

**Multiple perceptions (teachers', parents', learners') of Somali learner acculturation in a
Cape Town primary school setting**

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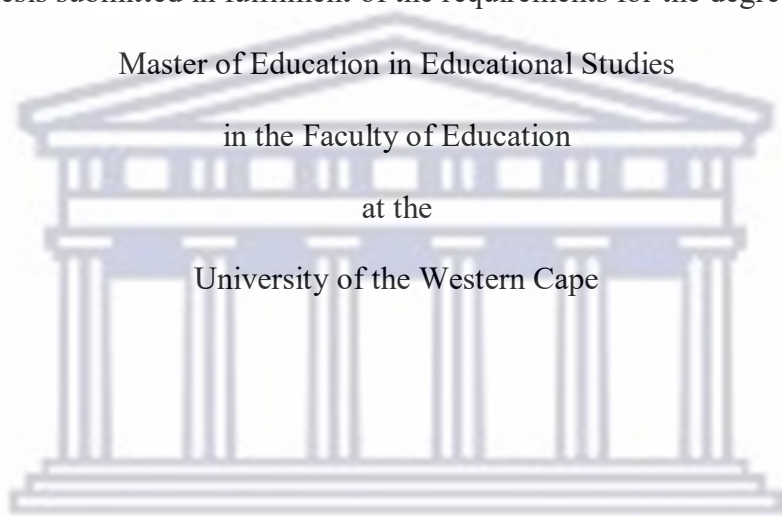
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that the work contained herein is entirely my own except where explicitly stated by reference or acknowledgement. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, in part or whole, for any other qualification.



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To God be the glory. Thanks and praises to our Heavenly Father for his mercy in granting me the endurance to complete this thesis.

My profound gratitude I also express to the following persons who were instrumental in helping me realize and complete the thesis:

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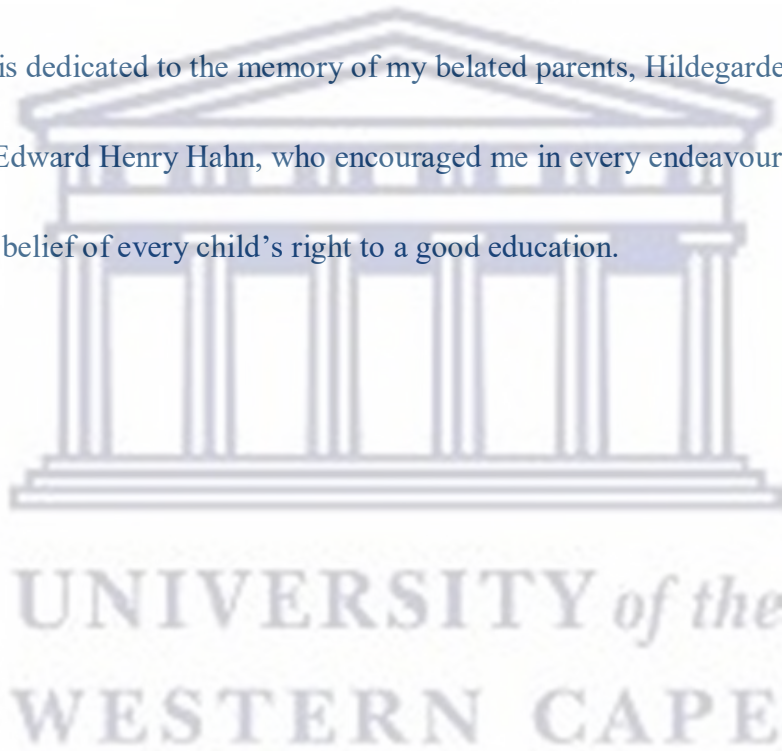
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ABSTRACT

During the 1990s many Somali families settled in South Africa amid severe protracted inter-clan conflict in Somalia. Other Somali families migrated to the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and other western countries. Limited knowledge exists about the acculturation of the children of these families in their newly adopted western schools. No less is this the case of refugee and immigrant Somali learner descendants attending South African schools.

This qualitative research project focuses on the school acculturation experiences of Somali learners attending a public primary school in one of the northern suburbs of Cape Town. The study involves the input of the three main education components, viz. teachers, parents and the learners. A sample of two teachers, two Somali parents and two Somali learners were identified for participation. The research data collection was based on semi-structured interviews, audio recordings and observations. The data analysis was done through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) process, a research qualitative methodology used to explore the participants' perspectives of their lived acculturation experiences.

The research data suggests that first generation Somali-South African learners at the resource school experience the primary school as a positive learning environment despite

their struggles with the curriculum and to a lesser degree intercultural activities. Learner support by their parents and their educators favourably influence their school experiences. However, their educational deficits and socio-cultural transition difficulties render these learners vulnerable in a westernized South African school system currently void of any real scholastic support.

The findings of this study will be useful in remedial support addressing the acculturation challenges faced by first generation Somali-South African learners in a public primary school environment.

Key words: Somali learners, immigrant, refugee, perceptions, acculturation, primary school.



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MULTIPLE PERCEPTIONS (TEACHERS', PARENTS', LEARNERS') OF SOMALI LEARNER ACCULTURATION IN A CAPE TOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL SETTING

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Research orientation

This study sought to investigate insight into the educational role players' perspectives of Somali learners' acculturation experiences within a unique Western Cape primary school in the Republic of South Africa. It uses the voices of Somali learners, their parents and teachers to explore their own experiences and understandings of Somali learner adaptation and integration in a specific primary school situated in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. The geographic location is a working class suburb accommodating many Somali refugee and immigrant families. The investigation aims to expand on studies about Somali learners' school adaptation conducted elsewhere in the western world, and to document acculturation data currently not easily available in the South African educational domain. Background information to the investigation, the clarification of relevant terms and concepts and an explanation of the abbreviations are provided in this chapter. Furthermore, the chapter outlines are discussed.

1.2. Background information

The changing school environment since the 1994 democratic dispensation has placed tremendous pressure on the Western Cape school system (Lunga, investigative journalist, date unknown). Many learners from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds were assimilated into a newly constructed yet overburdened school system (Department of Education 2001). The arrival of foreign nationals from struggling Southern African Development Economic Community regions (SADEC) and war torn north East Africa (Carillet, Bewer, Butler, 2013) compounded the problem of effective education provision in the Western Cape. This difficulty is confirmed by the

Western Cape Education Department's 2019/2020 Annual Report. Challenges relating to both accommodation as well as academic levels bear evidence of the challenging school experiences in the Western Cape schools (Annual Report for 2019/20 Financial Year. Department of Education; Western Cape Government: Education. Circular: 0043/2019).

An additional burden is learner integration. During the researcher's tenure as a school principal in the source school, many teachers indicated that a significant number of refugee and immigrant Somali learners showed ongoing integration difficulties in the classroom. These difficulties manifest themselves in the form of linguistic, academic and social challenges. Bridging the difficulties are compounded by a language barrier which makes communication between the teachers, Somali parents and their children problematic.

Studies relating to refugee Somali learners' acculturation have been done in the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and other western countries (Hassan, 2013; Kanu, 2008; Kruizenga, 2010; Thomas, 2016). However, researchers concede that insufficient research has been conducted addressing the scholastic experiences of these learners in their western school adaptation (Eno, 2017; Gichiru, 2012). Complexities in understanding the Somali learners' socio-political, cultural and academic backgrounds in addition to the teachers' perceived inability to recognize imposing western school contextual factors, are deemed to affect learner acculturation experiences negatively (Kruizenga, 2010; Rasmussen, 2009).

1.3. Rationale for the study

Immigration, the movement of people from their home country to settle in a foreign country (Bolter, 2019), is a global phenomenon in contemporary time. Unstable political conditions

(Sekhon, 2008) or seeking improved living prospects for themselves and their families (Bolter, 2019; Newland, 2012) are cited as the main reasons for people leaving their homeland. South Africa's new democracy in post 1994, heralded the arrival of many Somalis fleeing the protracted civil war (Thomas, 2016) back home in Somalia (Peters, 2017). For many Somalis the choice of a new homeland fell on South Africa (Daniels, 2017; Ngwenya, 2017; Peters, 2017) which "allows them to integrate into the broader society" (Daniels, 2017) and affords them favourable economic opportunities (Ngwenya *ibid.*) The study explores one facet related to immigrants' social integration, viz. the adaptation and integration of Somali learners in a particular government primary school in the Western Cape, a province of South Africa. It focuses on the learners' school acculturation challenges, documenting their perspectives of their varied school experiences. The study is inspired by the researcher's experiences as a school principal managing the accommodation of many first generation Somali primary school learners. Staff members battled to assist the struggling learners and assumed that their school acculturation success extended to these factors: the learners' ability to converse in basic English vernacular, their school attendance histories and their adaptation to a routinely rigid westernized school system. In this study the voices of three education role players, i.e. the Somali learners, their parents and their teachers are employed to help understand the perceptions of Somali learners' acculturation in a primary school in Cape Town.

1.4. Significance of the study

The significance of the study lies in the knowledge acquired in understanding local Somali learners' acculturation perceptions and experiences in a Western Cape public primary school. Even though some research has been done in the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and to a lesser degree some European countries (Hassan, 2013; Kanu, 2008;

Kruizenga, 2010; Thomas, 2016), little is known about Somali learners' experiences in the South African school context. The acquisition of knowledge is beneficial in making a contribution to:

- Understanding Somali acculturation challenges at local primary school level;
- Exploring uniquely South African acculturation factors influencing learner integration experiences at a local primary school;
- Contributing to a shortage (Vithal and Jansen, 2010) of South African Somali learner acculturation data;
- Making informed decisions in supporting Somali learner acculturation processes in the South African educational environment;
- Expanding (Maree, 2017) on previous international acculturation studies deemed as inadequate (Thomas, 2016; Hassan, 2013; Kruizenga, 2010; Kanu, 2008).

The primary aim of the study was to explore the learners', their parents' and teachers' perceptions of Somali learners' acculturation in a local primary school context. The research hoped to clarify (Creswell, 2002) the three educational role players' perceptions of learner adaptation to a uniquely (Maree, 2017) South African school context, and to contribute to existing literature deficits focusing on Somali learner adaptation to a westernized school system.

The study objectives were:

- To use the voices of Somali learners, their parents and teachers to explore their perceptions of Somali learners' acculturation in a local primary school;
- To explore Somali acculturation in a uniquely (Maree *ibid.*) South African educational context;
To explore acculturation factors implicitly related to the South African Somali learner population;
- To expand (Mash, 2014) on previous acculturation studies conducted in other western school systems, viz. the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom (Hassan, 2013; Kanu, 2008; Kruizenga, 2010; Thomas, 2016);

- To contribute to existing deficit (Vithal and Jansen *ibid.*) Somali acculturation data not readily available in South African educational research;
- To contribute to attempts to support the acculturation of immigrant Somali learners in South African schools.

The main research question was:

What are the multiple perceptions (learners', parents', teachers') of Somali learners' acculturation in one particular primary school in South Africa?'

The research sub-questions were:

- How do Somali primary learners perceive their acculturation at their particular primary school?
- How do Somali parents perceive the acculturation of Somali learners at the learners' particular primary school?
- How do primary school teachers perceive Somali learner acculturation at their particular school?

1.5. Research design and methodology

To answer the research question, an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) within the qualitative paradigm was used (Alase, 2017). Qualitative research examines how individuals' social environment has meaning to them (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). It allows the researcher to have insight in the research participants' 'live experiences' (Alase, 2017; Smith and Osborn, 2007; Tuffour, 2017), uncovering and helping to interpret their perceived realities of acculturation experiences in a "natural" setting (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Using exploration and analysis (Terre Blanche et al., 2006), an inductive process helped the researcher to gain insight in the research participants' acculturation experiences as a social phenomenon (Bronfenbrenner, 2002; Merriam, 2002) in which social interactions mold human relationships (Bronfenbrenner *ibid.*). The participants' 'live experiences' were consequently used to help the researcher identify emerging acculturation themes and relevant concepts.

Ethnographical content exposed the “multiple meanings” of the participants’ “individual experiences” (Creswell, 2002).

An interactive, multi-method approach assisted to understand and verify the first-person experiences of the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2017). Triangulation, the use of various data collection instruments (Creswell, 2002; Fusch and Ness, 2015; Patton, 2002) were employed to interpret and verify data. Semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, observations and occasional journaling provided rich data. However, the main data collecting instruments were the interviews and audio recordings. The research population included the triad of educational role players, namely the Somali learners, their parents and their teachers. The semi-structured interviews with the Somali participants were conducted at their homes, and those of the teachers at school. The choice of particular interview locations enabled the researcher to view each participant in his own environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and to gauge the contextual circumstances influencing each learner’s socialization within a school cultural context (Bronfenbrenner *ibid.*).

The data analysis process provided rich textural data. Positive interviewer-interviewee engagement enhanced the research navigation process. The responses of appropriate participants (Alase *ibid.*) helped to reveal emergent acculturation themes during the interviews. As each participant’s response was afforded equal attention (Moustakas, 1994), a wide accumulation of textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas *ibid.*) were captured. During the entire data analysis process iterative data reviewing (Moustakas, *ibid.*; Terre Blanche et al, 2006) helped to make meaning of the respondents’ learner acculturation perspectives.

The data reduction process occurred when segment text coding (Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Hassan, 2013) was applied and the repetitive themes discarded. Various tables were used to organize the data. Distinctive categories were sub-divided into three themes, viz. School Culture, Learner Identity, and Cohesion and Relationships. The Somali translator was consistently consulted to confirm the researcher’s understanding of the essence of the Somali participants’ responses, and to validate her interpretations thereof.

1.6. Ethical considerations

Ethical behaviour should at all times guide the researcher in his/her interaction with the research participants (Creswell, 2013; Henning, Van Rensburg, Smit 2004; Kvale, 2007 cited in Peters, 2014). A fundamental ethical research principle includes the notion of respect for and the safety of each participant throughout the entire research process (Creswell *ibid.*). The recognition of the participant responses must be considered with care, and their confidentiality should always receive precedence (National Commission for the Protection of Human subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research 1979). All the research role players, i.e. the Somali learners, their parents and teachers signed permission letters for their participation. The following information was contained in the permission letters and reiterated prior to the interviews:

- The purpose and benefit of the study;
- The participants' need for signing confidentiality agreements to protect their identity;
- Possible risks, social and otherwise, which could be revealed during the research process and how the researcher would address it;
- The significance of voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from participation without any negative consequences to themselves or their families;
- The participant's right to confer at any time with the researcher and the university authorities to ensure clarity about any aspect of the research process.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) granted permission for the research to be conducted in a public primary school and an ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Western Cape prior to conducting the study. During the research period health and safety regulations were adhered to as all the interviews were conducted during the 2021-2022 COVID pandemic.

1.7. Clarification of terms and concepts

Various terms and concepts are used in the research data. Some are explained here below to clarify the research information and help the readers understand the study context. Enacted dates are indicated in the case of legislative documents. Abbreviations used mostly in socio-political, historical or geographic context are indicated.

Apartheid

“Apartheid” in the Afrikaans language literally means to set ‘apart’ or to ‘separate’ (History of South Africa, 1994). It refers to the racial segregationist and discriminatory policies which the South African government enforced after the National Party gained power in 1948. The minority white government instituted a political system which discriminated against non-white citizens in order to maintain their white dominance (Kallaway, 2002). Laws prohibited the black majority citizens from accessing quality education and public amenities like quality health facilities, housing and transport like their fellow white citizens. People of colour lived far away from the economic hubs in the country and pass laws prohibited prevented them from free movement inside the country (A history of Apartheid in South Africa, 2022). Black persons were not allowed to own land and interracial marriages were banned. These laws were implemented by means of legislation which kept the minority government in power (History of South Africa, 1994). During the period 1990 to 1993, negotiations between the National Party (NP) and the African National Congress (ANC) resulted in the end of the apartheid system, with the NP rule finally coming to an end in 1994 (Unterhalter, Wale, Botha, Badat, Laminae, Khotseng, 2017).

Bantu Education Act (1953)

The Bantu Education Act was enacted in 1953 and took effect in January 1954 (Unterhalter et al., 2017). The act governed the education of black South African learners. “Bantu” education, as it was referred to by the South African government, formed part of the racially segregated apartheid education system. The inferior system prepared the learners as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers for the South African job market. A separate schooling system ensured that they were segregated from those learners of European descent in the classrooms (Kallaway, 2002). In this manner these learners, who were denied a good education, were prepared for a lowly wage

and resultant poor quality of life in their adulthood (Unterhalter et al., 2017).

Eiselen Report (1951)

The Eiselen Commission Report recommended the South African government to take control of black South Africans' education as part of the country's socioeconomic plan (Kallaway, 2002). It supported the government's separatist racial policies and laid the foundation for apartheid education which culminated in the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The majority of black schools were then run by church missions. An anthropologist, W.W.M. Eiselen, was appointed by the government to make recommendations for black learners' education. The report recommended that the needs and values of particular cultures of the communities should be considered in policy making (Eiselen Commission, 1951). This perspective was in accordance with the South African government's racial separatist ideology.

Post-apartheid

The post-apartheid era signifies the end of the apartheid political system in South Africa (Maharaj, 2004). In 1994 a new democratic political dispensation ensued with the presidential victory of the country's first black president, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918 – 2013) (Lasting Legacy: Nelson Mandela's Evolution as a Strategic Leader, 2013). It heralded the beginning of an inclusive society commonly referred to as the 'rainbow nation'. The term was first coined by the Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, and is symbolic of the various cultural, ethnic and racial groups in the country. The rainbow in some South African cultures is associated with good prospects and a bright future bringing hope (The Sunday Times, November 4, 2007). The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) affirms the rights of all citizens in the country. It enshrines the values of human dignity, freedom, equality and respect

for all.

South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996

The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 advocates a uniform school system pertaining to the management, governance and funding of state controlled public schools. Chapter 4 Section 39 (2)(b) indicates that a School Governing Body (SGB) may adopt a resolution to assist economically disadvantaged learners to acquire a total or partial exemption from paying school fees, thus implying that all learners in the country have the opportunity to attend school. Chapter 3 Section 3 (1) refers to the compulsory attendance of learners between the ages of 7 and 15 years (or Grade 9). Section 3 (6) (a)(b) indicates that parents' failure to comply with a commitment for their children's compulsory education is punishable by fine or imprisonment.

The Constitution of South Africa (1996)

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, No. 108 of 1996 declares that all citizens must be treated equally and will be protected against unfair discrimination on the grounds of "race, colour, ethnic or social origin, sex, religion or language." It also declares amongst others that every South African has a right to education. Section 29 paragraph (2)(c) addresses the importance of redressing racially laws and practices in the past. Paragraph (3)(a) declares that educational institutions are prohibited from discriminating against learners or students on the basis of race.

White Paper on Education and Training (1995)

The White Paper on Education and Training advocates the principle of access of all South

African learners to an inclusive education and training school system. It promotes human rights and social justice for all learners irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex by providing the “first steps” in the post-apartheid era to a new system of education and training serving all South Africans. The White Paper on Special Needs Education (2001) expands on this legislation. It focuses on a framework for outlining inclusive education. It provides steps in establishing school systems to accommodate those learners with various learning disabilities, enabling them to so take up their positions as equal South African society members. The Paper acknowledges that during apartheid “specialised education and support were provided on a racial basis, with the best human, physical and material resources reserved for whites” (Paragraph 4(ii) in the *Executive Summary*).

Refugee

A refugee is a person who migrates outside the country of his/her habitual residence for safety reasons (Sekhon, 2008). Such a person is unable to or unwilling to return to his/her country of origin due to unstable political conditions including war, or fear of persecution because of his/her beliefs, religion, race, political affiliation or nationality (United Nations Convention and Protocol, 1951/1996 cited in Sekhon, 2008). The protracted conflict in Somalia since the late 1960s prompted many of the country’s inhabitants to flee to other African states including South Africa. One research parent participant has a refugee status in South Africa.

Immigrant

An immigrant is a person who has settled permanently in a foreign country. i.e. a country other than his birthplace. The process of moving to a foreign country is called immigration. Two types of immigration occur: internal and external migration. Internal migration refers

to moving within a country or state. External migration occurs when people move outside their country's borders to settle in a different country or state (Bolter, 2019). As in the case of refugees, human migration takes place when people seek improved living conditions in the new country which they feel might offer them better professional and educational opportunities, health services and security. One research parent participant has an immigrant status in South Africa.

Assimilation

Assimilation indicates the extent to which an immigrant or refugee bears a resemblance to the cultural characteristics of the host group. It is measured in terms of the immigrant or refugees' duplication of the host groups' values, characteristics, traditions or systems (Brown and Bean, 2006).

Cultural assimilation

Cultural assimilation signifies the gradual integration process of an immigrant or refugee in the host society of their newly adoptive country. The pace of integration differs for various individuals, however, Gordon (1964) indicates that cultural assimilation is an inevitable step for immigrant adjustment and integration in the host country.

Acculturation

Acculturation can be defined as the immigrants' or refugees' process of adopting the values, beliefs, customs and mannerisms of the majority culture in the host country (Makarova, 2019). Berry (1980) and Persky & Birman (2005) cited in Sekhon (2008) define acculturation as the cultural changes which occur when persons of "two or more cultural groups" have contact

and assimilation of the dominant culture occurs.

Subtractive acculturation

Subtractive acculturation denotes immigrant or refugee learners' rejection of their culture in favour of the host country's (Sekhon, 2008). According to Wolf (2010), this phenomenon is a significant acculturation stressor in the learners' families. Western society's liberal values are blamed by the parents for their children's disregard for family traditions and parental authority.

Acculturation stress

Acculturation stress refers to the pressure immigrant or refugee learners experience in their newly adopted school environment (Schwartz, Unger, Szapocznik, 2010). These pressures manifest itself in the form of anxiety underpinned by factors such as the learners' mode of school adjustment and the school's capacity to support the learners in school integration. Acculturation stress within family context occurs when familial bonds are challenged by the newly adopted cultural system in the host country. Anxiety is caused by the depletion of cultural values which erodes the immigrant or refugee's traditional identity, beliefs and practices.

Inclusion

Inclusion in the educational context implies providing school access to all learners despite their personal background or immigration history, or individual needs or capacity. It encompasses a "non-segregational" or non-separatist approach. All learners are accommodated in a classroom environment (Kirchner, 2015) which rejects learner exclusion on the grounds of social class, culture, religion, gender, ethnicity, or physical

disability.

First generation Somali learners

These learners are the first children of Somali refugee or immigrant families to attend a South African school. They are the descendants of the refugees or immigrants who arrived in South Africa in the late 1990's seeking improved living conditions for their families away from their war torn homeland. Whilst establishing small businesses ("spasa shops") in Johannesburg (Ngwenya, 2017), they also envisaged good schooling opportunities for their children. The Somali school population has recently grown significantly in the research locality, with most of the learners at the source school born in South Africa. A very small minority arrive directly from the conflict region nowadays.

Koranic education

Koranic schools exist alongside secular schools in Somalia. In contrast to the secular schools which follow a westernized school model, they focus on an Islamic education. The learners are taught to read, write and memorize verses from the Koran. In Koranic schools the language of teaching and learning is Arab. At the heart of these schools' education philosophy is the preservation of the Islamic religion and culture (Hassan, 2013).

Abbreviations

CEC – Community Education Committees (Somalia)

CNE – Christian National Education (South Africa)

SADEC – Southern African Development Community (Southern African region)

SCS- South Central Somalia

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

UNISOM – United Nations Operation in Somalia

WCED – Western Cape Education Department (South Africa)

1.8. Chapter outline

The thesis comprises five chapters. In Chapter One an introduction to the study is presented. It provides a background to the study and briefly elaborates on historic educational information in the early post-apartheid era when Somali refugee learners arrived in South Africa. The chapter also focuses on various terms and concepts and abbreviations to help enlighten the contextual circumstances dealt with within the research topic. Also, chapter outlines are presented, providing a synopsis of each chapter, as indicated here below.

In Chapter Two the researcher presents the reviewed literature used to enhance her understanding of the research topic (Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Educational histories of the Somali and South African school systems are discussed to serve as a background to the investigation. Somalia’s past and present education systems reflect the country’s destabilization along geo-political lines and South Africa’s “end to its fortified borders” (Klotz, 2000) in the post-apartheid era heralds many African refugees’ arrival in “the land of opportunities” (Maharaj, 2004). Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (2005) is briefly discussed and is later used as a theoretical framework to analyse environmental influences on the learners’ integration processes (Chapter Four). Bronfenbrenner’s theory assists in gaining insight in the ‘intersectionality’ (Daniels, 2017) between the two “micro systems”, i.e. the school and

home.

In Chapter Three, a qualitative methodology explores the teachers', Somali parents' and Somali learners' perceptions of Somali learner acculturation in a Cape Town primary school. An IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) strategy helps to explore the participants' 'lived experiences' (Alase, 2017; Smith and Osborn, 2007, Tuffour, 2017) in their "natural" settings of the school and home (Isaacs, 2014; Merriam, 2002). Multi-method research instruments such as semi-structured interviews, video recordings, class observations as well as intermittent journaling and diary entries capture the research data. The chapter elaborates on the data collection challenges and discusses the research trustworthiness process underpinned by the research principles of reliability, triangulation and transferability. Within the domain of international studies, the latter principle is especially relevant as the study heeds to the call to contribute to "insufficient" research done on Somali learners' adaptation experiences in westernized schools (Eno, 2017; Kruiženga, 2010; Rasmussen, 2009; Sekhon, 2008).

In Chapter Four, the collected data is presented and the data analysis steps are explained. Demographic data sheds light on the participants' contextual variables and the interrelatedness between their perspectives on Somali learner acculturation. Three broad research categories emerge, viz. school culture, learner identity and cohesion and relationships. The themes, learner overall adaptation, daily attendance rate, daily academic routine, parent-teacher contact, intercultural contact and extra-mural activities feature prominently during the participants' interviews. They are discussed and displayed in a graphic representation at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Five is the final chapter of the study. It presents a study overview which includes the research questions and concludes the research process. The findings and the dualistic strength of the study within the local and international education domain are discussed. Further research projects are recommended to help understand Somali learner school experiences specifically within the South African school context.



Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

Literature reviews form an important component of research. It entails identifying previous and current literature supporting a research topic (Peters, 2014). Information is accumulated to answer the research question (Creswell, 2015) and to expand the researcher's knowledge in his understanding thereof (Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). However, occasionally available information is inadequate. Further research is then required to support underrepresented elements or disclose new developments in a particular domain or topic (Denney and Tewksbury, 2012). Extended research around main or subordinate themes consequently becomes necessary (Denney and Tewksbury, 2012) as contextual weaknesses insufficiently link data to a research topic, or conceptual weaknesses expose a void between what has already been researched and what is required to inform the new research topic (Maree, 2017). The researcher then has to explore gaps in existing information to clarify, interpret or assimilate research data in support of a new theme (Vithal & Jansen, 2010).

The inclusion of education as a comprehensive topic within South African immigration dynamics is lacking. Research about Somali learner integration and acculturation in the South African school context is not readily available within scholarly communities. This underrepresentation is contrary to studies in the western countries focusing on African immigrant learners' adaptation to first world schools (Abdi, 2013; Graham-Brown, 1993; Kanu, 2008; Lingard, Knight, Porter, 1993). Similar studies peculiar to the South African context could not be found at the onset of my research, hence my aim to report on Somali learners' social integration in a post-apartheid South African primary school system.

2.2. Early post-apartheid challenges in the classroom

The first Somali learner arrived from the conflict torn Somalia in 2002 (Peters, 2014). The learner was registered at a Strand primary school near Cape Town (Peters *ibid.*). The subsequent arrival of other Somalis as well as other African refugee learners from northern and central parts of Africa, posed language and cultural challenges for teachers in the Western Cape (The Western Cape Education Department Admissions 2019/20 Track Applications, investigative Report: Peter Lunga, date unknown). Amid struggles at educational grassroots, local primary school teachers faced challenges to accommodate learners who struggled at linguistic, academic and social levels. This situation to a large extent still prevails today. Many primary school teachers are of the opinion that the absence of definitive guidance from education authorities complicate the situation.

2.3. Somali learners' acculturation

Little is known about the early migration of Somali learners to South Africa. Immigration data focuses mainly on family migration to South Africa following the Somali civil war in 1991, and the establishment of the communities in the commercial sector (Ngwenya, 2017). However, Daniels (2017) and Peters (2014) conducted research on these families and their experiences in the newly adopted school environment in South Africa. Both investigated parents' support of their children in a Western Cape primary school. Daniels (2017) focuses on the intersectionality between school and home. She concludes that positive learner development is based on a progressive parent-teacher relationship and the parents' cultural understanding of the South African school system. Peters alludes to parents' physical and emotional support serving as significant factors in supporting learner development. Neither of the studies focuses pertinently on Somali learners' school integration abilities and their behavioural responses to the South African primary school system. This study attempts to take Daniels' (2017) and Peters' (2014) investigation further by focusing on Somali learners' school acculturation

and their individual responses to a Cape Town primary school setting. Their historical backgrounds incorporating socio-political and educational data are employed to help to understand their experiences, and how it has possibly impacted on their integration in the South African primary school system.

2.4. Somalia, a country in distress

Somalia, a country in severe political turmoil (Hassan, 2013; Thomas, 2016), started out as a democracy in 1960 (Gelletly, 2004; Newland, 2012; Ricciuti, 1995). However, a military coup d'état under the leadership of General Mohamed Siad Barre occurred in 1969 (Thomas, 2016; Newland 2012). This event worsened the country's increasing political instability during the post-colonial period. An absence of stable government caused by severe Somali inter-clan conflict (Newland, 2012; Thomas, 2016), helped spiral law and order out of control, forcing the state into a further low point (Hassan, 2013). Amid the anarchy many Somali families fled their country. They sought refugee status in southern and eastern African countries (Daniels, 2017) as well as countries in the West (Kanu, 2008). In 1991 further political dissonance ensued. Intense factional fighting forced Barre's central government to collapse (Abdi, 2013; Hassan, 2013; Newland, 2012). This occurrence intensified the political dilemma of a severe, protracted civil war (Hassan, 2013) which took its toll on human lives and caused its nation dire socio-economic harm (Ricciuti, 1995). To date the civil war continues sporadically (Gichiru, 2012; Hassan, 2013; Kruizenga, 2010; Radio Solder Grense, 2021; Rasmussen, 2009, Thomas, 2016). The mass migration of Somali families still occurs to different parts of the world (Abdi, 2013). Literature indicates that many learners fleeing the Somali homeland either have an interrupted education or no formal schooling at all (Gelletly, 2004; Kanu, 2008; Newland, 2012; Peters, 2014; Thomas, 2016).

2.5. Somalia's education system, past and present

Hassan (2013) asserts that Somali educational development must be understood in the context of the country's three historical phases: the pre-independence, post-independence and post-civil war phases. Each of these phases are indicative of significant developments in the country's education history.

2.5.1. Pre-independence phase

Koranic education, a component of community education still in existence today, was introduced long before the British and Italian missionary schools were established in Somalia. It is the oldest education system in the country. The system can be traced back to Somali nomads' contact with Arabs from Arabia and south west Asia around the tenth century (Hassan, 2013; Newland, 2012). Koranic education is deemed as important in Somali society. Its function is primarily to uphold strict Islamic values and maintain a distinct Islamic tradition in society (Abdi, 2013). Girls and boys, ranging from five to fifteen years, memorize the Koran, or Holy Book, in Arabic (Ricciuti, 1995).

Europeans started exploring Somalia in the 1800s and by the next century, Britain and Italy colonized the north western and north eastern regions. Western education was introduced to learners up to grade seven only, strengthening the opinion that the self-serving colonial powers prepared the Somali youth for low level jobs and their colonial masters' own needs (Abdi, 1998; Bennaars, 1996). Learners were taught in English and Italian, explaining the language competencies of many adult Somalis speaking these languages today. Unfortunately, the schools were largely limited to cities, making school access for learners out of the reach for the majority of poor communities in rural areas (Hassan, 2013).

2.5.2. Post-independent phase

Somalia gained independence in 1960 (Hassan, 2013). This important political milestone was soon to be marred by an increased conflict between warring clans (Ricciuti, 1995). By 1991 a full-scale civil war was in progress (Daniels, 2017; Sekhon, 2008). Despite political unrest and the anarchy which followed after the military take-over of Barre nearly a decade after independence in 1969 (Gelletly, 2004), many Somalis believed that government education showed some promise (Cassanelli & Abdikadir 2007). Education was one of the sectors Barre intended using to modernize the nation (Hassan, 2013). Significant education reforms occurred. A centralized education system was created and a literacy campaign initiated. A written Somali script in the Roman alphabet was introduced for the first time (Gelletly, 2004; Hassan, 2013; Ricciuti, 1995). Compulsory free education for primary school learners was instituted. These measures were considered as a major step in upgrading the education system and improving education access for the population (Gelletly, 2004; Hassan, 2013). The only opposition encountered was of those persons who favoured the Arab language as the sole language of instruction in the classroom (Hassan, 2013).

The start of the Somali-Ogaden War (1977-1978), however, was a precursor to the steadily destabilizing sequence of events not only in the political sphere but also in education. Political uncertainty and economic decline gradually but profoundly impacted on schools in the early 1980s. The schools operated minimally and learner attendance dwindled significantly. School infrastructure fell in disrepair and education funding for scholastic provisions and teaching staff was stretched (Hassan *ibid.*). The overthrow of “dictator” Barre’s government in 1991 (Thomas, 2016), marked the intensification of civil war. The simmering clan conflict going back as far as the 1960s, surfaced more sharply. With the collapse of Barre’s government, the education

system fell apart.

2.5.3. Post-civil war phase

The destruction of many schools marred the face of education after Barre's oust. Fewer Somali children attended school (Newland, 2012). Free and compulsory education came to a halt with only those who could afford it still attending schools which remained open (Gelletly, 2004). In the ensuing period, parts of the population were displaced. With the intensification of conflict some of the school buildings were used by the militia. The education system fell into disarray with many teachers, school administrators and families fleeing to neighbouring states (Abdi, 1998; Cassanelli & Abdikadir 2007, Hassan, 2013). With schools closing and education programmes coming to a halt in 1991-1992 (Gelletly, 2004, Hassan, 2013), many teachers abdicated their duty in favour of personal safety.

The arrival of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNISOM) in 1993 enabled schools to reopen. However, UNISOM's withdrawal two years later (1995) frustrated attempts to resuscitate the fragile education system. In the absence of educational institutions, some communities took it upon themselves to reopen former government schools. These schools were privately sponsored and existed alongside newly created Islamic schools financially supported by Kenya and some Arab nations (Gelletly, 2004). Some progress was made. For many children, including those living in poor rural areas, the chances of attending a school became a possibility (Newland, 2012). However, this situation gradually dissipated with the political destabilization affecting the country's education sector. Up till today many Somali learners are still denied educational services in their country (Abdi, 2013; Hassan, 2013, Newland, 2012; Ricciuti, 1995; Thomas 2016).

2.6. Fragmented education in a fragmented society

Somalia is considered by many analysts as a ‘troubled’ state incapable of delivering services to its people (Gelletly, 2004; Thomas, 2016). Currently a fragmented, decentralized educational system exists. Differentiated models of school governance or management exist at policy making, curriculum and infrastructure levels. Some schools are administrated by private owners and financial donors with no formal educational training (Hassan, 2013).

2.6.1. Differentiated school systems along geopolitical lines

Whilst the protracted conflict situation continues, schools are established along clan groups to ensure school safety in different regions (Hassan, 2013). This pattern mirrors the country’s socio-political fragmentation. The self-independently declared Republic of Somalia (north west region) and the break-away state of Puntland on the ‘horn’ of Africa, manage their own education systems (Ricciuti, 1995; Newland 2012). Both have education ministries and show a greater stability in the education sector compared to South Central Somalia (SCS) (Hassan, 2013). According to a 2005 UNICEF (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund) report, ninety percent of schools in SCS are privately owned by various community education committees (CECs) who take decisions on all education related issues including management, staffing, salaries and curriculum provision (Hassan, 2013). Modified curricula based on former colonial education programmes are used, but no common standards prevail. Throughout the country variations in teacher appointments, remuneration and scholastic resources exist, thus thwarting education coherence and stability. Fragmentation in school infrastructure and provision also remains: most schools are located in bigger cities so that many learners living in rural are denied access to education. (Hassan, 2013).

2.6.2. Education models and school attendance

Varied social dynamics reflect the communities' needs for different education models.

Different schools, secular and religious, each with its own ethos, are established alongside each other (Hassan, 2013). Secular schools are based on western school models and others follow an Islamic discourse. Former government schools' curriculum delivery is in English and Italian and to a lesser degree, Arabic. These schools' curricular content is similar to those in western schools with academic achievement a strong focus. Islamic schools focus on knowledge acquisition of the Holy Koran and learners reflect the more conservative component of Somali society. These schools strongly encourage the preservation of traditional Islamic culture ("dhaqan") and religious practices ("dheen") (Thomas, 2016). Here the primary language of learning and teaching is strictly Arabic (Ricciuti, 1995) and gender separation in the classroom is compulsory (Hassan, 2013).

Differences in the school attendance rate is marked: the children of more affluent parents in cities attend school more regularly whilst their poorer rural counterparts cannot always afford to be educated (Hassan, 2013). Data estimates record only thirteen percent of Somali children attending school in 2004 (Gelletly, 2004) and in 2013 over one and a half million learners missed out on school (Hassan, 2013). Displacement in the ongoing civilian conflict together with other contributory factors like poverty, drought, nomadic lifestyles and child labour are cited as reasons for poor school attendance (Gelletly, 2004). Poor school attendance also affects Somalia's literacy rates regarded as amongst the worst globally (Newland, 2012). Analysts predict that unless the country takes control of its politically volatile situation, it "faces a difficult road ahead for many years to come" (Ricciuti, 1995). Until then, its youth development will always be badly affected by the existing political turmoil (Hassan, 2013).

2.7. Social disintegration and education policy discourse in pre-democratic South Africa: A short historical overview

Apartheid, a government policy based on racial segregation prior to 1994, endeavoured separating South African society at social, political and economic levels (Kallaway, 2002; Peters, 2014). A policy of social segregation based on race was implemented by the South African government after the 1948 National Party election victory. Discriminatory laws entrenched in the apartheid system was used to strengthen Afrikaner ideology and promote white Afrikaner supremacy (Unterhaller, Wolpe, Botha, Badat, Dlamini, Khotseng, 2017). Christian National Education (CNE), an educational system serving the religious and cultural needs of the Afrikaner population, served as the basis for the South African education model during apartheid (Kallaway, 2002). In historical context, the first informal learner segregation in the classroom started in early government schools (date unknown). In an effort to promote ethnic nationalism in the late nineteenth century, the South African government gradually established separate schools for white Afrikaans and English home language speakers of European descent (Kallaway, 2002). Black schools always operated separately since its inception in the 1920's and were managed by mission churches (Sayed, 2004 cited in Chisholm, 2004)). With the announcement of the Eiselen Report (1951) and the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act (1953), black schools were transferred to state authority, subjecting them to government rule. This development was seen as a political effort to tighten control over black schools (Morrow, 2004 cited in Chisholm, 2004). By the 1960s separate schools for Black, Coloured and Indian learners were well established (Morrow *ibid.*). Many were under sourced compared to white schools. By law each racial group had its own separate education administration. Despite the government declaring that apartheid made it possible for each racial group to prosper and develop parallel with the other, many inequalities in terms of educational provisioning such as

government funding, teaching resources and academic opportunities for the different racial groups emerged (Sayed *ibid.*). It was clear that learners of colour had limited development opportunities compared to their white counterparts. To further entrench its policy of racially defined schools, teachers' training colleges were established along ethnic lines (Sayed, 2004 cited in Chisholm, 2004).

2.8. South African education in the post-apartheid era

The first democratic elections in 1994 brought an end to apartheid in South Africa. The Constitution of South Africa (1996) heralded the beginning of a new democratic political dispensation in the country. Racial discrimination against any person irrespective of race, heritage, class, creed or gender is prohibited as everyone living in South Africa is regarded as equal before the law.

The new political dispensation impacted profoundly on all sectors in society, including education. The newly acquired democracy considered education as an important tool for social transformation (Unterhaller et al., 2017) and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 as well as the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) helped reverse racial discrimination in the classroom. With the new political climate many African refugees from countries including Somalia migrated to South Africa. According to a Somali refugee in the research location, many Somalis perceive the country as a receptive host with a colonial history and past political difficulties similar to theirs. They perceive South Africa as a prosperous country with a bright future bringing hope to previously disadvantaged persons far from the conflict and war back home (Newland, 2012). Somali immigrants and refugees view South Africa as a safe haven offering many developmental opportunities. An additional advantage is the educational benefits the country holds for their children.

2.9. School attendance during post-apartheid

South Africa's political transformation during the first democratic elections (1994) brought many changes in South African society. The transformation allows all learners to receive education in a unified education system. Various legislative documents such as the Constitution of South Africa (1996), the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) and the White Paper on Special needs education (2001), serve as a guide to redress past educational inequalities. These documents support every child's right to education, aiming to create quality education and training opportunities for all learners (Daniels, 2017). South Africa subscribes to international communities' educational ethos for children. It endorses the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO 1960), and the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR 1948). Within South African educational context, this implies that every child living in South Africa irrespective of race or social status is eligible for education. The South African Schools Act (1996) provides guidance on learner admission and stipulates that every child from the age of seven years must be enrolled at a school. Non-compliance, either by a school's refusal for learner admission, or parental neglect in disabling learner school attendance, is punishable by law. The research of Peters (2014) and Daniels (2017) as well as the researcher's experience at primary school indicate that Somali parents deem education as pivotal in advancing their children's development. This explains the Somali learners' favourable school attendance rate. A meaningful number of Somali parents feel that South Africa's newly established democracy together with advantageous learner education opportunities make the country a popular choice for immigration.

2.10. Refugee integration in the source primary school

The changing demography in learner admissions since the 1994 democratic dispensation has

placed tremendous pressure on the Western Cape school system (Daniels, 2017; Peter Lunga, investigative journalist, date unknown). According to WCED (Western Cape Education Department) documents published in 2001 and 2019, many learners from culturally diverse and poor scholastic backgrounds were assimilated into a newly constructed yet overburdened school system (Department of Education: Education in South Africa. Achievements since 1994. May 2001., Western Cape Government: Western Cape Education Department 2019 Admissions Update and Learner Growth in the Western Cape). The arrival of refugees from struggling SADEC (Southern African Development Economic Community) regions and war torn north east Africa (Carillet, Bewer & Butler, 2013) compounded the problem of effective education provision in the Western Cape. This difficulty is confirmed in the aforementioned 2019 WCED admissions document which alludes to the challenges experienced at accommodation as well as academic levels in Western Cape schools.

An additional burden was learners' integration, a problem which still persists today. During the researcher's tenure as a school principal at an MNED (Metro North Education Department) primary school in Cape Town, many teachers relayed their integration experiences of Somali refugee and immigrant learners. They concurred that some learners experienced challenges in adapting to the new school system. These difficulties manifested itself in academic backlogs and behavioural problems. Despite having good daily attendance records, the learners' language barrier, hesitancy to comply with various scholastic activities and poor interaction with fellow learners and some teachers hampered their ability to integrate in the school programme. The teachers attributed the learners' poor education levels to their interrupted education (Hassan, 2013) and their problematic behaviour to integration difficulties (Kanu, 2008). Measures used to address the behavioural incidences included referrals to remedial

teachers and Education Department support teams. Although parent consultations were held to address the difficulties, it was clear that they did not know how to interpret nor handle the learners' behaviour (Abdi, 2013; Thomas, 2016; Wolf, 2010).

2.11. Acculturation

As with many refugee or immigrant learners across the globe, Somali learners are confronted with the new culture of their host country to which they have to adapt (Sekhon, 2008). The adaptation experience is termed acculturation. It is part of the dynamics of migration, i.e. when people relocate from one geographic region to another in search of improved lifestyles (Peters, 2014). Usually the minority group, the refugees or immigrants, adjusts to the mainstream cultural traits of their adoptive country (Makarova, 2019). The social transition entails a psychological and cultural adjustment, for both the newly arrived migrant as well as the host society (Kanu, 2008; Makarova, 2019; Sekhon, 2008).

Acculturation presupposes a process of integration. Integration, or assimilation, helps immigrants to adapt to the host country's values, customs, beliefs and behaviours (Acculturation: Online Etymology Dictionary). During intercultural convergence the two groups, the immigrant and citizens of the host country, to a greater or lesser extent (Zhou 1997 will share a 'common' culture (Schwartz et al., 2010; Zhou, 1997). This occurs because of the process of mutual adaptation (Brown and Bean, 2006; Makarova and Birman, 2016; Suarez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, Katsiaficas, 2018; Zhou 1997). According to Parry (2019), intercultural contact gives rise to the creation of multicultural societies.

2.12. Sociocultural dichotomy

The sociocultural context of the feeder area in which the source school is located, has changed much recently. According to a representative of the local Community Police Forum (CPF) the

area has taken on a multicultural character, with many Somali families settling there as early as the 2000s. During the researcher's interaction with local immigrant Somali parents, parents revealed their concern for their children's speedy acclimatization. They felt that a successful integration at the school would help the learners achieve the ultimate goal of academic success. Consequently, they impress upon their children values such as perseverance, academic excellence as well as loyalty to the school. In theory, though, this practice could effect a cultural duality (Sekhon, 2008) within the learners' management of the acculturation process: within the school confines Somali learners conform to westernized culture and values, but domestically their cultural traditions persist. Sekhon (2008) refers to this phenomenon as "additive" acculturation. The description is often afforded to voluntary immigrants, e.g. refugees, who eagerly adapt to the dominant group's cultural ways to enable them to achieve success in their host country. The immigrants choose to learn new cultural "tools", yet retain their own. These 'tools' help them to transit between opposing cultures, i.e. between the newly adopted one and their own. This transition happens within any given circumstance in any social context, enabling the immigrant to move between two different cultural domains (Ogbu, 1982; in Sekhon, 2008).

2.13. Immigration

The presence of Somali communities in South Africa are indicative of the contemporary phenomenon of immigration. Immigration refers to the movement of persons from one country to another with the aim of settling in the country of which one is not a native (Parry, 2019).

Within acculturation context, immigration contributes to the assimilation of varied cultures and ethnicities, creating multi-ethnic and multicultural societies across the world (Parry, 2019).

Adverse political and socioeconomic conditions as well as improved educational and job prospects are cited as the main determinants for immigration in contemporary times (Carbone,

2017; Castelli, 2018; News. European Parliament 2020). In South Africa, Somali immigration dates back to the early 1990s (Daniels, 2017). The first Somalis settled in Johannesburg in the Gauteng province where many opened small businesses (Ngwenya, 2017).

2.14. Immigration and refugee learners' school experiences globally

Globally the social, psychological and cultural adaptation of immigrant and refugee learners in host countries are often a stressful experience (Schacher, 2017). Learners find difficulty in navigating between their own culture and that of the host community. Shachner (2017) indicates that this situation is often compounded by other influential factors, e.g. the learners' early adolescence development in a new environment. Within an educational context, they struggle to adapt to the host school's ethos, i.e. its distinctive character, as well as all other educational facets closely associated with that particular school. During adaptation the internalization of new skills ("additive" acculturation) of the new school culture and language makes their integration and assimilation process a traumatic experience (Gibson, 1995). Cultural confusion ensues. The learners struggle to cope with cultural duality experiences (Sekhon, 2008) and feelings of alienation. Additionally, their integration pace is negatively affected by western teachers' "biases...based on social clues" (Eno, 2017), such as poor perceptions of working class parent involvement in scholastic events. This strains positive teacher-parent relationships (Orellana, Monkman and Mac Killivray, 2002) and negates a welcoming learning environment for the learners.

Schachner (2017) asserts that comprehensive research of the acculturation process in "combination" with other "psychological school adaptation aspects" is sorely needed to understand immigrant or refugee learners' adaptation challenges and their experiences thereof. Too many scholarly publications do not focus on the learners' first-hand experiences, but rather

on their linguistic difficulties in North America, Great Britain and other European states (Paris and Alim, 2017; Sheninger, 2016; Williamson and Blackburn, 2010; Yelland, 2010).

Consequently, attempts to understand the effect of other impacting acculturation factors and how the learners experience them are not exposed (Gichiru, 2012; Rasmussen *ibid*; Schachner, 2017; Thomas 2016). A much wider research spectrum, including the learners' personal histories, is needed to understand the learners' acculturation difficulties (Gicihiru, 2012; Kruizenga, 2010; Rasmussen, 2009). This argument is extended to Somali immigrant and refugee learners.

Kruizenga (2010) emphasizes that Somali learner integration data is "thin" with "several gaps." She alludes to the link between identity, race, culture and religion, and learner experiences and development. She contends that a "culturally relevant pedagogy" is required to help create a successful enabling school environment to minimize challenging acculturation experiences. She further argues that western teachers do not observe the learners' "little to no formal schooling", their unique culture or sociopolitical backgrounds nor the social, emotional and educational "needs" they have upon accessing western schools (Eno, 2017; Gichiru, 2012; Sekhon, 2008). According to her the learners are viewed "from a deficit model". Rasmussen (2009) agrees. The learners are regarded as a "burden" in the classroom. They are not sufficiently supported academically nor socially, and many "negative perceptions" still prevail amongst some teachers about the learners' ability to progress.

Studies on Somali learners' school acculturation experiences specifically within a Cape Town primary school context were not available at the onset of this research task, hence the researcher's decision to research this topic. The primary school study of Peters (2014) and follow-up article of Daniels (2017), both located in the Western Cape, do not focus on learner acculturation. Rather, the former investigates the positive role parents play in their children's

school life, and the latter the intersectionality between their school and home environments (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Other academic literature about Somali adaptation lends itself to a variety of immigrant related subjects, e.g. economic participation within the South African commercial environment, religious resilience and identity, gendered norms in South African Somali communities and the displacement of refugees in Cape Town (Ngwenya, 2017; Sigamoney, 2018; Brown, 2015; Buyer, 2008). They are void of any primary school related data.

This study, however, sought to focus specifically on Somali primary school learners in order to obtain their own perspectives about their acculturation experiences at a primary school in Cape Town. Their voices together with their parents' and teachers' relayed their first-hand experiences at the host school.

2.15. Somalis and contemporary intra-African migration

From discussions the researcher had with immigrant and refugee Somali parents during her tenure as a school principal, it came to light that South Africa is a favourite destination for the relocation of Somali families. Somali parents view the new democratic South Africa as a welcoming option for educational training and the safety of their children. Parents with very little or no formal education, see the South African education system as one bringing hope for a prosperous future for their children. In addition, a sense of belonging to the country plays a role in resettling locally. Carbone (2017) and The Africa Migration Report (Global Migration Data Analysis 2020) report that Somali immigrants make up a significant part of African migrants preferring to resettle in other African states. Eighty percent of Somali migrants declared that they had no intention to leave the African continent (Global Migration Data Analysis 2020), with Somali migration to South Africa accounting for nearly half of all African immigrant mobility (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018) between

2008 and 2017 (Africa Migration Report 2020). Better educational prospects, improved economic opportunities as well as protracted political conflict, poverty and drought serve as reasons for Somalis leaving their homeland (Abdi, 2013; Daniels, 2017; Ibrahim, 2016; Kanu, 2008; Newland, 2012; Peters, 2014; Ricciuti, 1995). Ngwenya (2017) expands on the reasons for Somalis migrating to South Africa. He reports that the large Muslim population, the availability of Islamic schools ('madrasas') and mosques makes South Africa an attractive option for Somalis. Daniels (2017) agrees, but contends that South Africa's liberal integration policy in broader society serves as further attraction to South Africa as a migratory destination.

2.16. Acculturation within an educational context

Acculturation is synonymous with two transitional processes: immigration and assimilation. Immigration refers to the process of permanent geographic relocation of persons from one country to another (Parry, 2019). Assimilation is the cultural transition to mainstream culture enabling immigrants to integrate in their new environment (Brown and Bean, 2006; Gordon 1964). Acculturation within educational context, denotes changes ethnic minority group learners undergo in their adaptation to mainstream or the host school culture (Makarova, 2019). Learners adapt to the new school's distinctive character, or ethos, as exemplified in both academic and non-academic activities. The acculturation process, however, is not limited to the learners only. An intercultural interplay caused by the interaction between the learners and host school, results in an adjustment of attitudes and behaviours on both parties' sides (Makarova and Birman, 2016; Zhou 1997). Makarova (2019) focuses on teachers, indicating that they need to be sensitive to the immigrant learners' acculturation needs. She argues that teachers must acknowledge the positive role they could play in the learners' school adjustment. Teachers' attitudes affect the psychological wellbeing and academic success of the learners

during the adaptation process (Hassan, 2013; Kanu, 2008; Makarova and Birman, 2016), creating enabling spaces accommodating varied cultures and cultural identities within the classroom (Kanu, 2008). According to Makarova (2019), the school and home serve as the major contexts for supporting the favourable educational transition of the learners during the acculturation process.

2.17. Supporting learner acculturation

Peters (2014) argues that learner acculturation is a complex phenomenon. The adjustment of immigrant learners to host schools could exert much pressure on learner-teacher working relationships. Schwartz et al. (2010) assert that “acculturation stress” in the form of learner anxiety and depression plays a decisive role in the learner’s integration mode. The reception context, i.e. the manner in which the learner enters the new school and the school’s attitude to the new learner, influences his adjustment. To affect successful acculturation, the cultural differences between immigrant learners and the host school should be recognized by teachers wishing to champion the cause for immigrant learner education (Daniels, 2017). This goal requires a shift in pedagogical attitudes, including taking cognizance of the psychological effects of immigrant learners’ traumatic historical backgrounds. Thus, the immigrant in his totality needs to be considered. This includes his cultural background, personal experiences, home and socioeconomic circumstances as well as academic capabilities (Kanu, 2008).

An example of a school attempting to bridge cultural differences is the International Baccalaureate (IB) school in the Netherlands. In reviewing the school’s teaching policy for immigrant learners, Raina and Sommer (2021) found that teachers focus on “cultural differentials” practices. Emphasis is placed on the learner’s own cultural background and

individual history. Showing a sensitivity to learners' individual cultural backgrounds, upholding values such as open-mindedness and respect, and practicing social skills are recognized as tools for successful acculturation in the school environment. The school's aim is to close the gap between varied learner cultures, drawing on learner similarities despite their cultural differences. An awareness of a common humanity and "shared guardianship of the planet" is central to the school's education policy (Policy of International Baccalaureate school 2017 cited in Makarova, 2019).

2.18. Assimilation

When two cultures are in prolonged contact with one another, a psychological process, assimilation, occurs (Brown and Bean, 2006). Whilst acculturation denotes a cultural group's retention of cultural markers such as traditions, customs, language, norms, food and clothing, assimilation, or integration, refers to the immigrant group's resemblance to characteristics of the host group (Brown and Bean, 2006). Gordon (1964) asserts that "cultural assimilation" is an inevitable step for immigrant adjustment and integration. The acculturation of immigrants begins with a gradual integration process, albeit that different groups vary in their degree of integration. Some immigrants show a clearer defined similarity with the host group's norms, values and behaviour, while others display a "delayed" form of assimilation (Brown and Bean, 2006). Within school context, the integration of learners has long been a topic of discussion with attempts to investigate the connection between learner assimilation and schooling (Eno, 2017; Kanu, 2008; Robinson in Sessler, 2006). The focus on how foreign born learners discard their distinctive cultural behaviours in favour of integrating in mainstream education, remains an important topic in the fields of sociology and education (Gordon, 1964; Kruiženga, 2010; Sizzler, 2006; Schachner, 2017; Zhou 1997). There is agreement, however,

amongst educationists that school contextual variables often play a role in immigrant learner integration. Racialization, school composition, adverse socioeconomic conditions, language inefficiency, and teachers' ignorance of immigrant learners' historical backgrounds, are cited as contributory factors of delayed learner assimilation (Gichiru, 2012; Kanu, 2008; Portes and Hao, 2004; Thomas, 2016; Zhou, 1997). Alternative hampering factors include generational "dissonance", i.e. the non-correspondence of acculturation levels between children and their immigrant parents (Zhou, 1997) and cultural transitional challenges when juveniles struggle with simultaneous home culture retention and host culture assimilation (Schachner, 2017).

2.19. Acculturation stressors in Somali immigrant families

Somali families adhere to strict Islamic cultural traditions passed on from generation to generation. These traditions continue in their newly adopted countries.

However, external forces in host countries often affect familial structures during the acculturation transitional process (Abdi, 2013; Makarova, 2019; Osman, Klingberg-Allvin, Flacking, Schon, 2016). Family structures, marriage unions, parenting and Somali social interactions at community level is affected (Osman et al. 2016). Psychological stressors like anxiety, depression, poverty, loneliness and the loss of Somali values, beliefs and identity, manifest itself daily in Somali households (Kanu, 2008; Thomas, 2016). Abdi (2013) and Wolf (2010) describe how the empowerment-disempowerment dichotomy affects family systems in these patriarchal communities. Compromised gender roles and male Somali disempowerment occur, contributing to daily stress in families (Kribia, 1993 in Abdi, 2013).

Abdi (2013) and Osman et al (2016) refer to the complexity of Somali males' persistence in maintaining patriarchal practices. Both studies allude to the conflict it creates in families. The new sociocultural context is perceived by many Somali adult males as too liberal, denoting it as

destruction agents “eroding their power over their wives and children” (Pels, 2000 in Abdi, 2013) and alienating or “stripping” them from that which is familiar (“gale”) (Thomas, 2016). The father, traditionally the stalwart family disciplinarian and protector of cultural and Islamic practices, has to accept the individualistic culture practiced in a western egalitarian society. He also has to accept his equal position as a partner in the marriage (Osman et al., 2016). Besides bearing the burden of financial support of his family, he is very often compelled to partake in extended family matters traditionally unfamiliar to fathers in Somali society. This could include amongst others taking responsibility for his children’s schooling.

Both Abdi (2013) and Hassan (2013) refer to the emancipatory benefits Somali women experience in western countries and how it disturbs their male counterparts. The mother, formerly the nurturer, experiences increased social encounters beyond her conservative home confines. Many women, in support of their family’s dire financial needs, participate in economic activities (Thomas, 2016) such as running stalls, others get involved in their children’s scholastic events (Daniels, 2017; Peters, 2014). These experiences increase the women’s sense of empowerment. Furthermore, women enjoy legislative protection in the new host country. Women’s rights give them access to state machinery for protection during domestic disputes (Abdi, 2013). This situation renders the common patriarchal practice of elderly male intervention in family conflict as obsolete, thus challenging the traditional role of men in Somali collectivist culture and practices (Wolf, 2010).

The acculturation experiences in western host societies also affect parent-child relationships. The transition to a markedly different individualistic culture (Wolf, 2010) make the preservation of traditional Somali values difficult for the youth. This phenomenon creates conflict between

parents and children (Sekhon, 2008). In certain cases, generational dissonance occurs: Somali learners identify much sooner with their host country's cultural practices than their parents. They acquire the country's language and social skills and eagerly embrace the mainstream culture at a faster pace (Sekhon, 2008; Zhou, 1997). These aforementioned parent-child relationship experiences resonate with those encountered by the researcher at the host school.

Pre-teen Somali learners showed a marked aptitude for adapting to their new educational environment compared to their parents. They participated eagerly in scholastic activities despite their parents' hesitancy to give permission. Family acculturation stressors due to the learners' progressive cultural acclimatization are also found in North America. Wolf (2010) reports that conflict ensues in Somali households when parents lose control over their children (Abdi, 2013; Thomas, 2016). They construe the latter's disregard for parental authority as disobedience, lamenting "children's lack of respect for elders" (Wolf, 2010). The parents blame the "fundamental differences" in value systems between Somalis and western society for the "diminishing regard for parental authority" and the discord in their households (Wolf *ibid.*). In extreme cases, subtractive acculturation develops. This occurs when learners reject the family culture and take on a new western identity in the host country (Sekhon, 2008).

2.20. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory

Peters (2014) argues that both the home and school context have an influence on learner behaviour. If the school and home interact favourably, it benefits the learner. She bases her argument on Bronfenbrenner's systems theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998 cited in Peters, 2014) and uses an ecological theoretical framework to explain how two independent primary contexts, the home and school ("micro system") and parental involvement ("meso system"),

converge to aid educational support for children. Kanu (2018) expands on Peters' (2014) argument and suggests that western government institutions' educational policies ("macro system") need to be adjusted to support psychosocial challenges immigrant learners face.

2.20.1. Perspectives on Bronfenbrenner's theory

Human development, according to Bronfenbrenner (2005), is influenced by a person's interactions with others in the various spheres he encounters in his environment. He theorized that the potential to discover something new in each person must be recognized. As human beings we share similarities, yet show complexities in our contextual diversity. Each individual's development is affected by environmental conditions enhanced by his genetic factors. Bronfenbrenner emphasized that human development cannot be measured within the confines of scientific experiments under laboratory conditions. Human development is continuously evolving, with contextual conditions superseding mere change and influencing the individual's transactional process during development (Lerner, 2005). Lerner (2005), refers to Bronfenbrenner's scientific societal vision. She concurs that individuals should be studied within their own ecological settings and that a connection should be established between an individual and his contextual circumstances. She supports Bronfenbrenner's perspective on social policies which play a pivotal role in initiating scientific questions around human development and its links to the environment. Social policy should be dictated by people for their wisdom and conformity to fact, i.e. the prevailing "truths". Koller (2017) asserts that Bronfenbrenner's theory employs scientific inquiry in applying insights to "treat" human psychological phenomena ('translational' psychology). Bronfenbrenner also aspired to implementing 'positive' psychology (Koller *ibid.*), a scientific psychological approach based on exploring the optimal functioning of humans through their strengths and virtues.

2.20.2. Childhood development

Bronfenbrenner's (2005) scientific study of children focused on their behaviour in various contexts, viz. their homes, schools and playgrounds. He researched their development and behaviour within contextual settings as opposed to under laboratory conditions. Bronfenbrenner concluded that the learners' social context or environmental conditions together with their personal traits (emotional, cognitive and biological) continuously present itself with opportunities for behavioural change and further development. The convergence of human attitudes and personal traits together with the child's environmental conditions stimulate learner development and the adaptation to his surrounds.

2.20.3. Bioecological levels

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005) the learner is exposed to five influential contextual systems. The contextual systems range from institutions closest to him (family, school, friends) to those afar (policies at a legislative level). Even though the latter context is distant, it indirectly influences his development. Bronfenbrenner asserts that various contextual systems interact with one another to support the child's psychological development. The five systems, viz. the individual, micro, meso, exo and macro systems inform the learner's socialization within cultural context. The individual system is at the core of the systems. It identifies personal components of the learner, i.e. his age, sex, and emotional, cognitive and biological health. The next level, the micro system, is defined as the immediate location for human behaviour in which the developing learner interacts with his environment. At this level his family, peers, school and place of religious worship is presented. The level (or system) serves as a transitional basis across which the other systems interact. The meso system represents the interrelatedness of significant contexts affecting the child's human development at a particular point in his life. It signifies a combination of microsystems in his development over a period of time. The exo system refers to indirectly

impacting but significant contextual settings affecting the learner's behaviour and development. Examples include amongst others local politics, mass media and social services. It is an extension of the meso system, embracing both definitive formal as well as informal social structures in his immediate setting. The "superordinate of the ecology level" is the macro system (Lerner, 2005). It affects the processes within all ecology levels of human development and influences a variety of dynamics such as cultural ideologies, public policy and macro institutions, e.g. the federal government. Even though the learner is far removed from these institutions, they have a profound influence on his development experiences. As a 'positive' theorist, Bronfenbrenner believed that a learner's development should be advanced in a scientific and positive way, helping him to enhance the changing experiences affecting his life context. Bronfenbrenner's theory is also referred to as the 'systems theory' (Lerner, 2005).

2.20.4. Interrelation between the systems levels

Bronfenbrenner's systems theory emphasizes that individuals should be studied within their natural environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Lerner, 2005). He argues that this research strategy enables the researcher to see interrelated social factors impacting on persons' behaviour and development. His scientific study focused on children's behavioural adaptation in various contexts, viz. their homes, classrooms and playgrounds as opposed to under "laboratory conditions." In recognizing the relation between a learner and his/her contextual circumstances (Bronfenbrenner *ibid.*; Lerner, *ibid.*) the researcher attempted to understand how the learners' distinctive ecological settings influenced their acculturation experiences. It was clear that the learner responses reflected the extent of the home, school and broader community's influences on their acculturation mode and adaptation to the school system. One particular learner initially experienced adjustment difficulties mainly due to his poor home circumstances, his academic inability and pressure from

his own community to rather engage in economic activities. Both participants, however, persevered, and envisioned successful educational trajectories for themselves. They reflected clarity on how and why they should adapt to the school system, and how it would be beneficial to their future careers. Their parents' own educational deficits, the teachers' constant encouragement and the learners' strong personal convictions (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) played a decisive role in their adaptation.

The use of similar research questions for all educational role players closest to the learners (micro system), enabled the researcher to obtain an intimate yet comprehensive view of the learners' acculturation processes. Each participant presented his/her perspectives from a particular level: the learners at an individual level, and the parents and teachers at their level (micro system). During the data collation and analysis process, the interrelatedness of their responses revealed both convergent and divergent acculturation perspectives. Indirectly impacting factors such as gender, cultural and religious aspects influencing learner behaviour and experiences were exposed (exo system). Other social factors, e.g. school attendance inconsistencies, parental absenteeism, poverty (all economically related), and a lack of academic home support due to poor parent education (Peters, 2014), also played a major role in the learners' adaptation mode. The learners gave recognition to these factors which hampered their integration process. However, their will to succeed eventually surpassed these adversities. The influence of Education Department policies (macro system) defeated the dynamics of effective learner inclusivity for struggling learners (Department of Education: Education White Paper 6. Special Needs Education. 2001). It became incumbent upon the teachers together with the parents (meso system) to explore means to ease the learners' school adaptation experiences without departmental support.

The data analysis also revealed that despite the interplay of erratic adverse conditions manifesting itself at different systems levels and in various scholastic dimensions, the Somali learners were driven in their goal to obtain quality (“good”) education. Their resolute attitudes and personal social contexts drove them to survive in a school environment with many academic pressures. This phenomenon is explained by Bronfenbrenner (2005) who asserts that converging human attitudes and personal traits (emotional and cognitive) together with the social context lend itself to learner adaptation, integration and development.

2.21. Summary and conclusion

In Chapter Two the researcher provided an overview of the historical background leading to the migration of Somali learners to South Africa. The country’s favourable sociopolitical conditions are presented as a hospitable educational environment for receiving immigrant Somali learners. Cognizance is taken of the academic literature denoting various interpretations of Somali immigrant learners’ acculturation in western school settings. An overview of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological system and how the theory is applied to learner development is presented. In Chapter Three the research design and methodology is addressed. The rationale for a qualitative study is explained and the process of data analysis, its validity and reliability is reviewed.

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented a literature review to inform the research topic. Reference was made to immigrant Somali learner adaptation struggles to education systems in western countries. Deficit immigrant Somali learner acculturation literature within the South African school context was identified. This deficit correlates with other international studies deemed as insufficient (“thin”) with “several gaps” (Kanu, 2008; Kruizenga, 2010). This research project explores the perceptions of immigrant Somali learners’ acculturation within a uniquely South African school context. It heeds the call to supplement ongoing international studies (Gichiru, 2012; Kanu, 2008; Kruizenga, 2010; Thomas, 2016) recording acculturation perceptions and experiences of Somali learners assimilating with westernized school settings. In this chapter the methodology in approaching the research topic is presented and discussed. It is organized according to an introduction, statement of purpose, research approach, research paradigm, research population sample and data collection. A section on the trustworthiness of the research, ethical considerations as well as a summary and conclusion finalizes the chapter.

3.2. Research orientation

Research, the systemic process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting research information, helps to improve our understanding of social phenomena in society (Merriam, 2002).

Understanding people’s interpretation of their personal experiences and how they construct their worlds (Butina, Campbell & Miller, 2015) help inform us about people’s needs and the complexities of human behaviour (Isaacs, 2014). The investigative topic is the first step in the research design process (Jansen, 2017). It helps us to ‘explore’, ‘examine’ and ‘understand’ the topic of interest (Isaacs, 2014; Vithal & Jansen, 2010). We ask questions such as ‘who’, ‘what’,

‘how’ or ‘why’ to help clarify underlying assumptions relevant to the theme (Isaacs, 2014). The research process prompts the employment of a research design or plan which is congruent with the research topic and the researcher’s approach (Nieuwenhuis, 2017; Vithal and Jansen, 2010). The next section describes the purpose, followed by other research design elements within the research plan.

3.3. Statement of purpose

The unfolding refugee crisis worldwide has sparked a marked interest in understanding refugee and immigrant learner acculturation in western schools (Sekhon, 2008). Much more research is required in investigating the difficulties these learners encounter when migrating to host countries (Eno, 2017; Kruizenga, 2010; Rasmussen, 2009; Sekhon, 2008). Supplementing deficient acculturation data in educational literature of refugee and immigrant learners has become essential to expose the needs of these learners (Eno, 2017; Sekhon, 2008).

The availability of Somali learner acculturation data within the South African primary school context is sparse. Daniels (2017) indicates that a more critical knowledge and understanding is needed around educational issues of Somali learners in South Africa. She argues that the cultural difference between the learners and South African school communities creates miscommunication and tension. Furthermore, the scarcity of equitable channels between schools and parents hamper meaningful dialogue between all education parties. In an effort to expand the involvement of all education role players equitably, this study engaged with the triad of educational role players: learners, parents and the affected teachers. It allowed all parties an opportunity to engage in discussions around learners’ acculturation, providing much needed empirical insight in the phenomenon. In this manner dialogue was stimulated and augmented all concerned parties’ voices about learners’ adopted identity and assimilation within the South African primary school context.

The main research question to guide the study is:

What are the multiple perceptions (learners', parents', teachers') of Somali learners' acculturation in one particular primary school in South Africa?

The research sub-questions are:

- How do primary school teachers perceive the acculturation of Somali learners at their particular primary school?
- How do Somali parents perceive the acculturation of Somali learners at the learners' specific primary school?
- How do primary school Somali learners perceive their acculturation at their particular primary school?

These research questions reinforce the primary aim of the study, viz. exploring teachers', parents' and learners' perceptions of Somali learners' acculturation within the local school context, unpacking role players' perceptions about a unique learner group located in a distinct school setting (Creswell, 2002; Maree, 2017).

The research objectives included:

- Highlighting acculturation elements implicitly relevant to the South African primary school context;
- Supplementing South African educational data of Somali learners not readily available (Vithal & Jansen 2010);
- Assisting in attempts to support learners experiencing acculturation challenges at primary school level;
- Contributing to the pool of insufficient international studies (Kruizenga, 2010; Mash, 2014) conducted elsewhere in western countries such as the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, and other European countries (Eno, 2017; Hassan, 2013; Sekhon, 2008).

3.4. Research approach

A qualitative approach was chosen to gain insight into the perceptions of acculturation

experiences of Somali learners. Qualitative research focuses on understanding human systems as they occur in natural settings without environment manipulation (Isaacs, 2014; Merriam, 2002). It implies an exploratory enquiry (Creswell, 2013 cited in Hassan, 2013; Isaacs, 2014; Peters, 2014) which provides the researcher with rich, purposeful, descriptive data (Hassan, 2013; Isaacs, 2014) to reconstruct a holistic picture impacting on social or human issues (Isaacs, 2014). Grounded in induction, the process allows for expanding the researcher's understanding of a social phenomenon, acknowledging the participant's viewpoint in his or her cultural or environment context. The participants' multiple realities of their environment are uncovered by expressing their thoughts and opinions using triangulated research instruments such as interviews, observation, and audio recordings. As a critical instrument (Butina, Campbell and Miller, 2015), the researcher identifies emergent themes or categories from the data, captures it, and studies it carefully. Different themes are analyzed. The research findings are collated to help provide insight into the participants' lives and expose their perspectives of how their social world has meaning to them (Peters, 2014). Hassan (2013) asserts that a "better understanding" is achieved of "what it is like for someone to experience the phenomenon under investigation". This result is gained by applying a congruent research approach underlying the researcher's assumptions and the purpose of the research (Nieuwenhuis, 2017).

A hallmark of qualitative research is its 'fluidity' (Nieuwenhuis, 2017). A variety of approaches or methodologies with its foci, data collection methods, strategies and data syntheses are employed to ensure fluidity and look for meaning whilst developing the theme (Butina et al., 2015; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Hassan, 2013; Janesick, 2000 cited in Hassan, 2013; Peters, 2014). Creswell (2007 cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2017) asserts that none of the qualitative approaches are "pure" in application as overlaps in methodology could occur. Nieuwenhuis

(2017) and Groenewald (2004) concur with this viewpoint. During the research process the researcher may feel the need to create a hybrid of approaches within a single study.

3.5. Reflexivity

Reflexivity, the researcher's acknowledgement of his/her own presupposed beliefs or ideas about the research topic, is a widely accepted phenomenon in contemporary research (Ortlipp, 2008). Russell and Kelly (2002) indicate that the researcher's judgement is underpinned by his/her subjectivity of the research subject matter. Subjectivity emerges through the interaction between the researcher and the research participants, each bringing their own pre-existing perspectives and experiences into the research process. During interaction, the experiences are enriched at different social levels or "multiple nested systems" in the research environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994 cited in Russell and Kelly, 2002). Constant self-reflection based on personal assumptions and biases occur, resulting in the researcher having to continually exercise self-separation from the subjects and the research subject matter. The application of "bracketing" (Miller and Crabtree, 1992 cited in Groenewald, 2004), i.e. the avoidance of the researcher's own preconceptions, was used to manage the researcher's preconceived ideas about Somali learner acculturation. She acknowledged that her own assumptions might have an impact on the research process as she had previously been directly involved with the learners at a school managerial level. Intermittent journaling, though not a data collection source, helped to review research related experiences prior to, during and after the data collection process. It helped to caution and dismantle preconceived ideas, curbed the researcher's possible influence on interviewees' responses and enhance her understanding of the participants' experiences. Any uncertainties about Somali interviewee responses were cleared by the Somali interpreter present during the interviews.

3.6. Research paradigm

A paradigm refers to the interconnectivity between practice and thinking structures (Peters, 2014). Dash (1993) defines a paradigm as an interrelated group of substantive concepts and variables attached with correlating methodological approaches and appropriate tools. The research paradigm, described by Thomas (2010) as an all-encompassing system with a pattern, structure and framework, determines the nature of the investigation (Peters, 2014) and includes three interwoven dimensions, viz. ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). These components encapsulate the “essence” of what the research study is trying to uncover (Alase 2017). Ontology refers to how people perceive reality, whilst epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge of people’s world perspectives. Methodology refers to the practical application in how the investigator obtains data he/she deems attainable in the study (Alase, 2017; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The research process is inductive, i.e. the researcher uses data to reconstruct concepts and work towards a theory (Merriam, 2002).

In this study, the reality of being uncovered was how teachers, parents and learners viewed Somali learner acculturation in a Western Cape primary school setting, and to clarify those perceptions (Creswell, 2002) about the learners’ adaptation to a uniquely South African educational context (Maree, 2017). To explore the ‘lived experiences’ (Alase, 2017; Smith and Osborn, 2007; Tuffour, 2017) of the learners and the other two role players, viz. teachers and parents, an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed. This qualitative approach helped probe the respondents’ views about their acculturation experiences of Somali learners in their educational environment. The methodological tools included semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and voice recordings. Intermittent journal recordings helped

supplementing the data collection process.

The IPA was used to provide a framework within which to discover and review the researcher's understanding of the various role players' acculturation perspectives on Somali primary school learner' adaptation. This approach helped inform her about the role players' experiences, uncovering their realities and perceived theories of primary school acculturation. IPA, a conversational, interpretative data collection and analysis method, assisted in obtaining a detailed account of these participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017). The flexible, participant-oriented approach advances researcher-participant bonding and allows the respondents to narrate empirical data candidly (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009 cited in Alase, 2017). IPA uses the 'what'- 'why'- 'how' methodology (Moustakas, 1994 cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2017) for understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what "meaning" they attribute to "their experiences" (Butina et al., 2015). In attempts to act as sense-making individuals in a social world, participants reflected on their own experiences and acculturation perspectives (Smith et al., cited in Alase, 2017). The teachers, and the learners and parents, narrated their distinctive insights of their particular lived experiences and the accompanying problematic situations they faced (Smith and Osborn, 2007). In heeding their innermost deliberations, themes of confluence ('convergence') as well as deviation ('divergence') were identified. These were amplified and appropriately addressed in the data analysis (Alase, 2017). This inductive process allowed the researcher to uncover divergent opinions, highlighting different nuances in the participants' lived experiences, securing richly textured responses during the research process.

3.7. Research population sample

The research population comprised first generation Somali primary school learners. The

secondary informants were their parents. The latter forms part of a robust trader community residing in the source school surrounds. Other informants included the learners' teachers who were chosen for their rich knowledge (Cossham and Johanson, 2019; Patton, 2002) of the acculturation challenges Somali primary school learners experience. Initially purposive sampling – a deliberate participant choice used to enhance the researcher's understanding of the research phenomenon (Merriam, 2002; Morse and Niehaus, 2009; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Dun, and Hoagwood, 2016) – was considered. However, this choice changed when direct access to the Somali community became increasingly difficult. Snowballing then occurred to secure research recruits (Cossham, 2020; Glen, 2015; Kumar, 2011) when the teachers encouraged additional participants to come forward. After many unsuccessful attempts to obtain participants from the Somali community, the interviews eventually proceeded. Cossham (2020) cautions the researcher to anticipate patience when using the snowballing technique in recruiting unwilling participants. He recommends the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants and to be aware of any potential risks. No risks or ethical dilemmas were identified during the “cold-calling” process (Glen, 2015), and the sample size was satisfied so that the data collection process could proceed.

3.7.1. Sample limitations and data saturation

The recruitment process was erratic. Participant numbers fluctuated – at the onset purposive sampling identified five learners, their five parents and five class teachers as research participants. However, rescissions loomed and an additional four learners and four parents were recruited via the networking of teachers. Finally, only two learners and their two parents consented after an extended period of defaults caused by parents granting verbal permission for learner participation, but failing to sign consent forms shortly before the arranged learner interviews. A Somali interviewee and the interpreter cited a number of reasons for participant

withdrawals, viz. parents' unscheduled work commitments, the English language barrier, skepticism and fear of exposure, and possible state reprisals. Further recruitment became redundant when analyses of learner and parent data showed no new significant information (Miles and Huberman, 1994 cited in Palinkas et al., 2016) as similar patterns and themes emerged during interviews (Guest, Bunce, Johnson, 2006). The number of teacher participants remained congruous with the number of learner participants. The teachers at times narrated divergent learner acculturation perceptions compared to the learner and parent component. Their deviation centered mostly around learner behaviour and social interaction during the acculturation process.

3.7.2. Access to the Somali community

As a female teacher who had previously experienced Somali cultural conservatism within school context, it was clear that my attempts to gain access to the Somali source community would be challenged. Somali families are a culturally homogenous group subjected to strong patriarchal values and clan based dynamics (Abdi, 1998; Gelletly, 2004; Gichiru, 2012; Hassan, 2013; Rasmussen, 2009; Ricciuti, 1995). As a mark of respect for their cultural traditions, a gatekeeper was enlisted to gain access to the parents (Kruizenga, 2010). The choice of a gatekeeper fell on an ex-primary school learner of the source school who is a current university student. The student introduced the researcher to the envisaged Somali parent participants. Later he endeavoured to offer his services as an interpreter and translator. He was present throughout all the learner and parent interviews. His presence allowed for a trustworthy climate in which an amicable exchange of narratives could occur (Cossham, 2020) during the data collection process.

3.7.3. Key informants

Cossham and Johanson (2019) define 'key informants' as a term widely used in cultural

anthropology. It originated from ethnographic research, serving as a “purposeful entrée” (access) to a ‘cultural group’ ... to focus on identification of its characteristics (Skinner, 2012 cited in Cossham and Johanson, 2019). Marshall (1996, cited in Cossham et al., 2019) observes that key informants are participants willing to share information about their understanding of the researched phenomenon. They are ideal participants who have firsthand knowledge (Patton, 2002) and can authoritatively communicate their insights about the investigated research population. Their credibility to furnish insider information is beneficial to the study as they support the researcher’s understanding of the researched phenomena (Marshall, 1996 in Cossham et al., 2019). Key informants have efficient interview and interpersonal skills, thus making them exemplary participants positioned within the research population (Merriam, 2002). The key informants in this study comprised teachers who are well informed about Somali learners’ challenging acculturation experiences at a primary school. They were chosen as key informants to relay data rich information based on their daily interaction with the learners and their ability to adapt the school programme to suit the learners’ needs. Their insights provided additional themes later to be explored during the interviews (Silverman, 2010) with parents and learners. To gain an understanding of the multiple perceptions of all the role players, all participants, i.e. learners, teachers and parents, were subjected to the core themes during interviews.

3.8. Data collection

3.8.1 Data collection procedures and research instruments

Multi-method research instruments helped to provide rich information during the research process. Triangulation (Creswell, 2002; Fusch and Ness, 2015) was employed to expose a diversity of themes during the inquiry process (Patton, 2002). Nieuwenhuis (2017) contends that an interactive multi-method approach assists in interpreting and verifying participants’

experiences, thus increasing the validity of the research process (Creswell, 2002). Furthermore, Creswell (2002) states that triangulation is beneficial when the exploratory topic is relatively “new” and pertains to a “certain sample of people.” This preferred data collection method was deemed useful in exploring the topic around Somali learner acculturation and adaptation within the dynamics of a Western Cape primary school context. The researcher’s choice of multi-instruments fell on audio recorded face-to-face semi-structured interviews and class observations. To supplement IPA data, penned notes and available learner records were reviewed. A post-interview discussion was held with the interpreter for data confirmation purposes after each interview, and a reflective journal maintained intermittently (Hassan, 2013).

3.8.2. Data collection challenges

Thomas (2010) explains that interpretive researchers obtain valuable data through effective interaction with experienced participants of the studied phenomenon. Positive interviewer-interviewee engagement enables the researcher to interpret information whilst directly engaging with the source recruit. The participants’ narrated experiences provide meaningful insight into the inquiry, and expand the researcher’s understanding of the researched phenomenon. Research participants are therefore pivotal instruments in driving the research process. They expose rich, credible data and help to establish meaningful interpersonal connections needed to navigate the inquiry process. Numerous challenges were experienced prior to accessing Somali parent and learner participants. The hindrances defeated effective project planning and research time management. Having previously been in contact with this culturally unique, homogeneous refugee group (Sekhon, 2008; Gichiru, 2012) and its strong Islamic traditions and patriarchal structure (Abdi, 2013; Kruizenga, 2010; Rasmussen, 2009; Sekhon, 2008), the researcher foresaw difficulties to secure community accessibility. Although the researcher was cordially

received in homes, gradual cultural dissonance between western behaviours and understandings and Somali traditions and practices surfaced. Patriarchal hierarchy and gender dynamics (Abdi, 2013) played a decisive role in the ensuing recruitment process. Senior male community members' permission had to be sought to gain access to other household members. An unrelated member to the study tried to exercise his entitlement to all research documents on the grounds of being a Somali "community representative." Male household heads took the final decisions about recruits' participation even if their wives had granted previous consent. In certain cases, adult females could not confirm their participation whilst their husbands were out of town, and a senior male community member prohibited his married daughter from lending project assistance. Other challenges included the constant shift of consultation appointments (Kruizenga, 2010), skepticism towards the project, and parents' hesitancy to sign consent forms despite giving verbal consent previously (Sekhon, 2008). Fear of state reprisals and its legal implications were also cited as a participant deterrent by some community members. However, once the Somali interpreter engaged alongside the researcher to explain the aim of the study, these fears were allayed. The final choice of learner and parent participants then proceeded much quicker, making data collection much easier. Despite the English language barrier, the interviewees eagerly responded during interviews, albeit in the Somali language. Their responses were immediately translated by the Somali translator during the interview sessions.

3.8.3. Data analyses

Data analysis refers to collating information obtained during the data collection process. In qualitative research it comprises the preparation and organization of information (Creswell, 2013 cited in Hassan, 2013). Data is organized according to themes, patterns or categories (Patton, 2002; Thomas, 2010), enabling the researcher to explore, interpret and make meaning of the collected information (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). Data analysis is an

iterative process requiring the researcher to review the collected information repeatedly through comparisons of categories and codes (Terreblanche et al., 2006). This process enables the researcher to understand the interviewees' experiences and the psychological world (Smith and Osborn, 2007) in which they encounter their "human lived experiences" (Alase, 2017). The aim of the analysis is to make meaning from the data so that the textual interpretation thereof will help the researcher to understand the complexity of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2007). Constant engagement with transcripts and other textual data supports interpretation and illuminates emergent themes. In an attempt to make meaning of the participant's experiences, the IPA researcher tries to understand the phenomenological significance of these 'lived experiences' and how it impacts them (Alase, 2017). Tuffour (2017) argues that the researcher is committed to a detailed, nuanced analysis of each case. Each individual interviewee's contribution is valued as the researcher examines surface meanings during interviews. Reading intuitively in between the lines encourages a "deeper" interpretation and renewed reflection of the research phenomenon. The relationship between "parts" and the "whole" comes to the fore to support a hermeneutic model of holistic analytical interpretation (Tuffour, 2017). Examining, comparing and contrasting meaningful themes and patterns exposed during data collection is underpinned in an IPA qualitative analysis (Alase, 2017), encouraging the researcher to feel familiar with the research topic and deepening his/her understanding of the studied phenomenon.

3.8.4. Data analyses steps

Hassan (2013) cites Creswell's (2013) six analysis steps for novice researchers to obtain the "essence" of the lived experiences of their subjects. These steps enable "useful information ...closely linked to their (the subjects') experiences to emerge" (Thomas, 2010). During the IPA process, Creswell's (2013) procedures were followed. Firstly, the researcher deliberately attempted to move beyond her own preconceived ideas of Somali learner acculturation. Even

though her professional experience with Somali learners had seized five years previously, this consideration was deemed necessary to ensure objectivity so that she could focus anew on the participants in the study (Creswell *ibid.*). The next step required iteratively reviewing the audio recorded interviews. This procedure helped in identifying significant conceptual categories (Thomas, 2010). It also assisted the researcher in gaining a better understanding of the participants' experiences, capturing implied nuances as expressed through their own words. This step aided "horizontalization" (Moustakas, 1994) which forms part of phenomenological reduction, viz. removing repetitive statements and those irrelevant to the investigation. Step three involved clustering emergent themes which capture the phenomenon investigated (Van Manen, 1990 cited in Hassan, 2013). Statements were categorized and organized according to identical, individualized or non-repetitive themes. Those narratives bearing more than one category were noted. Once the 'meaning units' or theme identification was complete, the next step entailed studying "textural descriptions" (Creswell *ibid.*). The personal experiences and perceptions of each participant were noted. The process once again required re-listening to the audio recordings so that the participants' ideas could be closely captured. Contradictory opinions and subtle nuances were recorded, capturing rich textures. The "structural description" (Creswell *ibid.*) entailed discovering, interpreting and recording how the participants experienced the acculturation process. Conceptual data helped to highlight those experiences and provided in-depth descriptions. Finally, a "composite description" (Creswell *ibid.*) completed the interpretive phenomenological analysis. 'Composite' implies combining both the textural and structural elements so that the essence of the participants' experiences is brought to the fore. The composite description represents a culminating aspect of phenomenology, revealing the richness and complexity of the phenomenon investigated.

3.9. Trustworthiness of the research

Thomas (2010) defines ‘trustworthiness’ as the measure of quality of the research which indicates the extent to which the data and data analysis are “believable” and “trustworthy.” Creswell (2002) advises that the research findings should be data and context rich. The reader will then be compelled to “believe” that he has gained a reasonable measure of insight in the research topic. During the investigation, an inductive process (Merriam 2002) helps the researcher to view the participants’ behaviours and experiences from different angles (Neuman 2003 cited in Sangasubana 2011). The researcher in turn relates this information to the reader. These findings are evaluated in relation to prevailing knowledge, illuminating the current study’s contribution to knowledge expansion about the studied phenomenon. Thomas (2010) warns that evaluating the accuracy of qualitative findings are not easy. Different qualitative scholars advance different measurement strategies in trying to convince the reader of the accuracy of the research findings (Hassan 2013). At the confluence of these evaluation variables are, amongst others, reliability (Silverman 2000), triangulation (Creswell 2002), and transferability (Guba and Lincoln 1985).

3.9.1. Reliability

Reliability refers to a collection of research data which is credible and internally and externally consistent (Sangasubana, 2011). Internally consistent data addresses behaviour within social context, whilst external consistency refers to measuring data against a variety of sources for verification purposes (Sangasubana *ibid.*). Sangasubana (2011) suggests that the researcher should familiarize himself with the data source so that contextual details including behaviours could bring deeper insight into the studied phenomenon in its particular social context. Creswell (2002) and Merriam (1998) suggest that data should be triangulated to examine source evidence and confirm emergent findings. In this way data reliability is strengthened. The various

acculturation perspectives of the different research participants (Merriam, 2002; Thomas, 2010), viz. learners, teachers and parents, were needed to confirm and corroborate Somali learner acculturation data. This strengthened the researcher's awareness of the acculturation phenomenon (Neuman, 2003) and provided a form of consistency which served to validate the data.

3.9.2. Triangulation

Triangulation denotes the employment of various external methods to collect, analyze and corroborate multiple research information (Denzin, 2009 cited in Fusch and Ness, 2015; Thomas, 2010). Fusch and Ness (2015) argue that multiple data sources enhance the reliability of research data. The major benefit of triangulation is the ability to discover and explore different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon (Denzin *ibid*). Upon examining the data, meaningful, well-articulated and substantiated patterns could emerge (Thomas, 2010), broadening the researcher's insight and enhancing the validity of the study. Systematic errors are reduced, increasing the 'confidence' in research findings (Painter and Rigsby, 2005 cited in Thomas, 2010) and ensuring the reader with "...a fuller picture of the phenomenon" (Richie and Lewis, 2003 cited in Thomas, 2010). These characteristics encouraged the researcher to select triangulation to examine and evaluate research data. The selection of participants at three differentiated levels, i.e. learners', teachers' and parents', provided rich data with convergent and at times divergent perspectives on Somali learner acculturation. Their varied personal insights were captured through individual semi-structured interviews backed by audio recordings. Learner observation occurred in the classrooms, learner records were examined, and journaling was penned intermittently. Data corroboration was strengthened by the engagement of the Somali translator who helped to who review, clarify and confirm the participants' interpretations immediately after each interview.

3.9.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the relevancy of the study outcome to other similar settings (Hassan, 2013; Mabuza, Gender, Ogunbanjo, Mash, 2014). Thick or detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences must enable readers to judge if the outcome is transferable to other settings. Guba and Lincoln (1985) indicate that transferability enables the researcher to connect the findings to other comparable contexts or situations. This relevancy depends on the detailed descriptions of the appropriately selected participants, the study location and circumstances, and the study findings (Mabuza et al., 2014, Sekhon, 2008). In this regard, Western Cape primary school Somali learners serve as an appropriate research subject. They share the same acculturation experiences as those immigrant or refugee Somali learners distributed across the western world. Calls for the expanded research of their acculturation experiences are echoed in various academic literature in different parts of the world, viz. the United States of America, Canada and Europe. These learners experience many similar contextual challenges relevant to a status based on their educational, religious and cultural background (Daniels, 2017; Eno, 2017; Gichiru, 2012; Kruizenga, 2010; Mash, 2014; Rasmussen, 2009; Sekhon, 2008).

3.10. Ethical considerations

Creswell (2013) declares that various ethical guidelines should be considered during the data collection process. Aspects like the dignity of and respect for participants, confidentiality and safety should be prioritized during the researcher's interaction with the participants (Creswell, 2013; Henning, Van Rensburg, Smit, 2004; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research 1979). Informed consent as stipulated in a researcher-participant agreement makes allowance for study participation, and the potential risks must be conveyed to research participants (Kvali, 1996). These considerations prevailed during

the data collection process. Also, the rights of each participant were clarified at the onset of the research deliberations and then again prior to each interview. These rights were repeated by the Somali translator to ensure clarity about the participant's understanding of the study and his/her safety in the involvement of the process. The rights of the participants included the following aspects:

- The right to confidentiality and to know how the research information provided will be protected;
- The right to voluntary participation and to withdraw from the research process at any time without any negative consequences to the participant;
- The right to enquire about any aspect of the study with the appropriate university authority;
- The right to be informed about the reason for the study and to know how the findings will eventually be applied.

Pseudonyms were used to prevent participant identification. To safeguard participant responses, interviews were stored electronically by means of a 'biometric' fingerprint on the researcher's cellular phone. Consent forms were signed by all the adult participants and the learners completed assent forms. Permission was sought from the Western Cape Education Department: Research Directorate and the Metro North Education Department to use a public primary school as source, and an application for ethical clearance to conduct research was submitted to the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Western Cape. Also, protocols relevant to the COVID pandemic were adhered to at all times.

3.11. Summary and conclusion

This chapter explains the methodological design used in the study. It presents a qualitative approach and informs the reader about the researcher's choice of an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Two learners, their class teachers and parents were invited to present their perspectives on Somali learners' acculturation in a Western Cape primary school

setting. The chapter was organized according to an introduction, statement of purpose, research approach, research paradigm and research population sample. A detailed description on data collection was presented. The trustworthiness of the study was highlighted by incorporating elements such as reliability, triangulation and transferability. To conclude the chapter, ethical considerations were considered. The following chapter, Chapter Four, will present collected data and elucidate the themes and categories generated during the data analysis process.



Chapter Four: Data presentation and analysis

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter, Chapter Three, introduced the data collection methodology. It included the statements of purpose, the research approach and the research paradigm. The research population, population sample and data collection were discussed. Further elaboration included highlighting the research trustworthiness and the ethical considerations applied during the research process. The collected data is now presented. The various emerging categories and themes are clarified based on Creswell's (2013) six data analyses steps. Firstly, the application of the researcher's reflexivity is discussed. Thereafter a demographic data summary of the participants provide a context to the study. Various tables and figures are employed to highlight the data. An integrative perspective is given to understand the interrelatedness between the role players' views on Somali learner school acculturation in the three identified categories, viz. *School culture*, *Learner identity*, and *Cohesion and relationships*.

4.2. Demographic data summary

The study sample included a total of six participants, viz. two Somali male learners, their mothers and their respective class teachers. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' identities. The interviews with the two male learners, Yasser (pseudonym) and Rafiek (pseudonym), revealed that both were born in South Africa. They are second generation Somali children of refugee and immigrant parents residing in South Africa. Both learners are in their early teens (Table 1). The younger one will turn thirteen years soon and the elder is fourteen years old. Of significance is their over-age status for their grade levels in the South African school system (Table 2). The younger learner (Yasser) is two years older in the Grade Four age cohort, and the older learner (Rafiek) is two years older in the Grade Six age cohort. This

situation is related to the families' social dynamics underpinned by their economic needs. The younger participant's school entry was two years late to Grade One as he remained home whilst his caregiver worked. The elder learner, also two years beyond the accepted grade age norm, experienced family migration due to the search for job opportunities to sustain the family. They moved to various small towns in the Western Cape before finally settling in Cape Town. The learners attend school regularly albeit that the fourteen-year old's mother sometimes has to spur him on to do so. Najma (pseudonym) bemoans Rafiek's noncommittal attitude: "(Sometimes) I have to force him to go to school." Both learners were successful in progressing from the previous grade.

TABLE 1. LEARNER PARTICIPANT - PROFILES:

Participant: Yasser (Pseudonym) Age 12 years

Gender	Place of birth	Generational status	Siblings	Caregiver	English communicative skills
Male	Republic of South Africa	Second generation Somali of refugee descent	Eldest of 5 siblings	Mother (main) Father Aunts (paternal)	Moderate

Participant: Rafiek (Pseudonym) Age 14 years

Gender	Place of birth	Generational Status	Siblings	Caregivers	English communication skills
Male	Republic of South Africa	Second generation Somali of immigrant descent	Youngest of 3 siblings	Mother (main) Older teenage sister	Moderate

TABLE 2. LEARNER PARTICIPANT PROFILES: EDUCATIONAL

Participant: Yasser (Pseudonym)

School attendance rate	Period at source school	School system entry	Current grade
Regularly	4 years	2 years late	Grade 4

Age	Grade norm age	Years above grade age norm	Highest grade passed	Educational level of parent	Parent-teacher contact
12 years	10 years	+2 years	Grade 4	None	Favourable

Participant: Rafiek (Pseudonym)

School attendance rate	Period at source school	School system entry	Current Grade
Fairly regular Encouragement needed at times	1 year	2 years late	Grade 6

Age	Grade norm age	Years above grade age norm	Highest grade passed	Educational level of parent	Parent-teacher contact
14 years	12 years	+2 years	Grade 5	None	Favourable

The learners share certain commonalities which reflect the social context of their particular personal circumstances (Fig.1). Their inconsistent socio-economic circumstances, mostly attributed to economic reasons in the parents' constant search for work opportunities, have impacted on their late entry to the South African school system. The school's close location and medium of instruction, English, made the choice for schooling an easy option.

FIGURE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: SOMALI LEARNER PARTICIPANT COMMONALITIES

1.1) Gender	Male
1.2) Place of birth	Republic of South Africa
1.3) Parents	Foreign: Refugee/immigrant
1.4) Generational status	Second generation Somali with South African status
1.5) School attendance	Fair to excellent
1.6) School appropriate age	2 years beyond the accepted norm
1.7) Scholastic Performance	Additional academic support required
1.8) English communicative skills	Moderate

The learners' main caregivers, the mothers, were born in Somalia. Khadija (pseudonym) is the forty-two-year-old mother of Yasser in Grade Four (Table 3.1). She is mostly a homemaker and lives with her husband and five children in an extended family unit. She has four children enrolled at the source school and displays pleasure at Yasser's dealings with the school. Khadija relates that Yasser is "actually having a good time (at school)" and that he is "adapting well." She has high expectations for her son's progress which she enforces with a rigid "programme" for Yasser to "leave (for school) at a certain time (in the morning)." Her dualistic sense of care and nurturing is rule based. It arises from her desire as caregiver to prepare him for an improved quality of life, and a commitment to her adopted country's school attendance laws.

Najma (pseudonym) is the forty-five-year-old mother of Rafiek in Grade Six (Table 3.2). She is a businesswoman who supports her family financially. She ensures that Rafiek attends school despite his opposition: "Every morning is big trouble (in getting him to school) ..." (sic). Najma is part of a nuclear family.

TABLE 3.1. PARENT PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Participant name: Pseudonym

Marital status	Family unit	Caregiver	Gender	Age	Total no. of children
Married	Extended family	Khadija	Female	42 years	5

Children	Below school going age	School system exited prematurely	Mother's education
4 children	1 child	0 children	None

Educational assistance given to learner	English communicative skills	Profession	Political status
None, extended family members assist	Poor	Housewife	Refugee

Despite her occasional conflict with Rafiek about school related matters and having to deal with the time constraint of dividing her time between her small business and her home, she persists in getting Rafiek educated. Her daughter takes responsibility for the household when she is not home. The latter's duties include assisting Rafiek with school work.

TABLE 3.2. PARENT PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Participant name: Pseudonym

Marital status	Family unit	Caregiver	Gender	Age	Total no. of children
Married	Nuclear	Najma	Female	45 years	3

Children enrolled at school	Children below school going age	School system exited prematurely	Mother's education
1 child	None	2 children	None

Educational assistance given to learner	English communicative skills	Profession	Political status
None, older teenage daughter assists	Poor	Business woman	Immigrant

The learners' mothers share certain commonalities (Fig.2). Both are married and are the main caregivers. The older one (Najma) has her own business and contributes financially towards the household. She has immigrant status in South Africa. The younger one (Khadija) is mostly a housewife who sometimes helps in the family business. She has refugee status in the country. Both mothers have no schooling experience. Consequently, they are not able to support their children with any academic work but take care of the learners' other educational related needs (Peters, 2014). They are also left to care for their families when their husbands are away from home seeking business opportunities. The fathers were unavailable to participate in the study due to business commitments. Both the mothers participated eagerly in the interviews despite their poor English communicative skills.

The choice of teachers as key informants was significant in the study. Their professional experience in teaching Somali learners amplifies their perspectives on learner acculturation responses and behaviour in the classroom. The two teachers, Marianne (pseudonym) and Larry (pseudonym) are both South African born and are respectively fifty-nine years and thirty-one years old (Table 4). Marianne (female) and Larry (male) are both university educated teachers

FIGURE 2. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: SOMALI PARENT PARTICIPANT COMMONALITIES

2.1) Gender	Female
2.2) Main caregiver	Mother
2.3) Age	42 to 45 years
2.4) Place of birth	Somalia
2.5) Political status	Foreign: Refugee or immigrant
2.6) Education	None
2.7) English communitive skills	Poor
2.8) Learner scholastic support	None, siblings or extended family members assist
2.9) Parental vision	Learner academic achievement through discipline and perseverance

Their professional experience equals six years each teaching mixed classes with South African learners and those of foreign African descent. Both the teachers avidly support the school's remedial services in assisting struggling foreign learners including Somalis. Being the class teachers of the learners, they consult with the parents and the grades' subject teachers about the learners' performance. Besides currently assisting learners on a one-on-one basis, they are involved in a triad educational approach with the parents, the remedial teacher and class teacher to assist academically struggling learners. Of encouragement to the teachers is that nearly "each class has a Somali learner in the top ten" academic rankings of a grade or class.

TABLE 4. TEACHER PARTICIPANT PROFILES: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL

Names of participants: Pseudonyms

Name	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Teaching experience	Additional support rendered	Parent-teacher contact
Marianne	Female	59	University	6 years	Yes	As required
Larry	Male	31	University	6 years	Yes	As required

4.3. School context

The source school in the study is in the geographic context of Bellville, a northern suburb in Cape Town. Many Somali immigrant and refugee families live in the area. Sometimes referred to as “Little” or “Small Somaliland”, it is a preferred location for many Somali small business owners plying their trade in a vibrant traders’ community in close proximity to the source school. According to unofficial sources, the English medium primary school was the first school to enrol Somali refugee children in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. Located centrally, the school’s learner enrolment increased from a mere seven percent of foreign learners’ in 2009 to just under a quarter of the entire school population when the researcher retired from the teaching profession (2018). The school endeavours to provide quality education for all learners. Cognizance is taken of the needs of immigrant and refugee children residing in the area. Teacher discussions at remedial consulting groups occur, but the input of Educational Department officials is lacking. The school implements a policy of equal education recognizing each learner’s constitutional right to education despite his/her ethnicity, class, religious persuasion or historical background. Word of mouth plays an important role in Somali learner enrolment. Very often Somali parents

outside the ‘feeder’ (immediate) area request their children’s admission to the school. This is due to the positive perceptions they have of the teachers’ commitment to teaching foreign learners at the source school. Also, the parents attempt to keep the clan children together at the school. The most frequent contact with parents is through the mother who, according to the researcher’s experience, shows exemplary fervour in supporting the family’s school-going children. This perspective is corroborated by the teachers who have spoken about the mothers being “quite responsive” in co-operating with the school regarding their children’s progress.

4.4. Textural and structural descriptions

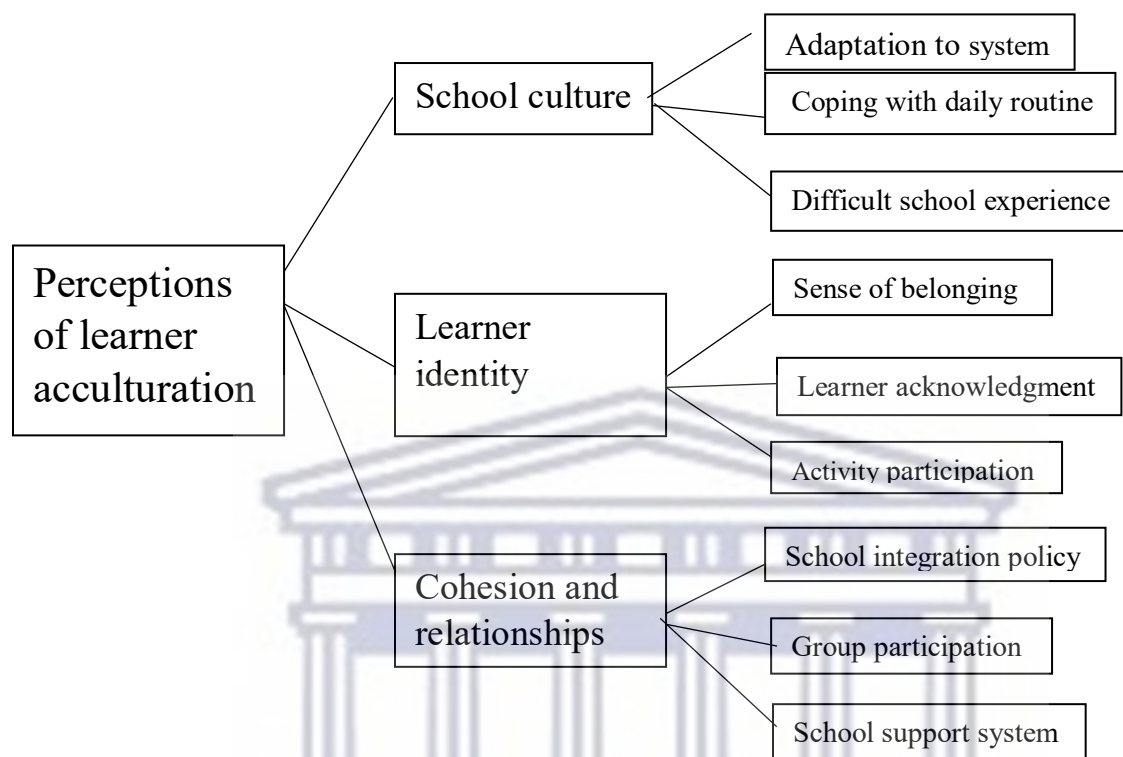
The data analysis of this study is underpinned by an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) which involves more than simply gathering information for research purposes (Alase, 2017; Creswell, 2013). The aim of IPA is to collect appropriate participants which will “give the study the best chance of collecting rich and accurate data” (Alase, 2017). According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), the “essence” of IPA is its analytical focus. Applying IPA principles helps to “open up” the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and to expose the latter’s ‘live experiences’ for exploration and analysis purposes (Smith et al., 2009). At the onset of the participant interviews, the Somali parents were hesitant in ‘opening up’. There was some apprehension towards the researcher. However, once the Somali interpreter explained the aim of the study, the awkwardness dissipated. The interviewer-interviewee engagement then gradually developed into a frank exchange of perceptions. “Textural descriptions” (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994) revealed their experiences and opinions of learner school acculturation, and “structural descriptions” (Creswell *ibid.*, Moustakas *ibid.*) exposed how they personally felt about these acculturation experiences within the primary school context. Whilst iteratively reviewing the audio-recorded interviews (Alase 2017, Thomas 2010), “horizontalization” was applied (Creswell *ibid.*, Moustakas *ibid.*). This process entails giving “equal” recognition to all

relevant participant statements, then reducing repetitive themes to create umbrella groupings or categories. Even though a multitude of themes and sub-themes emerged, only the particular ones relative to the research focus are discussed. The categories, themes and subthemes were used to compile composite textural and structural descriptions for the data analysis purposes.

4.5. Composite textural and structural descriptions of the participants' perceptions of Somali learners' school acculturation in a Cape Town primary school setting

A variety of data surfaced whilst interviewing the two teacher, learner and parent participants. Integrated or composite textural and structural descriptions of their perceptions are presented, reflecting their insights of Somali learner acculturation at the source school. Their universal meanings of experiences are constructed and explored, using only the most common themes. Three categories emerged during data analysis. They are *School Culture*, *Learner Identity*, *Cohesion and Relationships* (Fig.3). These categories are each subdivided into three themes, viz. *Adaptation to South African school system*, *Coping with the Daily Routine Activities* and *Difficult school experiences* (Category School Culture). *Sense of belonging*, *Learner acknowledgement* and *School activity participation* fall within the category, Learner Identity. The category, *Cohesion and Relationships*, comprises *The School support system*, *Class group participation* and *School integration policy*. As key informants pivotal in partially motivating the reason for this study, I first present teachers' perspectives of learner acculturation and include their narratives of two learner adaptation cases they deem as significant. Thereafter I focus on an integrated summary of all research participants' perspectives and explore their converging and diverging opinions.

FIGURE 3. MULTIPLE EDUCATION ROLE PLAYERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOMALI LEARNER ACCULTURATION IN A CAPE TOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL: CATEGORIES AND THEMES



4.6. Teachers' perspectives

4.6.1. Category: School culture

Theme 1: Adaptation to the school system

Both teachers alluded positively to the “mostly regular” attendance of the Somali learners.

However, they were concerned about some learners’ poor psycho-social integration at classroom level. Yasser and Rafiek, the learner participants, were mentioned as examples. Yasser, a friendly learner, seemed “very lonely” at times. His teacher, Marianne, contributed this to an insecurity based on his poor English verbal skills. This phenomenon, according to previous studies, is a fairly common contextual factor hindering foreign learner assimilation in western schools (Gichiru, 2012; Kanu, 2008; Portes and Hao, 2004; Thomas, 2016; Zhou, 1997).

Yasser’s behaviour, however, is exemplary and despite this hindrance he tries his best to partake in class activities. Yasser’s behaviour contrasts with Rafiek’s less than exemplary attitude.

Rafiek's teacher, Larry, views the learner's poor self-discipline as a reason for his adaptation challenges:

"I think he was slow to adaptation, especially in terms of the school's code of conduct" (sic). He had to adapt to coming to school on time...then (again) it was a (school) uniform (issue), coming in 'tackies' and a t-shirt...we had to reprimand him, and then he eventually came in proper attire, (and) came on time for school."

His teacher further lamented,

"there is no sign of a clear indication of (interest in) writing or reading, or even copying down anything."

This occurrence resonates with Kanu's (2008) perspective that Somali learners' integration difficulties manifest itself in behavioural problems connected with the school acculturation process.

Theme 2: Coping with the daily routine

Most Somali learners have shown a gradual adaptation to the daily routine as they have progressed from the Reception Grade (Grade R) to the senior classes (Grades Four to Seven).

This is confirmed by Larry who argues that the more senior Somali learners have "adapted quite well." They are "coming up now from the bottom (Foundation Phase, i.e. Grade R or One)" (sic).

He also indicates that the school lately "is not getting learners starting (their school careers) in Grade Six (as during the researcher's tenure as school manager in the past). Consequently, "it's easy (for the learners) to adapt..." Their school environment exposure and subsequent interaction with learners of different cultures over the years, have helped them to 'bridge' the transition to the school's culture (Gordon 1964). If, however, a learner presents difficulty in adaptation, intervention methods are applied. Marianne tries to build Yasser's self-confidence by often giving him extra attention to enable him to understand the work. She cites the reason for Yasser's anxiety as his fear for making language mistakes: "It seems to me it's more about the

language barrier” she comments, and then repeats, “there is a language problem and he is shy (pause)...to make a mistake.” Even though Yasser’s contribution to group activities and other exercises are lacking, she still regards his learning attitude in a positive light. She encourages him: “I go to him and explain to him (the work).” Rafiek’s academic performance is poor. He refuses to give his full co-operation. He “will basically just sit there or sometimes drift away while in class” so that “there is nothing really going on.” According to Larry, this attitude complicates Rafiek’s adaptation process (Moustakas 1994). He “just doesn’t want to listen to simple instructions” and the teachers struggle to get him to do “anything.” Furthermore, he challenges “simple instructions” like requests to settle in the classroom timeously and to wear a face mask during the COVID 19 pandemic. The teachers spend a “considerable time” attempting to help him settle into the school’s routine. They have called for his parents to assist with his confrontational attitude which, amongst others, includes “always having to say something towards the teachers.” His mother was “quite responsive” when requested to consult with the teacher regarding his behaviour. However, the teachers deem her intervention as unsuccessful. A similarity here is reflected in the studies of Kanu (2008), Thomas (2016) as well as Osman, Klingberg, Green, Wisdom, Dun, Hoagwood (2016) which confirm that many Somali parents experience a measure of despondency when attempting to discipline their children who attend school in ‘liberal’ western school environments. The despondency extends to Rafiek’s teachers who view his lack of self-discipline as a contributory factor to his poor academic performance as “he just doesn’t want to listen (to the teachers).” Rafiek’s social engagement with learners of other cultures inside and outside the classroom is non-existent as “he is very much with the Somali learners only.”

Theme 3: Time constraints

Both teachers agree that the teaching time constraints affected struggling learners’ adaptation to

the daily school routine during the COVID 19 pandemic. Marianne feels that this situation is particularly relevant to Yasser. She regrets the teaching time lost during the platoon system, an alternative school programme instituted by the Department of Basic Education. The learners attended school on a rotational basis with shorter hours and on alternative days. The new school attendance routine was created to curb the spread of the COVID 19 virus during the 2020-2022 pandemic. Learners like Yasser, she argues, are disadvantaged: “You can’t give so much attention especially for (sic) them (Somali learners) who need extra attention.” Their academic programme is thwarted and their learning process is hindered. Larry’s concern about lost time is of a different nature. Even though he agrees that the platoon system disrupted teaching time, he deplores Rafiek’s delaying tactics during lessons. His poor behaviour constitutes “basically the greatest difficulty in terms of his learning.” Yet Larry acknowledges the learner’s learning difficulties and takes steps to assist him despite the “struggle.” Rafiek’s improper conduct, however, sabotages his class integration process and consequently, knowledge acquisition.

4.6.2. Category: Learner identity

Theme 1: Sense of belonging

Most of the Somali learners feel a strong association with the school as the majority have been enrolled since the Foundation Phase (Reception Grade to Grade Three) level. Larry feels that “since the numbers (of Somali learner enrolment) have increased” after the researcher left the school, “it is easier (now) for a Somali child to adapt and find a sense of belonging to the school.” Despite Rafiek’s challenges, he identifies with the school albeit that his sense of belonging is by way of an association with fellow Somali classmates: “If you look at the percentage of Somalis...it is easier (nowadays) for a Somali child to adapt and find a sense of belonging to the school.” Yasser’s teacher is not quite sure about his sense of belonging. Even though he relates well to some of the learners, sometimes “he is very quiet” and looks distant.

Theme 2: Learner acknowledgement

The school acknowledges the hard work of all learners. This implies that Somali learners are treated equally to any other and are rewarded for excellent progress at the end of each academic year. “In fact, if you look at the top learners, you will always find a Somali learner in the top ten (position) in every grade” insists Larry. This acknowledgement extends further than the learning programme. The school respects the diversity of its school population and gives recognition to the cultural traditions of all learners. The traditions of Somali society are respected: female learners are allowed to divert from the prescribed school uniform by wearing the traditional “burqa” (head covering which partially covers the shoulders) and a matching full length trouser.

Theme 3: School activity participation

Both teachers expressed their disappointment in Somali learner’s non-committal attitude to school sports and other extra-mural activities. Larry declares parents “don’t allow them to (participate or) attend any kind of sport”, nor are they allowed to perform in school concerts. This scenario correlates with Abdi (2013) and Wolf’s (2010) perspective focusing on the challenging social dynamics conservative Somali parents face. They often refuse learner participation in western school non-academic activities. Yet, at times, they are forced to compromise their rigid attitudes in favour of schools’ traditions. Marianne views Yasser’s parents’ dismissal of their son’s soccer “passion” as detrimental to learner social development. Prominence is also alluded to Somali gender separation when Marianne describes how the girls eagerly participate in prescribed education activities during Life Orientation classes: “They love to be in group activities, especially between themselves, then they can speak their own language ...and actually they (are) more open” (sic). It is clear, though, that they deliberately avoid

mixed gender group activities which require social interaction with boys as “girls (are) on their own, boys (are) on their own.” She noticed that after hours the social gender separatism continues, e.g. the girls would keep their distance from sport activities even though their other female counterparts attend official school sport events. This pattern she ascribes to Somali culture which spills over into the school environment: “I think that is what’s going on at home and now it is happening in a public space...at school.”

4.6.3. Category: Cohesion and relationships

Theme 1: School support

Both teachers recognize the benefits of a close teacher-learner bond. Marianne adopts a motherly role with Somali learners who encounter any kind of educational difficulty. She feels it necessary to attend to the Somali learners’ psycho-social experiences such as anxiety and interpersonal conflict: “They normally come to me when they have a problem...they will come and tell me.” Both teachers take care to settle in their learners as no designated provision is made at the school for learner integration difficulties. They have enlisted school remedial support for additional lessons for the learners, with Larry also instituting peer learning in his classroom to assist Rafiek in not feeling so “intimidated...and (make him feel) more comfortable” during the lessons. His placement of Rafiek next to a “strong Somali learner” he regards as beneficial for Rafiek’s class integration and learning. The peer learner could “relay the content of the lesson” to him, boosting his self-confidence, thus motivating Rafiek’s improved class engagement during the lessons. This learning strategy, he hopes, will “make him feel ... more comfortable in terms of adaptation” in the classroom.

Theme 2: Class group participation

Gender division is clearly defined in the classroom during group participation. Despite the

prominent separation between Somali boys and girls, a congenial atmosphere prevails, according to Miriam. Opposite genders shy away from one another, yet the learners find intra-group engagement “enjoyable.” Marianne qualifies her perspective: she asserts that in the girls’ groups “they love art and to draw” and through those activities experience a sense of camaraderie. Larry confirms this phenomenon: “These girls...will just mingle with other Somali girls.” Boys’ interaction, however, will transcend cultural boundaries during class group participation: “They (boys) are actually more comfortable with engaging with other races whereas the girls like sticking together.” Both teachers, however, amplify the significance of Somali learner involvement within class participation context. They view it in a positive light not only for academic progress, but also for positive peer socialization.

Theme 3: School integration policy

Whilst the researcher was in service at the school, the school had a formal integration policy. The principles of the policy still apply today. Accordingly, all learners, irrespective of cultural or religious background, are afforded the same quality education. To support the learners, the teachers currently invest in a triad approach to assist the learner’s adaptation process. This strategy includes engaging in consultations with the teachers, learners as well as with parents where necessary. Larry purports that the older second generation Somali learners have a big advantage over their other Somali refugee and immigrant peers. Most learners have attended a South African primary school “since the Foundation Phase (Grades R and One)” and have therefore, progressed remarkably “well” through the years to become successfully integrated at the school. Their definitive progress is a testimony to their adaptation: this explains the drastic academic improvement the researcher observed of the majority of English speaking Somali learners whilst visiting the source school.

4.7. Integrated summary of different role players' perspectives on Somali learner school acculturation

Similarities and dissimilarities in the unique understanding of teachers', learners' and parents' perceptions of the learners' school acculturation are now discussed. The data presents a cross-cutting analysis of the most common themes highlighted (Figs. 4 and 5). In terms of choice, an approximate sixty percent sample margin is reflected. Even though the prominent foci are relative to all research participants, deviations in perspectives underline each one's unique understanding of Somali learner school acculturation, thus highlighting their own personal experiences of the learners' adaptation and integration in the source school environment (Tables 5.1. and 5.2.).

TABLE 5.1. SOMALI LEARNER SCHOOL ACCULTURATION: SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES IN PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES

Category: School culture

Theme	Learner (Yusuf)	Teacher (Marianne)	Parent (Khadija)
Adaptation to school system	Yes	No	Yes
Coping with the daily routine	Yes	Inconsistent	Yes
Difficult school experiences (mostly academic)	Yes	Yes	No

Category: Learner identify

Sense of belonging	Yes	No	Yes
Learner Acknowledgement	Yes	Yes	Yes
Activity Participation	Yes	Yes	Yes

Category: Cohesion and relationships

School support system (additional support)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Group participation	Yes	Yes	Yes
School integration policy (learner adherence: social)	No	No	No

TABLE 5.2. SOMALI LEARNER SCHOOL ACCULTURATION: SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES IN PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES

Category: School culture

Theme	Learner (Rafiek)	Teacher (Larry)	Parent (Najma)
Adaptation to school system	No	No	No
Coping with the daily routine	No	No	No
Difficult school experiences (Mostly academic)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Category: Learner Identity

Sense of belonging	No	Yes	No
Learner acknowledgement	No	Yes	No
Activity participation	No	No	No

Category: Cohesion and relationships

School support system (additional support)	No	Yes	No
Group participation	No	No	Unsure
School integration policy (learner adherence: social)	No	No	No

4.7.1. Category: School culture

Theme: Adaptation to the school system

All role players are in agreement about the degree to which the learners have adapted to the school system. Khadija, the mother of Yasser, and Marianne (Yasser's teacher) view the learners' daily attendance as a positive ("good") adaptation factor. This is despite Marianne's apprehension about Yasser's seemingly sporadic "lonely" bouts which renders him as "very shy" and "an introvert." Yasser contradicts Marianne's perspective. He pertinently indicates during the interview that he feels "fine" and is "happy", implying that he has adapted well and enjoys being at school. Najma's perspective about Rafiek's maladaptation converges with Larry's. She previously encountered problems in sending Rafiek to school, and occasionally still "struggles" with him because he has vehemently declared that he "doesn't like school." However, now that some progress has ensued, she feels more at ease, for he is "at least at school." Both Najma and Larry see Rafiek's academic struggles as the reason for his poor behaviour. Of significance in both these learners' cases are all educational parties' willingness to collectively strive to improve learner adaptation which, they feel, will ultimately impact on enhanced learner performance.

Themes: Coping with the daily routine and difficult school experiences

According to the teacher participants, the daily routine adherence of Somali learners is commendable as the overwhelming majority of Somali learners comply with teaching instructions. Yasser, despite his teacher's doubtfulness, contends that he "feels fine" in coping. His mother confirms this sentiment declaring that "he is excited to go to school" and that he is coping satisfactorily with the school's daily routine. His teacher disagrees. His demeanour is "insecure." She finds it disconcerting so she resorts to giving him an abundance of "personal

attention.” She considers Yasser’s English communication inability as a participation deterrent “fearing (him) to make mistakes.” Rafiek explicitly indicates that “school is not nice.” He struggles to read and write. His mother confirms his apathy: “He doesn’t like going to school. I force him to go because I wanted to learn him read and write” (sic). Larry is in agreement: “It is a struggle to let him write down anything.” All three educational role players, viz. Larry (teacher), Najma (parent) and Rafiek (learner) are frank about the latter’s scholastic inabilities and they all hope for improved opportunities to “support” his performance levels.

4.7.2. Category: Learner identity

Themes: Sense of belonging and learner acknowledgement

The Somali learners’ school attendance rates range from average to exceptional. The researcher recalls Somali parents’ previous comments on regular school attendance as a crucial factor for learners’ adaptation and sense of belonging to the source school. Despite the contradiction in their extra-mural participation refusal, the learners still portray a loyalty to the school and proudly associate with its ethos. This allegiance, according to the parent participants, is needed to develop a pride in their school identity. Furthermore, they attach value to English language acquisition, a transitional tool the parents deem necessary to enhance positive school integration. Yasser’s mother comments favourably on amongst other his improved language skills. She feels that the school should give him acknowledgement for his linguistic progress. Rafiek’s mother elaborates further on another linguistic aspect i.e. language as a communicative tool. Effective communication, she argues, enhances learner integration and development in the classroom. It is crucial for teachers to use appropriate “language...with English words. To understand is very nice” (sic). Rafiek feels that his English language skills have improved and that it should be acknowledged by his teacher. Of significance is Yasser’s perspective about South African languages. He adamantly indicates that they are “difficult.” He feels that his Afrikaans

communicative skills need attention even though his English has improved. Similarly, he feels that some form of recognition should be given for his language growth.

Theme: School activity participation

Most teachers are in agreement that the majority of Somali learners are keenly “involved” in school activities bar the aforementioned sport and cultural events. Active participation, according to the parent participants, is “important” for enhancing their children’s educational development. However, Yasser’s mother shows discomfort in the school’s Christian religious practices running parallel with school activities especially when it entails “going into the church (building).” No reference is made by Rafiek’s mother to any religious activity at the source school.

4.7.3. Category: Cohesion and relationships

Theme: School support system and school integration policy

The parents and the teachers acknowledge the Somali learners’ integration experience “difficulties” at academic and sociocultural levels. The recognition of these difficulties serve as a cohesive factor amongst all the adult role players to support the learners as best as they could. Their support strategies, however, differ. The teachers place great emphasis on supplementing their lessons with alternative teaching methods in the form of “extra” personal support and remedial teaching. The parents, despite no schooling experience themselves, enforce homework for lesson consolidation purposes in the home environment. Thus, a united support structure is created for the learner. Even though Larry feels that much academic progress was achieved by the more senior ranked Somali learners (Grades Four to Seven) who have progressed well “since their Foundation Phase” enrolment, there is one other circumstance of a social nature that he feels is lacking: the learners’ sparse intercultural “mingling.” This phenomenon is confirmed by

Yasser’s mother who indicates that “Somali children are always in groups. It is further emphasized by the learner, Rafiek, who says that: “Somali children are fine. I play with them (only)...the only other boy I play with is a Malawi” (sic). This definitive social occurrence is contrary to the cultural norm and practice in the classroom as the school integration policy encourages positive learner interaction. Both parents share the perspective that the successful adaptation of Somali learners depends on a trustworthy teacher-learner relationship. This relationship is underpinned by teachers’ understanding of Somali learners’ position within the school context: “(Teachers should) understand (the learner) very nice...motivate them (so that they could perform better)” (sic). All role players, viz. teachers, learners and parents should work together to establish a closer bond which favours positive learner integration and development.

FIGURE 4. STATISTICS: INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVES ON SOMALI LEARNER SCHOOL ACCULTURATION

Y (Yes)	N (No)	Participants	Learners:	Parents:	Teachers:
n =	0	6	*Yasser *Rafiek (*pseudonyms)	*Khadija, *Najma (*pseudonyms)	*Marianne, *Larry (*pseudonyms)

Overall learner adaptation: School routine (general)

Yasser = <u>Y</u>	Khadija = <u>Y</u>	Marianne = $\frac{1}{2}$
Rafiek = <u>N</u>	Najma = <u>Y</u>	Larry = $\frac{1}{2}$
$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{2}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
67%		

Daily attendance rate

Yasser = Y	Khadija = Y	Marianne = Y
Rafiek = <u>Y</u>	Najma = N	Larry = <u>Y</u>
2/2	½	2/2
83%		

Daily academic routine

Yasser = Y	Khadija = Y	Marianne = N
Rafiek = N	Najma = N	Larry = <u>N</u>
½	½	½
33%		

Parent-teacher contact

Yasser = Y(implied)	Khadija = Y	Marianne = Y
Rafiek = Y(implied)	Najma = Y	Larry = <u>Y</u>
2/2	2/2	2/2
100%		

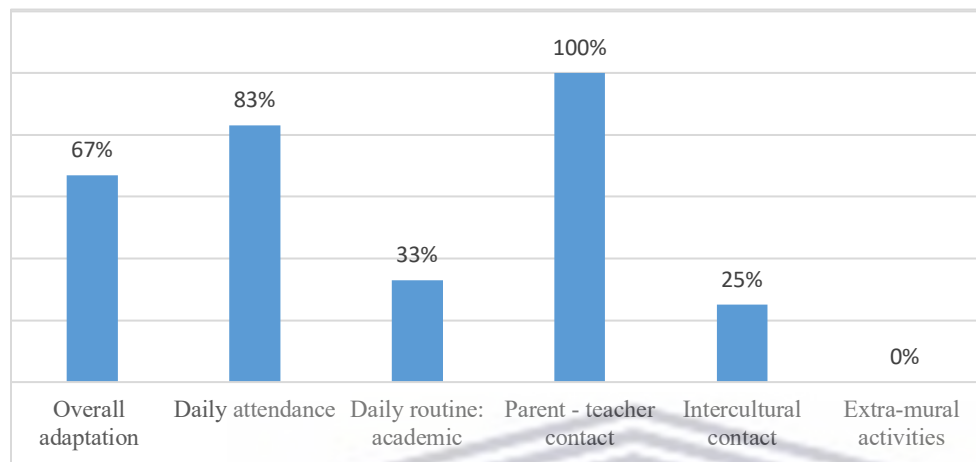
Intercultural contact: Boys only (Based on teacher observation)

Yasser = N	UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE	Marianne = N
Rafiek = N		Larry = <u>Y</u>
0/2		½
25%		

Learner extra-mural participation

Yasser = N	Khadija = N (implied)	Marianne = N
Rafiek = N	Najma = N (implied)	Larry = N
0/2	0/2	0/2
0%		

FIGURE 5. GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION: INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVES ON SOMALI LEARNER SCHOOL ACCULTURATION



4.8. Ecological influences on learner acculturation

Bronfenbrenner’s systems theory emphasizes the various influences of the different ecological levels on learner behaviour and development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Koller (2017) refers to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Engagement Methodology which advises that the researcher’s involvement in “several activities with the participants in formal and informal moments of collecting data” must be applied. She elucidates the application of several data collection strategies, including developing “bonds” with participants, and recognizing participants’ individual life histories to be able to gain a better insight during the data analysis process. These aforementioned strategies enabled the researcher to discover and explore the learners’ adaptation approaches and evaluate the rich data in close, intimate environments in which a mutual understanding for the study goals prevailed.

In applying Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological system as a theoretical framework, the following systems levels seemed to decidedly influence learner acculturation behaviour: the individual, micro, meso, exo and macro levels. At an individual level, the learners displayed consistent dedication despite experiencing academic challenges. The persons closest to them

(micro system) influenced their adaptation mode at both psychological and cognitive levels. The parents, their main influencers, prompted the way they thought about education, encouraging them to deliver their best. Consequently, their own integration attitudes showed clarity of thought about why they had to adjust to the school system and how to reach their goals whilst braving unknown school aspects. The combination of the parents' encouragement together with the learners' attitudes and behaviours (meso level) translated into their positive perspectives about school (Bronfenbrenner *ibid.*).

The teacher component served as an extension of the parents' support structure. Parallel to the parents, they tried their best to help ease the school integration process. They encouraged the learners to heed to the values of perseverance, dedication and a good work ethic. Together with the parents, they provided guidance and assistance in a constructive manner. The combination of both these primary sources (teachers and parents) exposed the interrelatedness (meso level) in a context close to the learners (Koller, 2017), helping to consolidate the learners' opinion about the value of school attendance.

The impact of indirectly influencing factors (exo level) also played a role in learner behaviour and school adjustment. Significant contextual settings, the political milieu and social services (Bronfenbrenner *ibid.*) impacted on the learners' responses and adaptation. Despite household poverty and the threats of immigration and social services intervention, they persevered in their efforts to receive a school education. This scenario echoes Bronfenbrenner's theory that a child's personal traits together with influential external factors affects his/her development, and that the development constitutes "more than" a mere "change." Development is considered a "consistency", enabling human attitudes and personal traits (emotional and cognitive) to converge with environmental factors, stimulating learner development (Bronfenbrenner, 1978

cited in Koller, 2017).

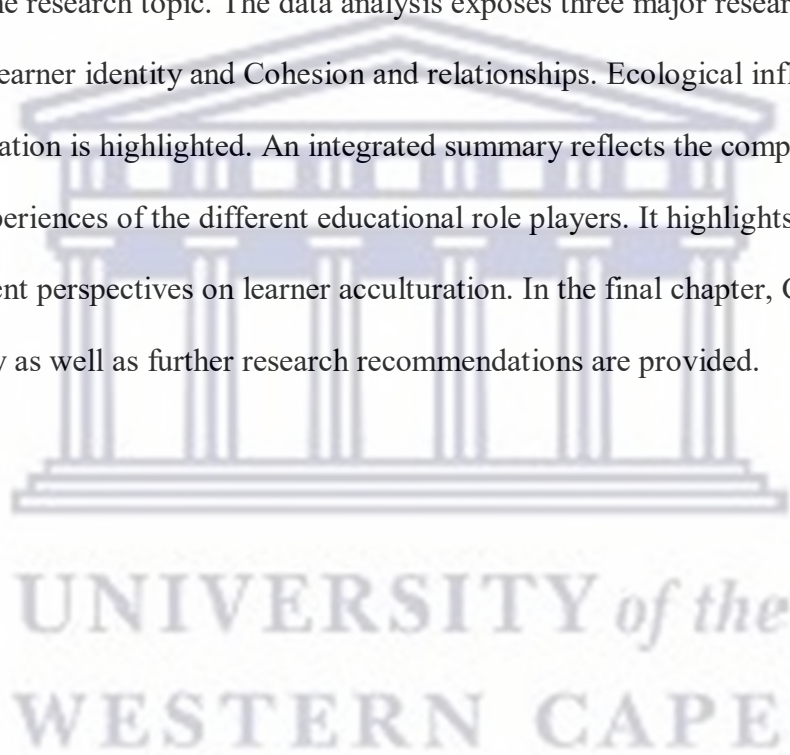
Various dynamics such as cultural ideologies and macro institution policies (macro system) impacted on the learners' school acculturation and development processes. Somali cultural ideologies immersed in stern religious beliefs and authoritarian cultural practices (Abdi, 2013) versus a Christian oriented South African school system, created learner acculturation 'stress'. However, a common ground is the convergence of similar religious oriented values like honesty, respect, support and piety which acted as a cementing factor. A further commonality was the prime focus on the importance of educational knowledge acquisition: both the parents' and teachers' intolerance to poor school attendance and inferior scholastic performance motivated the learners and seemed to impact the learners' attitudes positively.

The interaction, or absence thereof, between the education department ("subordinate" ecological system level, macro level) and the school (micro system), also affected learner adaptation and integration. Even though the education department is the "most distant" institution from the learners, it still exercised a significant influence on the learners' adaptation and development (Bronfenbrenner *ibid.*). Their unresponsiveness in rendering academic assistance despite an inclusivity advocacy policy for struggling learners (Department of Education: Education White Paper 6. Special Needs Education. 2001), forced the parents and teachers to seek additional learning support for the learners. A specially devised academic programme was implemented by a remedial teacher who also offered them counselling. This strategy benefitted especially the older learner who had previously shown disciplinary and integration difficulties but who improved eventually in class participation and cognitive activities. Here, the interplay (meso level) of the various educational role players across the different systems levels supported the

needs of the learners. Bronfenbrenner argued that “social policies... for improving the life quality of human beings in their environments”, and the “practical” application of appropriate methodologies should be used to enhance learner adaptation and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995 cited in Koller, 2017).

4.9. Summary and conclusion

In Chapter Four, demographic data and the study context is discussed and presented as background for the research topic. The data analysis exposes three major research categories, viz. School culture, Learner identity and Cohesion and relationships. Ecological influences on the learners’ acculturation is highlighted. An integrated summary reflects the composite textural and structural experiences of the different educational role players. It highlights their convergent as well as divergent perspectives on learner acculturation. In the final chapter, Chapter Five, a findings summary as well as further research recommendations are provided.



Chapter Five: Findings and recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This final chapter, Chapter Five, provides a findings summary based on a qualitative investigation. It highlights the teachers', Somali learners' and their parents' integrated perspectives on Somali learner acculturation in a particular primary school in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa. The study population included two Somali male learners, their mothers and their class teachers from a local primary school. Many Somali families reside in the focus area. Both learners' parents are the main caregivers and form part of a vibrant Somali traders' community plying their trade in the suburb. An interpretative phenomenological analyses (IPA) was employed to give prominence to the participants' understandings and perspectives about Somali learner adaptation and integration in a primary school setting. The educational role players' similar and dissimilar interpretations and responses are identified and discussed in the findings. Finally, the chapter discusses the significance of the study. It also provides recommendations for further studies to broaden the knowledge about Somali learners' experiences in South African schools.

5.2. Study overview

The study objective was to explore the educational participants' perceptions of Somali learner acculturation in a uniquely South African primary school educational context. The main research question was:

- *What are the multiple perceptions (teachers', learners', parents') of Somali learner acculturation in one particular primary school in South Africa?*

Three sub-research questions helped to guide the research objective. These questions were:

- *How do primary school teachers perceive the acculturation of immigrant Somali learners at their particular primary school?*
- *How do Somali parents perceive the acculturation of Somali learners at the learners' particular school?*

- *How do immigrant Somali learners perceive their acculturation at their particular school?*

Thus, a triad of educational role players' lived experiences and perceptions of learner acculturation was captured. To ensure clarity of interview content, the research data such as semi-structured interview responses, handwritten notes, summaries and audio-recordings were iteratively reviewed by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Where necessary, the Somali interviewees' responses were translated and confirmed by an English-Somali translator. These responses were re-checked prior to collating and analyzing the data. The researcher acknowledges the Somali participants' language proficiency. Cognizance is given to their struggle to express their thoughts and opinions in an English vernacular, and recognition is given to linguistic nuances possibly lost during English-Somali translations (Peters, 2014). However, close care was taken to capture the Somali respondents' interpretations of the topic. Emotive subtleties were noted and penned during the audio recorded interviews.

5.3. Findings

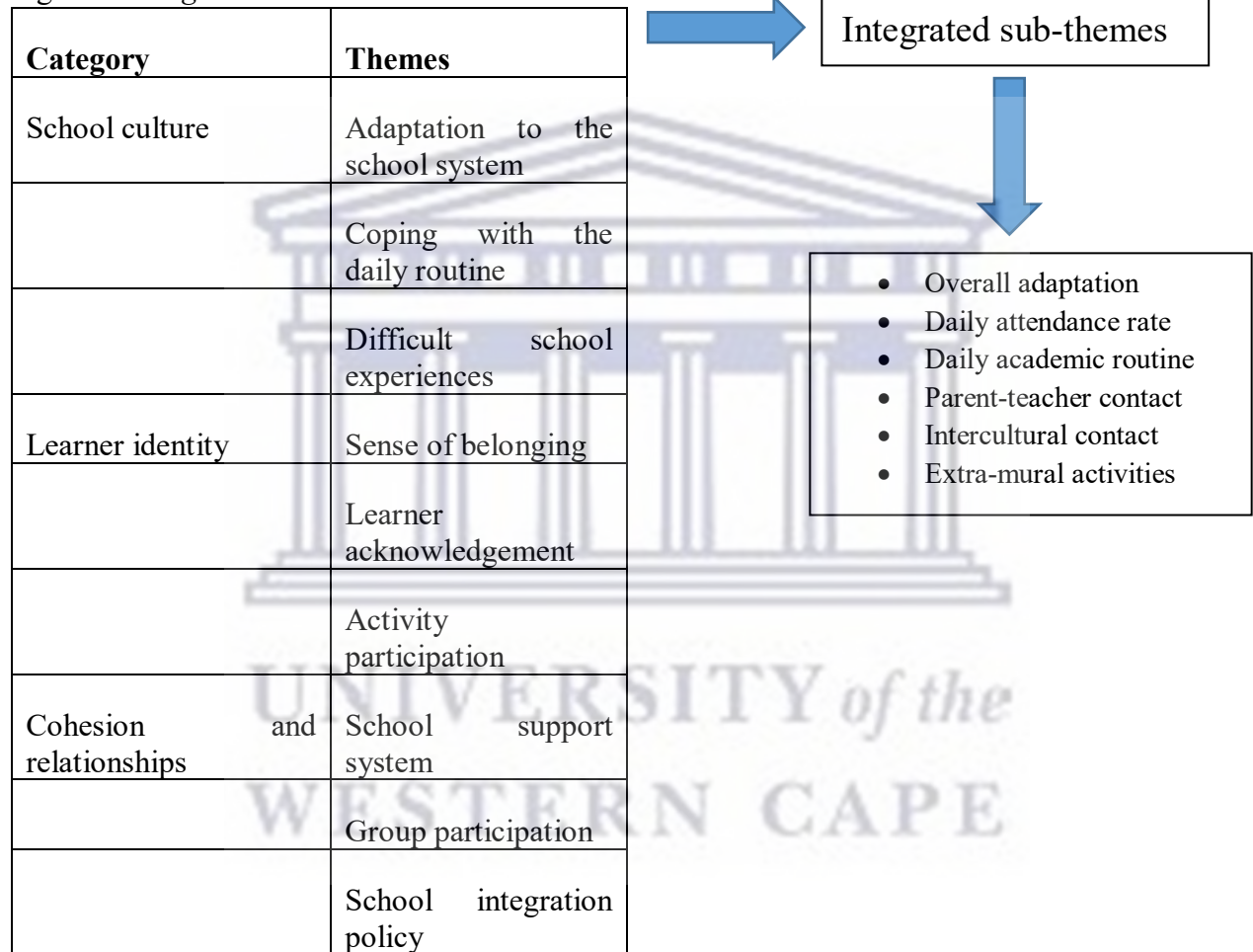
Three major categories and related themes based on the findings of the research questions emerged (Fig.6). They are:

School culture, with the themes, *Adaptation to the school system*, *Coping with the daily routine*, and *Difficult school experiences*; *Learner identity*, with the themes, *Sense of belonging*, *Learner acknowledgement* and *Activity participation*, and *Cohesion and relationships* with the themes, *School support system*, *Group participation* and *School integration policy*.

An intersection of sub-themes included varied perspectives on the learners' overall adaptation, their daily attendance rate, their daily academic routine and parent-teacher contact. Also of significance is learner intercultural contact and learner extra-mural activities. A frank exchange of opinions prevailed during the interviews (Marshall, 1996 cited in Cosham et al., 2019, Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002; Alase, 2017) after the researcher and the English-Somali translator

emphasized the need of educationists to grasp Somali learner acculturation challenges within a South African primary school context. Here follow the integrated perspectives of the educational role players' views about Somali learner acculturation at the source school. They are based on the themes which emerged more prominently during the interviews.

Figure 6. *Integrated sub-themes*



5.3.1. Overall adaptation

All the educational role players agree that the learners' general adaptation is favourable. During the interviews the parents described their children's adaptation as "good" and spoke of the latter's determination in coping at school. These perspectives were corroborated by the teachers

who declared that the learners adapted well to the educational environment and the various school dimensions such as class integration and activity participation. Furthermore, the teachers felt that their learners portrayed a sense of school identity which is supported by their association with the school. The various participants' perspectives are further supported by a high learner attendance rate (eighty-three percent) which the teachers deem as instrumental for learner assimilation in the school setting. One learner affirmed that he "likes" attending school, and whilst the other learner infrequently discounts his teacher's assistance, he nevertheless perseveres in his efforts to attend school. There are other facets he likes about school, amongst others his interaction with the remedial teacher and school mates who make school "fun." This interpersonal connectedness and his drive to obtain an education help to support his adaptation at school.

5.3.2. Daily attendance rate

All role players, i.e. the parents, teachers and learners view the Somali learners' daily attendance rate as commendable. Research data corroborates their perspectives, reflecting an approximate eighty-three percent daily attendance rate. The participants' perspectives compare favourably with an American study (Kapteijns and Arman, 2004 cited in Kruizenga, 2010) confirming that Somali learner school attendance is satisfactory. The importance of daily school attendance is justified by the parents who argue that it enhances their children's academic achievement.

Learner attendance is therefore prioritized and parents resort to various measures to ensure that their children attend school daily. The teachers confirm the learners' exemplary attendance rate which bears evidence in the daily attendance registers. Contrary to a study in the United Kingdom (Rasmussen, 2009), the local Somali learners seldom "disengage from school" but "navigate through the (school's) demands" (Oikonomiday, 2007 in Kruizenga, 2010) as they seize the opportunity to attend classes to improve their academic skills. This is especially

so for the second learner who perseveres despite the occasional conflict between himself and his class teacher. He declares that it is imperative for him to attend school to improve his chances for a future 'better life'. The other learner confirms his regular attendance at school by simply stating that he "likes school."

5.3.3 Daily academic routine

Not all the role players are in agreement about the learners' efficacy in handling their daily academic routine. This disagreement is particularly prominent in the first learner's case with a conflict of opinion between the learner's parent on the one hand, and the learner and his teacher on the other hand. According to the mother, her son is "used to" (comfortable with) the school's routine, and is "coping well." She enthusiastically explains that academically he is doing "better" than her other children as he has shown progress. Her son disagrees albeit hesitantly; the daily lessons in English and Mathematics he particularly finds difficult. He views his improved English performance as insufficient and also feels that he still sorely lacks in his Mathematical skills. His teacher corroborates his argument. She commends his "co-operation" in class but agrees that he requires more attention than the other learners and that he "sometimes has no clue (about) what is going on." Consequently, she spends more time in assisting him on a one-to-one basis. In the second case, the learner, teacher and parent share similar views about the learner's handling of his daily academic routine. All three respondents agree that the learner has difficulty in managing the standard daily programme routinely, hence his involvement in remedial classes every day. In the latter case the agreement amongst all three affected role players, viz. the learner, teacher and parent make a united vision for learner assistance management easier.

5.3.4. Parent-teacher contact

There is consensus amongst all the role players that the parent-teacher contact is commendable.

Both parents and the teachers agree unanimously that parent-teacher consultations take place as needed and as prescribed by the school's internal curriculum moderation policy. The parents' drive to assist the teachers and their children to attain success results in regular contact with the school. The teachers confirm the parent's willingness to partake in consultations. This perseverance occurs despite the parents' own contextual obstacles like their poor command of the English language, their personal educational inefficiencies and cultural alienation (Eno, 2017; Kruizenga, 2010; Oikonomiday, 2007 in Kruizenga, 2010; Rasmussen, 2009). Both parents have emphasized that they regard their children's adaptation to the school system as imperative for ensuring their later success in life. Thus, maintaining contact with the school helps to support their children's school career and their vision for the latter's future quality of life. Their perspectives bear relevance to American studies of Somali refugee parents who view their children's education as of "utmost importance" (Kruizenga, 2010) and who despite their own poor educational training persevere in granting their children a good schooling. Of relevance in this regard is also Peters' (2014) study about South African Somali refugees' support of their children which reflects the same parental attitude and also bears similarities to the parents of the source school. The teachers confirm that the parents maintain a regular relationship with the school. A parallel could be drawn between local parental school involvement and the study of Kruizenga's (ibid.) which indicates that "parental involvement and close monitoring (of the learners) are (seen) as important for (Somali children's) academic success".

5.3.5. Intercultural contact

The data reflects a very low percentage of intercultural mixing between the Somali learners and other learners at the school. All educational role players, i.e. the teachers, parents and learners are in agreement that the latter's interaction with the rest of the school population is sparse and that there is a social 'detachment' from the general school population in the classroom as well as

on the sport field or playground. One teacher observed that the Somali learners “love to be especially between (amongst) themselves” and the other teacher stressed how his learner “is very much with the Somali learners only, not interacting with others.” These perspectives are corroborated by the learners. The first learner argues that he feels “good” because “he has Somali friends at school.” The second learner emphatically states that “Somali children are fine. I play only with them.” Both parents confirmed that their children interact mostly with other Somali learners as “Somali children play amongst themselves.” This cultural detachment is extended to the religious domain. Even though the Somali as well as the local Muslim learners attend school assemblies where Christian worship occurs, the Somali learners refrain from participating in any form of Christian rituals. Here a parallel could be drawn between their behaviours and those of Somali learners in an American school (Kruizenga, 2010) where learners avoid non-Islamic practices. Locally, some parents request their children’s recusance from Christian worship at school gatherings. Such an occurrence implies their unpreparedness for the dominant school culture which is supported by Christian traditions and strong intercultural bonds. In this instance Daniels (2017) comments about the parents’ misinterpretations of the cultural realities in South African schools. Poor intercultural contact also affects learner social bonding on the sport grounds. All participants agree that the Somali learners’ sports participation is non-existent. This similarity is confirmed in Peters’ (2014) study of Somali learners’ at another school outside Cape Town. The teachers at the source school regret the Somali absenteeism in this regard as they believe that sport enhances social integration and promotes learner assimilation.

5.4. Significance of the study

Research about Somali learners within the South African primary school environment is sparse. To the researcher’s knowledge, studies on Somali learner acculturation in a Western Cape

primary school setting haven't been conducted before. This study provides insight in the different perspectives and experiences of learner acculturation using the voices of different role players, viz. the teachers, parents and learners. As such, the acculturation process is viewed from different angles. It provides a comprehensive view on Somali learner adaptation and integration, as well as the extent of learner assimilation and to a lesser degree system alienation. The strength of the study is dualistic. Not only does it answer the research question about the learners' primary school acculturation in a particular South African locality, but confirms parallel challenges Somali learners and their families experience internationally. Their vulnerability in surviving on the periphery of western society is once again confirmed as they struggle with educational deficits, cultural alienation and additionally, economic deprivation in the host country (Eno, 2017). Despite these difficulties, the parents show a remarkable tenacity in their struggle to provide a "good education" for their children.

5.5. Recommendations for further research

Upon exploring the topic of local Somali learners' acculturation in a Cape Town primary school setting, it was evident that further investigation about their local educational experiences is necessary. South Africa has a status as "the continent's magnet for refugees which attracts more asylum seekers than any other (African) nation" (Powell, 2013). Consequently, an asserted effort is required to create a school readiness environment for the children of "thousands of Somali refugees" (Powell *ibid.*). The following topics are recommended to enhance the "little research" (Kruizenga, 2010) of Somali learner "transnationals" (Rasmussen, 2009) coping with western educational experiences (Gichiru, 2012; Kruizenga, 2010; Sekhon, 2008) within a South African school context.

5.5.1. Teachers' understanding of Somali learners' challenges in a South African westernized school environment

This investigation would be beneficial for expanding on the teachers' knowledge about the learners' personal histories and their social circumstances affecting academic progress. Even though the teacher interviewees showed some knowledge of the learners' home circumstances, there wasn't sufficient evidence of them understanding how the sociocultural and political factors of families' refugee or immigrant histories impact the learners' schooling (Gichiru, 2012). Both Anwar (1981) and Rasmussen (2009) suggest that teachers should acknowledge learner difficulties in transposing "between two cultures" in the education environment.

5.5.2. The effect of South African Somali learners' language proficiency on their scholastic development

This study exposed the difficulties some Somali learners experienced in expressing themselves satisfactorily in basic English. Their comprehension of the teachers' instructions is adequate, but their verbal responses are limited and hinders effective learner-teacher interaction as well as learner growth. Investigating the Somali learners' language proficiency could serve as a precursor to establishing language enrichment programmes specifically aimed at stimulating Somali learners' vocabulary growth. Furthermore, the socio-linguistic benefits will include enhancing learner confidence and supporting learner social integration. An extension of this investigation would be determining the effect of poor teacher-parent communication on learner success in the classroom (Peters, 2014).

5.5.3. The efficacy of South African Somali parent-school relations and its impact on learner development

This investigation reveals that parents consider their children's schooling much more than a mandatory daily routine. The parents maintain consistent relations with the school to ensure learner progress and involvement in the school programme. Despite contextual difficulties like

economic opportunities taking the parents away from home, they maintain loyalty to the school and their mission to secure a “better future” for their children. The learners’ school programme is therefore seldom disrupted by the parents’ absenteeism, nor are they dislodged from school. Research could indicate to what extent the parents’ involvement in favourable parent-school relations translate into learner academic success.

5.5.4. Somali learners’ adaptation to Christian oriented South African public schools

The study indicated the need for schools to acknowledge the Islamic culture of Somali learners in Christian oriented schools. Even though these learners, like their local Muslim classmates, are permitted time off for Friday prayers, they are still required to be present at school assemblies and other functions where Christian worship is practiced. This scenario remains an issue of contention for some Somali parents and their children. Research could indicate how Somali learners’ enrolment at a Christian oriented school affect their religious identity and school assimilation.

5.5.5. Comparative educational behaviours: South African Somali learners and their local Muslim counterparts’ socio-educational development in a public primary school

This study has exposed the different school experiences between Somali learners and their South African born Muslim counterparts. Even though both groups of learners adhere to the Islamic faith, different socio-historical factors dictate their attitudes to the school culture and its systems. Further research can explore how socio-cultural factors affect both groups’ assimilation in a mixed gender westernized public primary school, and compare how religious and cultural influences determine either group’s attitudes and behaviours within a South African primary school setting. Furthermore, the study could explore how these factors affect each group’s academic progress in the local educational environment.

5.6. Summary and conclusion

This study investigated Somali learners' acculturation in a Western Cape primary school setting. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to enquire how the various educational role players, viz. teachers, learners and their parents, understand and experience Somali learners' acculturation within a particular South African primary school setting. The findings indicate that the overall adaption of the learners is satisfactory and that the learners show a determination to adhere to the school environment. Parents and teachers play a valuable role in the learners' adaptation and integration and collectively help to support and sustain the learners in the school system. Despite contextual constraints like academic challenges, inefficient English verbal communication and a degree of social alienation, the learners deliberately embark on their school careers to enhance their future career prospects. The significance of the study lies not only in revealing Somali learners' acculturation within the South African primary school context, but it also echoes studies of their international counterparts' similar educational struggles in western schools. Further research is recommended at a local level to enlighten teachers and researchers about Somali learners' school challenges within the South African educational arena.

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Addenda

INTERVIEW GUIDE AND PROOF OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Interview guide

Title: Multiple perceptions (teachers', parents', learners') of Somali learners' acculturation in a Cape Town primary school setting

A. Teachers

1 School culture

- How do you view the learner's adaptation to the school system?
- How does the learner cope with the daily school routine?
- Which facet of primary school experiences seem to present the greatest difficulty to the learner?

2 Learner identity

- Do you think that the learner experiences a sense of belonging to the school?
- Does the school give any form of acknowledgement to Somali learners and if so, under which circumstances?
- Which activities do Somali learners tend to shy away from?

3 Cohesion and relationships

- Are there any designated persons that a Somali learner can talk to if he/she needs any kind of support?
- What are your observations of Somali learners' involvement in group activities?
- Is there anything that the school does to encourage good relationships amongst learners, and learners and teachers?

B. Parents

1 School culture

- How do you view your child's adaptation to the South African school system?
- How, do you think, is your child coping with the school's daily routine?
- What do you see as your child's most difficult experiences he faces at school?

2 Learner identity

- Do you think that your child experiences a sense of belonging to the school?
- What, do you think, should the school give your child acknowledgement for?
- Are there any activities which make your child feel uncomfortable at school?

3 Cohesion and relationships

- Are you aware of anybody your child could talk to should he experience any problems at school?
- How does your child feel about working with other learners in a group?
- Is there anything the school does to encourage good relationships amongst learners, and learners and teachers?

C. Learners

1 School culture

- Could you tell me how you feel about adapting to the school system?
- How are you coping with the daily routine at school?
- Can you name the most difficult experiences you face at school?

2 Learner identity

- Do you feel that you belong at the school?
- What would you like the school to give you acknowledgement for?
- Are there activities at school which make you feel uncomfortable?

3 Cohesion and relationships

- Should you need support in any area of schooling, is there someone you can talk to?
- How do you find group activities in the classroom or on the sports field?
- Is there anything that the school does to encourage good relationships amongst learners, and learners and teachers?



1 October 2021

Mrs M Hahn
Educational Studies
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HSSREC Reference Number: HS21/5/70

Project Title: Multiple perceptions (teachers' parents', learners') of immigrant Somali learners' acculturation in a Cape Town primary school setting

Approval Period: 30 September 2021 – 30 September 2024

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology, and amendments to the ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

For permission to conduct research using student and/or staff data or to distribute research surveys/questionnaires please apply via:

<https://sites.google.com/uwc.ac.za/permissionresearch/home>

The permission letter must then be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
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