admission to the school	3,04	36
20	Child has special educational needs	2,65	37
14	Aftercare facilities offered by the school	2,42	38
40	Provision of transport to the school	2,21	39
24	Child's friends will be attending the school	2,21	40
29	The school's 'single sex' status	1,67	41
41	Other preferred schools were full	1,48	42

It is noted from Table 4.1 that the ten most important variables considered by middle class South African parents consulted when faced with the school choice decision include: The child's happiness (B21); school safety (B13); discipline (B31); academic curriculum and performance (B3); training and experience of staff (B16); leadership in the school (B18); school facilities (B9); the general approach to teaching (B44); the safety of the neighbourhood in which the school is located (B33); and the school's academic performance in terms of exam results (B4).

Of interest and in accordance with international literature (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.2), is the factor 'Academic curriculum offered by the school', which is ranked fourth. 87,3% of parents rated this factor as being either influential or extremely influential. The term 'curriculum' refers to the academic content taught in a school.

In South Africa the curriculum has been designed by the Department of Education and is compulsory for all public schools to implement. In addition, most private schools in South Africa also use the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for curriculum denotation. Consequently, it is strange that such a high importance is associated with this factor, when strictly speaking there are not really curricula options to choose from. Parents, however, seem to associate the quality of curriculum deliverance for school choice rather than the curriculum itself. Some responses made by parents when they selected the 'other' category include "excellent pass rate from Grade 12 learners each year" and "the school's reputation for students being accepted to medicine and other degrees with a limited intake". This, however, is an assumption that would require further investigation.

The factor 'The training and experience of staff at the school' is worth noting. This received an 85.7% response in terms of being influential and ranks fifth. Parents, it seems, see teachers as pivotal to their children's development and they appreciate the importance of a dedicated, committed, passionate teacher in the classroom. Good teaching involves the combination of expert knowledge including that of the curriculum, subject content, teaching strategies, teaching resources, and situational factors that children and the teaching and learning environment bring to the fore. Good teaching therefore involves extremely specialised skills and parents recognise the value of this. In applying credence to these findings, parents under the 'other' category also listed "support of staff", "excellent teachers" and "the school is very accommodative of my child's specific remedial needs" as additional influencing factors.

It was interesting to note that an overwhelming 81,9% of parents indicated 'Quality of professional leadership in the school' as being influential and this factor ranked sixth. The qualifications, philosophy of education and management and leadership style of principals spills over into all operations of the school contributing to the ethos of the school. It could thus be inferred that parents see a positive correlation between this and the provision of a perceived quality education, as one parent noted "the schools' ethos on building quality educated, strong individuals, with a focus on good character". This assumption is well founded in that effective schools require

well selected individuals as principals together with management teams that understand and fulfil their roles as leaders of the curriculum, ensuring that organised environments conducive to learning are present (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011).

Though all parents face the decision about where to secure the best education for their children, the decision takes place in the context of unique biological, cultural, economic and social conditions, faced only by the parents and their child (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). To this end, question 8 of the questionnaire administered to parents considered the relative importance of the top three most influential factors as indicated by parents.

4.2.2 The top three choice factors as determined by parents

Parents were provided the opportunity to rank factors according to their own situation and circumstance in question 8. This notion of individuality and choice is ratified by choice theory, which contends that different people may participate in the same activity, but because of different individual experiences and perceptions their choices will differ (Sullo, 2011).

According to empirical evidence, the following were indicated as being the most influential school choice factors. Item 39, 'School fees' was specified as being the first and second most influential choice factor by parents respectively. This was followed by item 31, 'Quality of discipline in the school' denoted by parents as being the third most influential choice factor.

What is interesting is that 'school fees' ranks only twenty seventh (Table 4.1) among all 42 items whereas 'discipline' ranks third. Parents seem to consider a variety of factors when confronted, but when asked to identify one overarching factor the financial dimension seems to take precedence. This could point towards the amplification of the financial strain linked to school choice for parents (Hastings, 2005; Carnoy & McEwan, 2003; Walford, 2003). The second key concept of choice theory (as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.5.2.1) could possibly explain this anomaly. In essence, the theory suggests that as individuals live their lives, they

build up an image of their perfect existence. This image is what they continually aspire towards (Sullo,2011). For many South African parents, it could be that education, and as such school choice, forms part of this perfect existence, since education is seen as a liberator from poverty (Maile, 2004). Often parents' socio-economic status constrains the opportunities and perceived benefits of school choice (Hoadley, 1999) and thus becomes a focal point in decision-making.

When considering the third most influencing factor according to parents of 'school discipline', the finding may suggest that parents want a school to play a wider role rather than just catering for the academic performance needs of their children. This is endorsed by factors cited by parents in the 'other' category which include; 'the schools code of conduct in terms of policy', and 'character building camps'. Parents, it seems, see the school fulfilling a dual role of both education and mentorship for life.

The findings from both sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 for the most part are in agreement with the international literature where discipline and safety are rated highly by parents in the US (section 2.6.2.1) and Australia (section 2.6.2.2). Findings related to Items of school management, staff, and discipline in other South African studies (section 2.6.2.5) are corroborated again in empirical evidence of this study. In Ghana (section 2.6.2.4), a study more in line with the South African context, parents also rate the costs of school choice highly. A choice factor prominent in both the international and local literature that however does not feature significantly in this study is the item related to the school's location from a logistical point of view. This item is only ranked fifteenth in this study. Rather than to highlight a contradiction in findings with regards to this item, my thinking is that the demographics of my sample has more likely been the cause of the anomaly. The sample of respondents were specifically a middle class one where possibly transport may simply not be an issue or influencing factor in school choice causing it not to be indicated significantly.

Having demarcated the different reasons parents consider when choosing a school, the next facet to scrutinise is what information parents consider when participating in the school choice decision-making process.

4.2.3 Parent strategies for school choice

In identifying discernible patterns concerning the process of school choice in this study, parents were asked to indicate which sources of information they considered when making the school choice decision. Fifteen different information sources were listed and respondents were asked to indicate the extent of each using a four point Likert scale.

These items together with their respective mean scores are presented in Table 4.2, followed by a discussion of some of the main information sources as indicated by parents.

Table 4.2: Items associated with information sources influencing parental school choice in question 9

Item	Description from which Parents were asked to indicate the level of influence:	Mean Score	Rank Order
15	The school's image in the community	3,26	1
10	Visit to the school (open days /evenings etc.)	2,87	2
6	Other parents with children attending the school	2,79	3
4	Friends	2,63	4
13	Information on exam results	2,60	5
1	Personal experience of the school	2,54	6
7	Other children attending the school	2,45	7
5	Family	2,41	8
14	Information on Annual National Assessments (ANA)	2,36	9
12	School's website	2,29	10
11	School brochures/booklets	2,18	11
9	Information provided by the local education district	1,75	12
3	Work Colleagues	1,73	13
2	Local newspaper	1,56	14
8	Outdoor signage (Billboards/street-pole advertising)	1,56	15

Empirical evidence suggests that the main information sources for parents consulted appear to be those that provide some sort of direct contact with or

feedback about the school. The most significant source for parents (51%) was 'The schools image or reputation in the community'. This finding is in agreement with the literature in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6.3) that points out that although parents care about the academic quality and performance of schools, more important is their own observations of the school in action and the sense of reputation conveyed through word of mouth with others of similar values, concerns or experiences (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). Other information sources of importance included 'Visits to the school in the form of open days,' (40,6%), 'Other parents with children attending the school,' (34,8%) and then 'Information on exam results' (33,8%). This reiterates the less tangible aspects of information that are not always clearly communicated on paper. What is not evident however in the findings, but requires consideration, is that parents are not equally positioned to exercise choice but are constrained by factors such as the extent to which they are "in the know" about the local school system (Bosetti, 2004; Longfield, 2011). This aspect requires further investigation.

As a consequence of educational migration in South Africa, and in determining additional parental strategies for choosing schools, I thought it would be of interest to investigate the type of school parents were considering in their decision-making process. This was done in Question 3 of the questionnaire for parents. What resulted from the empirical evidence was a situation that featured all school choice options with 13% of parents considering private primary schools, 14% contemplating the home schooling route or a private secondary school, 24% investigating public secondary schools and 36% public primary schools. These figures could allude to the findings that parents engage in values and beliefs that are in some sense socially formed, and are open to influence by the dominant discourse of political debate. To this extent such engagement may construct the way parents strategise school expectations and consequently school choice.

In disseminating further parental strategies for school choice, parents were asked to indicate who was involved in making the school choice decision in Question 1 of the questionnaire. Various options of children only, parents only, extended family and combinations of the above were presented to parents to choose from. Contradictory to the literature in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.3), there was no

overwhelming evidence that parents together with their children decided on their school of choice. Rather it was evenly split in that 55% of parents indicated that they alone were involved in the decision making process and 45% indicated that they involved their children. These findings could point to the possibility that parents making primary school decisions would not necessarily involve children because of their age and that parents making secondary school decisions may be influenced by children and their individual preferences, as these percentages could be aligned with the choice of school for which the decision was made. On the whole, choice is best conceived as a family activity where aspirations of parents and happiness of children are taken into consideration (Woods, Bagley, & Glatter, 1998). Credence to this is evident in that item 21 'The child will be happy at the school' is ranked as the number one school choice influencing factor by parents as per Table 4.1.

Parental preferences are to a greater or lesser extent socially influenced (Bosetti, 2004), and thus to take this into consideration, parents were asked to list their three most frequented sources of information on which school choice decisions were based from question 9.

4.2.4 The top three school choice information sources as determined by parents

Strategies employed for school choice or the process parents engage with in decision-making is guided by a personal vision, and sustained by a personal conviction, of what is best for their child (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). This is however often influenced by a parents' social network (Bosetti, 2004). Findings of the three most frequented sources of information used by middle class South African parents in this study indicated item 1, 'Personal experience with the school' the most influential source of information with item 10, 'Visit to the school or open days' coming in second and item 15, 'The schools image in the community' third (items found in Table 4.2). These findings confirm the existence of an informal local information network, informing parents and learners of the more and less desirable schools operating within a community (Hoadley, 1999) and that many parents rely

on their social networks for information regarding school choice (Bosetti, 2004; Longfield, 2011).

Having established congruency with the literature, attention is now turned to what parents fear, and how this influences the school choice decision-making process.

4.2.5 Parent anxieties associated with school choice

Question 11 of the parent questionnaire examined obstacles that parents might have encountered when making the school choice decision. It contained 10 items and parents were once again required to indicate the extent to which each item posed as an obstacle using a four point Likert scale. The items were based on key obstacles, which were indicated as being debilitating to school choice found in the literature review.

The obstacles with their respective mean scores are presented in Table 4.3. This is followed by a discussion of some of the items and how they manifest in parental school choice anxiety.

Anxieties associated with parental school choice were for the most part found to be consistent with the literature as per Chapter 2 (section 2.6.4). In order to determine whether parents in fact have a perception of choice they were asked in question 2 of the questionnaire, "How many schools did you deliberate between when making your school choice decision?" 45% of parents were only considering one school possibility with the remaining 55% evaluating two or more potential schools as viable options. When invited to comment, parents among others, indicated "Only decent English school," and "Only public high school in area". Thus, it could be inferred that a large portion of parents in the study perceived that their choice was limited. These perceptions could feed into the school choice debate of over-subscribed schools and criticism of the inconsistency of quality education being offered by all schools in an area or district (Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011)

Table 4.3: Items associated with obstacles to school choice in question 11

Item	Description from which Parents were asked to indicate the extent to which each item posed as an obstacle:	Mean Score	Rank Order
1	Availability of space for my child(ren) at the school	2,20	1
8	School fees at the school	1,78	2
4	Cost of admission	1,67	3
2	Admission requirements	1,63	4
3	Admission deadlines	1,59	5
7	Feeder area of the school	1,52	6
6	Physical distance from home to school	1,48	7
10	Lack of knowledge of other schools to make comparisons	1,47	8
5	Lack of knowledge of procedure or information relating to admission	1,44	9
9	Lack of communication by the school in terms of application status	1,40	10

Credence to these notions were confirmed when parents indicated the obstacles they experienced when making the school choice decision. Of the options provided, parents indicated 'Availability of space for my child at the school' or oversubscription as the number one problem creating difficulty. This highlights issues of functional versus dysfunctional schools in South Africa and the fact that some schools have to turn parents away, leaving them with little choice in terms of other quality schools available to them (Maile, 2004). Unfortunately, parents in this study confirm the attitude referred to in the literature of having no confidence in government's ability to provide a consistent standard of education across the board (Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011; Reprobate, 2012; Modisaotsile, 2012). The criticism is that over-subscribed schools give priority to children living in the defined school's feeder area and as such, many parents perceive this as discriminatory. Indeed, one parent even commented, "*Had to move closer to school in order to get in*". Other comments included "*Not enough good English Model C schools around*" and "*Not much of a choice in our area*". What can be deduced is that the current education system in South Africa only provides some children with quality education insofar as their parents can actually choose for them to attend good schools. Other

parents, it seems, living outside of a perceived quality schools' feeder area, are left with little or no choice at all.

Other obstacles ranked highly by parents in this study included 'School fees at the school' and 'Cost of admission'. Earlier, (see section 4.2.2) school fees was also indicated as the first and second most important school choice influencing factor, its importance once again being highlighted here. To expand on the possibility of other obstacles that I had not thought of, I provided an option for parents in the form of an item labelled 'Other - please specify below'. Many parents took this opportunity and generated a list of additional obstacles. Included and of significance to this aspect of school choice were "cost of school uniforms and stationery," and "non-refundable deposit to secure admission". What is interesting to note is that these additions also speak of costs. These therefore, including school fees and cost of admission, could all be categorised into a financial dimension that points towards the amplification of the financial strain school choice has on parents. Thus, it could be said that for many parents, only those that have the financial means are in fact able to choose excellent schools for their children. For others, the value of a quality providing school and what it can offer justify the decision to make significant sacrifices in terms of opportunity costs to choose these schools for their children. A concerning consequence of the divide between functional and dysfunctional schools and the clamber and cost of enrolment in those that are functional is the quality of education on offer (Taylor, 2011).

In an effort to determine the overarching obstacles that deliver the most anxiety for middle class South African parents when making the school choice decision, parents were once again asked to indicate the three greatest obstacles encountered.

4.2.6 The top three obstacles to school choice as determined by parents

Question 12 of the questionnaire administered to parents considered the relative importance of the top three obstacles to school choice as indicated by parents. Findings indicated that the greatest obstacle according to parents from all the

options offered in question 11 to be item 1, 'Availability of space for my child(ren) at the school'. The second greatest obstacle was seen to be item 2, 'Admission requirements'. The third greatest obstacle was indicated as item 8, 'School fees at the school' (items found in Table 4.3).

Again the empirical evidence in this study supports both the international and local literature regarding the anxieties parents experience when making school choice decisions. Hoadley's (1999) conclusion that choice opportunities are not evenly distributed and Maile's (2004) deductions that parents are more than willing to sacrifice and pay more than they can afford to attend certain schools is evident in this study too. The final aspect to consider before moving on to the questionnaire administered to principals is the aspirations of parents or what parents want as a result of exercising school choice.

4.2.7 Aspirations of parents regarding school choice

Education affects the future prosperity and economy of any country and parents are quick to recognise the link between better educational opportunities and future life success (Modisaotsile, 2012). Much literature points to the situation that parents have become increasingly concerned about their inability to secure a quality education for their children in some schools (Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Modisaotsile, 2012). In order to determine whether this in fact is true of South Africa and specifically Western Gauteng middle class parents, two questions were formulated in a way that parents could indicate the extent to which they either agreed or disagreed with the statements. The first statement read, "The school choice I make will influence the quality of education my child receives". The data revealed that 91% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that school choice does have a direct influence on the quality of education a child receives. This concurs with a finding by Van Heemst (2004) in which it is contended that by choosing a school that a child will attend, some parents may perceive that they can influence the quality of education their children receive. Parents it seems want a better education for their children as noted in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.5) by Bainbridge and Sundre

(1991) and Longfield (2011). A concern, however, is that the idea of a better education or what constitutes quality may differ from one parent to another.

Of the second statement which read “My child’s academic achievement will be influenced by the school choice I make,” 93% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that school choice will influence the academic achievements of their children. This is once again an interesting finding, since numerous studies have shown no correlation between increased choice and increased academic success (Plank & Sykes, 2003; Walford, 2003; Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005). What however is evident is that examination results seem to act as a screening mechanism in that it allows parents to deselect particular schools from consideration. For many parents, schools have to show that their exam results are above an acceptable minimum before they become potentially acceptable (Walford, 2003). This is reiterated by information presented in Table 4.2, where parents in this study indicated, as a significant source of information upon which to base a school-choice decision. Academic achievement from a parent’s perspective, gives the impression of a direct link to economic empowerment and as such education is seen in economic terms (Msila, 2009). School choice appears to matter since it seems to give parents hope. The evidence thus validates the literature in Chapter 2 and points to the main aspiration of parents, with regard to school choice, as being able to ensure that their children acquire the necessary skills to earn more and have an economically empowered future.

To summarise, the empirical evidence with respect to parents in this study indicates that:

- The choice factors parents consider when choosing a school include the child’s happiness, school safety, school discipline, the academic curriculum and performance of the school, school leadership as well as the training and experience of staff, school facilities and the overarching factor of school fees.
- The information sources parents consider when making the school choice decision comprise of the the school’s image in the community, personal experiences with the school and open days.

- The anxieties parents associate with school choice take account of the financial dimension as well as the availability of space for admission to the school.
- The key aspirations of parents to exercise school choice embrace the desire for a quality education effecting economic empowered for the child's future.

Having established a base of knowledge regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for school choice as perceived by parents in Western Gauteng, South Africa, attention is now turned to principals. As described in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.4) the questionnaire administered to principals was specifically designed to determine consistency of thought between parents and principals regarding school choice in an effort to generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in school marketing.

4.3 QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PRINCIPALS

From Section 4.2 it is clear that parents are increasingly making decisions regarding where to send their children to school and thus, it is important for principals to know what parents want and expect from schools in providing quality education for their children. In order to establish the perceptions of principals with regards to the notion of 'quality education', a questionnaire was designed to measure variables that emerged as important determinants of behaviour and perspectives in terms of promotional mechanisms for school marketing and the administration of school admission. The intent of the questionnaire was to determine whether any synergy existed between parent and principal perceptions surrounding the concept of school choice via the manner in which schools market themselves as quality providing institutions.

4.3.1 Principals perceptions of quality education

In establishing perceptions of quality, Question 2 of the questionnaire designed for principals scrutinised the factors that could be used by a principal in their marketing plan to influence parental choice. It was made up of 38 items and these items

except a few, were the same items presented to parents in question 7 of the parent questionnaire as described earlier in this Chapter (see section 4.2.1). Principals were asked to indicate the level of influence for each item using a five point Likert scale in terms of influencing parents to choose their particular school in the school choice decision-making process. In responding in this way the expectation was that those factors that principals perceived as being high in terms of quality would be highly ranked and that the remaining factors would diminish in ranking order to their perceived value. These items together with their respective mean scores are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Items associated with factors that principals could use in school marketing to influence parental school choice

Item	Description of factors that could be used in school marketing by principals to influence parental school choice:	Mean Score	Rank Order
37	The school's caring approach to teaching and learning	3,64	1
35	The school's reputation	3,59	2
16	The training and experience of staff at the school	3,55	3
3	The academic curriculum offered by the school	3,45	4
4	The school's academic performance in terms of exam results	3,41	5
25	The school's discipline policy	3,32	6
13	The safety the school offers its learners in terms of security	3,29	7
18	Quality of professional leadership in the school	3,29	8
19	Level of parental involvement in the school	3,27	9
20	The school's medium of instruction	3,27	10
8	Upkeep of school buildings and grounds	3,23	11
36	School's communication with parents	3,23	12
9	Academic facilities offered by the school (classrooms, equipment, books, computer centre, library etc.)	3,18	13
21	The school's established traditions	3,14	14
26	Location of the school	3,14	15
33	School fee payment structures	3,09	16
29	The school's feeder area	3,05	17
6	Assessment body of the national senior certificate	3,00	18
17	The quality of school governance	3,00	19

Item	Description of factors that could be used in school marketing by principals to influence parental school choice:	Mean Score	Rank Order
27	The safety of the neighbourhood in which the school is located	2,95	20
15	The training and experience of the principal at the school	2,86	21
12	School uniform	2,86	22
2	Size of classes (i.e. the number of children in a class)	2,82	23
7	Opportunities for extracurricular activities	2,82	24
22	Ethnic/racial make-up of the school	2,73	25
1	Size of the school (i.e. the total number of learners)	2,71	26
11	Aesthetics of the schools reception area	2,67	27
10	Sporting facilities offered by the school (fields, courts, equipment etc.)	2,64	28
5	The school's performance in Annual National Assessments (ANA)	2,59	29
30	The socio-economic status of the school	2,59	30
24	The school's religious ethos	2,58	31
28	The proximity of the school to green space	2,55	32
31	The school's standard of achievement in sport	2,27	33
32	Ease of admission to the school	2,23	34
34	Provision of transport to the school	1,86	35
14	Aftercare facilities offered by the school	1,55	36
23	The school's 'single sex' status	1,40	37

From Table 4.4, the top five influencing factors that principals in this study indicated they used to a large extent in communicating quality to parents included 'The school's reputation', 'The school's caring approach to teaching and learning', 'The academic curriculum offered by the school', 'The school's academic performance in terms of exam results' and 'The training and experience of staff at the school'. Accordingly, it is inferred that these top factors are the factors that principals perceived to be suggestive of providing quality education in their respective school environments.

When comparing these responses in Table 4.4 with the top ten parent responses in Table 4.2, it can be established that for the most part, parents and principals do

share similar perceptions regarding items of influence for school choice. Although not ranked similarly, seven common items appear in each group's top ten and thus indicate consistency of thought. These items of commonality which point towards synergy are tabulated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Common items of influence for school choice between parents and principals

Common Items	Parents Ranking order	Principals Ranking order
The school's caring approach to teaching and learning	8	1
The training and experience of staff at the school	5	3
The academic curriculum offered by the school	4	4
The school's academic performance in terms of exam results	10	5
The school's discipline policy	3	6
The safety the school offers its learners in terms of security	9	7
Quality of professional leadership in the school	6	8

When scrutinising these items, it becomes evident that the five dimensions of quality education (learners, learning environments, content, processes and outcomes) as defined by UNICEF (2000) are represented and as such the impression is that both principals and parents in South Africa, do in fact have clear perceptions and beliefs concerning quality education in the context of school choice. These findings are consistent with the definition used to deconstruct the term quality education in Chapter 2 (section 2.7.1).

With regards to these dimensions the items 'Safety the school provides its learners in terms of security' and 'The schools discipline policy', equate to those facets making up a quality learning environment (UNICEF, 2000). High quality learning environments set the stage for learning to occur, which is the fundamental objective of the school. Principals and parents, from the empirical evidence appear to value a school where the creation of a peaceful, safe and disciplined environment is evident. It follows then that these items are being used to great effect by principals in convincing parents of the quality of education being offered at the school.

'The school's caring approach to teaching and learning', 'The training and experience of staff' and 'The quality of professional leadership in the school', meet the principles of quality processes (UNICEF, 2000). The quality of a school system cannot exceed the quality of its teaching and leadership force and evidence suggests that principals and parents agree (Msila, 2009).

Quality content (UNICEF, 2000) parallels with 'The academic curriculum offered by the school' and 'The academic performance of the school' speaks to quality outcomes (UNICEF, 2000). Quality education puts learners at the centre of the educational process and learner achievement, self-evidently must be the school's first priority. Parents attach a significant amount of value to educational outcomes as a measure of school quality and findings indicate that principals are perceptive of this. Within South Africa the quality of education varies widely and effective schools require active, engaged and committed principals that together with their management teams understand and fulfil their roles as school leaders (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011). Principals from the empirical evidence, thus seem to sell themselves short in that 'The quality of professional leadership in the school' is only ranked eighth as an influencing factor and 'The training and experience of the principal at the school' twenty first. Principals that effectively manage their schools, should market themselves more in terms of their abilities as a mechanism to influence parents school choice decisions.

In contrast to the factors above that show synergy, of interest are the items that show discord between parents and principals. Items of influence that were ranked in the top ten by parents but not by principals and visa versa, are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Items of discord with regards to school choice between parents and principals

Items of Discord	Parents Ranking order	Principals Ranking order
Academic facilities offered by the school (classrooms, equipment, books, computer centre, library etc.)	7	13
The safety of the neighbourhood in which the school is located	9	20
The school's reputation	12	2
Level of parental involvement in the school	19	9
The school's medium of instruction	14	10

The perception principals have of how a quality education presents itself is important as these are the components they will promote in their schools. As a service provider, it is important for these facets to match what parents expect in terms of their perceptions of quality education and as such, these differences are important.

In terms of the 'Academic facilities offered by the school', school principals it seems, need to accentuate the specific facilities they provide in their school environment more aggressively, as research indicates that 84.4% of parents value this factor. The school environment needs to be a place that is supportive and challenging but at the same time also nurtures children to become self-confident, motivated individuals with a sense of responsibility towards others in the community. An education that is meaningful, worthwhile and responsive to individuals and their social needs per se. Academic facilities might specifically rate highly among Western Gauteng and South African parents in general as a result of the apartheid legacy. Many schools throughout South Africa, despite legislative changes, are still inadequately resourced, overcrowded and poor environments for teaching and learning (Bloch, 2009). Consequently, parents who have the means to take their children to better resourced schools with green lawns, beautiful flowers and notably

luxurious buildings among others do so enthusiastically (Maile, 2004). Principals need to be perceptive of this.

Another factor valued by parents is 'The safety of the neighbourhood in which the school is located'. Principals rank this factor only in the twentieth position. A possible reason for this could be that school principals in reality are unable to guarantee the safety of the neighbourhood in which their respective schools are located. Although this may be true, this factor may have the ability to provide school principals with an opportunity to engage more visibly with the immediate community in various outreach projects. According to CHAT, to achieve outcomes, subjects are required to work collaboratively to resolve the systemic contradictions that can emerge. These outcomes can encourage or hinder the subject's participation in future activities. As such, I postulate from Chapter 2 (section 2.5.1.2) that the desired outcome of participating in decision-making for school choice for parents is the perception of quality education combined with positive academic outcomes for their children. The role of the school and school principal in influencing parents decision-making processes with regards to school choice is the shared participation responsibilities in the activity labelled 'division of labour' as determined by the community.

'The school's reputation', although ranked twelfth by parents as an influencing factor, is ranked first in terms of being a source of information they considered when making the school choice decision. Consequently, I solicit this factor to not be an item of discord but rather one indicating synergy. A school's reputation or what is generally said or believed develops over a period of time as a consequence of actions and established relationships (Newberry, 2015). Principals in the study appear to be confident in the way they have established their school's reputations through the provision of quality school facilities and the creation of peaceful, safe disciplined environments that look the part, strive for achievement, are consistent and act with integrity and engage in the community (Brustein, 2014).

Factors including, 'The level of parental involvement in the school' and 'The school's medium of instruction', appear to be more highly rated by principals than by parents.

A possible reason for this discord could be explained in terms of the concept of reality and perception embedded in Choice theory. Choice theory contends that even though we live in the real world, what matters is one's perception of reality. An individual's perception of reality is created from filtered information or experiences that pass through three distinct filters. Because of these filters different people may witness the same event or participate in the same activity and develop radically different perceptions (Sullo, 2011). Principals and parents consider quality education through different filters and accordingly have different perceptions of the concept. For principals, parental involvement in a school is very important as this often transcends into many other benefits. Research shows that parental involvement in schools improves learner achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents' confidence in their children's education (Eskelsen & Thornton, 2014). Understandably, from a principal's perspective this leads to improved provision of quality education and is thus deemed important. For parents it holds less of a significance. With regards to the school's medium of instruction, the Bill of Rights (South African, 1996(d)) provides that everyone receive an education in an official language of their choice, but this is not always the case. The 1976 Soweto uprisings were driven by opposition to being taught in an unfamiliar language. Many children in South African schools are still not taught in their mother tongue, however many parents choose an English education for their children because they see it as a language of liberation and the language of the world (Isaacs, 2014; Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). Since English is the medium of instruction of choice for many South African parents, it therefore could hold less significance than for that of principals.

As described in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.1.2), parental school choice was introduced as an activity system that can only exist in relation to rules, community and division of labour as these societal dimensions effect the systemic organization of human activity. Community refers to the social group or organisation to which subjects belong while engaged in activity. Because community includes multiple points of view, traditions and interests, different participants to school choice will encounter different perceptions as noted above.

Schools today are under financial pressure to improve quality and deliver effective teaching and learning to their clientele. As the school market changes and becomes more complex and more crowded, the need to listen to ones' community, and communicate what one as a school does well, becomes very important. If a school can create better relationships with parents, teachers, the local community (business and media), former students and other stakeholders as per CHAT, it will be better able to offer a quality environment as a result of the support it receives from these respective parties (Hepburn, 2015).

4.3.2 Principal strategies used to influence school choice

As already highlighted in Chapter 2 (section 2.6), many parents have a negative view of education and it is through school marketing that these perceptions can be changed. In identifying discernible patterns concerning how schools promote themselves as quality providing institutions, principals were asked in Question 1, to indicate how their school engaged in marketing themselves to potential parents with the hope of influencing their decision-making with regards to school choice. Sixteen different promotional mechanisms were listed and respondents were asked to indicate the amount of use where 1 equalled 'never use' and 5 'use always'.

These items together with their respective mean scores are presented in Table 4.7, followed by a discussion of school promotion as indicated by principals.

Table 4.7: Items associated with promotional mechanisms used by principals to influence parental school choice

Item	Description of promotional mechanisms used in school marketing by principals to influence parental school choice:	Mean Score	Rank Order
12	Communication with feeder schools	3,77	1
11	Involvement in community and outreach programmes	3,36	2
6	General publicity (articles in local media celebrating school achievements)	3,24	3
8	Open days	3,18	4
5	Promotional materials (brochures, leaflets, booklets etc.)	3,05	5

Item	Description of promotional mechanisms used in school marketing by principals to influence parental school choice:	Mean Score	Rank Order
9	School's website	2,82	6
14	Fundraising activities	2,81	7
7	Open educational events e.g. sports or cultural festivals	2,77	8
3	Outdoor signage (billboards, street-pole advertising etc.)	2,73	9
1	Advertising of any form in print media (newspapers, magazines etc.)	2,64	10
13	The alumni of the school	2,48	11
10	Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube	2,41	12
4	The use of opinion leaders or ambassadors	2,15	13
15	The offer of academic, cultural or sport bursaries	2,00	14
16	Cell phone marketing & SMS's	2,00	15
2	Advertising of any form in the audio/visual media (TV, radio etc.)	1,62	16

Empirical evidence suggests a confirmation of the literature in Chapter 2 (section 2.8.1.3) in that a key strategy in marketing a school successfully is to talk to the target audience (Buscall, 2014). Principals it seems are doing this effectively by pouring a substantial amount of effort into 'feeder schools' (ranked 1st) where enrolments would be forthcoming and communicating directly with them.

Every school depends on its reputation for survival and success and what better way to do this than through public relation efforts. Once again principals in the sample through the 'engagement with community outreach programmes' (ranked 2nd) and the 'reporting of school achievements in the local newspaper' (ranked 3rd) seem to be doing just this. By getting involved, the school is able to show rather than tell that it is able to provide a quality learning environment that cares for the community and is willing to work towards its improvement. In the South African context where social and economic restitution is a concern, this community involvement does not go unnoticed by parents. 'Open days' (ranked 4th) are often the first opportunity for prospective parents to interact with the school and its learners. This is an important strategic marketing opportunity that should be

planned to showcase the school and principals appear from the study to be involved in such days.

In terms of establishing congruency with regards to parent and principal perceptions of issues surrounding school choice, parents rank 'the school's image in the community' and 'open days' as significant sources of information on which to base school choice decisions (section 4.2.3). In this respect principals and parents seem to be on point. The local newspaper, however, is ranked only fourteenth by parents yet third by principals. A probable reason for this could simply be the shift of print media to the world online and accordingly it could be suggested that principals need to make this paradigm shift too. The challenge for principals is how to infiltrate parent's social networks to provide useful and accurate information to help them make appropriate decisions (Bosetti, 2004).

A further point of interest is that promotional mechanisms using the 'school's website' to communicate a quality environment ranked only 6th and the use of 'social media' only 12th by principals. Social media is significantly powerful and influential as it not only voices the opinions of others but also allows parents to interact in an informal personal way and on their own terms with the school (Shahim, 2011). Many parents who are the key decision makers when it comes to school choice are active on social media platforms. Principals in this study give the impression of being sluggish in terms of moving away from traditional marketing activities in the move towards online marketing communication. There could be many reasons for this but one could be the fact that many principals simply don't understand how to design and implement a dedicated marketing plan that communicates effectively online (Buscall, 2014; Hepburn, 2015). Another could be that their role as school principal is so consumed by administrative activities that they simply do not have the time, budget or inclination to dedicate attention to this aspect.

Another misnomer is the complete lack of mention of 'ambassadors for the school' by principals. Parents on the other hand, highly rate the opinions of 'friends' and 'other parents who already have children attending the school' (section 4.2.3) and thus principals could most definitely make use of ambassadors to influence parents

decision-making. Parents are key to a schools marketing effort and as such parents who have a passion for the school, are credible among peers, have connections with the community and a desire to advance the school need to be identified and recruited as parent ambassadors (Newberry, 2015). Principals need to identify and involve these parents to speak about their school and its programmes in order to muster a positive image and support from the community.

Before moving on to how principals respond to the anxieties experienced by parents in making school choice decisions, it seems that in many ways principals need to be adept online marketers and communicators, as well as educationalists to stay in touch with parents in the online world (Buscall, 2014).

4.3.3 Principals response to parental anxiety associated with school choice

Earlier in this Chapter (see section 4.2.6), findings indicated that the greatest obstacles causing anxiety for parents with regards to school choice to be that of 'Availability of space at the school', 'Admission requirements', and 'School fees'. In determining how schools measured in these aspects, Question 3 of the questionnaire administered to principals inspected issues surrounding a school's admission policy.

Questions posed to principals included, "Does your school have an operational school admission policy?" and "Describe your school in terms of availability of space for learners". From the empirical evidence it was found that all schools in the study had an operational schools' admission policy in line with the expectations of the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996(a)) and that most schools (77.3%) experienced a situation of over subscription where more students were applying than the number of places available at the school. This automatically perpetuates the propensity of selection which may inadvertently disadvantage some applicants and as such is in accordance with the literature in Chapter 2 (section 2.7.2) by Kozol (2005) and Bifulco (2005), where it is ascertained that many children are assigned to neighbourhood schools that are poor in terms of quality as defined by UNICEF (2000) and the anxieties parents experience (section 2.6.4).

When asked how principals communicate admission criteria, 26% indicated 'direct communication with applicants', 24% via the 'school's newsletter' and 20% through 'feeder schools'. The 'school's website', 'local newspaper' and 'radio advertisements' made up the remaining 30%. These findings corroborate the literature, in that school choice can be restricted by school admission criteria, family income and access to information (OECD, 2012). It seems that only parents with a definite interest in the respective school would have access to admission requirements, and parents that fell outside of the school's feeder area would be deprived of this information. This once again ratifies the literature above and brings to question the equality of school admission in general. Oddly enough, when principals were asked the question of whether they thought their school's admission policy was freely accessible to all, 90.9% answered yes. The notion of 'freely accessible to all' in this instance as perceived by principals, seems to be somewhat constrained and limited to those applicants they believe to be 'their all' and not the wider sense of the community or area in question.

Family income is not thought to be restrictive as a measure of school choice in terms of access by principals. 59.1% of principals revealed that they did not charge a school admission fee or levy and in the cases where they do, 62.5% indicated that this was either refundable to unsuccessful applicants or would be deducted from future school fees for successful applicants. It should however be mentioned that 75% of schools in the study fall into quintile 5 according to the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) policy document (South Africa, 1998(c)) and as such are defined as being the 'least poor'. Although the quintile ranking system which groups all South African government schools for the purposes of allocating financial resources is often criticised for not taking into account the demographics of specific school (Grant, 2013; Mestry, 2014), this could explain why income in this particular study is not seen as being restrictive.

If South Africa wants to develop its economy and overcome poverty, it has an obligation to work towards the improvement of people's skills and capacity. This can only be accomplished through the provision of an education that is accessible to all regardless of wealth, race, gender and culture (Mestry, 2014). Thus it can be

deduced that school principals have a crucial role to play in the implementation of reform, and specifically in terms of quality processes in the form of school admission to ease parental anxiety.

4.3.4 Principals response to parental aspirations associated with school choice

From the findings presented in section 4.2.8 of this Chapter, a central theme which becomes evident in terms of parental aspirations is that of “quality”. Quality determines how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits (Grima, 2008). Quality is a perceptive term that means different things to different people. To this end, the questionnaire administered to principals ended off with two similar questions regarding school choice, quality education and academic performance as presented to parents. Principals were asked to indicate the extent to which they either agreed or disagreed with these statements to once again determine consistency of thought between parents and principals regarding school choice.

Principals were asked whether the quality of education a child received and the academic achievement a child experienced was influenced in their opinion by the school choice that parents make? The first question read, “The quality of education a child receives is influenced by the school choices their parents make”. The data revealed that 90.9% of principals either agreed or strongly agreed that school choice does have a direct influence on the quality of education a child receives. Of the second question which read “A learner’s academic achievement is influenced by the school choices their parents make”, 72.8% of principals either agreed or strongly agreed that academic achievement by the same token would be affected.

It could therefore be said that principals believe that children of different learning abilities develop and grow in school environments that focus on offering quality education. It has been recommended in a report for the National Planning Commission (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011) that top performing schools in a community

and those that have demonstrated a significant improvement in learner performance be publicly recognised and that principals provide parents with a comparative breakdown of their school's performance relative to that of similar schools in the area. To this end, both principals and parents would be able to gauge their school's achievement and the focus could thus be on improving quality in areas that may become identifiable through this data.

To summarise, the empirical evidence with respect to principals in this study indicate that:

- The choice factors principals use to influence parents when choosing a school include the school's approach to teaching and learning, its reputation and medium of instruction, the academic curriculum and performance of the school, the quality of professional leadership as well as the training and experience of staff, school discipline and safety and the level of parental involvement in the school.
- The promotional mechanisms used by principals to influence a parents' consideration of a school comprise of communication with feeder schools, community involvement, local newspapers, open days and promotional materials in the form of brochures etc.
- In response to parental anxiety associated with school choice, principals operate admission policies in accordance with government regulations, however, in most cases are over subscribed.
- In response to parental aspirations regarding school choice, principals believe that children of different learning abilities develop and grow in school environments that focus on offering quality education.

It is clear from the preceding sections that parent's school choice decisions are influenced by a number of factors. For principal's it is thus essential to understand the educational needs, preferences and viewpoints of parents in order to satisfy them and provide a quality educational experience in their respective schools. Having sufficiently garnered the perceptions of parents and principals from the

questionnaire in terms of their behaviour, attitudes and actions that could influence school choice, what follows is factor analysis.

4.4 FACTOR ANALYSIS

The main aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of parents regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies influencing the school choice decision with the general intention of strengthening the capacity of parental school choice if necessary with regards to decision-making. A subsequent aim was to establish whether these perceptions are consistent with those of school principals in an effort to generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in marketing their schools. The sample size for the principal questionnaire was considerably smaller than that of the parent questionnaire (Table 3.1), and as such it was decided that only the questionnaire administered to parents would undergo factor analysis. There is little agreement among authors concerning how large a sample should be, however, the recommendation is the larger the better. Pallant (2010) suggests that a sample should have at least 300 respondents for factor analysis and the questionnaire administered to parents met this requirement.

Factor analysis is a useful statistical method for investigating variable relationships for complex concepts (statisticssolutions.com). It is a process in which the values of observed data are expressed as functions of a number of possible causes in order to find which are the most important. It allows researchers to investigate concepts that are not easily measured directly, by collapsing a large number of variables into a few interpretable underlying factors. Factor analysis aims to find independent latent variables. In factor analysis, a factor is a latent (unmeasured) variable that expresses itself through its relationship with other measured variables. The process of factor analysis starts by firstly ensuring the measuring instrument to be valid and reliable (statisticssolutions.com).

4.4.1 Factor analysis of factors influencing parental school choice

As already described in Chapter 3 (section 3.3), reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated and validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In ensuring reliability and validity in the context of this study, 44 items (see Annexure B) were designed to garner information on the preferred factors parents perceive as being influential in making school choice decisions. The Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficient was used in order to determine the internal reliability of the questionnaire. All values in this questionnaire demonstrated a Coefficient-Alpha of above 0.60 and were thus considered reliable (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2010). Furthermore, the questionnaire was subjected to explorative factor analyses. Exploratory Factor Analysis is done by means of Principal Axis Factoring (extraction method) and oblimin rotation with Kaiser Normalization. In this study, the 44 items were subjected to principal axis factoring (PAF) using the SPSS 15.0 programme. Prior to performing PAF, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. An inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of sufficient coefficients of 0.3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.898, exceeding the recommended value of 0.7. The measures of sampling adequacy (MSA) were also all above 0.6 except for item B25 and B23. As a result Question B25 and B23 were omitted from the factor analysis since the data collected from these questions presented to be relevant to some parents but not to others and as such deemed unreliable. A brief summary of the KMO and Bartlett's test of Sphericity are indicated in the table below.

Table 4.8: KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.898
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	1291.664
df	28
Sig.	0.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of 0.898 for this study indicates that sufficient data is available for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of Sphericity indicates p-values of 0.000 which implies the existence of sufficient correlation between items for factor analysis.

Having established internal validity, construct validity of the structured questionnaire was investigated using the remaining 42 items by means of an exploratory PAF. Based on the pattern matrix, the outcome suggested the presence of 8 factors which explained 48.19% of the variance. Table 4.9 describes the total variance explained by the emergent 8 factors.

Table 4.9: Total variance explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.332	54.155	54.155
2	0.999	12.484	66.639
3	0.633	7.915	74.554
4	0.572	7.153	81.707
5	0.445	5.565	87.272
6	0.382	4.770	92.042
7	0.351	4.391	96.433
8	0.285	3.567	100.000

It is evident from Table 4.9 that the first factor contributes largely to the total variance explained. The contribution of subsequent factors diminishes considerably from that of factor 1. A possible reason for this is that 5 of the items making up the factor as depicted in Table 4.11 are also found in the top 15 as ranked by parents in Table 4.1. These items are thus the most valued by parents and accordingly have the propensity to be the most influential in exercising choice.

In reliability analysis the researcher is interested in how well the responses of each choice statement in a factor (or scale of items making up that factor) correspond to that of the other statements and to the choice scale as a whole. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient is a procedure, reliable in nature to indicate how well items are positively correlated to one another (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2010). For the

purpose of this study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scales of each of the eight factors were named appropriately, ranked accordingly and are tabled below in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Factors constituting parental school choice

No.	Factor Name:	No. of items	Factor mean score	Rank Order	Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient
1	Intrinsic child related influences	7	4.20	1	0,855
2	School infrastructure	6	3.62	5	0,882
3	Effective school leadership and governance	5	4.13	2	0,904
4	Value added incentives	7	2.53	8	0,801
5	School culture	8	3.22	7	0,785
6	Academic excellence	4	4.03	3	0,807
7	Geography	3	3.74	4	0,698
8	School size	2	3.59	6	0,741

The degree to which a set of items measures a construct, is indirectly related to and indicated by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient will increase with increased inter-correlation amongst items and will show increased internal consistency. The coefficient value can range from 0 to 1. A value of less than 0.6 typically indicates marginal to low internal consistency implying that some items underlying the factor do not relate to the factor sufficiently. The closer the value to 1, the higher the internal consistency. It is evident from the table above that all the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for all eight factors are higher than 0.6 and consequently the factors are considered reliable.

The individual questionnaire items together with their respective mean scores associated with each of the eight factors established above, are presented in Tables 4.11 - 4.18. For the purposes of further analysis, the sum of the mean scores of the items presented in each table below are computed to arrive at factor mean

scores for each of the established factors. These factor mean scores are presented in the form of histograms and box-plots for each factor in Figures 4.1 – 4.16.

When considering these histograms and box-plots for each factor, it is important to note that they all indicate either positive or negative asymmetric data. This event of unnatural distribution is quite common in real data of this nature. One or two parents with significantly different perceptions to the norm in terms of the captured items in each factor can make a substantial difference to the representation of the data, thus resulting in skewness. CHAT once again coupled with Choice theory provides explanations for these frequent events of skewness in this study.

Table 4.11: Items associated with the factor: Intrinsic child related influences

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
13	The safety the school offers its learners in terms of security	4,42	0,924
21	Child will be happy at the school	4,50	0,830
22	Child preferred the school	3,90	1,222
31	Quality of discipline in the school	4,38	0,919
42	The school's reputation	4,18	1,061
43	The school's involvement of parents	3,81	1,154
44	The school's caring approach to teaching and learning	4,30	0,916

Choice is a socially and culturally constructed concept that has different meanings for different families. This is evident when scrutinising the items making up the factor '*Intrinsic child related influences*'. The emphasis of all items listed above involve the unique perceptions of each parent with regards to safety, discipline, reputation, approach, involvement, happiness and preference important for and to the specific child for whom the school choice decision is being made (Bosetti, 2004; Lombard, 2007; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Friedman, Bobrowski & Markow, 2007; ISCA,

2008; Longfield, 2011; Planks & Sykes, 2003). This factor as such depicts harmony with the literature review in chapter 2.

The data in the histogram (figure 4.1) and box-plot (figure 4.2) below, indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor '*Intrinsic child related influences*', **to be influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 4.20$). The box-plot reveals that the distribution of data is negatively skew indicating asymmetric data where both the mean and median are less than the mode.

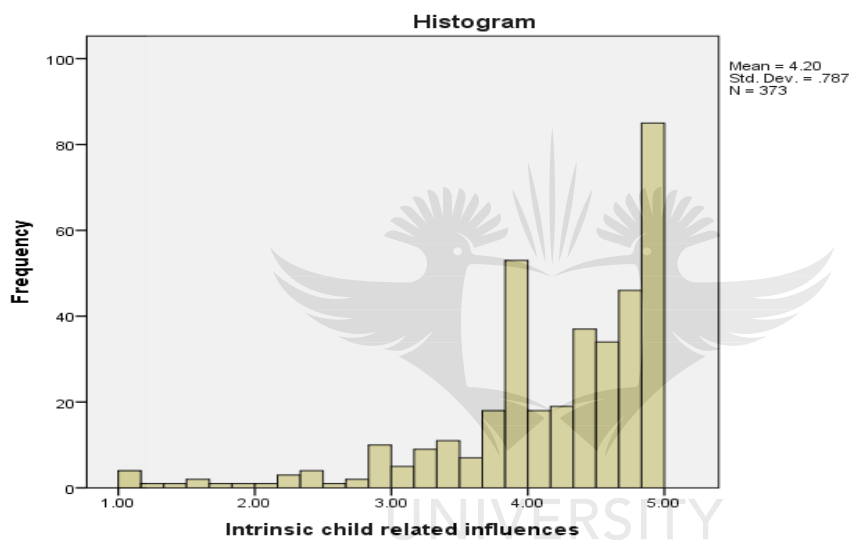


Figure 4.1: Histogram of the factor Intrinsic child related influences

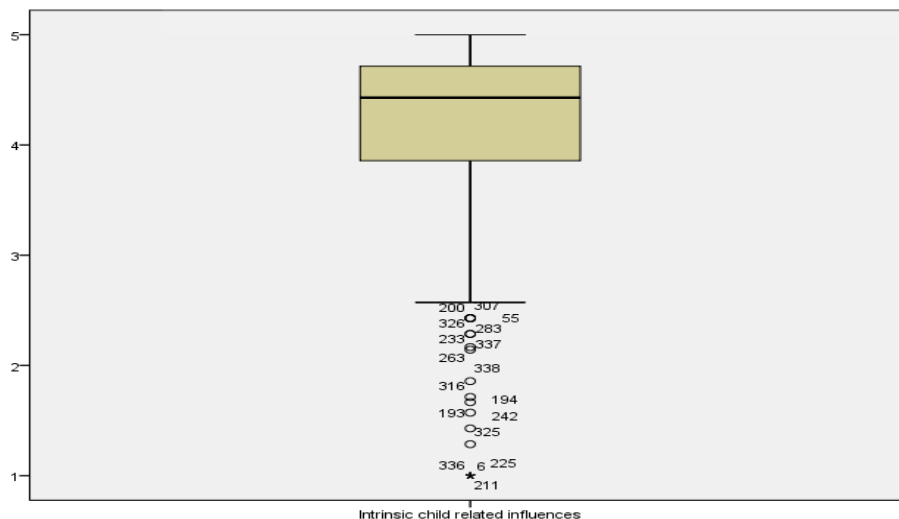


Figure 4.2: Box-plot of the factor Intrinsic child related influences

Table 4.12: Items associated with the factor: Effective school leadership and governance

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
15	The training and experience of the principal at the school	4,11	1,064
16	The training and experience of staff at the school	4,33	0,941
17	Quality of school governance	4,17	0,985
18	Quality of professional leadership in the school	4,26	0,959
19	Level of parental involvement in the school	3,81	1,086

Schools are entities that have their own human, financial and physical resources. These resources need to be managed. The principal as the head of the entity, has a definitive impact on the school and its effectiveness in providing quality education in accordance with the expectations of parents. Consequently, items culminating into the factor '*Effective school leadership and governance*' is an important dimension of school choice that has the propensity to influence parental decision-making and is thus valid as a factor (Msila, 2009; Lombard, 2007; Woolman & Fleisch, 2006; Hsu & Yuan-fang, 2013). This factor is represented by the lower part of the triarchic model in Figure 2.4 that describes how activity can only exist in relation to rules, community and division of labour, as these societal dimensions effect the systemic organisation of human activity.

The histogram in Figure 4.3 and box-plot in Figure 4.4 below, indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor '*Effective school leadership and governance*', **to be influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 4.13$). The box-plot again reveals that the distribution of data is negatively skew indicating asymmetric data. In this instance again, both the mean and median are less than the mode.

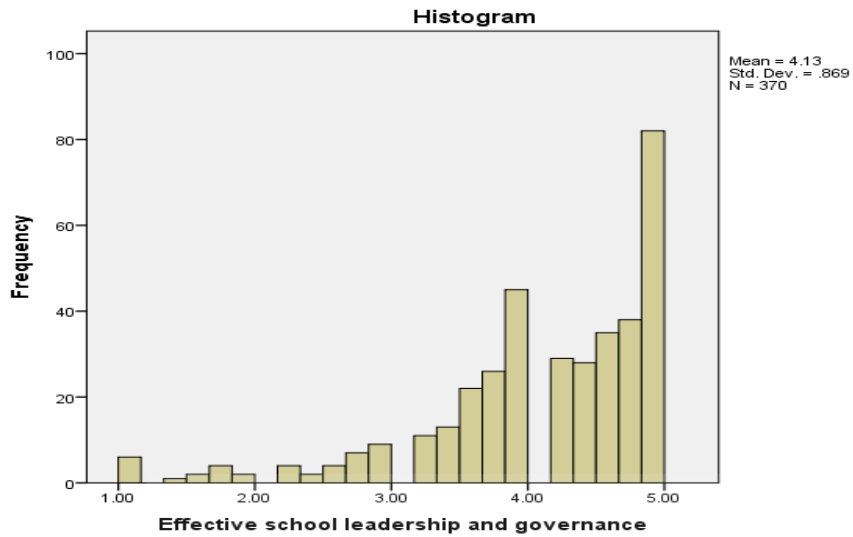


Figure 4.3: Histogram of the factor Effective school leadership and governance

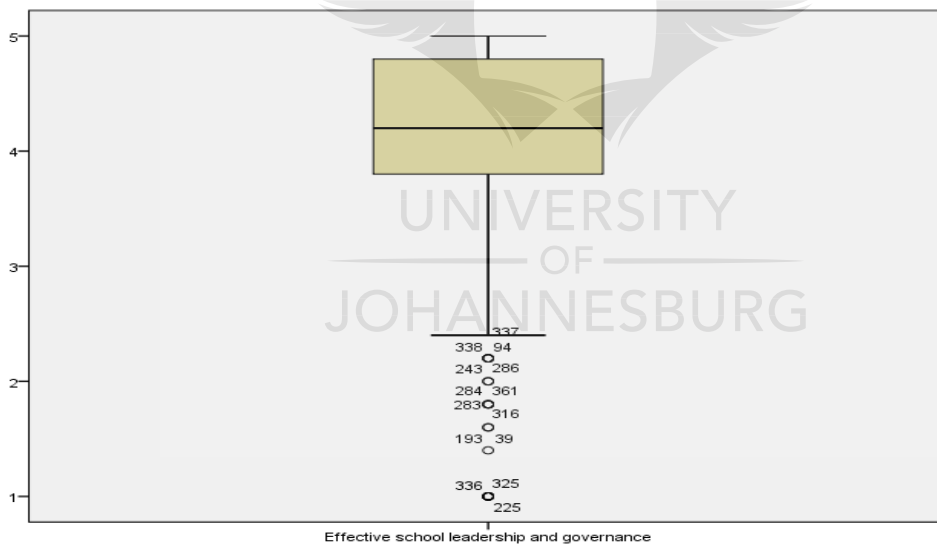


Figure 4.4: Box-plot of the factor Effective school leadership and governance

Table 4.13: Items associated with the factor: Academic excellence

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
3	The academic curriculum offered by the school	4,35	0,949
4	The school's academic performance in terms of external exam results	4,19	0,994
5	The school's performance in Annual National Assessments (ANA)	3,80	1,179
6	Assessment body of the national senior certificate	3,76	1,247

The factor labelled '*Academic excellence*', flows from the ever increasing trend of parents constructing a connection between educational attainment and occupational success (Plank & Sykes, 2003). Parents according to Goldring and Rowley (2006), emphasise and prioritise items associated with academic outcomes and student achievement. This is evident in the items constituting this factor, thus validating it as an important consideration in school choice decision-making.

Figure 4.5 and 4.6 below, indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor '*Academic excellence*', **to be influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 4.03$). The box-plot reveals that the distribution of data is negatively skew with both the mean and median less than the mode, a characteristic of asymmetric data.

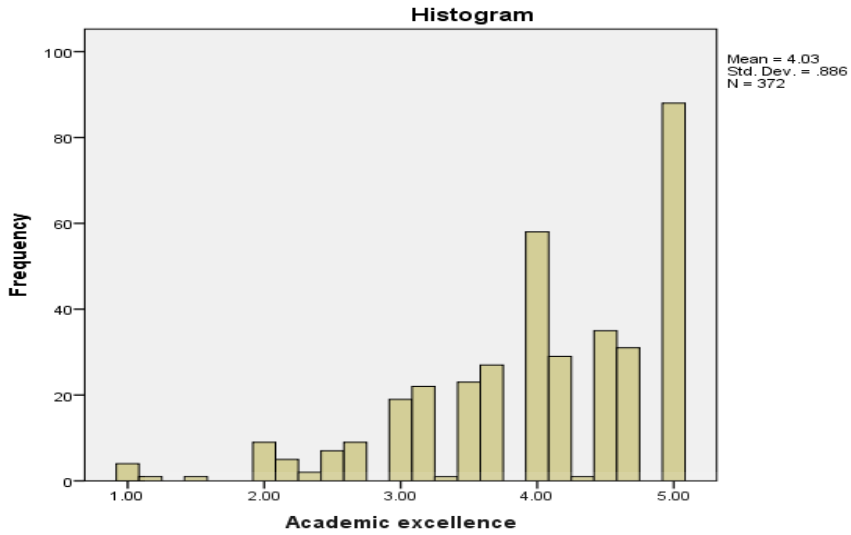


Figure 4.5: Histogram of the factor Academic excellence

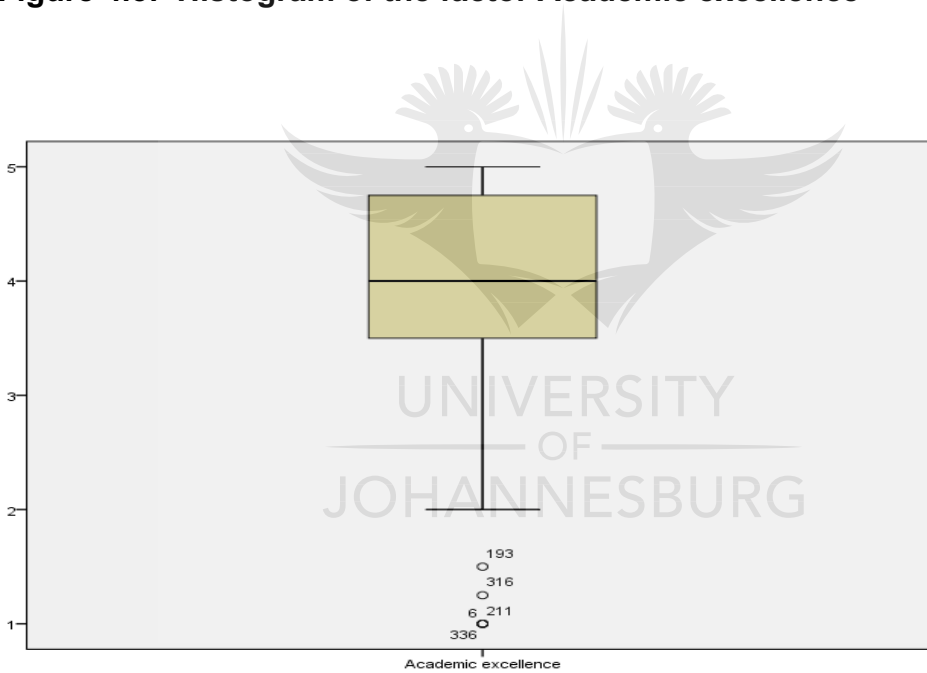


Figure 4.6: Box-plot of the factor Academic excellence

Table 4.14: Items associated with the factor: Geography

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
32	Location of the school (close to home or on my way to work)	3,94	1,270
33	The safety of the neighbourhood in which the school is located	4,25	1,038
35	I/we fit into the school's feeder area	3,06	1,572

The factor 'Geography' is made up of firstly, the location of the school in terms of logistics, secondly the safety of the neighbourhood and thirdly the issue of school placement. These items all demonstrate relevance in both the international and national literature of Kelly and Scafidi, 2013; Goldring and Rowley, 2006; Goh and Dolnicar, 2006; ISCA, 2008; Burgess, *et al.*, 2010; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; Lombard, 2007 and Hsu and Yuan-fang, 2013, in chapter 2 of the literature review and are thus justifiable as a factor.

The data in the box-plot (figure 4.8) and histogram (figure 4.7) below, indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor 'Geography', to be **somewhat influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 3.74$). The box-plot reveals that the distribution of data is negatively skew indicating asymmetric data where both the mean and median are less than the mode.

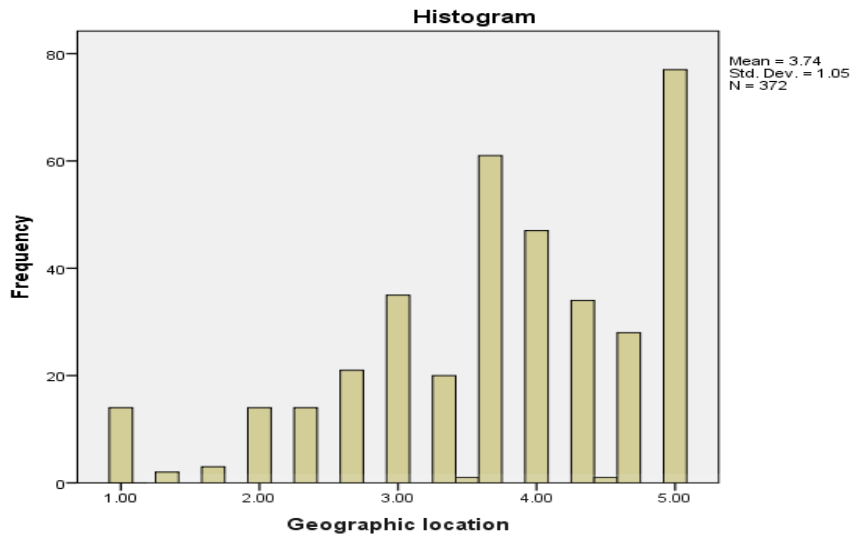


Figure 4.7: Histogram of the factor Geography

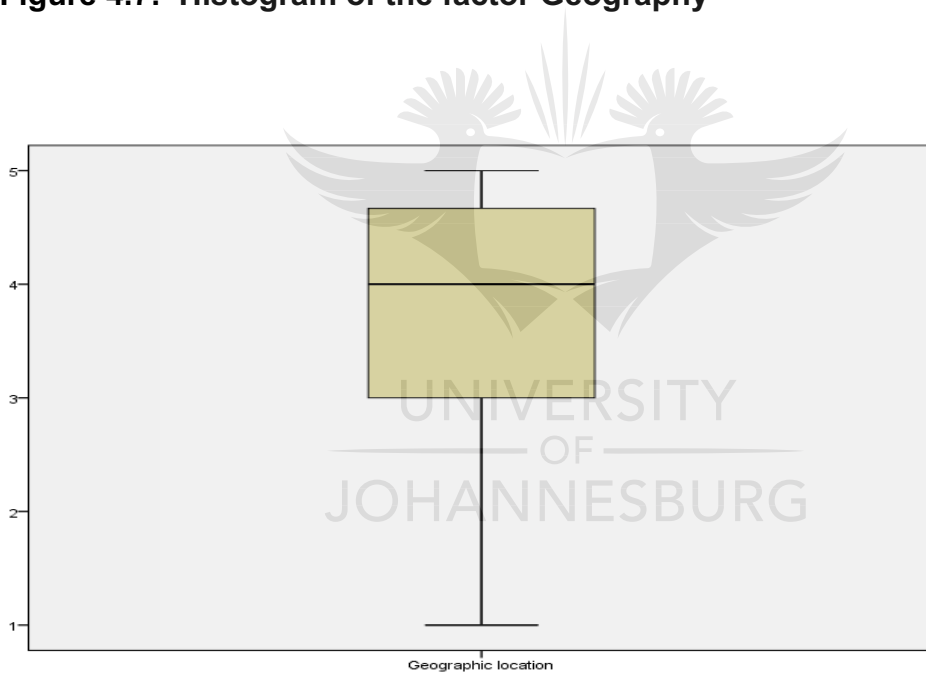


Figure 4.8: Box-plot of the factor Geography

Table 4.15: Items associated with the factor: School infrastructure

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
7	Opportunities for extracurricular activities	3,77	1,237
8	The external state of school buildings and grounds	3,70	1,159
9	Academic facilities offered by the school (classrooms, equipment, books, computer centre, library etc.)	4,27	0,919
10	Sporting facilities offered by the school (fields, courts, equipment etc.)	3,60	1,309
11	Aesthetics of the school reception area	3,21	1,270
37	The school's standard of achievement in sport	3,09	1,394

Items associated with the factor 'School infrastructure' encompass a parents five senses. School infrastructure thus makes up all those aspects of a school that are clearly visible, spoken about and are physical and tangible in nature. Literature points out that parents the world over are able to distinguish between schools of varying quality and as such respond positively by regarding these attributes as important in terms of enhancing the educational outcomes of their children (Goldhaber, 1999). This factor accordingly, corresponds well with the dimension of parental decision-making as described by Choice theory where it is postulated that an individual's choices are driven by a never ending quest to satisfy individual human needs (Glasser, n.d).

The data in Figure 4.9 and 4.10 indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor '*School infrastructure*', to be **somewhat influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 3.62$). The box-plot reveals that data is once again distributed negatively with its associated characteristics of asymmetric data.

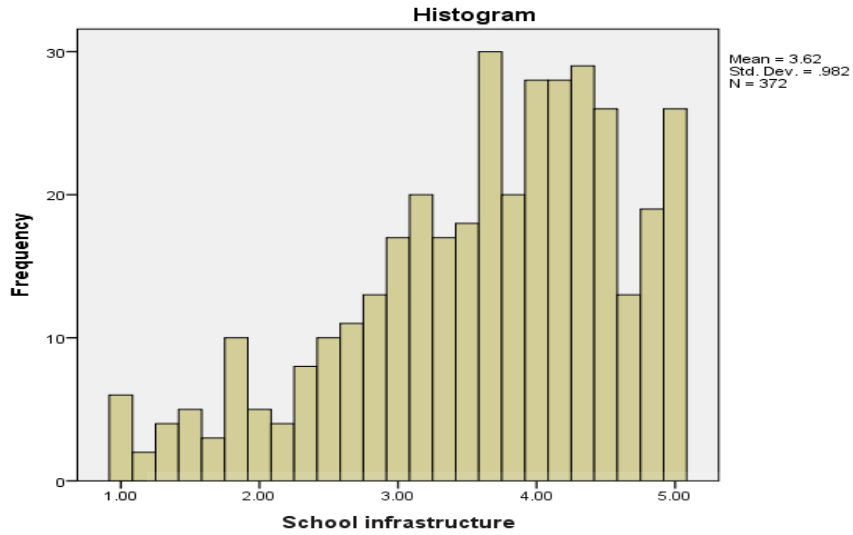


Figure 4.9: Histogram of the factor School infrastructure

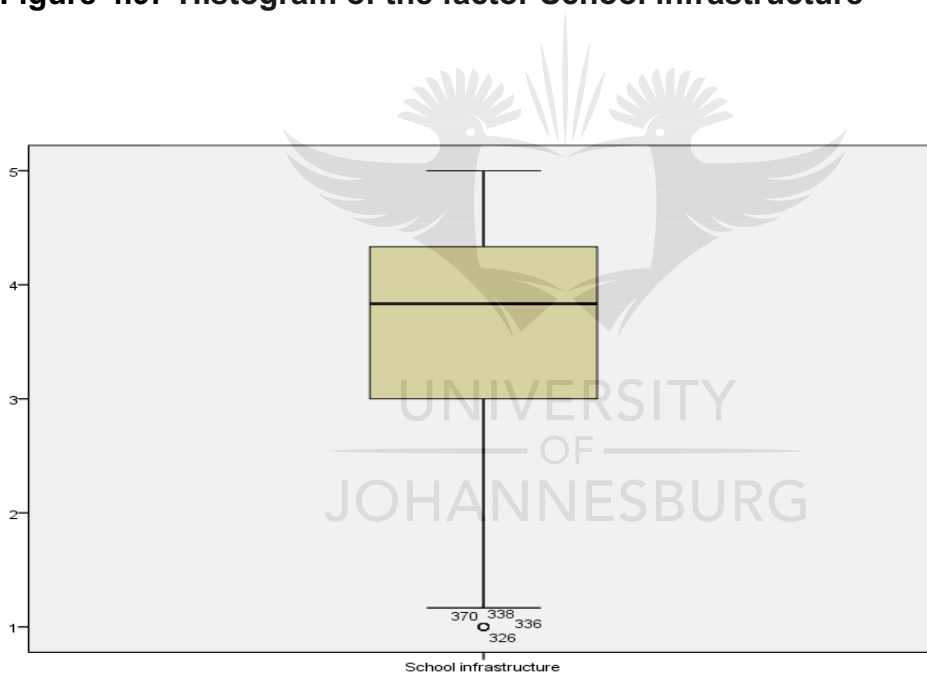


Figure 4.10: Box-plot of the factor School infrastructure

Table 4.16: Items associated with the factor: School size

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Size of the school (i.e. the total number of learners)	3,25	1,357
2	Size of classes (i.e. the number of children in a class)	3,91	1,171

'School size' is a factor that incorporates both the physical size of the school and the number of learners per educator assigned to an individual classroom. These elements are important in terms of parental school choice decision-making since research indicates that school size can sometimes be overwhelming for learners and smaller class sizes enable teachers to provide a better quality education (Huntsman, 2008; Torquati, Raikes & Huddleston-Casas, 2007; De Schipper, Riksen-Walraven & Geurts, 2006). 'School size' therefore as a factor in terms of its associated importance in parental decision-making can thus be supported.

The histogram and box-plot below in Figure 4.11 and 4.12, indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor 'School size', to be **somewhat influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 3.59$). The box-plot reveals that the distribution of data is negatively skew indicating asymmetric data yet again.

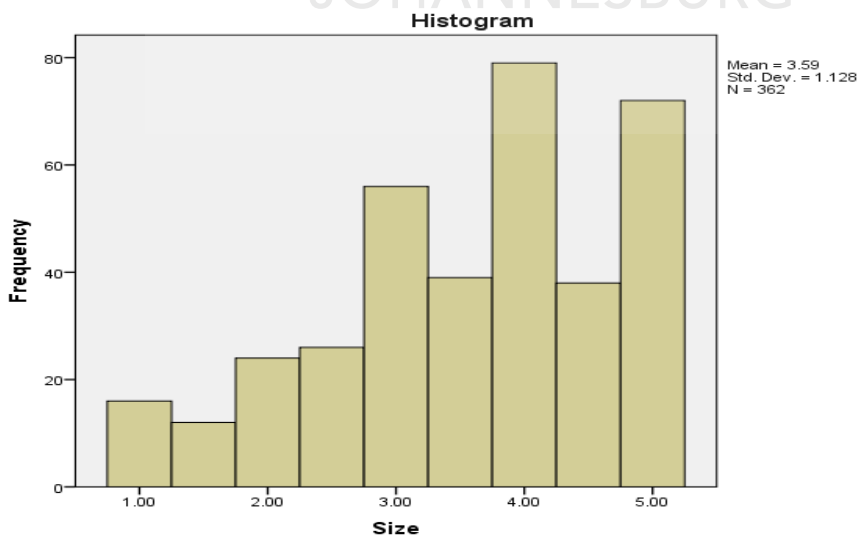


Figure 4.11: Histogram of the factor School size

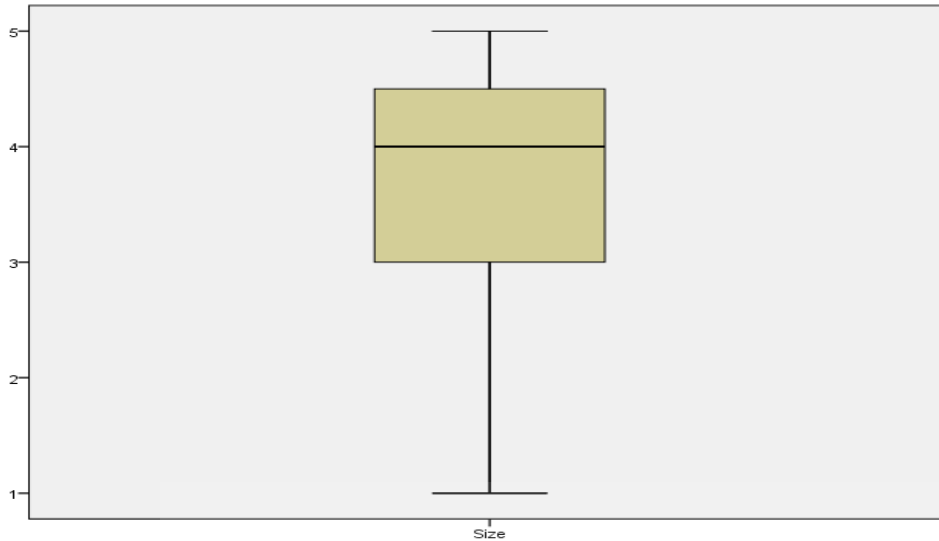


Figure 4.12: Box-plot of the factor School size

Table 4.17: Items associated with the factor: School culture

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
26	The school's medium of instruction	3,98	1,140
27	The school's established traditions	3,72	1,284
28	Ethnic/racial make-up of the school	3,09	1,449
29	The school's 'single sex' status	1,67	1,219
30	The school's religious ethos	3,36	1,535
36	Opinions of other parents regarding the school	3,19	1,346
38	Ease of admission to the school	3,04	1,451
39	School fees	3,32	1,423

Democracy has led to parents in South Africa formulating their own opinions regarding what they think an ideal school should offer their children (Venter, 2011). 'School culture' thus as a factor exerts probably the broadest and deepest influence for parents in making a school choice decision (McDaniel, *et al.*, 2012). Culture comprises a complex system of values, norms and symbols all of which are evident in the items making up this factor. This in combination with the legacy of apartheid and the environment in which school choice decision-making takes place substantiates the factor.

The data in Figures 4.13 and 4.14 below, indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor 'School culture', to be **somewhat influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 3.22$). The the distribution of data in this factor approaches more of a normal distribution with only a slight tendency pointing to negative skewness.

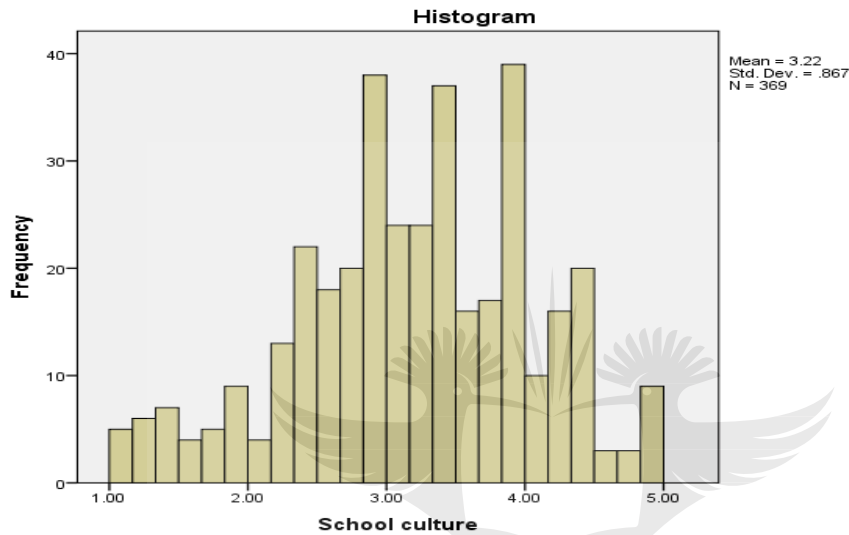


Figure 4.13: Histogram of the factor School culture

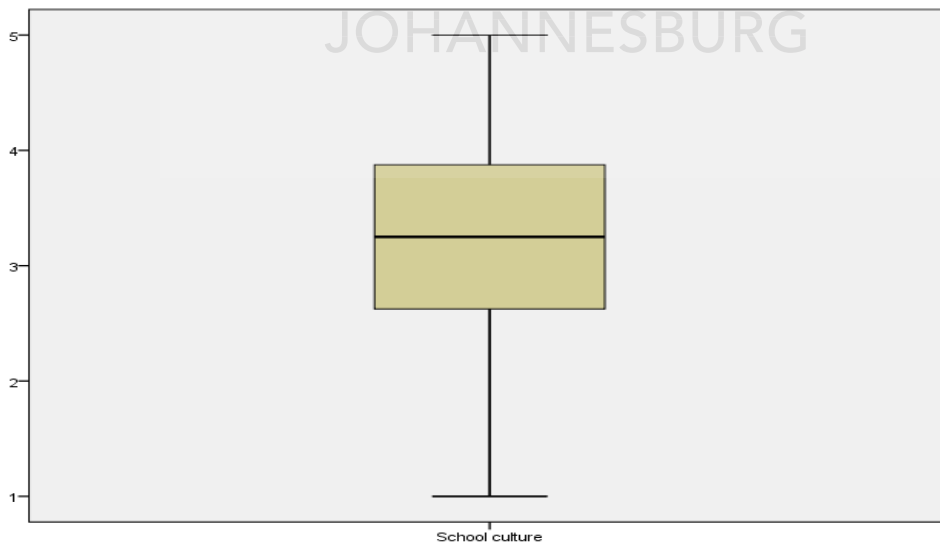


Figure 4.14: Box-plot of the factor School culture

Table 4.18: Items associated with the factor: Value added incentives

Item:	Influencing choice statements:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
12	School uniform	2,97	1,444
14	Aftercare facilities offered by the school	2,40	1,493
20	Child has special educational needs	2,67	1,603
24	Child's friends will be attending the school	2,23	1,376
34	The proximity of the school to green space	3,18	1,354
40	Provision of transport to the school	2,21	1,530
41	Other preferred schools were full	1,51	1,107

On examination of the items encapsulated in the '*Value added incentive*' factor it is noted that many of the items speak towards the individual circumstances for which the school choice decision is made. Decision-making with regards to uniforms, provision of transport, special educational needs etc. would be important for some parents and not so important for others. These unique items thus explain not only why this factor registers the lowest factor mean score but also why it is noted as being significant in most circumstances in table 4.28 (section 4.5) for hypothesis testing. It additionally once again ratifies the influence of CHAT and Choice theory as individuals taking part in decision-making but having different views and interpretations for the purpose of activity.

The data in the histogram and box-plot below (figure 4.15 and 4.16), indicate that parents regard the items contained in the factor '*Value added incentives*', to be **slightly influential** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 2.53$). The box-plot reveals that the distribution of data in this factor to be positively skew indicating asymmetric data. In this instance, both the mean and median is greater than the mode and a generalization can be made that any deviations from the mean are going to be positive.

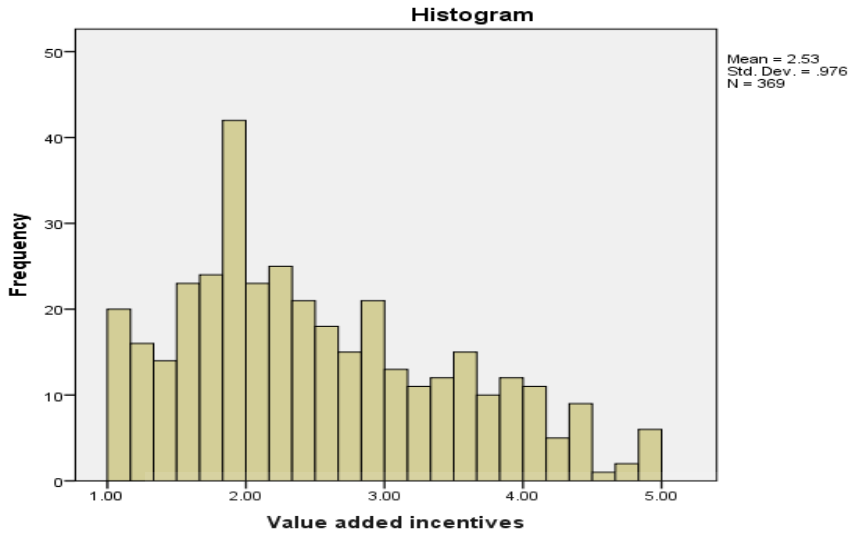


Figure 4.15: Histogram of the factor Value added incentives

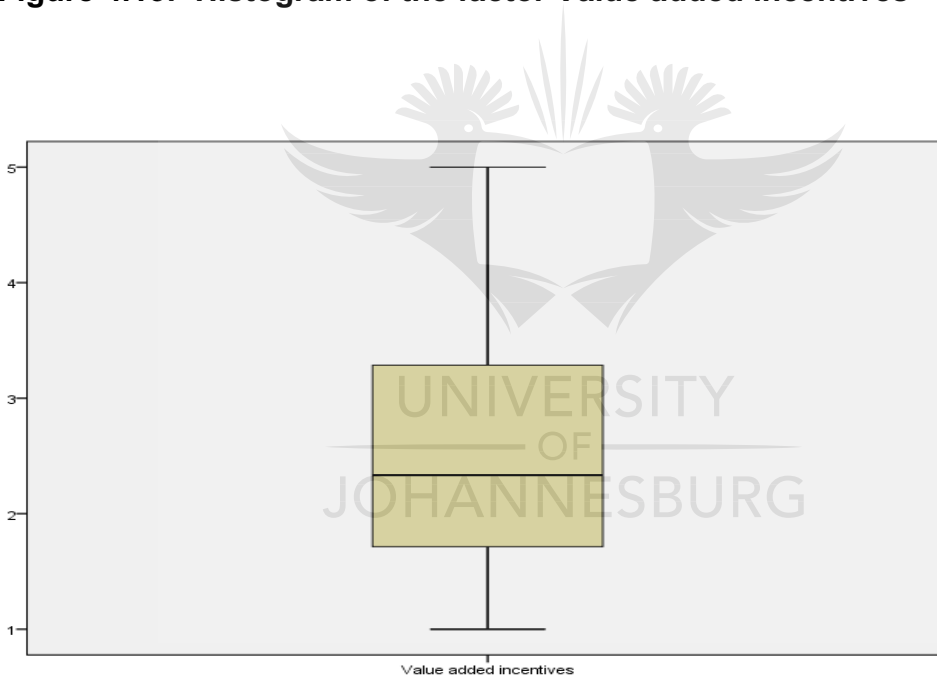


Figure 4.16: Box-plot of the factor Value added incentives

A synopsis thus, of factor analysis with respect to parents in this study indicate that:

- Each of the eight choice factors realised an overall mean score of above 2.5. Parents were required to indicate the level of influence for each item using a five point Likert scale in the questionnaire. This indicates that all eight factors play an influential role for parents in making a school choice decision.

- Three of the eight factors realised a mean score of more than 4, the highest being for factor 1, 'Intrinsic child related influences' ($\bar{x} = 4.20$). Next was factor 3, 'Effective school leadership and governance' ($\bar{x} = 4.13$) and in third place factor 6, 'Academic excellence' ($\bar{x} = 4.03$). These factors are the most influential for parents.
- Four of the eight factors realised a mean score in the vicinity of 3, indicating somewhat influential for parents. These factors included, factor 7, 'Geographic location' ($\bar{x} = 3.74$), factor 2, 'School infrastructure' ($\bar{x} = 3.62$), factor 8, 'Size' ($\bar{x} = 3.59$) and factor 5, 'School culture' ($\bar{x} = 3.22$).
- The lowest mean score per statement was realised for factor 4, 'Value added incentives' ($\bar{x} = 2.53$). This factor implies a slightly influential extent in a parent's decision to choose a particular school.
- Results indicate that the data in this data set is not normally distributed but asymmetrical. Seven of the eight factors revealed to have negative skewness (factors 1,2,3,5,6,7,8) with one factor being positively skewed (factor 4, 'Value added incentives'). Researchers generally expect a certain level of skewness in terms of the results since opinion-related statements are often positively or negatively skewed. This presents a limitation to the study in terms of hypothesis testing as non-parametric analysis will have to be conducted.
- These findings concur with conclusions drawn in section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 earlier in this chapter and are in accordance with the literature both nationally and internationally in Chapter 2.

4.4.2 Factor analysis of information sources influencing parental school choice

Information is the precondition for choice. As such question 9 of the questionnaire administered to parents was designed to elicit the extent of use of particular sources of information when making the school choice decision. In ensuring reliability and validity in the context of this study, 15 items (see Annexure B) were offered to garner information on the preferred sources parents perceive as being influential in making school choice decisions. The 15 items were subjected to principal axis factoring

(PAF) with oblimin Kaiser Normalization rotation using the SPSS 15.0 programme. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.844 exceeded the recommended value of 0.7. The outcome of an exploratory PAF suggested the presence of 4 factors with Eigen values exceeding 1.0 explaining 47.93% of the variance. These factors were named appropriately and are tabled below.

Table 4.19: Factors constituting information sources for school choice

No.	Factor Name:	No. of items	Factor mean score	Rank Order	Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient
1	Mass media promotional sources	3	1.68	4	0.793
2	Social networks	5	2.58	2	0.711
3	Personal interaction	3	2.43	3	0.727
4	Public network sources	4	2.72	1	0.674

The items together with their respective mean scores associated with each of the factors established, are presented in Tables 4.20 – 4.23. Histograms for each factor are presented in Figures 4.17 – 4.20.

Table 4.20: Items associated with the information factor: Mass media promotional sources

Item:	Influencing information sources:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
8	Outdoor signage (Billboards/street pole advertising)	1.56	0.871
2	Local newspaper	1.56	0.884
9	Information provided by the local educational district	1.75	1.052

The data in the Table 4.20 and Figure 4.17, indicate that parents **do not give much attention** to the items contained in the factor '*Mass media promotional sources*', when making school choice decisions ($\bar{x} = 1.68$). The data is positively skewed indicating that the mean and the median are greater than the mode.

Although the items in the factor correlate well together, it could be that parents do not give much attention to them, not because they are insignificant but perhaps because information provided by schools and educational departments in this manner is somewhat limited or not freely accessible. Outdoor signage and newspaper advertisements may be an expensive option for schools, and possibly the lack of an easily accessible public platform for local educational districts to provide information on, may be a cause. This, however, is an assumption that is being made and would need further investigation in possible future studies.

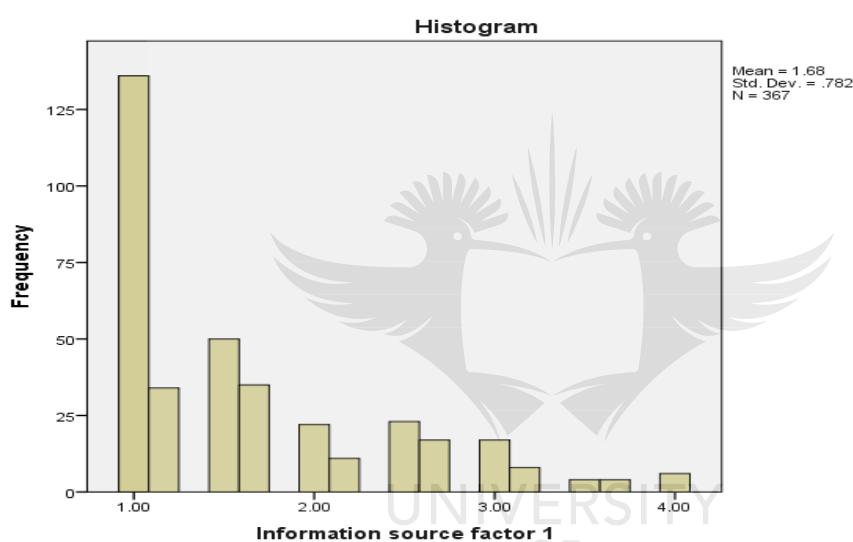


Figure 4.17: Histogram for the factor Mass media promotional sources

Table 4.21: Items associated with the information factor: Social networks

Item:	Influencing information sources:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
6	Other parents with children attending the school	2.79	1.119
4	Friends	2.63	1.082
7	Other children attending the school	2.45	1.164
5	Family	2.41	1.187
3	Work colleagues	1.73	1.013

The data in Table 4.21 and Figure 4.18, indicate that parents **will to a moderate extent use** the items contained in the factor 'Social networks', when making school

choice decisions ($\bar{x} = 2.58$). On the four point Likert scale this falls just under the option ‘use to a large extent’.

Research indicates that many parents rely on their social networks for information regarding school choice (Bosetti, 2004; Longfield, 2011). Accordingly, the items making up the factor of other parents, other children, friends, colleagues and family are probable parties that make up a parent’s social circle and would thus have associative influence as reference groups over parental decision-making related to school choice.

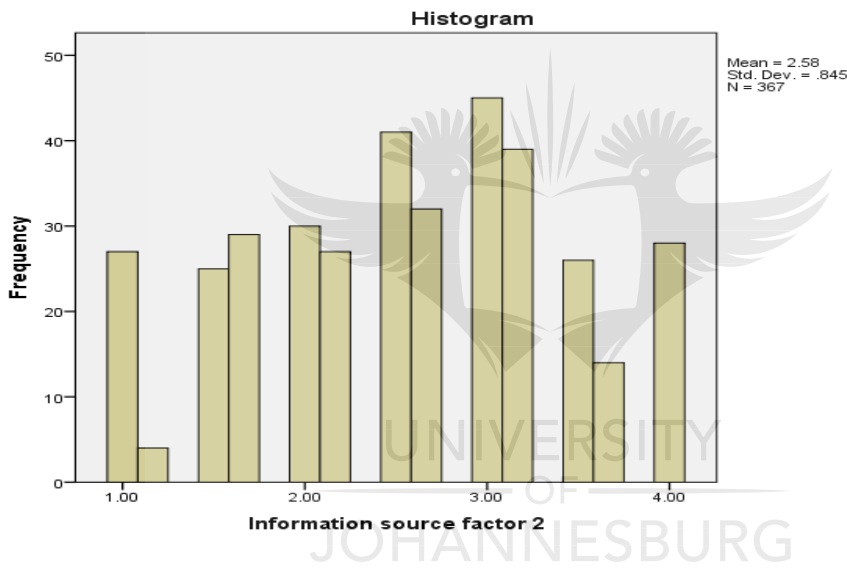


Figure 4.18: Histogram for the factor Social networks

Table 4.22: Items associated with the information factor: Personal interaction

Item:	Influencing information sources:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
11	School brochures/booklets	2.18	1.164
12	School’s website	2.29	1.225
10	Visit to the school (open days/evenings etc.)	2.87	1.177

The data depicted in Table 4.22 and figure 4.19, indicate that parents will **only to a small extent**, consult with the items contained in the factor '*Personal interaction*', when making school choice decisions ($\bar{x} = 2.43$).

Of the items making up the factor, 'visits to the school (open days/evenings etc.)' records the highest mean score in comparison to the other items. In the current day and age of technology and the internet, it is surprising that the school's website does not resonate more with parents. A possible explanation for this could once again be the lack of an informative, interactive and up to date website or social space on the world-wide-web to which parents have easy access to. On the other hand, it could point toward a lack of access opportunity to engage on these said platforms. Again, this is an assumption that would need to be ratified by further research into school promotional tools.

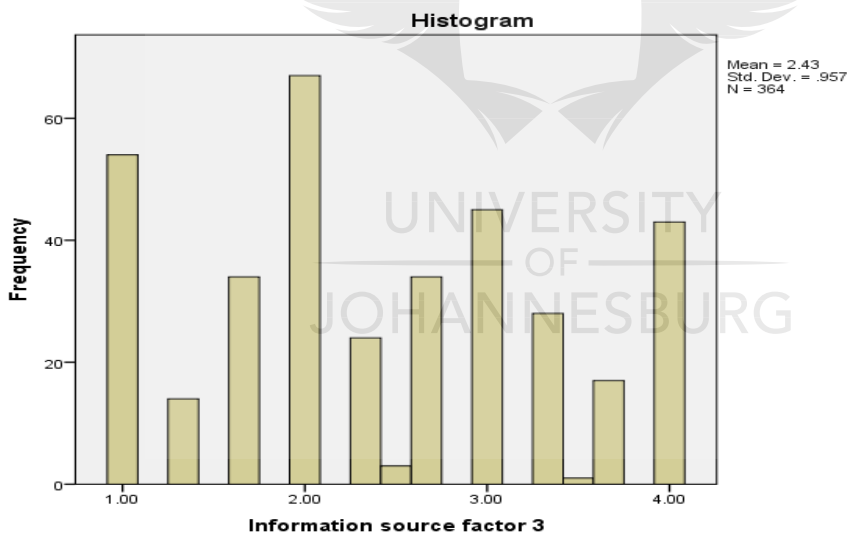


Figure 4.19: Histogram for the factor Personal interaction

Table 4.23: Items associated with the information factor: Public network sources

Item:	Influencing information sources:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
13	Information on exam results	2.60	1.235
1	Personal experience of the school	2.54	1.247
15	The schools image in the community	3.26	0.923
14	Information on Annual National Assessments (ANA)	2.36	1.169

The data in the Table 4.23 and Figure 4.20, indicate that parents will to a moderate extent use the items contained in the factor – Public network sources, when making school choice decisions ($\bar{x} = 2.72$).

Research points out that, middle and upper income families seek strategies to maintain their children’s privileges and escape from schools to which their children are assigned in the quest for better opportunities (Carnoy & McEwan, 2003; Walford, 2003). This notion accordingly, rationalises the information sources expressed in this factor as parental decision-making criteria.

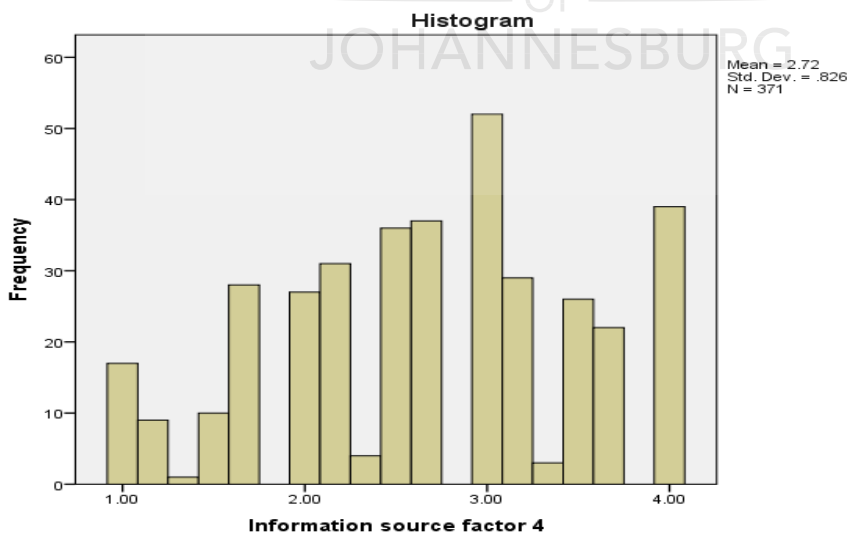


Figure 4.20: Histogram for the factor Public network sources

In summary, the factor analysis of information sources influencing parents in this study indicate that:

- Parents, in the questionnaire using a four point Likert scale, indicated that three of the 4 factors were consulted for information when engaged in the school choice decision.
- These three factors realised an overall mean score of 2 and above. It is thus assumed that these three factors are the most influential for parents seeking information about potential schools.
- The most important information source was revealed to be 'Public network sources' ($\bar{x} = 2.72$). This is followed by 'Social networks' ($\bar{x} = 2.58$) and 'Personal interaction' ($\bar{x} = 2.43$).
- These findings concur with conclusions drawn Section 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 earlier in the chapter are in accordance with the literature both nationally and internationally in Chapter 2.

4.4.3 Factor analysis of obstacles to school choice

To complete the main aim of the study, anxieties associated with school choice were transcribed into possible obstacles which could have the ability to inhibit school choice decision-making. Question 11 of the questionnaire administered to parents extracted this information for analysis. In ensuring reliability and validity in the context of this study, 10 items (see Annexure B) were posed to parents. The 10 items were subjected to principal axis factoring (PAF) with oblimin Kaiser Normalization rotation using the SPSS 15.0 programme. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.839 exceeding the recommended value of 0.7. The outcome of an exploratory PAF suggested the presence of 3 factors with Eigen values exceeding 1.0 explaining 56.62% of the variance. These factors were named and are tabled below.

Table 4.24: Factors constituting obstacles to school choice

No.	Factor Name:	No. of items	Factor mean score	Rank Order	Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient
1	Admission criteria	6	1.78	1	0.854
2	Access to information	2	1.45	3	0.778
3	Geographic logistics	2	1.53	2	0.696

The items together with their respective mean scores associated with each of the factors established, are presented in Tables 4.25 – 4.27. Histograms for each factor are presented in Figures 4.21 – 4.23.

Table 4.25: Items associated with the obstacle factor: Admission criteria

Item:	Obstacles to school choice:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
4	Cost of admission	1.67	1.015
3	Admission deadlines	1.59	0.985
2	Admission requirements	1.63	1.002
5	Lack of knowledge of procedure or information relating to admission	1.44	0.818
8	School fees at the school	1.78	1.020
1	Availability of space for my child(ren) at the school	2.20	1.184

Hoadley's research (1999), one of the few studies investigating school choice in the South African context, finds that school choice centres around whether parents are economically in a position to make choices beyond the borders of their locality or not. The items culminating in the factor '*Admission criteria*', point to these exact issues as identified by factor analysis. Parents accordingly, it seems are in agreement with the notion that residential location, costs and admission processes among others, can be debilitating in terms of school choice decision-making.

The data in Table 4.25 and Figure 4.21, indicate that parents find the items contained in the factor '*Admission criteria*', **somewhat of an obstacle** when making

a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 1.78$). The data in this factor can also be described as being positively skew.

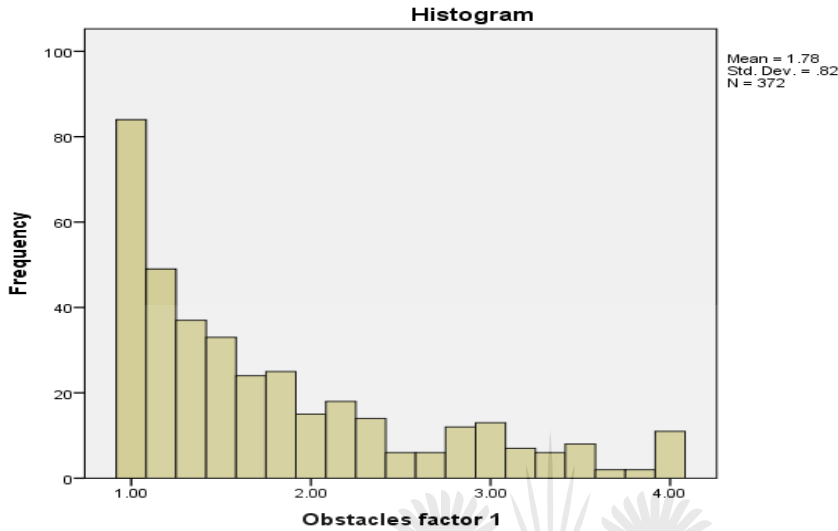


Figure 4.21: Histogram for the factor Admission criteria

Table 4.26: Items associated with the obstacle factor: Access to information

Item:	Obstacles to school choice:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
10	Lack of knowledge of other schools to make comparisons	1.47	0.841
9	Lack of communication by the school in terms of application status	1.40	0.810

The data in Table 4.26 and Figure 4.22, indicate that parents find the items contained in the factor 'Access to information', **not much of an obstacle** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 1.45$).

This finding concurs with factor analysis of information sources in section 4.4.2. Once again a possible explanation for this data could simply be the lack of available information for parents to make comparisons with between schools and a schools' inability to keep abreast of communication in the application process. As already mentioned, this is conjecture and would need to be ratified by further research.

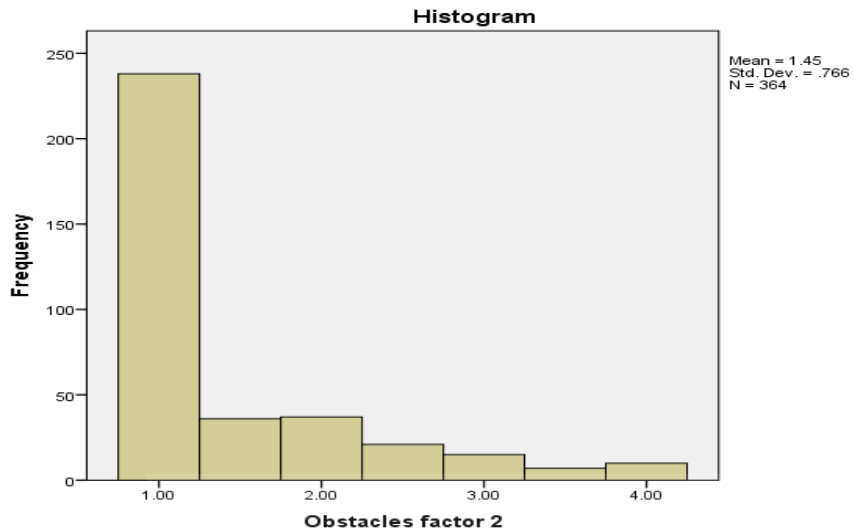


Figure 4.22: Histogram for the factor Access to information

Table 4.27: Items associated with the obstacle factor: Geographic logistics

Item:	Obstacles to school choice:	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
7	Feeder area of the school	1.52	0.946
6	Physical distance from home to school	1.48	0.862

The fundamental issue of over-subscribed schools giving priority to children living in a defined catchment area brings to the fore the notion of negative free choice. Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998), highlight this issue as well as the difficulties and inconvenience parents experience in getting their children to and from school. This research thus, substantiates the prevalence of geography as a compounding obstacle to school choice.

The data in Table 4.27 and Figure 4.23, indicate that parents find the items contained in the factor '*Geographic logistics*', **somewhat of an obstacle** when making a school choice decision ($\bar{x} = 1.53$). The data additionally presents itself to be positively skew.

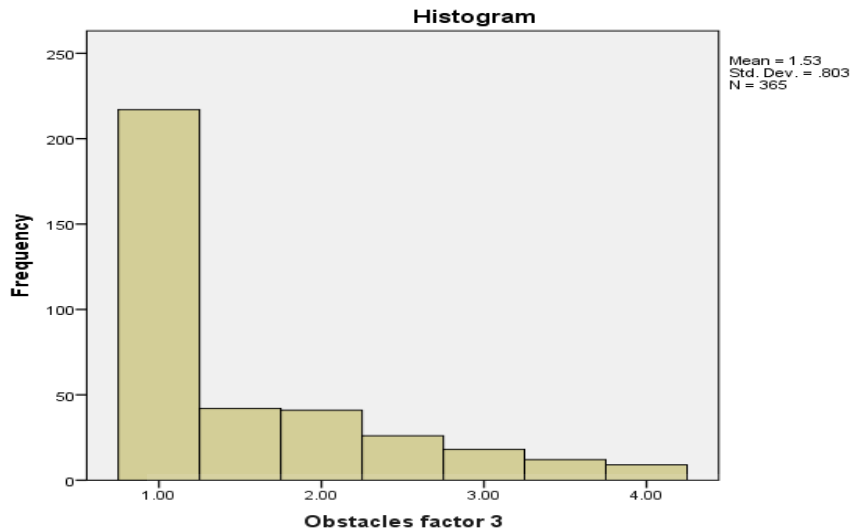


Figure 4.23: Histogram for the factor Geographic logistics

When considering the two factors contributing the most anxiety for parents (*'Admission criteria'* and *'Geographic logistics'*), it becomes evident that a parental perception exists that is in harmony with the literature presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.4). Here factor analysis alludes to a perception that school choice is limited to a parent's social-economic situation, in that choice opportunities for quality education increase as income increases (Hoadley, 1999). This ties in with the contradictions and disturbances identified in CHAT (Cole & Engestrom, 1993) that parents are forced to resolve in their school choice decision-making.

In summary, the factor analysis of obstacles to school choice in this study indicate that:

- Parents, in the questionnaire using a four point Likert scale, indicated that two of the 3 factors constituted an obstacle to making a school choice decision.
- These two factors realised an overall mean score of above 1.5. It is thus assumed that these factors are the most debilitating for parents when making a school choice decision.
- The most greatest obstacle was revealed to be *'Admission criteria'* ($\bar{x} = 1.78$). This is followed by *'Geographic logistics'* ($\bar{x} = 1.53$).

- These findings concur with conclusions drawn Section 4.2.5 and 4.2.6 earlier in the chapter are in accordance with the literature both nationally and internationally in Chapter 2.

Having completed a representation of the various factors, information sources and obstacles in respect of parental school choice, it is appropriate to state the hypotheses and to discuss the statistical analyses.

4.5 HYPOTHESES

A hypothesis is an assumption or theory guess that a researcher makes about some characteristic of the population being investigated (McDaniel *et al.*, 2010). To determine whether a result obtained in a sample is due to chance or whether it is a reflection of what is happening in the population, the researcher uses hypothesis testing. Typically, two hypotheses are stated. A null-hypothesis states that the sample results are due to chance alone and an alternative hypothesis states that the sample results reflect what is happening in the population. Researchers will either accept or reject a hypothesis based on the results of either parametric or non-parametric tests. The skewness of the data will dictate the type of test to be used in hypothesis testing. Since factor analysis in this study indicates a relatively high level of skewness for choice factors and additionally since the sample used was not a random one, non-parametric analysis will be used in hypothesis testing.

In testing for significant differences between groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was used for two groups and the Kruskal-Wallis test for three groups or more. Amidst the criticism of nonparametric testing, it is believed that the sample size in this study will mitigate the unnatural distribution of data and evoke the Central Limit Theorem. The Central Limit Theorem states that the sampling distribution of the sampling means approaches a normal distribution as the sample size get larger regardless of the shape of the population distribution (statisticssolutions.com). This fact holds true for sample sizes over 30, which applies to this study as the sample size equalled 374.

Table 4.28 and Table 4.29 summarises the statistical significant differences between groups based on demographics with regards to parental school choice.

Table 4.28: Statistical significance related to Factors influencing parental school choice

Independent variables	Dependent variables influencing school choice							
	1. Intrinsic child related influences	2. School infrastructure	3. Effective school leadership and governance	4. Value added incentives	5. School culture	6. Academic excellence	7. Geographic location	8. School size
Age		√			√	√	√	
Marital status				√				
Home language	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Employment status				√				
Highest academic qualification				√				√
Combined monthly gross income	√	√		√			√	
Population group	√	√	√	√		√		√
Parties involved in decision-making		√					√	
No. of schools deliberated								√
Type of school		√		√	√	√	√	√
Gender of child	√	√	√	√	√	√		
School quality	√		√		√	√		√
Academic achievement	√		√		√	√		√

Table 4.29: Statistical significance of Information sources and Obstacles to school choice

Independent variables	Dependent variables of information sources				Dependent variables of obstacles to school choice		
	1. Mass media promotion	2. Social networks	3. Personal interaction	4. Public networks	1. Admission criteria	2. Access to information	3. Geographic logistics
Position in family							√
Age	√	√	√	√			
Home language	√		√	√	√		
Employment status			√				√
Combined monthly gross income	√			√			
Population group	√		√	√	√		
No. of schools deliberated							√
Type of school	√	√	√	√	√		
Gender of child		√	√	√			
School quality		√					
Academic achievement			√				√

The specific independent variables chosen from the tables above to report on include, position in family, home language, monthly gross income, type of school and academic achievement. Although other statistical significance is evident, these variables seem to be the most influential on the factors generated in respect of parental school choice. Outcomes of these group comparisons will be discussed, giving possible reasons for the differences and similarities in the way in which the independent groups within each independent variable respond to the questions posed in the questionnaire.

4.5.1 Comparison of two independent groups

In testing for significant differences between two groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed. It is often considered the nonparametric alternative to the independent t-test (statistics.laerd.com). The U-test does not compare mean scores but rather median scores of two samples where the U-value represents the number of times observations in one sample precede observations in the other sample in ranking. Thus, it is much more robust against outliers and heavy tail distributions as is the case in this study (statisticsolutions.com). Effect size, which is the quantitative measure of the correlation between two variables for the Mann-Whitney test is calculated using the formula: $r = \frac{z}{\sqrt{n}}$ where n = the number of observations. Statistic effect size helps in determining if the difference between two variables is real or if it is due to a change of factors.

The Mann-Whitney U test was applied to the 'position in family' variable to determine whether any significant differences between mothers or fathers was apparent in terms of the various school choice factors. Evidence of significance in terms of obstacles to school choice factors was found. Table 4.30 and 4.31 describes the emergent hypothesis and significance.

Table 4.30: Hypothesis with respect to Position in family as the independent variable

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Multivariate Level	Position in family	HoT	There is statistically, no significant difference between the mean rank scores of mothers and fathers in respect of the three obstacle factors considered together.	Mann-Whitney U test
		HaT	There is a statistically significant difference between the mean rank scores of mothers and fathers in respect of the three obstacle factors considered together.	
Univariate Level	Position in family	Hot	There is statistically, no significant difference between the mean rank scores of mothers and fathers in respect of each obstacle factor taken separately, namely:	Mann-Whitney U test
		Hot1	Admission criteria	
		Hot2	Access to information	
		Hot3	Geographic logistics	
Univariate Level	Position in family	Hat	There is a statistically significant difference between the mean rank scores of mothers and fathers in respect of each factor taken separately, namely:	
		Hat1	Admission criteria	
		Hat2	Access to information	
		Hat3	Geographic logistics	

Table 4.31: Significance of differences between mothers and fathers regarding the three Obstacle factors

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney (U value)	Z value	p value
Admission criteria	Mothers	183.69	15614.500	-0.557	0.577
	Fathers	177.62			
Access to information	Mothers	181.53	14607.000	-1.045	0.296
	Fathers	171.96			
Geographic logistics	Mothers	188.75	13568.500	-2.313	0.021*
	Fathers	166.45			

* Statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$)

Table 4.31 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean rank scores of mothers and fathers at the multivariate level in respect of the three obstacle factors considered together and thus H_0 is accepted. At the univariate level, however, there is a statistically significant difference at the 5% level between the mean rank scores of mothers and fathers with respect to obstacles, and specifically geographic logistics to school choice ($p = 0.021$). As a result, H_0 is thus rejected in favour of H_1 . Although the effect size ($r = 0.12$) according to Cohen's conventional criteria is considered small, the interpretation of effect size should depend on the context (Cohen, 1988). Choice can be seen not only to be an action but an action continuously influenced by tensions and other elements making up the social construct of a parent and as such is worth documenting.

The data illustrates that both mothers and fathers experience obstacles to school choice, but that for mothers the geographical logistics as an inhibiting factor to school choice is more of a concern than for fathers.

In Chapter 2 (section 2.5.1.2), parents were identified as the 'subject' of the CHAT activity system engaged in school choice decision-making (Figure 2.4). The activity system was described as a means to understand the separate actions of individuals resulting from social, psychological, cultural and institutional perspectives. Parents,

later in the chapter were also construed as consumers of education and thus their decision-making behaviour influenced by among others individual factors (section 2.9.2.3) using a consumer decision-making point of reference. It is these individual factors combined with the principles of CHAT as described above that could provide a possible explanation for the differences identified between mothers and fathers. According to McDaniel *et al.*, (2012), a consumers decision-making process is influenced by their gender, age, life-cycle state, personality, self-concept and lifestyle. Correspondingly, mothers and fathers have distinct cultural, social and economic roles to play as denoted by society mediating collective activity (kaptelinin, 2005). As such these roles can trigger tensions caused by systemic contradictions relating to personal and interpersonal crises and may affect individual short-term actions (Cole & Engestrom, 1993). In terms of the middle class sample of this study, it could be assumed that mothers take on the nurturing role in the family whereas fathers are deemed to be the providers for the family in terms of societal roles. For this reason, mothers may experience challenges in terms of juggling different school times, extramural activities of different children, peak time traffic and in general the geographical logistics of getting to and from school as an influencing choice factor. Fathers as providers would not be caught up in these dimensions and thus do not identify with the factor. This could explain the statistical significance of the two independent groups.

Having set hypotheses and tested them in respect of two independent groups, the same will now be conducted for three or more independent groups.

4.5.2 Comparison of three or more independent groups

In testing for significant differences between three independent groups or more, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. The Kruskal-Wallis test is the nonparametric test equivalent to the one-way ANOVA, and is an extension of the Mann-Whitney U test. It allows the comparison of more than two independent groups and is used when the assumptions of one-way ANOVA are not met. Both the Kruskal-Wallis test and one-way ANOVA assess for significant differences on a continuous dependent variable by a categorical independent variable. In the ANOVA, it is assumed that

the dependent variable is normally distributed and there is approximately equal variance on the scores across groups. When using the Kruskal-Wallis test, these assumptions are not necessary, however, it is not as powerful as the ANOVA (statisticssolutions.com).

The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed to determine statistical significant differences on groupings for home language, monthly gross income, highest academic qualification and type of school. In all instances ranks of the data values were used in accordance with the test rather than actual data points. Unfortunately, SPSS does not report an effect size index for the Kruskal-Wallis test and as such these have not been included.

4.5.2.1 Differences with respect to parent's home language and school choice factors

Language is related to ethnic groups and literature suggests differences between ethnic groups and the importance associated with choice factors (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012; Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). Consequently, it was decided to investigate whether any significant differences between parent's home language was noticeable in terms of the various school choice factors. All eleven South African official languages were listed, however to simplify the statistical testing and analysis, it was decided to collapse the responses into 3 groups namely English, Afrikaans and African languages. Evidence of significance in terms of school choice factors and information source factors was found. Table 4.32 and 4.33 describes the emergent hypothesis and significance.

Table 4.32: Hypothesis of Home language as the independent variable

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Multivariate Level	Home language	HoM	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents home language in respect to the eight school choice factors taken together.	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaM	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents home language in respect to the eight school factors taken together.	
Univariate Level	Home language	HoA	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents home language in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HoA1	Intrinsic child related influences	
		HoA2	School infrastructure	
		HoA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HoA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Univariate Level	Home language	HaA	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents home language in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaA1	Intrinsic child related influences	
		HaA2	School infrastructure	
		HaA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HaA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	

Table 4.33: Significance of differences among respondents Home language in respect of the eight School choice factors

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (H-value)	(p-value)
Intrinsic child related influences	African Language	211.28	8.498	0.014 *
	English	177.90		
	Afrikaans	162.55		
School infrastructure	African Language	210.43	27.584	0.000 **
	English	186.38		
	Afrikaans	96.80		
Effective school leadership and governance	African Language	206.16	6.091	0.048 *
	English	176.88		
	Afrikaans	168.89		
Value added incentives	African Language	227.99	26.806	0.000 **
	English	172.25		
	Afrikaans	133.70		

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (H-value)	(p-value)
School culture	African Language	196.21	6.396	0.041 *
	English	183.99		
	Afrikaans	141.70		
Academic excellence	African Language	207.41	6.860	0.032 *
	English	179.06		
	Afrikaans	160.70		
Geographic location	African Language	198.61	10.461	0.005 **
	English	186.77		
	Afrikaans	129.72		
School size	African Language	168.74	5.156	0.076
	English	179.45		
	Afrikaans	216.39		

** Statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0,01$)

* Statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0,05$)

The data in Table 4.33 shows that there is statistically, a significant difference between parent's home language at the multivariate level. HoM is thus rejected in favour of the research hypothesis HaM. At the univariate level the mean rank scores of African language, English or Afrikaans speaking respondents differ from one another in respect of intrinsic child related influences (5% level), school infrastructure (1% level), effective school leadership and governance (5% level), value added incentives (1% level), school culture (5% level), academic excellence (5% level) and geographic location (1% level). HoA1, HoA2, HoA3, HoA4, HoA5, HoA6 and HoA7 are consequently rejected in favour of HaA1, HaA2, HaA3, HaA4, HaA5, HaA6 and HaA7.

It can be accordingly concluded in respect of the comparisons, that African language speakers in general attach more importance to the school choice factors mentioned above than that of the English or Afrikaans speaking group.

A possible reason for this could be the result of decades of Apartheid policy, where previously white schools received more funding than schools in black, coloured and Indian communities (Bisschoff & Mestry, 2009). Overcoming the apartheid legacy through education is a recurring theme throughout this study. Many of the inequalities created during Apartheid remain today making education in South Africa highly unequal (Bisschoff & Mestry, 2009). These inequalities are thus the probable reason why African language speaking parents attach more importance to school choice factors than that of their English or Afrikaans speaking counterparts. The desire to afford their children more educational opportunities than that of their own educational experience resonates strongly with this theme. This desire is echoed in both Msila (2009) and Lombard's (2007) studies of intra-township migration and why educator parents based at township schools transfer their own children to former model C schools highlighted section 2.6.2.5 of the literature review. Accordingly, it becomes clear that individual parent decision-making is not only embedded within the activity system, but it is also continuously influenced by tensions and interactions between the other elements of the CHAT system.

Although population as the independent variable has not specifically been hypothesized, it is evident from Table 4.2.8 that a similar significance is apparent. This is to be expected since language and population group are both dimensions of culture (Cant, 2010). As described in section 2.9.2.1, consumer behaviour in terms of a parent's value system is influenced by culture and this has a substantial effect on the way in which a person engages in decision-making (Perreau, 2016). This is also true for decision-making in terms of school choice as cultural factors form part of the community element of the CHAT triarchic model (Figure 2.4). Within this model a parent's decision-making with regards to school choice is shaped by the social context in which school choice is situated and includes multiple points of view (section 2.5.1.2). Choice theory contends that parents are motivated by what they want at a particular moment in time, described as their unique quality world (section 2.5.2.1). A parent's quality world is an expression of their perfect existence as influenced by past experiences or reality. Education makes up part of this ideal in a parent's life and as result influences school choice rationalisation and decision-making. Hastings, Kane and Staiger (2005), indicate that parents prefer schools

with populations ethnically similar to their own and as such it could be inferred in accordance with the literature that school choice in South Africa may enhance segregation by ethnic background causing greater inequality across education systems (OECD, 2012).

Family income as an element that influences school choice is explored in the next hypothesis.

4.5.2.2 Differences with respect to parent’s combined monthly gross income

Income speaks to whether parents are economically in a position to make choices beyond the borders of their locality (Hoadley, 1999). Subsequently it was decided to explore whether the importance parents attached to the various school choice factors differed in any significant way according to their combined monthly income. The income groupings were based on those used by STATS SA. Table 4.34 and 4.35 describes the emergent hypothesis and significance.

Table 4.34: Hypothesis of Combined monthly income as the independent variable

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Multivariate Level	Combined monthly income	HoM	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents combined monthly income in respect of the eight school choice factors taken together.	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaM	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents combined monthly income in respect of the eight school factors taken together.	Kruskal-Wallis test

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Univariate Level	Combined monthly income	HoA	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents combined monthly income in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HoA1	Intrinsic child related influences	
		HoA2	School infrastructure	
		HoA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HoA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	
Univariate Level	Combined monthly income	HaA	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents combined monthly income in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaA1	Intrinsic child related influences	
		HaA2	School infrastructure	
		HaA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HaA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	

Table 4.35: Significance of differences among respondents Combined monthly income in respect of the eight School choice factors

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (h-value)	(p-value)
Intrinsic child related influences	Up to R4 500	174.00	11.871	0.018 *
	R4 500 – R10 000	219.40		
	R10 001- R20 000	170.23		
	R20 001-R60 000	174.31		
	R60 001 and above	153.80		
School infrastructure	Up to R4 500	151.13	9.843	0.043 *
	R4 500 – R10 000	204.44		
	R10 001- R20 000	176.63		
	R20 001-R60 000	158.10		
	R60 001 and above	188.14		
Effective school leadership and governance	Up to R4 500	189.03	1.831	0.767
	R4 500 – R10 000	181.26		
	R10 001- R20 000	178.11		
	R20 001-R60 000	169.91		
	R60 001 and above	163.48		
Value added incentives	Up to R4 500	202.32	41.244	0.000 **
	R4 500 – R10 000	255.86		
	R10 001- R20 000	185.73		
	R20 001-R60 000	152.50		
	R60 001 and above	148.87		
School culture	Up to R4 500	164.53	8.909	0.063
	R4 500 – R10 000	206.90		
	R10 001- R20 000	183.95		
	R20 001-R60 000	170.15		
	R60 001 and above	153.15		
Academic excellence	Up to R4 500	183.21	3.314	0.507
	R4 500 – R10 000	192.58		
	R10 001- R20 000	180.49		
	R20 001-R60 000	169.73		
	R60 001 and above	161.97		

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (h-value)	(p-value)
Geographic location	Up to R4 500	146.00	10.399	0.034 *
	R4 500 – R10 000	213.87		
	R10 001- R20 000	178.43		
	R20 001-R60 000	171.57		
	R60 001 and above	158.23		
School size	Up to R4 500	127.29	9.270	0.055
	R4 500 – R10 000	144.83		
	R10 001- R20 000	160.39		
	R20 001-R60 000	179.62		
	R60 001 and above	181.58		

** Statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0,01$)

* Statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0,05$)

The data in Table 4.35 shows that there is statistically, a significant difference between the parent's combined monthly income at the multivariate level. HoM is thus rejected in favour of the research hypothesis HaM. At the univariate level the mean rank scores of the different income groups differ from one another in respect of intrinsic child related influences (5% level), school infrastructure (5% level), value added incentives (1% level) and geographic location (5% level). HoA1, HoA2, HoA4 and HoA7 are consequently rejected in favour of HaA1, HaA2, HaA4, and HaA7.

The data thus illustrates that the importance parents attach to the various choice factors differs according to their monthly income and as such it could be inferred that parents who actively choose schools or engage in school choice have higher levels of income. This concurs with findings by the OECD (2012) that parental school choice is often restricted by among others family income and is reiterated in the findings of Plank and Sykes (2003), Walford (2003) and Carnoy and McEwan (2003) in section 2.6.1.

From a consumer decision making perspective (section 2.9.2.3), individual factors reflected by a parent's self-concept and lifestyle often evolve as a result of combined monthly income. The way parents live or enact out their self-concept greatly influences the choices parents make. Seldom would parents associate with schools that may jeopardise their self-image (McDaniel., *et al*, 2012). Monthly income available to spend on education would thus influence school choice in terms of affordability, price sensitivity and the social value attached to a specific school (Cant, 2010). This relates directly to the second key concept of Choice theory, where Sullo (2011) explains that people build up through interaction with others, an idea of a perfect existence that becomes the source of all motivation (section 2.5.2.1).

Further to this, contradictions and disturbances in CHAT (section 2.5.1.3) could also explain this empirical evidence. In this context, school choice decision-making is not only embedded within the CHAT activity system, but is also continuously influenced by both individual and social tensions evident between the various elements of the system as depicted in Figure 2.4. The primary contradiction or tension that echoes through the entire activity system is the challenges or barriers parents experience when exercising choice. Income is a definitive barrier to school choice and this tension can most certainly preclude some parents from choosing a specific school and its perceived benefits (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). This finding is echoed by Hastings, Kane and Staiger (2005) where it is found that better-off parents are more likely to enrol their children in high quality schools as they have more information and resources available to making this choice. In contrast, more disadvantaged parents tend to exercise choice less and send their children to local neighbourhood schools.

The positive correlation between income and education is well documented and analysed in the next hypothesis.

4.5.2.3 Differences with respect to parent’s highest academic qualification

Section 2.6.1 of the literature review unpacks the demographics of school choice. In determining who chooses, research indicates that more educated parents are better equipped to exercise choice (Bosetti, 2004; Goldring & Rowley, 2006). It is asserted that some parents may have the best intentions for their children, but may not have the competencies or information necessary to select the most appropriate schools. Consequently, it was decided to investigate whether any significant differences between parent’s highest academic qualification was evident in terms of the various school choice factors. Five groups depicting various levels of education were presented and parents were asked to indicate which was the most appropriate to them. Table 4.36 and 4.37 describes the emergent hypothesis and significance.

Table 4.36: Hypothesis of Highest academic qualification as the independent variable

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Multivariate Level	Home language	HoM	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents highest academic qualification in respect to the eight school choice factors taken together.	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HoM	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents highest academic qualification in respect to the eight school factors taken together.	Kruskal-Wallis test

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Univariate Level	Home language	HoA	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents highest academic qualification in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HoA1	Intrinsic child related influences	
		HoA2	School infrastructure	
		HoA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HoA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	
Univariate Level	Home language	HaA	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents highest academic qualification in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaA1	Intrinsic child related influences	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaA2	School infrastructure	
		HaA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HaA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	

Table 4.37: Significance of differences among respondent's Highest academic qualification in respect of the eight School choice factors

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (h-value)	(p-value)
Intrinsic child related influences	Lower than G12	186.72	7.486	0.112
	Grade 12	184.37		
	Post school diploma	200.73		
	Degree	171.32		
	Postgrad qualification	155.29		
School infrastructure	Lower than G12	165.39	2.311	0.679
	Grade 12	188.02		
	Post school diploma	190.77		
	Degree	175.64		
	Postgrad qualification	172.48		
Effective school leadership and governance	Lower than G12	175.96	3.555	0.470
	Grade 12	189.22		
	Post school diploma	190.58		
	Degree	165.50		
	Postgrad qualification	169.33		
Value added incentives	Lower than G12	244.77	18.240	0.001 **
	Grade 12	196.02		
	Post school diploma	183.29		
	Degree	161.25		
	Postgrad qualification	144.51		
School culture	Lower than G12	169.66	2.077	0.722
	Grade 12	185.76		
	Post school diploma	190.03		
	Degree	169.28		
	Postgrad qualification	177.07		
Academic excellence	Lower than G12	155.5	5.207	0.267
	Grade 12	187.48		
	Post school diploma	193.45		
	Degree	185.20		
	Postgrad qualification	160.80		

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (h-value)	(p-value)
Geographic location	Lower than G12	173.04	2.108	0.716
	Grade 12	188.58		
	Post school diploma	189.18		
	Degree	178.92		
	Postgrad qualification	167.48		
School size	Lower than G12	143.50	10.478	0.033 *
	Grade 12	163.55		
	Post school diploma	193.61		
	Degree	200.50		
	Postgrad qualification	170.08		

** Statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0,01$)

* Statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0,05$)

The data in Table 4.37 shows that there is statistically, a significant difference between the parent's highest academic qualification at the multivariate level. H_0M is thus rejected in favour of the research hypothesis H_{aM} . At the univariate level the mean rank scores of the different educational groups differ from one another in respect of value added incentives (1% level) and school size (5% level). H_{0A4} and H_{0A8} are consequently rejected in favour of H_{aA4} , and H_{aA8} .

The data reveals that a parent's level of qualification does have an influence on school choice. In particular, value added incentives rate more highly with lower educated groups and interestingly school size is more of an influencing factor for the more educated.

Value added incentives as a factor includes aspects relating to school uniform, aftercare facilities, transport to school, friends attending the school and special educational needs being catered for by the school. Empirical evidence suggests that these aspects may be more important for lower educated groups as a result of the aspirations these parents have for their children (section 2.6.5). This is in

agreement with the findings of Longfield (2011) and Msila (2009) where education is seen as a liberator from poverty and an opportunity for parents to invest in their children's education. Parents with limited education have a directly proportionate amount of disposable income to spend on education. As such costs associated with school choice become important considerations (Du Toit, 2008; Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). On examination of the items encapsulated in the value added incentive factor it can be noted that many of the items speak towards the financial cost of education and school choice. Accordingly, these associated costs of uniforms, travel, aftercare and extra lessons would resonate more with the lower income group in terms of practical considerations that need to be taken than with more educated parents who may have more disposable income to work with.

School size as a factor in this study, included not only the total number of learners enrolled at a school but also the teacher/child ratio policy employed by the school for an individual class. In suggesting possibilities for empirical evidence related to school size, teacher/child ratios are thought to be a central issue. These ratios impact the quality of children's early educational experiences, with lower ratios typically being more favourable. Broad agreement in research indicates that a smaller class size enables teachers to provide a better quality education (Huntsman, 2008; Torquati, Raikes & Huddleston-Casas, 2007). This is true, since a smaller class size is believed to allow more time for individualised and responsive teacher attention and interactions (De Schipper, Riksen-Walraven & Geurts, 2006). In reality, however, many schools struggle to maintain low teacher/child ratios due to limited resources at both local and national level. Findings in this study thus suggest, that more educated parents are of a similar opinion that the predisposition to a quality education is the physical number of learners in a classroom linked to one teacher. Private schools use this ratio as a major marketing strategy in claiming the provision of a superior quality of education to that of Government schools. It is also used as a justification for high fees. Accordingly, as a result of the direct correlation between high levels of education and high levels of income (Goldring & Rowley, 2006), parents with increased access to resources are able to choose from a wider pool of educational opportunities providing credence to these findings.

Although parents may be concerned with different factors according to their situation and circumstance, in general parents participating in choice, seek the best possible educational opportunities for their children. The type of school sought by parents is thus the next hypothesis to be explored.

4.5.2.4 Differences with respect to parent’s choice of type of school

Parents in South Africa have a choice between public schools, private schools and home schools. Although parents may be concerned about equity and integration, they at the same time seek the best education for their children (Raveaud & Van Zanten, 2007). Accordingly, it was deemed important to consider whether any significant differences between a parent’s choice of school type manifested in terms of the various school choice factors. Table 4.38 and 4.39 describes the emergent hypothesis and significance.

Table 4.38: Hypothesis of School type as the independent variable

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Multivariate Level	School type	HoM	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents choice of type of school in respect to the eight school choice factors taken together.	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaM	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents choice of type of school in respect to the eight school factors taken together.	

Dimensions	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Univariate Level	School type	HoA	There is statistically, no significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents choice of type of school in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HoA1	Intrinsic child related influences	
		HoA2	School infrastructure	
		HoA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HoA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	
Univariate Level	School type	HaA	There is statistically, a significant difference among the mean rank scores of respondents choice of type of school in respect to the eight factors taken separately:	Kruskal-Wallis test
		HaA1	Intrinsic child related influences	
		HaA2	School infrastructure	
		HaA3	Effective school leadership and governance	
		HaA4	Value added incentives	
		HoA5	School culture	
		HoA6	Academic excellence	
		HoA7	Geographic location	
		HoA8	School size	

Table 4.39: Significance of differences among respondent's choice of School type in respect of the eight School choice factors

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (h-value)	(p-value)
Intrinsic child related influences	Public Primary	193.85	5.885	0.208
	Public Secondary	190.70		
	Private Primary	168.74		
	Private Secondary	176.65		
	Home school	157.64		
School infrastructure	Public Primary	211.84	67.258	0.000 **
	Public Secondary	184.84		
	Private Primary	201.80		
	Private Secondary	189.15		
	Home school	72.56		
Effective school leadership and governance	Public Primary	197.13	6.131	0.190
	Public Secondary	176.64		
	Private Primary	174.14		
	Private Secondary	175.14		
	Home school	157.94		
Value added incentives	Public Primary	189.63	36.819	0.000 **
	Public Secondary	219.50		
	Private Primary	170.80		
	Private Secondary	171.96		
	Home school	109.39		
School culture	Public Primary	204.61	27.674	0.000 **
	Public Secondary	198.39		
	Private Primary	160.23		
	Private Secondary	160.85		
	Home school	123.72		
Academic excellence	Public Primary	180.52	10.425	0.034 *
	Public Secondary	184.71		
	Private Primary	189.04		
	Private Secondary	212.80		
	Home school	145.83		

Factor	Group	Mean Rank	Kruskal- Wallis (h-value)	(p-value)
Geographic location	Public Primary	224.49	49.607	0.000 **
	Public Secondary	191.48		
	Private Primary	144.74		
	Private Secondary	143.16		
	Home school	126.05		
School size	Public Primary	169.58	36.547	0.000 **
	Public Secondary	128.89		
	Private Primary	207.48		
	Private Secondary	197.68		
	Home school	224.83		

** Statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0,01$)

* Statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0,05$)

Table 4.39 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean rank scores of parent's choice of schools at the multivariate level. HoM is thus rejected in favour of the research hypothesis HaM. At the univariate level the mean rank scores of the different types of schools differ from one another in respect of school infrastructure (1% level), value added incentives (1% level), school culture (1% level), academic excellence (5% level), geographic location (1% level) and school size (1% level). HoA2, HoA4, HoA5, HoA6, HoA7 and HoA8 are consequently rejected in favour of HaA2, HaA4, HaA5, HaA6, HaA7, and HaA8.

It can be accordingly concluded that the importance parents attach to choice factors, does differ according to the type of school for which the choice is made.

A possible reason for this is the unique feelings and perceptions parents have regarding the different types of schools available from which to choose in the distinctive South African educational environment (Msila, 2009; Paterson & Kruss, 1998; Malada, 2010). According to Choice theory, these perceptions influence the

choices parents make in a quest to meet their basic needs and compare their perception of reality versus the pictures of their individual quality worlds of what they want in an educational sense (Sullo, 2011). As such, it could be inferred that different types of schools are held to different standards by parents. Public schools, private schools and home schools all differ significantly according to the curriculum they offer, the learners that make up the student body, the financial capability of the school and its governance and accountability (<https://www.newschoolsnetwork.org>; Du Toit, 2008; Jansen & Taylor, 2003). These features as defined by CHAT, are all constructs shaped by the social environment in which school choice is located. Consequently, these societal dimensions may affect both the perceptions and expectations parent's have of different types of schools.

In bringing this chapter to an end, a summation of the hypotheses testing indicated that:

- Both mothers and fathers experience obstacles to school choice, but that for mothers, geographic logistics are more inhibiting than for fathers.
- African language speakers attach more importance to school choice factors than that of the English or Afrikaans speaking group.
- The importance parents attach to the various choice factors differs according to their monthly income. Thus it could be inferred that parents who actively engage in school choice have higher levels of income.
- A parents' level of qualification does have an influence on school choice.
- The importance parents attach to choice factors does differ according to the type of school for which the choice is made.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an analysis and interpretation of some of the empirical data from the broad research undertaken in terms of school choice. It commenced with the ranking of questionnaire items administered both to parents and principals in terms of ascertaining their perceptions, attitudes and actions that could influence school choice. Items of interest were discussed and those indicating synergy and

discord between parents and principals were highlighted. This was followed by factor analysis.

The purpose of factor analysis was outlined and the process followed in order to develop the factors was explained. Reliability coefficients for the various factors were presented in Table 4.10 for parental school choice, Table 4.19 for information sources to school choice and Table 4.24 for obstacles to school choice. All were found to be sufficiently reliable to continue with the statistical analysis of the data. For the purpose of analysis, variables that seemed to be the most influential on the factors generated in respect of parental school choice were presented in Table 4.28 and Table 4.29. The outcomes of these group comparisons were considered by stating the appropriate hypotheses and analysing the data by means of multivariate statistical tests. Possible reasons for differences and similarities in the way in which independent groups within which each independent variable responded to questions posed in the questionnaire were explored and discussed using CHAT and Choice theory as the theoretical context.

A synopsis of the chapter reveals that parental choice involves a mixture of rationalisations related to values, preferences, social class, social networks and aspirations for their children.

In chapter 5, a summary of the research will be presented. Important findings will be discussed and recommendations will be made.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Change is part of human existence and at present, more so than ever before, we live in an era of paradox, opportunities and above all change. Change is essential to keep abreast of our dynamic world. This is also true for parents and schools. The pace of change in the South African education system, stems from the major political change that has taken place in the country since 1994. As a result, the values, traditions and practices of parents and schools that served in the past are no longer relevant. Parents as a result of policy changes are now able to exercise school choice in search of better educational opportunities. Schools, by the same token are in a position to influence the choices parents make through the marketing of education as a service.

The aim of this study was to develop a base of knowledge regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies influencing the school choice decision in the South African context as perceived by parents, and to determine whether these perceptions were consistent with those of school principals in terms of how schools market themselves. The general intention was to strengthen the capacity of parental school choice decision-making if necessary and generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in marketing their schools. In an attempt to achieve this, a literature review concerning school choice from a global perspective was undertaken. This was followed by empirical research to garner the perspectives of parents and principals in terms of their behaviour, attitudes and actions that could influence school choice decision-making using a South African middle class sample.

The results of the research point to both positives and negatives in the policy of school choice. The positive is that school choice provides options for parents and learners to select schools that align with their values, preferences and aspirations.

The negative of school choice is that it privileges middle class parents who have the social and cultural capital to navigate their way through the school selection process (Gorard, 1999).

In this, the final chapter, a summary of the most significant aspects of the study will be provided. This will be followed by listing the important findings from the literature review as well as the empirical research and then making recommendations to strengthen parental school choice decision-making where necessary and generate a preliminary framework for principals to apply in marketing their schools.

5.2 SUMMARY

The crisis in the quality of South African education has resulted in a flight trend across all types of primary and secondary education. South African schools vary for many reasons in their ability to provide quality education. A huge divide exists between functional schools and dysfunctional ones and South African schools are split into two worlds. One is on par with the best in the world, the other is perpetually constrained by incompetent/dishonest administrators, ineffectual teaching and industrial action by teacher trade unions. Amidst this backdrop, there is a growing perception among South Africans that public schooling will not be able to enhance the educational outcomes and future of their children. Historically (pre-1994), the majority of South African parents were not actively involved in making choices regarding the schools their children would attend. Reason being, this was determined for them by legislation and children were enrolled in schools by residence, language and/or by colour. Democracy opened the door to many possibilities and post-1994 policy changes resulted in parents starting to formulate their own ideas and preferences of what they thought the ideal school should be and offer their children. Accordingly, South African parents are increasingly making decisions regarding where to send their children to school. The South African Department of Education acknowledges that since 1995 the school system has experienced new patterns of learner movement. Parents' inability to make informed choices is also highlighted. Chapter one thus provided an introduction and rationale for the research study as well as a conceptualisation of the problem. It presented

the general aim of the research, methodology to be employed and the clarification of important concepts relating to school choice in the South African context.

Chapter two focused on an exposition of school choice. The discussion commenced with an international perspective of school choice, followed by a historical account of changes encountered by the South African educational system and its relationship to school choice. The theoretical context for school choice including the combined use of both Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and Choice theory was explained as a means to engage in explanatory critique with regards to parental school choice decision-making. School choice was then demonstrated in terms of the various factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for parents from a variety of secondary sources. The link between quality, access, equality and opportunity in education and school choice was clarified. Having established a base of knowledge relative to parents, the chapter then turned its attention to the school's influence on school choice paying particular attention to school marketing in terms of objectives and strategies used by principals in school promotion. Consumer behaviour in the context of how parents engage in the decision-making process of choosing a school and how principals respond to these concluded the chapter establishing a thorough reference framework for school choice in this study.

The framework used to guide the design, collection and analysis of data for the study was explained in chapter three. As a new body of knowledge that needed to be explored, a quantitative study was used to establish the perceptions of middle class South African parents regarding the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies in making the best possible school-choice decision for their children's future and whether these perceptions were consistent with those of school principals. The empirical investigation followed a conclusive research design with a post-positivist paradigm. Within this context and in order to establish the perceptions of parents and principals, the research instrument together with issues surrounding sampling, reliability, validity and hypotheses was discussed. Items to measure variables that emerged as important determinants or factors in decision-making with regards to exercising school choice, was constructed and compiled into two questionnaires, one for parents and one for principals. A graphical

representation of the biographical details of respondents, both parents and principals, brought the chapter to a close. It is important to note, that data collected from principals was not done to hold principal's representative, but rather to establish the existence of synergy in perceptions with parents regarding school choice and quality education.

Chapter four provided an analysis and interpretation of some of the empirical data. It commenced with a description of the research instrument administered to parents and a discussion of some relevant items of interest. These included influencing choice factors, strategies and information sources for choice, anxieties and obstacles to choice and finally aspirations of parents regarding choice. The research instrument then administered to principals was discussed in a similar manner in response to parental choice factors, information sources and anxieties related to choice. Items suggesting synergy and items of discord with regards to school choice between parents and principals were presented and discussed. This was followed by factor analysis for influencing parental factors, influencing information sources and obstacles to school choice. All choice items were subjected to principal axis factoring where emergent factors were respectfully realised and appropriately named. The reliability coefficients of the various factors were presented and were found to be sufficiently reliable to continue with the statistical analysis of data. Five different hypotheses were set and multivariate statistics were used to analyse and interpret the results of the data.

The results of the research point to a number of factors complicating the school choice decision as often the decisions parents in South Africa make are unique and stem from consequences of apartheid policies and as such need to be understood in this specific context. Among others, the top five factors parents indicated as being important in school choice decision-making were, the child's happiness in the school, school safety, the academic curriculum and quality of discipline offered by the school, the training and experience of staff at the school as well as the quality of professional leadership, school facilities, performance and the overarching factor of school fees. The most significant information sources used by parents in their decision-making was found to be the schools' image in the community followed by

open-days. School fees and oversubscription of functional schools were identified as the major obstacles parents experienced in decision-making. The key aspirations of parents to exercise school choice embrace the desire for a quality education effecting the economic empowerment of a child's future. In establishing synergy, it was found that for the most part principals do share similar perceptions to parents concerning issues around school choice. As South African parents increasingly value the importance of education for the life opportunities of their children so the weight and cost of school choice intensifies. This is the dilemma many parents face when choosing a school for their children.

This summary highlights some of the important aspects and procedures that were undertaken during the study. Important findings derived from the study will now be presented and recommendations made for parents and principals in operationalising school choice will follow.

5.3 IMPORTANT FINDINGS

The findings from this study are presented according to the research aims set in Chapter one (section 1.5).

5.3.1 Findings in relation to the first objective:

To demonstrate 'school choice' as a base of knowledge in terms of factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for parents and school principals.

In addressing this particular objective, the following is applicable in first the literature review and then the empirical study:

5.3.1.1 Findings from the literature review

Finding 1

South African schools are split into two worlds, one on par with the best in the world producing quality foundation learning and providing access to top tertiary education,

the other (making up the vast majority) is perpetually constrained by incompetent/dishonest administrators, ineffectual teaching and industrial action by teacher trade unions (Reprobate, 2012; Du Toit, 2008; Fleisch, 2008; Taylor & Yu, 2009; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011; Kozol, 2005; Bifulco, 2005; Bloch, 2009). Accordingly, government leaders, teachers and the public in general have lost confidence in the public schooling system (Malada, 2010; Immelman, 2013; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011; Modisaotsile, 2012; section 2.6.4)

Finding 2

This crisis in the quality of education available coupled with changes in policy as an advent of democracy, has resulted in a flight trend across all types of primary and secondary schools and parents are increasingly wanting to shop for schools as they do for consumer products. Assumptions have been made about what parents are looking for in the schools they select for their children to attend, but there has been little real evidence to show what really influences parents when choosing a school in South Africa (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). What is clear is that parents have been voting with their feet over the past number of years (Msila, 2009; Van der Merwe, 2012; Malada, 2010; Raveaud & Van Zanten, 2007; section 2.1).

Finding 3

Historically (pre-1994), the majority of parents were not actively involved in making choices regarding the schools their children would attend. This was determined for them by legislation and children were enrolled in schools by residence, language and or by colour. Subsequently, South African parents today making school choice decisions, are a product of the apartheid era of education and as such carry either the scars or privilege of this ideological framework. School choice therefore is a problem in South Africa that is deeply ingrained in history, politics, economics and social intricacies (Maile, 2004; Pampallis, 2003; section 2.3).

Finding 4

A wide diversity of school choice policies are evident across the globe in response to a wide range of problems experienced in different contexts around the world.

School choice policies, however, have two essential features in common. Firstly, they all allow parents to choose what schools their children will attend and secondly, they result in competition among schools (Plank & Sykes, 2003). Accordingly, schools are able to be selective in their learner intake which inadvertently amplifies segregation by ability, income and ethnicity (Burgess *et al.*, 2010; Hoadley, 1999; OCED, 2012; Du Toit, 2008; section 2.2).

Finding 5

In discerning the demographics of school choice, research indicates that parents who actively choose schools are better educated, have higher levels of income and are less likely to be unemployed than non-choosing parents (Bosetti, 2004; Sekete, Shilubane & Moila, 2001; Woolman & Fleisch, 2006). Additionally, school choice policies seem to favour middle and upper income families (plank & Sykes, 2003) who seek to maintain their children's privilege (Carnoy & McEwan 2003, Walford, 2003; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; section 2.6.1).

Finding 6

It is evident from literature that the **factors that drive decision-making** for parents in terms of school choice globally have commonalities. Parents themselves, including their own background, gender, education, priorities and ethnicity influences the choices they make (Friedman, Bobrowski & Markow, 2007; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; Goh & Dolnicar, 2006; ISCA, 2008; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; Lombard, 2007; Hsu & Yuan-fang, 2013; Bosetti, 2004; Evans & Cleghorn, 2014; section 2.6.2).

Finding 7

Access to information and various **sources of information** globally, have been noted as being important in terms of disseminating strategies for school choice (OCED,2012; Maile, 2004; Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005; Bosetti, 2004; Longfield, 2011; section 2.6.3)

Finding 8

The main **anxieties** literature points to with respect to obstacles associated with parental school choice include firstly, the issue of oversubscription at schools and whether parents have schools to choose from (Mestry, 2014; Woods, Bagley & Glatter, 1998; Hoadley, 1999;) and secondly, the costs associated with school choice (Du Toit, 2008; Grant, 2013; Mestry, 2014; Mestry & Bisschoff, 2009; Evans & Cleghorn, 2014; Ndimande, 2006; section 2.6.4).

Finding 9

Parental **aspirations** globally for school choice give the impression that parents are able to distinguish between schools of varying quality and as such respond positively to this through a desire to choose these schools for their children with the aim of enhancing the educational outcomes of their children (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; ISCA, 2008; Bell, 2009; Venter, 2011; section 2.6.5)

Finding 10

It is essential for a school principal to understand the educational needs, preferences and viewpoints of parents in order to provide a desirable educational experience in their respective schools (Msila, 2009; SASA, 1996(a); Immelman, 2013; Hepburn, 2015; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004; Speirs, 2007). Thus, the **marketing implications** of education as a service is a complex phenomenon that complicates the school choice decision for parents (Immelman, 2013; Oplatka, 2007; Bisschoff, Du Plessis & Smith, 2004; McDaniel, *et al.*, 2012; section 2.8).

5.3.1.2 Findings from the empirical study

Finding 11

The **choice factors** parents consider when choosing a school include the child's happiness, school safety, school discipline, the academic curriculum and performance of the school, school leadership as well as the training and experience of staff, school facilities and the overarching factor of school fees. These items were identified as factors that drive decision-making for parents in the empirical study. These findings emphasize that although all parents face the decision about where

to secure the best education for their children, the decision takes place in the context of unique biological, cultural, economic and social conditions, faced only by the parents and their children (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; section 4.2.1). This is in agreement with finding 6 in section 5.3.1.1 from the literature review.

The choice factors *principals* use to influence parents when choosing a school include the school's approach to teaching and learning, its reputation and medium of instruction, the academic curriculum and performance of the school, the quality of professional leadership as well as the training and experience of staff, school discipline and safety and the level of parental involvement in the school (section 4.3.1).

Finding 12

According to empirical evidence item 39, 'School fees' was specified as being the most influential choice factor by parents respectively when asked to identify one overarching factor. This finding conforms with the widely expressed view that school choice favours middle and upper income families in finding 5 of the literature review (Carnoy & McEwan 2003, Walford, 2003; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; Hastings, 2005; section 4.2.2).

Finding 13

Empirical evidence suggests that the main *information sources* *parents* consider in this study when making a school choice decision appear to be those that provide some sort of direct contact with the school. The most significant source for parents was item 15, 'The schools image in the community', followed by personal experiences with the school and open days. These findings are in agreement with the literature that points out that although parents care about the academic quality and performance of schools, more important is their own observations of the school in action and the sense of reputation conveyed through word of mouth with others of similar values, concerns or experiences (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). In the South African context, school choice is inextricably bound with overcoming the legacy of apartheid and racism and so it is assumed that parent's perceptions are in some

sense socially formed (Bosetti, 2004; section 4.2.3). This is in accordance with finding 3 from the literature review (section 5.3.1.1).

The promotional mechanisms used by *principals* to influence a parents' consideration of a school comprise of empirical data pointing towards communication with feeder schools, community involvement, local newspapers, open days and promotional materials in the form of brochures etc. This confirms literature by Buscall (2014), that a key strategy in marketing a school successfully is to speak to the target audience (section 4.3.2).

Finding 14

Empirical data related to ***anxieties*** associated with *parental* school choice indicate the issue of 'Availability of space for my child at the school' as the number one obstacle causing concern for parents. This is followed by financial aspects of school choice in terms of associated costs. These parental perceptions consequently, feed into the school choice debate of over-subscribed schools and criticism of the inconsistency of quality education being offered by all schools in an area or district (Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011; section 4.2.5). These findings are thus consistent with those of findings 1,2,4 and 8 from the literature review in section 3.2.1.1. What can be deduced is that the current education system in South Africa only provides some children with quality education insofar as their parents can actually choose for them to attend good schools. Other parents, living outside of a perceived quality schools' feeder area are left with little or no choice at all.

In response to parental anxiety associated with school choice, empirical evidence revealed that *principals* operate admission policies in accordance with government regulations, however, in most cases schools are over-subscribed and this perpetuates the propensity of selection (section 4.3.3). As such, this situation inadvertently disadvantages some applicants and conforms with findings in literature by Kozol (2005) and Bifulco (2005).

Finding 15

The key *aspirations* of *parents* to exercise school choice embrace the desire for a quality education effecting economic empowered for the child's future. Parents are quick to recognise the link between better educational opportunities and future life success, since empirical data revealed that 91% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that school choice would influence one's quality of education. In addition, academic achievement from a parents' perspective gives the impression of a direct link to economic empowerment, in that 93% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their children's academic achievement would be influenced by the school choice they made. This is in accordance with finding 9 of the literature review and is in harmony with those of researchers such as Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; ISCA, 2008; Bell, 2009; Venter, 2011 and Van Heemst, 2004 (section 4.2.7).

In response to parental aspirations regarding school choice, empirical evidence indicates that *principals* similarly to parents believe that children of different learning abilities develop and grow in school environments that focus on offering quality education (section 4.3.4).

It is these fifteen findings that demonstrate school choice as a base of knowledge in terms of factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for parents and school principals.

5.3.2 Findings in relation to the second objective:

To ascertain items of synergy and discord between parental and principal perceptions of school choice.

5.3.2.1 Findings of synergy and discord

In addressing this objective, the following is applicable from the empirical study:

Finding 16

In establishing items of **synergy** and discord between parent and principal perceptions, the empirical study found that for the most part principals do share similar perceptions with parents surrounding the concept of school choice. Although not ranked similarly, seven common items appear in each group's top ten and thus indicate consistency of thought with regards to items of influence for school choice. These items include the school's caring approach to teaching and learning, the training and experience of staff at the school, the academic curriculum offered by the school, the school's academic performance in terms of exam results, the school's discipline policy, the safety of the school and finally the quality of professional leadership in the school (Table 4.5).

When scrutinising these items, it becomes evident that the five dimensions of quality education (learners, learning environments, content, processes and outcomes) as defined by UNICEF (2000) are represented and as such the impression is that both principals and parents in South Africa, do in fact have clear perceptions and beliefs concerning quality education in the context of school choice (section 4.3.1). These findings are thus consistent with the definition used to deconstruct the term quality education in the literature and is in accordance with finding 9 from the literature review in section 5.3.1.1.

Finding 17

Items of **discord** with regards parent and principal perceptions in the empirical study revealed five items of interest. The items included the academic facilities offered by the school, the safety of the school neighbourhood, the school's reputation, level of parental involvement and the school's medium of instruction (Table 4.6). In each instance parents and principals disagreed in terms of the value and importance of the items in influencing choice. These items are significant in that as the school market changes and becomes more complex and more crowded, the need to listen to ones' community, and communicate what one as a school does well, becomes very important. If a school can create better relationships with parents, teachers, the local community (business and media), former students and other stakeholders as per CHAT, it will be better able to offer a quality environment

as a result of the support it receives from these respective parties (Hepburn, 2015; section 4.3.1).

5.3.3 Findings in relation to the third objective:

To generate a preliminary framework for school marketing taking parental perceptions of school choice into consideration.

The empirical study through numerous findings, as already noted in this chapter, make it clear that parents are increasingly making decisions regarding where to send their children to school. School marketing is a complex phenomenon that complicates the school choice decision for parents.

Finding 18

In this context of ever increasing school choice, and corresponding evaluative criteria, it is imperative for principals as educational service providers in a competitive market, to be in tune with those features and characteristics parents value and expect from schools' in providing quality education for their child/ren. If a school can create better relationships with parents, teachers, the local community, former learners and other stakeholders, it will better be able to offer a quality environment as a result of the support it receives from these respective parties.

5.3.4 Findings in relation to the fourth objective:

To strengthen parental decision-making processes with respect to school choice for quality education (if necessary).

In addressing this objective, the following school choice factors, information sources and school choice obstacles are applicable from the empirical study:

5.3.4.1 Findings with respect to school choice factors

Finding 19

Three of the eight choice factors realised a mean score of more than 4. The highest was for factor 1, '*Intrinsic child related influences*'. Runner up was factor 3, '*Effective school leadership and governance*' and in third place factor 6, '*Academic excellence*'. The empirical evidence thus points to these 3 factors being the **most influential for parents** in making school choice decisions. Eight of the top influencing factors as ranked by parents in finding 11 (section 5.3.1.2) are encapsulated in the 3 factors above and thus can be considered valid and reliable. The data is also in accordance with both national and international literature in chapter 2 (section 2.6.2) supporting evidence that globally there exists commonalities with regards to influencing school choice decision-making factors (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; Goh & Dolnicar, 2006; ISCA, 2008; Burgess, *et al.*, 2010; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; Lombard, 2007; Hsu & Yuan-fang, 2013).

Finding 20

Four of the eight choice factors realised a mean score in the vicinity of 3, indicating **somewhat of an influence for parents**. These factors included factor 7, '*Geographic location*', factor 2, '*School infrastructure*', factor 8, '*School size*' and factor 5, '*School culture*'. Although not as influential as the factors in finding 18, these factors have been identified as items that parents would consider in addition to those highlighted above. Whether or not a school presents itself with these factors may be the supporting evidence parents need in choice decision-making situations. Items making up these factors are in accordance with the national and international literature presented in chapter 2 (section 2.6.2). Similar findings are apparent in the writing of Kelly and Scafidi, 2013; Goldring and Rowley, 2006; Goh and Dolnicar, 2006; ISCA, 2008; Burgess, *et al.*, 2010; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; Lombard, 2007 and Hsu and Yuan-fang, 2013.

Finding 21

The lowest mean score per statement was realised for choice factor 4, '*Value added incentives*'. This factor implies a slightly influential extent in a parent's decision to choose a particular school and thus the items making up the factor are considered to be the **least important** for parents in the empirical study. A schools' location from a logistical point of view, is a choice item in this factor that although does not feature significantly in this study, is prominent in both international and national literature (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; Goh & Dolnicar, 2006; ISCA, 2008; Burgess, *et al.*, 2010; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; Lombard, 2007). Rather than to highlight a contradiction in findings with regards to this item, my thinking is that since my sample was a middle class one, transport challenges may not resonate as highly with the sample as in other circumstances and as such is not indicated significantly.

Finding 22

From hypothesis testing with respect to differences regarding a parent's home language and school choice factors, it was found that African language speakers in general attach more importance to all of the school choice factors than that of the English and Afrikaans speaking counterparts. This is in agreement with finding 6, 11 and literature that emphasises that choice takes place in a unique biological, cultural, economic and social environment in line with CHAT and Choice theory (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; section 4.2.1).

Finding 23

Hypothesis testing of parent's combined monthly gross income illustrates that the importance parents attach to the various choice factors differs according to their monthly income and as such it could be inferred that parents who actively engage in school choice have higher levels of income. This confers with finding 5, 12 and literature in section 4.2.2 that school choice favours middle and upper income families (Carnoy & McEwan 2003, Walford, 2003; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; Hastings, 2005).

Finding 24

With respect to a parent's level of education and school choice factors, hypothesis testing indicated that a parent's level of qualification does have an influence on school choice. In particular, the factor 'Value added incentives' rate more highly with lower educated groups and interestingly 'School size' is more of an influencing factor for the more educated. This is also in line with that of finding 5 from the literature review privilege (Carnoy & McEwan 2003, Walford, 2003; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; section 2.6.1).

Finding 25

In hypothesis testing it was concluded that the importance parents attach to choice factors, does differ according to the type of school for which the choice is made. It is thus inferred that parents who actively choose a "good school" for their child/ren, do so from the perspective of a moral imperative. Not doing so is viewed as failing their parental duties (Thrupp, 2001). This confers with finding 9 from the literature review (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Longfield, 2011; Msila, 2009; ISCA, 2008; Bell, 2009; Venter, 2011; section 2.6.5).

5.3.4.2 Findings with respect to information sources for school choice

Finding 26

Three of the four factors constituting information sources for school choice realised a mean score of above 2. The most important information source was revealed to be '*Public network sources*' followed by '*Social networks*' and '*Personal interaction*' respectively. These three factors together with the items that make up the factor are thus assumed to be the most influential for parents seeking information about potential schools. This evidence suggests that the main information sources for parents appear to be those that provide some sort of direct contact with the school. This is in agreement with finding 13 above and Woods, Bagley and Glatter's (1998) notion that parents with a better off background are more likely to gather information and gauge a school through visits to the school, and word of mouth with others in making decisions in the literature review in chapter 2 (section 2.6.3).

5.3.4.3 Finding with respect to school choice obstacles

Finding 27

Of the three factors suggestive to be obstacles for parents to school choice, two of the factors realised a mean score of 1.5 and above. The greatest obstacle for parents in the study was found to be '*Admission criteria*' followed by '*Geographic logistics*'. Admission criteria is made up of both cost and space related items, while the item of most significance in the geographic factor is that of the schools' feeder area. The data thus make it implicit that oversubscription at schools and costs are the most debilitating aspects for parents when making a school choice decision. These findings concur with those of finding 14 and that of section 2.6.4 of the literature review (Woods, Bagley & Glatter, 1998; Maile, 2004; Du Toit, 2008). It resonates strongly with Hoadley's (1999) study that some parents are better positioned to choose schools than others due to residential location, socio-economic status and access to local knowledge of schools and admission processes.

Finding 28

From hypothesis testing with respect to differences between mothers and fathers regarding obstacle factors it was found that both mothers and fathers experience obstacles to school choice, but that for mothers the geographical logistics as an inhibiting factor to school choice is more of a concern than for fathers.

Following these 28 findings from both the literature review and empirical study, attention is now turned to appropriate recommendations to meet the objectives of this study.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to the study are offered:

5.4.1 Recommendations to generate a preliminary framework for school marketing taking parental perceptions into consideration:

With respect to *findings from both the literature review* (section 5.3.1.1), *empirical study* (section 5.3.1.2) and *synergy establishment* (section 5.3.2.1), the following recommendations are made (in no specific order) with regards to generating a preliminary framework for principals to apply in marketing their schools as quality providing establishments.

In respect of *finding 16 and 17*, establishing synergy is important since principal perceptions of how quality education presents itself will influence the way in which the school is promoted. Accordingly, as a service provider, it is recommended for principals to emphasise more aggressively those factors that parents rate far higher than that of themselves. It is important for principals to accentuate these facets in meeting parental expectations for successful school marketing to take place.

Further practical recommendations to this end in generating a preliminary framework for school marketing include:

Recommendation 1

The foremost manner in which to influence parental school choice decision-making is via the implementation of a school promotional strategy. Consequently, in relation to information sources identified as influential by parents, it is recommended that principals shift their attention from print media to the world of online marketing. Social media platforms (although wrought with challenges and legal implications) is considered to be the way forward in communicating with parents in all facets of school life including sports, discipline, achievements, day to day operations, festivals, fees and virtually anything else.

Recommendation 2

In terms of perceived parental obstacles to school choice, 'Admission criteria' was cited to be the most concerning for parents. In response to this, it is recommended for principals to communicate admission criteria extensively on all types of

communication platforms. With the Government's new online application system, it should be easier for principals to have a greater reach of its potential target market. 'School fees' also a major concern for parents, will always be controversial. In this respect principals are recommended to ensure due diligence in budgeting, be open and transparent with regards to school fee determination and sell to parents the benefits to be gained through fees to win support.

Recommendation 3

The most influential school choice factor for parents was identified to be 'Intrinsic child related influences'. With regards this factor, principals either in their school's mission statement, school processes or school environment (section 2.8.1.2) are recommended to draw attention to the following aspects:

- Safety issues:
 - School's are to have visible aspects of safety in place. This could be in the form of security gates, security guards and clearly communicated signing in and out procedures for parents. Principals could also invest in a safe and secure waiting area for learners that has bathroom facilities, supervision and shelter from the elements. Additionally, it is recommended for principals to use the opportunity to engage more with the immediate community linking the school to various outreach projects. This could do much to appease parents in terms of their preoccupation with the safety the school offers its learners and the safety of the neighbourhood in which the schools finds itself.
- The quality of school discipline:
 - Parents are quick to see the positive correlation between discipline and school achievement. Accordingly, schools should advocate a positive disciplinary process for both educators and learners that is noticeable to parents and the general community. Facets of discipline could include attendance, dress code, the showing of mutual respect, pride and diligence. In all respects positive behaviour should be an accolade that is rewarded and celebrated amongst educators and learners.
- The culture of teaching and learning:

- School's need to endorse a conducive environment for teaching and learning where educators act in the best interest of learners to create a competitive yet sound learning atmosphere. With regards to the 'School's culture' as an influential factor for parents, and the value they place on language, it is recommended for principals to implement measures to improve the command of English by offering extra English proficiency lessons. Furthermore, since parents in the empirical study demonstrate the widely held belief that more favourable educator/learner ratios, lead to better academic achievement, it is recommended for principals to as far as possible keep class sizes down and to be as consistent with these as possible. Even at the cost of additional SGB staff members, parents are likely to buy into this ideal if they are able to associate with the benefits.
- The involvement of parents:
 - Schools' are to commit to increased and open communication channels with parents as this will contribute to increased parental involvement and in general support for the school.

Recommendation 4

The second most influential school choice factor for parents was identified to be 'Effective school leadership and governance.' In terms of the elements making up a schools marketing plan (figure 2.6), effective school leadership and governance forms part of the human factor. The most important items that principals can use to their marketing advantage include the following recommendations:

- School staff:
 - School's are to invest in appointing the best possible educators and put in place the necessary policies and procedures to retain them. Minimum requirements for teaching opportunities need to be publicised, and together with the SGB, a suggestion is to implement an internal reward system for educator performance development. Educator achievements should also be publicised and principals are to inspire within their staff the desire to be committed and dedicated.

The quality of a school's staff determines the quality of education on offer and is thus paramount to meeting parental aspirations for children.

- The quality of leadership and governance:
 - Effective schools require active, engaged and committed principals. Principals from the empirical evidence seem to sell themselves short and as such it is recommended that they use their own experience and achievements to the school's advantage. This can be manifested by displaying positivity, enthusiasm, being available to all stakeholders and when the opportunity arises, engaging in the community.

Recommendation 5

'Academic excellence' was indicated as the third most influential school choice decision-making factor for parents. Items making up this factor form part of the school's product offering. For academic excellence to be used effectively from a marketing perspective it is recommended for the principal to firstly show commitment to this ideal and communicate overall school results in a easily accessible public space. Next, is to seek out opportunities to show case academic performance. This could involve encouraging learners to participate in academic Olympiads and then to celebrate their achievements.

Recommendation 6

In terms of the factor 'Geography', which was identified as the forth most influential school choice factor for parents, the following is recommended as marketing opportunities for school principals:

- The provision of school transport and a school aftercare facility:
 - As a mechanism to ensure that all learners are given the opportunity to participate in all sorts of extra-mural activities regardless of their logistical challenges, a school transport service is proposed. The actual vehicle used in this proposed service, provides a further opportunity for branding that serves as a visual connection to the school in the surrounding

community. This has the propensity to have much influence on generating a positive image of the school. In order, however for this to be successful the vehicle needs to be in good working condition and the driver needs to be respectful of the rules of the road.

- As a value added incentive, a school aftercare facility might appeal to parents that have problems with the geographic location of the school. It must, however, be mentioned that this adds a completely new dynamic to the school that complicates the management thereof and provision of this type of facility should be carefully considered.

Recommendation 7

'School infrastructure' was identified as the fifth most influential factor for parents. This factor forms part of the school environment as an element of the marketing plan. Its importance, in terms of the way in which the school presents itself, is paramount in determining its image as a quality providing organisation. In this respect it is recommended that the principal pay attention to the following aspects:

- Academic facilities:
 - These facilities including classrooms, equipment, textbooks, laboratories, computer centres and the like, are to not only provide for opportunities of learning but should also create an inviting learning environment appealing to both parents and learners.
- Sport and culture facilities:
 - Here it is recommended for principals to accentuate the specific facilities they provide more aggressively and employ qualified coaches or train current staff and instructors to offer parents and learners a wider variety of activities, for competitive participation and representation. Educators that are involved in extra-mural activities are additionally able to develop better relationships with parents and learners adding to the schools perceived value.
- External appearance of the school:
 - The appearance of the school's buildings and school grounds is an opportunity for principals to promote the setting in which educational

services are delivered. It is recommended that the school name be boldly displayed, and that the necessary attention be paid to maintenance and gardening.

As the school market in South Africa shifts from a government-supported initiative towards a market-driven service (Immelman, 2013) and in keeping with *finding 4 and 10*, it is crucial for schools to ensure that they are perceived by parents as quality institutions with positive images in the community. Consequently, it is hoped that principal's, would take heed of these recommendations with regards to school marketing or the promotional strategies they employ in their school management approach in working towards providing quality education. It must be stressed that these recommendations at this stage are only preliminary and would need further consolidated study to ratify. This limitation and more are discussed in section 5.5.

5.4.2 Recommendations to strengthen parents decision-making processes with respect to school choice for quality education (if necessary):

The empirical study through factor analysis, identified the presence of eight independent choice factors, four factors constituting information sources and three factors indicating obstacles to school choice. These latent variables explained 48,19%, 47.93% and 56.62% of the variance respectively. Since part of the general intention of the study is to strengthen the capacity of parental school choice decision-making, and in keeping with the findings *from both the literature review* (section 5.3.1.1) *and empirical study* (section 5.3.1.2), the following recommendations are proposed for parents in this regard:

Recommendation 1

In respect of *finding 1, 2, 3, 6, 9 and 11* it is recommended that the first aspect in making a good school choice decision, is for parents to determine the concrete aspects they expect to be offered by the school in terms of its ability to provide a quality education for their child/ren. In essence this means drawing up a list of what one wants from a school. This so called inventory of expectations is then able to act as a sort of check-list for parents to deliberate with, in making a school choice

decision. The idea is to put down in writing a utopia of ideals and then to proceed to find the best fit in terms of a school matching these unique characteristics. Since every child, every family situation or circumstance and related educational expectation varies, the fundamental burning question a parent is to answer is, “Which qualities making up the unique combination of my child really matters for choosing a school?” In unearthing this unique combination of qualities and in regard to *finding 18, 19 and 20*, the following is furthermore proposed:

Recommendation 2

The most influential factor for parents was identified to be ‘Intrinsic child related influences’. With regards this factor parents are encouraged to deliberate a number of aspects in realising the best school fit. Firstly, it is recommended that parents take account of the physical school environment. Is it perceived to be healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive according to their individual expectations? The school environment is often closely linked to the teaching and learning processes employed at the school. A parent should consider the aptitude and interests of the child (to ensure the school chosen meets the requirements of subject offerings or extra-mural activity desires). Additionally, parents are recommended to evaluate a child’s physical and mental health circumstance in terms of disabilities, disorders, motivation and learning style to ensure the school chosen meets the child’s requirements of teaching style according to their expectancy. In the same vein, parents are to consider assessment practices at the school. Is there a general expectation for children to succeed? Finally in this regard, parents are to consider their own willingness to participate and support the school in its endeavours, as successful schools are usually those that are supported by parents that have bought into the schools ideals. Thus it is recommended for parents to seek active participation in all sorts of school projects and programmes, both formal (School Governing Body) and informal (fundraising projects etc.).

Recommendation 3

The second most influential factor for parents was identified to be ‘Effective school leadership and governance.’ Leadership and governance encompasses a number of aspects, but in essence is all about how teachers and school management use

inputs to frame meaningful learning experiences for children. From a psychosocial point of reference parents are to determine whether the school looks welcoming, organised and if there is evidence of good management according to their standards. In strengthening decision-making in this respect, it is recommended for parents to start by finding out about the Principal, their qualifications and their management and leadership style. These aspects will automatically spill over into all operations of the school and a parent needs to determine whether this ethos is what they want for their child/ren. To assess this, parents could look at the schools code of conduct and policies on aspects that are important to them, i.e. bullying, anti-discrimination, drug use etc. Parents are to determine whether the school addresses those issues that are important to them. Next, parents are encouraged to find out what type of teachers are employed at the school, and whether a minimum qualification requirement is adhered to. The value of a dedicated, committed, passionate teacher in the classroom cannot be under-estimated. Regardless of all other factors, quality education depends largely on the teacher teaching one's child. Finally for this choice factor, parents are to consider the quality of administrative support and the use of technology in the teaching environment.

Recommendation 4

'Academic excellence' was indicated as the third most influential decision-making factor for parents. In evaluating this choice factor it is recommended that parents as a starting point, consider the schools vision and mission statement. The question to be asked is, "Does the vision and mission of the school include outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are these linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society?" Following this, it is proposed that parents take stock of the school's curriculum. Any curriculum should emphasise deep rather than broad coverage of important areas of knowledge and should be based on clearly defined learning outcomes. These outcomes are to be assessed in terms of whether they include content and materials that work towards the acquisition of basic skills. Furthermore, the school's academic success should also be assessed in terms of it working towards higher education or university entrance, if that is the trajectory for the parent and child. Lastly, parents are encouraged to seek out information to determine how the school compares

academically to other similar schools in the area, across the province and on a national scale.

Recommendation 5

In terms of the factor 'Geography', which was identified as the fourth most influential choice factor, it is recommended that parents take careful consideration of their unique situations and circumstances regarding the logistics of a chosen school. The opportunity cost of distance from home to school needs to be carefully weighed up against the perceived benefits of attending a particular school. Often much sacrifice is involved in school decision-making and parents are recommended to evaluate the sustainability of these challenges.

Recommendation 6

'School infrastructure' was identified as the fifth most influential factor for parents. The recommendation for parents in this respect is to assess the school from a physical point of view. Usually, the way in which the school building presents itself is an indication of other school quality issues, such as the presence of instructional materials, working conditions for teachers and the ability of teachers to undertake certain instructional approaches. Parents need to assess whether the school provides adequate resources and facilities in terms of what is sought by both them and their child/ren in this regard.

Recommendation 7

'School size' is the sixth most important factor for parents evaluating a particular school. No magic number in terms of teacher learner ratio has been identified but in general the lower the ratio the more advantageous to the individual learner. Accordingly, it is recommended that parents evaluate the school's policy on class size and furthermore investigate whether the school makes use of educator assistants and match this to the needs of their child/ren.

Recommendation 8

A 'School's culture' is an expression of its religious ethos, its discipline structures, its established traditions, its general image throughout the community and its

language of instruction. As a school choice influencing factor for parents, it ranked seventh overall. South Africa is a country of much diversity, consequently, it is recommended that parents actively seek out schools that are a relatively close match to that of their own belief systems or to seek out schools that are tolerant of and committed to diversity in general.

It is my hope that if parents employ and utilise these recommendations, then their decision-making processes will be strengthened and they should be able to make rational school choice decisions that takes cognisance of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context specific to South Africa.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Although this research study has achieved its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, my research was limited to a specific geographical area, that being the West Rand of Gauteng (Mogale City), South Africa. This area was specifically chosen on the basis on convenience allowing me to be close to the targeted sample and also because this area provided a good variety of different school sets from which parents were able to choose from. The findings are therefore not generalisable to other provinces or cities where the same number of choice opportunities may not be present within a confined area. Second, my research sample may be considered limited since participants were selected by way of purposive sampling of middle class parents and schools in the above mentioned geographical area. Had sampling included parents and schools of different socio-economic levels, findings may have differed considerably. Globally, however, research points out that school choice is essentially a middle class phenomenon and thus the sample was justified. Thirdly, my research is limited in terms of some statistical biases which may have resulted due to the small sample size of principals being asked to complete the questionnaire. I should stress, however, that the primary intention of including principals was not to hold them representative but rather to determine synergy between principal and parental perceptions of school choice. Finally, factor analysis in my study revealed relatively high levels of

skewness in data and additionally since my sample was not a random one, non-parametric analysis had to be used in hypothesis testing. Amidst the criticism of nonparametric testing, it is believed that the sample size of parents in this study, however, mitigated the unnatural distribution of data and evoked the Central Limit Theorem.

Having presented the limitations of this study, it is now pertinent to discuss suggestions for further research.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has focused on decision-making surrounding parental school choice. The study has revealed important influencing factors, strategies, anxieties and aspirations parents experience when engaging in school choice. Synergy between principal and parental perceptions of quality education has also been established. In view of this I believe possible areas for further research to include the following:

- It would be interesting to use the elicited school choice factors found in this study to conduct a quantitative follow-up study to assess how predictive each of these aspects are for actual parental school choice decision-making.
- Future research of a longitudinal nature into the link as to whether school choice has the propensity to influence positive improvements in academic performance could also add relevance to the school choice debate.
- A similar school choice study could be carried out, using a random sample or specifically eliminating the middle class segment from the study to determine whether parental perceptions remain unchanged with regards to socio-economic status or whether other factors, strategies, anxieties and aspirations come to the fore as socio-economic status changes.

Having established possible avenues for further research, suggestive contributions of this study will be outlined in the next section.

5.7 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

My study offers suggestive evidence to offer the following contributions to current school choice literature.

5.7.1 From a theoretical perspective

My empirical study unpacking the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies influencing the school choice decision, has identified those aspects that are most influential for parents in selecting schools as well as highlighting the demographic differences relative to the importance of those choice factors. Further to this it has made possible the integration of current international literature on school choice by explaining how and why school choice in the South African context differs from experiences in other countries.

5.7.2 From a practical perspective

The study provides an interesting insight into school choice in the SA context which has the ability to enlighten and strengthen parents in their school choice decision-making. By understanding the criteria parents attach to school choice, principals may be able to apply these findings to their marketing campaigns or strategic school improvement plans in working towards providing a parental perceived quality education. If a school can create better relationships with parents, teachers, the local community, former students and other stakeholders, it will better be able to offer an acceptable quality environment as a result of the support it receives from these respective parties.

5.7.3 From a methodological perspective

The methodological contribution of this study is the design of two quantitative instruments. The first instrument is a questionnaire consisting of personal, attitudinal and behavioural questions to measure variables that emerge as important determinants in decision-making for parents exercising school choice. The second

instrument is a questionnaire for school principals measuring their behaviour in terms of promotional mechanisms for school marketing and the administration of school admission. These questionnaires may be used by researchers seeking similar information regarding school choice to conduct any possible future research.

This then brings my study to an end.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study of school choice in South Africa has been operationalised in agreement with Savage (2000), from a stance and a view that knowledge is a strategic national asset. It supports the notion that the level of education and the skill set of citizens are to be considered a national priority. In this way school choice as a process, emphasises the importance of education as a determinant of future life success.

The drawback of school choice as a process, is that it assumes that parents have the competency to select appropriate schools (Gorard, 1999). Additionally, market theory assumes that parents are rational consumers who shop around for the best schools, weigh the costs and benefits of their various options, and base their decisions on adequate and accurate information (Bosetti, 2004). In South Africa this concept of 'freedom of choice' is privileged and school choice, like the rest of the world is proved to be essentially a middle class phenomenon where access to options are not always available or a possibility. Choice can only work if parents and learners can actually access the schools they choose. Freedom of choice thus becomes the focus of education rather than concerns for school effectiveness, equity, social justice and diversity (Bosetti, 2004). Policy makers and educational leaders thus have an obligation to ensure that issues of social justice, equality, and diversity are addressed within government education. This means allowing or encouraging low-income or disadvantaged families who do not readily engage in choice an opportunity to do so (Bosetti & Pyryt, 2007).

Another failing of school choice as a process is that it underestimates the role of human agency, the freedom and ability of parents to act independently and the

social and cultural practices that influence or guide parental decision-making (Wells, 1997). This study has shown through the use of CHAT and Choice theory that parents values and habits serve as a filter to determine what factors priorities or utilities they seek to maximise in their choice. When parents choose schools they are not seeking merely quality education, but are also expressing particular values and attempting to foster in their children particular sets of dispositions (Power, 2004). This study confirms that parental choice involves a mixture of rationalities related to values, preferences, child rearing practices, social networks, and aspirations parents have for their children (Bosetti & Pyryt, 2007). The study makes clear that South African middle class parents in this study understand the significance of a good education and feel it is their duty to access and provide for the best opportunities for their children.

In bringing this thesis to an end I believe that the general intention and objectives of the study have been accomplished and that the findings presented demonstrate the potential for merging international and national theory with practice.

I have spent nearly three decades of my career in South Africa's public schools as a teacher, supervisor of student teachers' and parent. Over this period of time I have seen the best and worst that South African schools have to offer. I have witnessed dedicated teachers and inspiring school leaders who have brought out the best in their schools and learners. I have also unfortunately in more instances than I wish to admit, experienced despairing situations of chaos and dysfunction. Through it all, I have not lost my core belief that when we get our schools right, when we empower teachers and principals and give them freedom and flexibility to drive real change in learner's lives, then our schools can and will fulfil their fundamental promise of being gateways to opportunity equally and for all in South Africa. I refuse to give up the hope and the belief that our schools can be better and can fulfil their potential and truly deliver the opportunity for success and achievement for all of our children.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anon. 2013. *Migration into private education gains momentum*. Retrieved from www.ujuh.co.za/news/south-africas-migration-into-private-education-gains-momentum/ (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Anon. 2016. *How much money you need to be middle class in SA*. Retrieved from <http://businesstech.co.za/news/wealth/111285/how-much-money-you-need-to-be-middle-class-in-south-africa/> (Accessed date: 28-07-2016).

Anon. 2013, August 1. The rise of low-fee private schools can only benefit South Africa. *Business Day*.

Anxiety. n.d. In *Merriam-webster Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://merriam-webster.com> (Accessed date: 04-04-2016)

Apartheid. n.d. *American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition*. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com> (Accessed date: 04-04-2016).

Bainbridge, L., & Sundre, S.M. 1991. *Factors that parents want in their children schools*. Educational Research Service Spectrum, Washington DC. Retrieved from <http://www.schoonmatch.com> (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Bantustan. n.d. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BantustanWikipedia> (Accessed date: 04-04-2016).

Bantu Education. n.d. *South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid*. Retrieved from <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/sidebar.php?id=65-258-2&page=1> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

Bell, C.A. 2009. All choices created equal? The role of choice sets in the selection of schools. *Peabody journal of education*, 84(1), pp. 191-208.

- Beavis, A. 2004. Why parents choose Public or Private schools? *Research Developments*, 12(12), pp. 2-5.
- Betts, J.R., & Loveless, T. 2001. *School choice, Equity, and Efficiency*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu> (Accessed date: 16-09-2016).
- Bifulco, R. 2005. District-level black-white funding disparities in the United States. *Journal of education finance*, 31(2), pp. 172-194.
- Bisschoff, T., Du Plessis, P. & Smith, E. 2004. *Effective School Marketing*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Blake, B.S. 2008. *The principal as entrepreneur in the management of schools*. Unpublished masters research report, Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Blank, R., Levine, R. & Steel, L. 1996. After fifteen years: Magnet schools in urban education. In B. Fuller, R. Elmore, & G. Orfield (eds.), *Who chooses? Who loses? Culture, institutions, and the unequal effects of school choice* (pp. 154-172). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bloch, G. 2009. *The toxic mix: what's wrong with South Africa's schools and how to fix it*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Bloch, G. 2011. *Fixing foundation at schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.graembloch.com/2011/07/02/fixing-foundations-at-school/> (Accessed date: 09-05-2013).
- Borg, W.R., Gall, J.P. & Gall, M.D. 1993. *Applying educational research: a practical guide*. 3rd Edition. New York: Longman.
- Bosetti, L. 2004. Determinants of school choice: understanding how parents choose elementary schools in Alberta. *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(4), pp. 387-405.

Bosetti, L., & Pyryt, C. 2007. Parental Motivation in School Choice, *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), pp. 89–108.

Burgess, S., Greaves, E., Vignoles, A. & Wilson, D. 2010. *What parents want: school preferences and school choice*. Working Paper 09-01, Institute of Education University of London: Department of Quantitative Social Science.

Brustein, D. 2014. *10 Simple ways to improve your reputation*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

Buscall, J. 2014. *How to market a school?* Retrieved from <http://www.mooddogmarketing.com> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

Byanyima, W. 2014. *Education is the Great Equalizer*. Retrieved from <http://www.globalpartnership.org> (Accessed date: 13-12-2014).

Cameron, R.S. 2009. *Education – A Parent’s responsibility*. Retrieved from <http://www.ezinearticles.com> (Accessed date: 09-05-2013).

Cant, M. 2010. *Essentials of Marketing*. 3rd Edition. Claremont: Juta.

Carnoy, M. & McEwan, P.J. 2003. Does Privatization improve Education? The case of Chile’s National Voucher Plan. In Plank, D.N. & Sykes, G (ed.), *Choosing Choice: School choice in international perspective* (pp. 24 – 41). New York: Teachers College Press.

Choice. n.d. Retrieved from <http://en.oxforddictionaries.com> (Accessed date: 13-05-2014).

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K.R.B. 2007. *Research Methods in Education*. 6th Edition. London: Routledge.

Cole, M. 1996. *Cultural Psychology. A Once and Future Discipline*. MA: Cambridge University Press.

Cole, M. & Engestrom, Y. 1993. A cultural historical approach to distributed cognition. In Salomon, G (ed.) *Distributed cognitions* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cooper, D.R. & Schindler, P.S. 2006. *Marketing Research*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Creswell, J. W. 2002. *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative research*. Upper Saddle River: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Cultural-historical activity theory. 2016. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/Cultural-historical activity theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/Cultural-historical_activity_theory) (Accessed date:12-04-2016).

Day, C. 2011. The layering of leadership. In J. Robertson & H. Timperley (ed.), *Leadership and Learning* (pp. 13). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Debois, S. 2016. *9 Advantages & Disadvantages of questionnaires*. Retrieved from <http://surveyanyplace.com> (Accessed date: 09-10-2018).

De Franca, M., Govender, J. & Shirley, R. n.d. *The South African School System*. Retrieved from <http://users.iafrica.com> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

Department of Basic Education. 2014. *Education statistics in South Africa 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gov.za/EMIS/StatisticalPublications/tabid/462/Default> (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Department of Basic Education. 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/NCSGrades12/CAPS/tabid/420/Default.aspx> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

Department of Education. 1999. *Race, diversity and values*. Annual report. Cape Town: Government Printers.

De Schipper, E. J., M. J. Riksen-Walraven & S. A. Geurts. 2006. Effects of Child-Caregiver Ratio on the Interactions Between Caregivers and Children in Child-Care Centers: An Experimental Study. *Child Development*, 77(1), pp. 861-874.

Doring, M. 2017. *A Very Brief Introduction to Choice Theory*. Retrieved from <https://www.headstuff.org> (Accessed date: 21-05-2018)

Du Toit, S. 2008. *Parental choice in SA high schools – An urban Cape Town case study*. Unpublished masters report, Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

Dzvimbo, K. 1995. The status, constraints and potential of primary teacher education reform for basic education in Mozambique. *Perspectives in Education*, 16(1), pp. 22.

Education in Ghana. n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.ghanaweb.com> (Accessed date: 15-04-2016).

Elliott, L. 2018. *What 'In Loco Parentis' Means to you'*. Retrieved from <http://lawandparents.co.uk> (Accessed date: 09-10-2018).

Engaging Parents. 2012. *Parents want to be involved in children's education yet don't understand key factors affecting public education quality*. Retrieved from <http://www.publicagenda.org> (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Engestrom, Y. 1987. *Learning by Expanding: An Activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. Helsinki, Finland: Orienta-konsultit.

Engestrom, Y. 2001. Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), pp. 133-156.

Equal Education. 2018. *School infrastructure*. Retrieved from <https://equaleducation.org.za/campaigns/school-infrastructure/> (Accessed date: 21-05-2018).

Erasmus, B., Strydom, J.W.S. & Rudansky-Klpppers, S. 2013. *Introduction to Business Management*. 9th edition. Cape Town: Oxford university Press.

Eskelsen, L., & Thornton, O. 2014. *The enduring importance of parental involvement*. Retrieved from <http://neatoday.org/2014/11/18/the-enduring-importance-of-parental-involvement-2/> (Accessed date: 03-07-2017).

Evens, R., & Cleghorn, A. 2014. Parental perceptions: a case study of school choice amidst language waves. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2), pp. 1-19.

Field, A. 2009. *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. 3rd Edition. London: SAGE.

Fincham, J.E. 2008. Response Rates and Responsiveness for surveys, standards and the Journal. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical education*, 72(2), pp. 43.

Fiske, E. & Ladd, H. 2003. *Balancing public and private resources for basic education: School fees in post-apartheid South Africa*. Working Papers Series, SAN03-03, Terry Stanford Institute of public policy, DUKE.

Fleisch, B. 2008. *Primary education in crisis: Why South African schoolchildren underachieve in reading and mathematics*. Cape Town: Juta.

Foster, B. 2010. *School Marketing Manual for the digital age*. 3rd Edition. Benowa: School Marketing Australia Pty Ltd.

Forster, G. 2013. *A win win solution: The empirical evidence on school choice*. The Friedman Foundation for educational choice: Indianapolis, Indiana.

Friedman, B.A., Bobrowski, P.E. & Markow, D. 2007. Predictors of parent's satisfaction with their children's school. *Journal of educational administration*, 45(3), pp. 278-288.

Gillingham, A. 2012. *Future of South Africa depends on education*. Retrieved from www.bdlive.co.za/national/education/2012/11/26/future-of-south-africa-depends-on-education (Accessed date: 13-05-2012).

Glasser, W. 1999. *Choice Theory: A new psychology of Personal Freedom*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Glasser's choice theory. n.d. Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasser%27s_choice_theory (Accessed date: 10-04-2016).

Goh, E. & Dolnicar, S. 2006. *Choosing a primary school in Australia: eliciting choice-determining factors using the theory of planned behaviour*. Paper presented at the Conference on Global Governance, Educational Change, & Cultural Ecology, Canberra, Australia. Retrieved from <http://ro.uow.edu.au/commpapers/360> (Accessed date: 03-06-2014).

Goldhaber, D. D. 1999. School Choice: An examination of the empirical evidence on achievement, parental decision making, and equity. *Educational Researcher*, 28(16), pp. 16-25.

Goldring, E. & Rowley, K.J. 2006. *Parent Preferences and Parent Choices – The Public-Private Decision about school choice*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California. Retrieved from www.vanderbilt.edu/school (Accessed date: 03-06-2014).

Gorard, S. 1999. 'Well That about wraps it up for school choice research': A state of the art review. *School Leadership and Management*, 19(1), pp. 25-47.

Grant, D. 2013. *Background to the national quintile system*. Retrieved from <http://wced.pgwc.gov.za> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

Grima, G. 2008. *What is quality education?* Retrieved from <http://www.timesofmalta.com> (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Gurian, A. (n.d.) *Involved parents: The hidden resource in their children's education*. Retrieved from http://www.aboutourkids.org/articles/involved_parents_hidden_resource_in_their_children's_education (Accessed date: 26-03-2014).

Hair, J., Bush, R. & Ortinau, D. 2006. *Marketing Research within a Changing Environment*, 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Hartshorne, K. 1999. The Making of Education Policy – *The evolution of education policy in South Africa* (pp. 17-36). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Harley, K. & Wedekind, V. 2004. *Political change, curriculum change and social formation, 1990 to 2002*. Retrieved from http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za/downloadpdf.php?pdffile=files/PDF/1937/1937_00_Changing_Class~26072005021530PM.pdf&downloadfilename=Changing%20Class%20-%20Changing%20Class%20-%20Entire%20eBook#page (Accessed date: 05-04-2016).

Hastings, J.S., Kane, T.J. & Staiger, D.O. 2005. *Parental preferences and school competition: Evidence from a public school choice program*, Working Papers 10, Yale University: Department of Economics.

Hedges, L.V., Schneider, B. 2005. *The Social Organisation of Schooling*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Hepburn, S. 2015. *The case for school marketing*. Retrieved from <http://www.marketingadviceforschools.com> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

Hill, S. & Chalaux, T. 2011. Improving access and quality in the Indian education system. OECD Economics Department Working Papers, No. 885, OECD Publishing.

Hoadley, U.K. 1999. For better or worse: School choice in a South African working class context. In Chisholm, L (ed.), *Critical perspectives in South African education: Reconstituting the educational realm* (pp. 28-44). Cape Town: Juta.

Holdsworth, H. n.d. *Education and schools in Ghana*. Retrieved from www.expatriarrivals.com/ghana/ (Accessed date: 15-04-2016).

Hoffman, K.D., Bateson, J.E. G., Wood, E.H. & Kenyon, A.J. 2009. *Services Marketing: concepts, strategies and cases*. London: Cengage Learning.

Hofmeyr, J., McCarthy, J., Oliphant, R., Schirmer, S. & Bernstein, A. 2013. *Affordable private schools in South Africa*, Johannesburg: The Centre for Development and Enterprise.

Howie, S. 2004. A national assessment in mathematics within an international comparative assessment. *Perspectives in education*. 22(2), pp. 149-161.

Hsu, Y. & Yuan-fang, C. 2013. An Analysis of Factors Affecting Parents' Choice of a Junior High School. *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology*. 3(2), pp. 39-49.

Huntsman, L. 2008. *Determinants of quality in child care: A review of the research evidence*, NSW Department of Community Services: Centre for Parenting and Research.

Immelman, R. 2013. *Choice factors for parents selecting independent primary schools in Gauteng*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

Isaacs, D. 2014. *Language debate continues in South African schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.enca.com/language-debate-continues-sa-schools> (Accessed date: 03-07-2017).

ISCA Research Report. 2008. *Factors affecting school choice*. Retrieved from [isca.edu.au/wp.../2011/.../ISCA-Reserch-Report-School-Choice-2008.pdf](http://isca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ISCA-Reserch-Report-School-Choice-2008.pdf) (Accessed date: 06-03-2014).

Ishizuka, K. 2002. *The unofficial guide to home-schooling*. New York: IDG Books Worldwide Inc.

Jansen, J. & Taylor, N. 2003. Educational Change in South Africa 1994-2003: Case studies in Large-scale Education Reform. *Country Studies Education Reform and Management Publication Series, Vol 2(1)*, pp.1-12.

Joppe, M. 2000. *The Research Process*. Retrieved from <http://www.ryerson.ca/mjoppe/rp.htm> (Accessed date: 12-03-2008).

Kalpaklioglu, N.U. & Taros, N. 2011. Viral marketing techniques within online social network. *Journal of Yasar University*, 24(6), pp. 4112-4129.

Kaptelinin, V. 2005. *The Object of Activity: Making sense of the Sense-Maker*. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 12(1), pp. 4-18.

Kaptelinin, V. & Nardi, B.A. 2006. *Acting with Technology: Activity Theory and Interaction Design*. London: MIT Press.

Keeves, J.P. 1997. *Educational Research, Methodology and Measurement: An International Handbook*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Pegamon.

Kelly, J. & Evans, M. 2004. Choice between government, Catholic and independent schools – culture and community rather than class. *Australian Social Monitor* 7(2), pp. 31-42.

Kelly, J.P. & Scafidi, B. 2013. *More than scores: An analysis of why and how parents choose private schools*. The Friedman Foundation for educational choice: Indianapolis, Indiana.

Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. 2012. *A framework for marketing management*. 5th Edition. New Jersey: Pearson.

Kozol, J. 2005. *The shame of the nation: the restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York: Crown Publishing.

Kuttyta, J. n.d. *Definition of management school*. Retrieved from <http://jacobkuttyta.hubpages.com/hub/Definition-of-Management> (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Lamdin, D. J. & Mintrom, M. 1997. School choice in theory and practice: taking stock and looking ahead. *Education Economics*, 5(3), pp. 211-234.

Landsdowne, A. 2011, July 4. ANC has lost the plot on priorities for SA youth. *Cape Argus*, p12.

Lethoko, M.A., Heystek, J. & Maree, J.G. 2001. The role of principalship and students in restoring the culture of learning, teaching and service (COLT) in black

secondary schools in the Pretoria region. *South African Journal of Education*, 21(4), pp. 311-317.

Longfield, D. 2011. *A case study looking at aspects of parental choice in five schools in Ghana*. Unpublished masters research report, Newcastle: Newcastle University.

Lombard, B.J.J. 2007. Reasons why educator-parents based at township schools transfer their own children from township schools to former Model C schools. *Education as change*, 11(1), pp. 43-57.

Lovelock, C. & Wirtz, J. 2011. *Services Marketing: People, Technology and Strategy*. 7th Edition. New Jersey: Pearson.

Maile, S. 2004. School choice in South Africa. *Education and urban society*, 37(1), pp. 94-116.

Malada, B. 2010. We ignore proper education at our peril. *Sunday Tribune*, p 22.

Merriam, S.B. 1998. *Qualitative research and case study applications in Education*. 2nd Edition. New Jersey: Wiley.

Malhotra, N.K. 2007. *Marketing research, an applied orientation*. 5th Edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education International.

Malhotra, N.K. 2009. *Basic marketing research, a decision-making approach*. 3rd Edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education International.

Malhotra, N.K. 2012. *Basic marketing research, integration of social media*. 4th Edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education International.

Maringe, F. & Moletsane, R. 2015. Leading schools in circumstances of multiple deprivation in South Africa. *Emal*, 43(3), pp. 347-362.

Mason, R.B. & Staude, G. 2007. A marketing mix model for a complex and turbulent environment. *Acta commercii*, 7(1), pp. 236-254.

McDaniel, C. & Gates, R. 2006. *Marketing research essentials*. 5th Edition. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

McDaniel, C. & Gates, R. 2010. *Marketing research with SPSS*. 8th Edition. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

McDaniel, C., Lamb, C.W. & Hair, J.F. 2012. *Marketing Essentials*. International Edition. Mason: South Western Cengage Learning.

McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. 2001. *Research in education: a conceptual introduction*. 6th Edition. San Francisco: Lonman.

McGhan, B. 1998. Choice and compulsion: The end of an era. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 79(8), pp. 610-613.

Mestry, R. 2014. A critical analysis of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding policy Implications for social justice and equity in South Africa. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 42(6), pp. 851-867.

Mestry, R., & Bisschoff, T. 2009. *Financial school management explained*. South Africa: Pearson.

Middle Class. n.d. In *Collins English Dictionary*. Retrieved from www.collinsdictionary.com (Accessed date: 13-05-2013)

Modisaotsile, B. M. 2012. *The failing standard of basic education in South Africa*. Retrieved from www.ai.org.za/wp-content/plugins/download-monitor/download.php (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Mogale City – Local Municipality Statistics South Africa. 2011. Retrieved from http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&id=mogale-city-municipality (Accessed date: 28-07-2016).

Mouton, N., Louw, G.P. & Strydom, G.L. 2012. A Historical Analysis of the Post-Apartheid Dispensation Education in South Africa (1994-2011). *International Business & Economics Research Journal*, 11(11), pp. 1211-1222.

Msila, V. 2009. School choice and intra-township migration: Black parents scrambling for quality education in South Africa. *Journal of Education*, 46(1), pp. 81-98.

Mukute, M. & Lotz-Sisitka, H. 2012. Working with Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and Critical Realism to Investigate and Expand Farmer Learning in Southern Africa. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 19(4), pp. 342-367.

Musset, P. 2012. *School choice and equity: Current policies in OECD countries and a literature review*. Paris: OECD.

Ndimande, B. 2006. Parental choice: the liberty principle in education finance. *Perspectives in education*, 24(2), pp. 143-156.

Nelson, F. H., Muir, E. & Drown, R. 2000. *Venturesome capital: State charter school finance systems*. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Neuman, W.L. 2003. *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 5th Edition. Boston: Pearson Education.

Newberry, R. 2015. *Recruiting Parent Ambassadors*. Retrieved from <http://www.entollmentcatalyst.com> (Accessed date: 28-07-2015).

New Schools Network. 2015. *Comparison of different types of school*.

Retrieved from

<https://www.newschoolsnetwork.org/sites/default/files/files/pdf/Differences%20across%20school%20types.pdf>. (Accessed date: 21-05-2018).

OECD. 2013. *Economic survey of South Africa*. Retrieved from

www.oecd.org/.../South%20Africa%202012%20Overview%20FINAL.pdf.

(Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

OECD. 2012. *Education spending*. Retrieved from

www.oecd.org/education/educationspendingrisingbutaccesstohighereducationremainsunequalinmostcountriessaysoecd.htm. (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

OECD. 2012. *Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged*.

Retrieved from www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf.

(Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Olavarria, R.B. 2013. *Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to study the relationship between school leadership and organisational change*. Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Queensland: Queensland University of Technology.

Olsen, G. & Fuller, M.L. 2008. *Home-school relations: Working successfully with parents and families*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education.

Oplatka, I. & Hemsley-Brown, J. 2004. The Research on School Marketing: Current issues and future directions. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 42(3): pp. 375-397.

Oplatka, I. 2007. The principal's role in marketing the school: subjective interpretations and personal influences. *Planning and changing*, 38(3 and 4), pp. 208-221.

Pampallis, J. 2003. Education reform and school choice in South Africa. In Plank, D.N and Sykes, G (Eds). *Choosing choice: school choice in international perspective*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Patterson, A. & Kruss, G. 1998. Educational migration and its effect on access to schooling in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 18(3), pp. 149-155.

Perreau, F. 2016. *The factors influencing consumer behaviour*. Retrieved from <http://theconsumerfactor.com> (Accessed date: 26-09-2016).

Plank, D.N. & Sykes, G. 2003. *Choosing choice: School choice in international perspective*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Power, S. 2004. Comments on 'how not to be a hypocrite': School choice for the morally perplexed. *Theory and Research in Education*, 2(1), pp. 23–29.

Raveaud, M. & Van Zanten, A. 2007. Choosing the local school: middle class parents values and social and ethnic mix in London and Paris. *Journal of Education Policy*, 22(1) pp.107-124.

Reprobate. 2012. *The great expectations of South African education*. Retrieved from <http://www.reprobate.co.za/the-great-expectations-of-south-african-education/> (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Roth, W.M., Radford, L. & Lacroix, L. 2012. *Working with Cultural-Historical Activity Theory*. *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, 13(2), pp. 1-13.

Roosevelt Institute. 2011. *Changing marriage patterns reflect economics and class*. Retrieved from <http://rooseveltinstitute.org/changing-marriage-patterns-reflect-economics-and-class/> (Accessed date: 28-07-2016).

Russell, A.M. 2006. *School choice and christian education*. Unpublished masters research report, Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. 1997. *Research methods for business students*. London: Financial Time Publishing.

Schools admissions – Gov UK. 2016. Retrieved from [https://www.gov.uk/schools.../choosing schools](https://www.gov.uk/schools.../choosing-schools) (Accessed date: 24-05-2016).

Savage, M. 2000. *Class analysis and the social transformation*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

School Communicator. Retrieved from <http://www.school-communicator.com>. (Accessed date: 23-08-2016).

Sekete, P., Shilubane, M. & Moila, B. 2001. Deracialisation and migration of learners in South African schools: Challenges and implications. HSRC: Paul & Company Pub Consortium.

Shahim, B. 2011. Social media: don't underestimate its impact. *Journal of Marketing*, 33(1), pp. 8.

Shezi, L. 2017. *Avoid fly-by-nights: How to check if a college is registered with gov*. Retrieved from <http://htxt.co.za> (Accessed date: 09-10-2018).

Siguaw, J. 2005. *Marketing Principles and Best Practices*. 3rd Edition. Manson: Thomson South-Western.

Smit, P.J. & Cronje, G.J. 1992. *Management Principles*. 2nd edition. Cape Town: Juta.

South Africa. 1996(a). *South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

South Africa. 1998(b). *Admission policy for ordinary public schools*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

South Africa. 1998(c). *National Norms and Standards for School Funding*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

South Africa. 1996(d). *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Act No 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

South African Press Association (SAPA). 2012, February 29. Fewer SA schools: survey. *The Citizen*.

Spaull, N. 2011. *A preliminary analysis of SACMEQ III South Africa*. Working Paper, No. 11/11, Stellenbosch: Department of Economics.

Spiers, R. 2007. *Funding for independent schools – brands on the run*. Retrieved from http://www.fismagazine.co.za/strategic/marketing_articles/brand.html. (Accessed date: 22-08-2016).

Spren C.A. & Vally, S. 2010. Outcomes-based education and its (dis)contents: Learner-centred pedagogy and the education crisis in South Africa. *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production*, 16(1), pp. 39-58.

Steyn, H.J., Steyn, S.C., De Waal, E.A.S. & Wolhuter, C.C. 2011. *South African Education System*. Potchestroom: Keurkopie

Sullo, B. 2011. *Choice Theory*. Retrieved from <http://www.funderstanding.com/educators/choice-theory/#sthash.rzEcCef7.dpuf>. (Accessed date: 10-04-2016).

Taylor, S. & Yu, D. 2009. *The importance of socio-economic status in determining educational achievement in South Africa*. Working Paper, No. 01/09, Stellenbosch: Department of Economics.

Taylor, S. 2011. *Uncovering indicators of effective school management in South Africa using the National School Effectiveness Study*. Working Paper, No. 10/11, Stellenbosch: Department of Economics.

Thrupp, M. 2001. Education policy and social class in England and New Zealand: An instructive comparison. *Journal of Education Policy*, 16(1), pp. 297-314.

Thurlow, M. 2003. The changing context of education management in South Africa. In Lumby, J., Middlewood, D. & Kaabwe, E. (Eds). *Managing human resources in South African schools*. London: The Commonwealth Secretariat, pp. 3-17.

Torquati, J., Raikes, H. & Huddleston-Casas, C. 2007. Teacher education, motivation, compensation, workplace support, and links to quality of center-based child care and teachers' intention to stay in the early childhood profession. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22(2), pp. 261-275.

Tooley, J., Dixon, P. & Amuah, I. 2007. Private and Public schooling in Ghana: a Census and Comparative Survey. *Review of Education*, 53(1), pp. 389-415.

Township (South Africa) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Township_\(South_Africa\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Township_(South_Africa)).

(Accessed date: 27-09-2016).

UNICEF. 2000. *Defining Quality in Education*. New York: UNICEF.

Van der Berg, S. 2008. How effective are poor schools? Poverty and educational outcomes in South Africa. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 34(3), pp. 145-154.

Van der Berg, S., Taylor, S., Gustafsson, M., Spaull, N. & Armstrong, P. 2011. *Report for the National Planning Commission*, Stellenbosch: Department of Economics.

Van der Merwe, C. 2012. Profiting from quality education. *Business Times*, P6.

Venter, E. 2011. *Parental reasons for choice of school: Implications for school management*. Unpublished masters research report, Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

Verma, H.V. 2008. *Services Marketing*. New Delhi: Pearson.

Verma, G.K. & Mallick, K. 1999. *Researching Education: Perspectives and Techniques*. Philadelphia: USA Falmer Press.

Visagie, J. 2013. *Who are the middle class in SA? Does it matter for policy?*
Retrieved from <http://www.econ3x3.org/article/who-are-middle-class-south-africa-does-it-matter-policy> (Accessed date: 28-07-2016).

Walford, G. 2003. *School choice and educational change in England and Wales in School choice in international perspective*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Wells, A.S. 1997. African-American students' view of school choice. In A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown, & A.S. Wells (Eds.), *Education, culture, economy and society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 422-438.

Wells, V. & Foxall, G.R. 2012. *Handbook of Developments in Consumer Behaviour*. Cheltenham: Elgar Publishing Ltd.

Wertsch, J. 1981. *The Concept of Activity in Soviet Psychology*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

What is School Choice? n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.edchoice.org/School-Choice/What-is-School-Choice.aspx>. (Accessed date: 13-05-2013).

Wiid, J. & Diggins, C. 2009. *Marketing Research*. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.

Williams, M. 2011. *Top of the class*. The Star, p. 10.

Willis, J. W. 2007. *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Willms, J.D. 1997. *Parental choice and Education Policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk> (Accessed date: 15-05-2013).

Woolman, S. & Fleisch, B. 2006. South Africa's unintended experiment in school choice: how the National Education Policy Act, the South African Schools Act and the Employment of Educators Act create the enabling conditions for quasi-markets in schools. *Education and the Law*, 18(1), pp. 31-75.

Woods, P.A., Bagley, C. & Glatter, G. 1998. *School choice and competition: Markets in the public interest?* New Fetter Lane, London: Routledge.

Yamagata-Lynch, L.C. 2010. *Activity Systems Analysis Methods: Understanding Complex Learning Environments*. New York: Springer.

Zikmund, W.G. & Babin, B.J. 2010. *Exploring marketing research*. 10th Edition. South Western: Cengage Learning.

LIST OF ANNEXURES

Annexure A: COVER LETTER TO PARENTS AND PRINCIPALS



Dear Parents and Colleagues

Research is the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. As such it is my intention for this study **to examine the factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies of parents in making the best possible school choice decision for their children's future and how schools themselves in-turn influence this process.** In order to achieve this purpose, I am inviting you to participate in this research study.

Much research is available highlighting the generally poor state of education in South African public schools, and it is no secret that a huge divide exists between functional and dysfunctional schools. While an overwhelming majority of learners remain within this perceived dysfunctional public schooling system, there is an undeniable increase in the percentage of people making use of private education. As more and more educational entrepreneurial ventures in the form of private schools open in South Africa amidst criticism of government schools, the pressure on parents' to find the right school for their children and the financial burden thereof increases. Choices presently, however, in spite of parent's best intentions are somewhat limited to dysfunctional schools, functional schools, private schools and/or the home schooling route.

As parents increasingly value the importance of education for the life opportunities of their children so the weight of school choice intensifies. Consequently this empirical study unpacking the decision-making process of parents in selecting schools at which to enrol their children, may provide a way to integrate the current international literature on school choice by explaining how and why school choice in the South African context differs from experiences in other countries. Another important aspect that could possibly come to the fore is the role of the school in shaping school choice outcomes. For example, "To what extent are children not able to enrol in the school they select?". In asserting the implications of school choice for academic outcomes this study may allow for an exploration of the relationship between learner migration, school choice and academic outcomes. That is to say "To what extent does the ability to access education at a private school or historically advantaged school determine opportunities available to a child as they move through school and then into higher education or the workplace?"

The practical contribution of this study will hopefully be able to provide an interesting insight into "school choice" and an in-depth look at how parents choose schools for their children based on a number of criteria. The findings may have the ability to enlighten and help parents make the right decisions for the right reasons. Furthermore, this study may also be of interest to schools in that by understanding the criteria parents attach to school choice, school management teams may be able to apply these findings to their marketing campaigns or more importantly their strategic school improvement plans.

Research on school choice in South Africa is fairly limited and this is a strong justification for an empirical investigation of the actual extent of school choice as found in Gauteng to allow for both the contextualisation of data and the identification of more generalizable patterns.

The following objectives will enable me to realise the aim of the study:

- To demonstrate 'school choice' as a base of knowledge in terms of factors, anxieties, aspirations and strategies for parents and school principals.
- To ascertain items of synergy and discord between parental and principal perceptions of school choice.
- To strengthen parents' decision-making processes with respect to school choice for quality education.
- To generate a preliminary framework for school marketing aligned to parental school choice decision-making.

This particular research will follow a Post-positivist paradigm. A paradigm is a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research. Your ideas are thus vital to this study and therefore I have specifically chosen you as a parent or Principal on the West Rand to contribute to this study. In order to establish the decision-making process of parents and school management teams with respect to school choice and how schools influence these decisions, I together with my Supervisor have designed a questionnaire for you to kindly complete. This questionnaire has been piloted to omit all possible errors and so should be clear and simple for you to follow. Once completed statistical analyses of the results will be performed on the data collected using the SPSS statistical package. The aim of the data collected from this questionnaire will be to produce objective and generalizable knowledge about parental choice factors in Gauteng that could explain how and why school choice in the South African context differs from experiences in other countries and how this affects us as a community.

To this purpose would you please be kind enough to assist me in completing this once off questionnaire. It should take you no longer than 15 min to complete. Please bear the following in mind when completing the questionnaire:

- Do not write your name on the questionnaire. All information will be handled with the strictest confidentiality to ensure your anonymity.
- There are no correct or incorrect answers in section B. Only your honest opinion is required.
- Your first spontaneous reaction is the most valid, so work quickly and do not ponder too long over any particular item.
- Answer all the questions please.
- After completion, please return the questionnaire as soon as possible to the person from whom you received it.

I thank you in advance for your kind contribution and assistance in this study.

Beverley Blake
Tel: 27 (011) 717 3053
Fax: 27 (011) 086 523 0194
Beverley.blake@icloud.com

Prof. R. Mestry
Tel: 27 (011) 559 2683/5248
Fax: 27 (011) 559 2262
Auckland Park Kingsway Campus
B Ring 425-A, Soweto Campus

Annexure B: QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PARENTS

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL: Parental school choice study

EXAMPLE FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Mark with a cross the applicable code or fill in the number where necessary.

QUESTION 1: Your gender?

(If you are male then mark 1 as follows:)

Male	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Female	2

SECTION A: PERSONAL AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Please indicate the following for the **head of the household** or **chief income earner**:

(a) **Position** in family:

Mother	1
Father	2
Other (please specify below)	3

Other (specify):

(b) **Age** in completed years:

e.g. If you are 35 then enter	3	5

(c) **Marital status**:

Single or Divorced	1
Married	2
Living together or Life partner	3

(d) **Home language**:

Zulu	1
Xhosa	2
Venda	3
Tswana	4
Tsonga	5
Swati	6
South-Sotho	7

North-Sotho	8
Ndebele	9
English	10
Afrikaans	11
Other (specify below)	12

Other (specify):

(e) Employment status:

Unemployed	1
Employee	2
Self-employed	3
Retired	4

(f) Highest academic qualification:

Lower than Grade 12	1
Grade 12	2
Post school diploma or certificate	3
Degree	4
Post graduate qualification	5
Other (please specify below)	6

Other (specify).....

(g) Monthly gross Income level:

R60 001 and above	1
R20 001 – R60 000	2
R10 001 – R20 000	3
R4 500 – R10 000	4
Up to R4 500	5

(h) Population group:

Black African	1
Coloured	2
Indian	3
Asian	4
White	5

SECTION B: CHOOSING YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

This section deals with the **choice factors** that you took into consideration when choosing a school for your child(ren). Please base your answers on the **most recent** school choice decision you made.

1. Who of the following were/are **involved** in making the school choice decision?
(Choose only 1 option)

Head of household or Chief income earner only	1
Parent/s	2
Parent/s and children together	3
Extended family	4
Extended family and children together	5
Child only	6

2. **How many** schools did you deliberate between when making your school choice decision?

Only 1	1
2 – 3	2
4 or more	3

3. Which of the following best describes the **type of school** you chose/will choose for your child(ren)?

Government Primary school	1
Government Secondary school	2
Private Primary school	3
Private Secondary school	4
Home school	5
Other e.g. Special school (please specify below)	6

Other (specify):

4. What is the **name** of the school you chose/will choose? (optional)

.....

5. What is the **gender** of the child(ren) for whom the school choice decision was made?

Girl	1
Boy	2
Girl & Boy	3

6. What **language** would you prefer your child(ren) to be educated in?

Zulu	1
Xhosa	2
Venda	3
Tswana	4
Tsonga	5
Swati	6
South-Sotho	7
North-Sotho	8
Ndebele	9
English	10
Afrikaans	11
Other (specify below)	12

7. To what extent did each of the following factors **influence** your decision to choose a particular school?

(Indicate the level of influence using the scale provided where **1 is not at all influential** and **5 is extremely influential**)

Category	No.	Influencing factors	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Somewhat influential	Influential	Extremely influential
			1	2	3	4	5
Academic Factors	1	Size of the school (i.e. the total number of learners)					
	2	Size of classes (i.e. the number of children in a class)					
	3	The academic curriculum offered by the school					
	4	The school's academic performance in terms of exam results					
	5	The school's performance in Annual National Assessments (ANA)					
	6	Assessment body of the national senior certificate					
	7	Opportunities for extracurricular activities					

Category	No.	Influencing factors	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Somewhat influential	Influential	Extremely influential
			1	2	3	4	5
Physical Factors	8	The external state of school buildings and grounds					
	9	Academic facilities offered by the school (classrooms, equipment, books, computer centre, library etc.)					
	10	Sporting facilities offered by the school (fields, courts, equipment etc.)					
	11	Aesthetics of the school reception area					
	12	School uniform					
	13	The safety the school offers its learners in terms of security					
	14	Aftercare facilities offered by the school					
Human Factors	15	The training and experience of the principal at the school					
	16	The training and experience of staff at the school					
	17	The way the school is managed					
Child related Factors	18	Child has special educational needs					
	19	Child will be happy at the school					
	20	Child preferred the school					
	21	Older brothers/sisters are/were at the school					
	22	Child's friends will be attending the school					
	23	Child was awarded a bursary to attend the school					
Cultural Factors	24	The school's medium of instruction					
	25	The school's established traditions					
	26	Ethnic/racial make-up of the school					
	27	The school's 'single sex' status					
	28	The school's religious ethos					
	29	The school's discipline policy					

Category	No.	Influencing factors	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Somewhat influential	Influential	Extremely influential
			1	2	3	4	5
Geographic Factors	30	Location of the school (close to home or on my way to work)					
	31	The safety of the neighborhood in which the school is located					
	32	The proximity of the school to green space					
	33	I/we fit into the school's feeder area					
Additive Factors	34	Opinions of other parents regarding the school					
	35	The school's standard of achievement in sport					
	36	Ease of admission to the school					
	37	School fees					
	38	Provision of transport to the school					
	39	Other preferred schools were full					
	40	The school's reputation					
	41	The school's involvement of parents					
	42	The school's caring approach to teaching and learning					
	43	Other? (please specify in the lines below)					

Other (specify):

.....

8. Out of those rated above, what were the **three most important** influencing factors for you?

(e.g. If the 'Additive factor' of 'School fees' was the most influential factor in school choice for you then write **37** in the space provided next to 'Most influential'. Do the same for second and third most influential.)

Most influential	
Second most influential	
Third most influential	

9. To what extent did you use each of the following **sources of information** when making your school choice decision?

(Indicate the extent of each source using the scale provided where **1 is not at all** and **4 is to a large extent**)

No.	Information Source	To no extent/ not at all	To a little extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
		1	2	3	4
1	Personal experience of the school				
2	Local newspaper				
3	Work colleagues				
4	Friends				
5	Family				
6	Other parents with children attending the school				
7	Other children attending the school				
8	Outdoor signage (Billboards/street-pole advertising)				
9	Information provided by the local education district				
10	Visit to the school (open days /evenings etc.)				
11	School brochures/booklets				
12	School's website				
13	Information on exam results				
14	Information on Annual National Assessments (ANA)				
15	Other? (please specify below)				

Other (specify):

.....

10. Out of those rated above, what were the **three most important** sources of information for you?

(e.g. If the 'School's website' was the most important source of information for you then write 12 in the space provided next to 'Most important'. Do the same for second and third most important source.)

Most important	
Second most important	
Third most important	

11. When making your school choice decision, indicate the extent to which each of the following factors was an obstacle?

(Indicate the extent of each obstacle using the scale provided where **1 is not an obstacle** and **4 is an extreme obstacle**)

No.	Obstacles	Not an obstacle	Somewhat of an obstacle	Moderate obstacle	Extreme obstacle
		1	2	3	4
1	Availability of space for my child(ren) at the school				
2	Admission requirements				
3	Admission deadlines				
4	Cost of admission				
5	Lack of knowledge of procedure or information relating to admission				
6	Physical distance from home to school				
7	Feeder area of the school				
8	School fees at the school				
9	Lack of communication by the school in terms of application status				
10	Lack of knowledge of other schools to make comparisons				
11	Other? (please specify below)				

Other (specify):

12. Out of those rated above, what were the **three greatest obstacles** for you?

(e.g. If 'Admission deadlines' was the greatest obstacle for you then write **3** in the space provided next to 'Greatest obstacle'. Do the same for second and third greatest obstacles.)

Greatest obstacle	
Second greatest obstacle	
Third greatest obstacle	

13. The school choice I/we make has/will influence the **quality of education** my child(ren) receive?

Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Partially disagree	3
Partially agree	4
Agree	5
Strongly agree	6

14. My child(ren)'s **academic achievement** has been/will be influenced by the school choice I/we make?

Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Partially disagree	3
Partially agree	4
Agree	5
Strongly agree	6

If you would be willing to participate in a follow up interview, please provide your contact details in the space below.

Name:

Tel no:

Email:

Thank you for your time and kind participation in the completion of this questionnaire.

Please hand the completed questionnaire to the person from whom you received it as soon as possible.

Annexure C: QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PRINCIPALS

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL:

Do schools influence parental school choice decisions?

EXAMPLE FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Mark with a cross the applicable code or fill in the number where necessary.

QUESTION 1: Your gender?

(If you are male then mark 1 as follows:)

Male	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Female	2

SECTION A: PERSONAL AND GENERAL INFORMATION

2. Please indicate the following with regards to **yourself** as a Principal / Acting Principal:

(i) Your **Gender**:

Male	1
Female	2

(j) Your **Age** in completed years:

e.g. If you are 35 then enter	3	5

(k) The number of years you have held **Principal / Acting Principal status**:

Less than one year	1
1 – 2 years	2
3 – 6 years	3
7 years or longer	4

(l) Your highest academic qualification:

Lower than Grade 12	1
Grade 12	2
Post school diploma or certificate	3
Degree	4
Post graduate qualification	5
Other (please specify below)	6

Other (specify):

3. Please indicate the following for the **school** of which you are a Principal / Acting principal:

(a) **Type** of school:

Government Primary school	1
Government Secondary school	2
Private Primary school	3
Private Secondary school	4
Home School	5
Other? (please specify below)	6

Other (specify):

(b) If a Government Primary or Secondary school, which of the following was the school **historically classified** as:

House of Representative school	1
House of Delegate school	2
House of Assembly school	3
Department of Education and Training school	4
Don't know	5

(c) If a Government Primary or Secondary school has your school, according to the SA School Act, been granted **section 21 status**?

Yes	1
No	2
Unsure	3

(d) If a Government Primary or Secondary school, what is your school's quintile ranking according to the National norms and standards policy document?

Quintile 1	1
Quintile 2	2
Quintile 3	3
Quintile 4	4
Quintile 5	5
Don't know	6

(e) What is the **language of instruction** at your school? Mark all applicable.

Zulu	1
Xhosa	2
Venda	3
Tswana	4
Tsonga	5
Swati	6
South-Sotho	7
North-Sotho	8
Ndebele	9
English	10
Afrikaans	11
Other (specify below)	12

Other (specify):

SECTION B: THE SCHOOLS INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL CHOICE

*This section deals with the way your school **markets** itself to potential parents with the hope of **influencing** their decision-making with regards to school choice. Please base your answers on current promotional factors and mechanisms used at your school.*

1. To what extent does your school use the following **promotional mechanisms** as a means to influence the decisions parents make regarding school choice?

(Indicate the amount of use **1 is never use and 5 is use always**)

No.	Promotional Mechanisms	Never use	Rarely use	Use occasionally	Use often	Use Always
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Advertising of any form in print media (newspapers, magazines etc.)					
2	Advertising of any form in the audio/visual media (TV, radio etc.)					
3	Outdoor signage (billboards, street-pole advertising etc.)					
4	The use of opinion leaders or ambassadors					
5	Promotional materials (brochures, leaflets, booklets etc.)					

No.	Promotional Mechanisms	Never use	Rarely use	Use occasionally	Use often	Use Always
		1	2	3	4	5
6	General publicity (articles in local media celebrating school achievements)					
7	Open educational events e.g. sports or cultural festivals					
8	Open days					
9	School's website					
10	Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube					
11	Involvement in community and outreach programmes					
12	External links with feeder schools					
13	The alumni of the school					
14	Fundraising activities					
15	The offer of academic, cultural or sport bursaries					
16	Cell phone marketing					
17	Other? (please specify below)					

Other (specify):

.....

2. Below is a list of factors that could be used by a school **to influence parents** to choose the school for their child(ren). Use the scale provided to indicate the extent your school uses each factor in your marketing as a means to influence the decisions parents make regarding school choice.

(Indicate the amount of use where **1 is not at all** and **4 is to a large extent**)

Category	No.	Influential factors	To no extent/ not at all	To a little extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
			1	2	3	4
Academic Factors	1	Size of the school (i.e. the total number of learners)				
	2	Size of classes (i.e. the number of children in a class)				
	3	The academic curriculum offered by the school				
	4	The school's academic performance in terms of exam results				
	5	The school's performance in Annual National Assessments (ANA)				
	6	Assessment body of the national senior certificate				
	7	Opportunities for extracurricular activities				
Physical Factors	8	Upkeep of school buildings and grounds				
	9	Academic facilities offered by the school (classrooms, equipment, books, computer centre, library etc.)				
	10	Sporting facilities offered by the school (fields, courts, equipment etc.)				
	11	Aesthetics of the schools reception area				
	12	School uniform				
	13	The safety the school offers its learners in terms of security				
	14	Aftercare facilities offered by the school				
Human Factors	15	The training and experience of the principal at the school				
	16	The training and experience of staff at the school				
	17	The quality of school governance				
	18	Quality of professional leadership in the school				
	19	Level of parental involvement in the school				

Category	No.	Influential factors	To no extent/ not at all	To a little extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
			1	2	3	4
Cultural Factors	20	The school's medium of instruction				
	21	The school's established traditions				
	22	Ethnic/racial make-up of the school				
	23	The school's 'single sex' status				
	24	The school's religious ethos				
	25	The school's discipline policy				
Geographic	26	Location of the school				
	27	The safety of the neighborhood in which the school is located				
	28	The proximity of the school to green space				
	29	The school's feeder area				
Additive Factors	30	The socio-economic status of the school				
	31	The school's standard of achievement in sport				
	32	Ease of admission to the school				
	33	School fee payment structures				
	34	Provision of transport to the school				
	35	The school's reputation				
	36	School's communication with parents				
	37	The school's caring approach to teaching and learning				
	38	Other? (please specify below)				

Other (specify):

.....

.....

3. With regards to your school's **admission policy**:

(a) Does your school have an operational **school admission policy**?

Yes	1
No	2

(b) Which would best describe your school in terms of **availability of space for learners**:

<i>Oversubscribed</i> -I have more learners applying than spaces I can offer at my school.	1
The number of applications match the number of spaces I have available at my school.	2
<i>Undersubscribed</i> - I have additional spaces available to learners that apply at my school.	3

(c) How does your school communicate **admission deadlines**?

(Choose/mark ALL applicable options)

Local newspaper	1
School website	2
School newsletter	3
Feeder schools	4
Direct communication with applicants	5
Any other way? (please specify below)	6

Other (specify):

.....

(d) My school's admission policy is **freely accessible** to all?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

(e) Does your school charge an **admission fee**?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

(f) If so, is this **fee**:

<i>Refundable</i> to unsuccessful applicants	1
<i>Non-refundable</i> to unsuccessful applicants	2
<i>Deducted from future school fees</i> for successful applicants	3
A once off payable amount <i>not deducted from school fees</i> for successful applicants.	4

(g) The quality of education a child receives is influenced by the school choices their parents make?

Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Partially disagree	3
Partially agree	4
Agree	5
Strongly agree	6

(h) A learner's **academic achievement** is influenced by the school choices their parents make?

Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Partially disagree	3
Partially agree	4
Agree	5
Strongly agree	6

Thank you for your time and kind participation in the completion of this questionnaire.

Please hand the completed questionnaire to the person from whom you received it as soon as possible.

Annexure D: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no: D2015 / 303

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	19 September 2014
Validity of Research Approval:	19 September 2014 to 3 October 2014
Name of Researcher:	Blake B.S.
Address of Researcher:	P.O. Box 1615
	Allens Nek
	1737
Telephone Number:	082 820 0219
Fax Number:	086 523 0194
Email address:	Beverley.Blake@wits.ac.za
Research Topic:	Parental decision making for school choice in the quest for quality education
Number and type of schools:	FOUR Primary and FOUR Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Gauteng West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to the Principal, SGB and the relevant District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted. However participation is VOLUNTARY.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher has agreed to and may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE

2014/09/22

1

Making education a societal priority

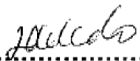
Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter;
2. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB.)
3. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned;
4. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid;
5. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal and/or Director must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
6. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
7. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
8. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent and learner;
9. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
10. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
11. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management with one Hard Cover, an electronic copy and a Research Summary of the completed Research Report;
12. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned;
13. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director and school concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards


.....

Dr David Makhado

Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 2014/09/22
.....

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Annexure E: ETHICS APPROVAL

Ethics clearance number **2018-063**.

NHREC Registration Number REC-110613-036



ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear Beverley Shannon Blake

Ethical Clearance Number: 2018-063

Parental decision-making for school choice in the quest for quality education.

Ethical clearance for this study is granted subject to the following conditions:

- If there are major revisions to the research proposal based on recommendations from the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted.
- If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, it remains the duty of the student to submit a new application.
- It remains the student's responsibility to ensure that all ethical forms and documents related to the research are kept in a safe and secure facility and are available on demand.
- Please quote the reference number above in all future communications and documents.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has decided to

- Grant ethical clearance for the proposed research.
- Provisionally grant ethical clearance for the proposed research
- Recommend revision and resubmission of the ethical clearance documents

Sincerely,



Dr David Robinson

Chair: FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

28 September 2018