

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter comes in the heels of the one that articulated literature obtained from related studies conducted on the topic available in the existing scholarship canon. Mainly, a comprehensive analysis was done on related studies carried out in various countries and settings on the educational welfare of learners left behind by emigrants. To note is that many countries have such learners albeit the majority are found in developing countries due to higher numbers of parents who migrate out of those countries. Also, it was noted that learners left behind experience schooling differently because of different parental responses by various societies in their diversity. In pursuit of the need to further knowledge on how best issues of the educational welfare of learners left behind could be addressed, this study was also carried out in rural Mwenezi in form of an evaluation of parenting strategies in as much as the strategies are experienced by the learners left behind and by people who cater for the educational needs of such learners. As such, this chapter outlines the research paradigm, design and procedures that were used to gather data from the participants. The specific issues covered in the chapter are research approach, population, sampling, research instruments, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and data analysis techniques that were used in the present study.

The structure and content of this study mirror the paradigm adopted. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) refer to a paradigm as abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world and how he or she interprets and acts within that world. The authors further observe that a paradigm acts as a conceptual lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that one uses to gather data and how

such data are analysed. In a related conceptualisation of the term, Morgan (2007) thinks of a paradigm as worldviews or ways of experiencing and thinking about the world including beliefs about morals, values and aesthetics. Elucidating further, McGregor and Murnane (2010) assert that paradigms encompass two dimensions namely philosophical orientation which is about basic beliefs and assumptions about the world and technical dimension which talks about the methods and techniques adopted when carrying out research. All these definitions point to the fact that paradigms are at the cornerstone of any research endeavour since they influence what can be seen as worth researching and direct ways on how research can be done from problem generation to interpretation of research results. Paradigms are distinguished by four key elements namely; axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Urus, 2013; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). These elements are briefly discussed below to show how they inform the present study on the educational welfare of learners left behind by emigrants in the Mwenezi District.

Antwi and Hamza (2015) refer to ontology as a view of the nature and structure of the world specifying the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it. There are two broad positions regarding ontology and these are objectivism which assumes that there is absolute and independent reality and constructivism which posits that reality is a product of social processes (Irene, 2014; Thahn & Thahn, 2015; Yin, 2014). According to Urus (2013), the assumption of independence of reality that is embedded in objectivism might mean that everything around us should be considered as naturally given, and detached from any influence while constructivism points to the possible influence of various factors on any phenomenon hence see reality as fluid. One's understanding and appreciation of the form of reality that shapes the world one lives in is either objective or socially constructed thus guiding how one approaches research studies (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2014). In this study where parenting roles were

assessed through interacting with the affected learners, caregivers and teachers all in their natural operating environments, it was opined that all these could most probably view social life differently depending on individual specific experiences about the phenomenon, personal attitudes towards life challenges in general or whether one is highly self-differentiated or lowly self-differentiated as propounded by family systems theory and explained elsewhere in this book (Johnson, 2010). In that regard therefore responses anticipated from all these diverse participants could not be assumed to be homogeneous but varied hence subjective ontology was regarded as appropriately more informing and hence adopted.

The other element of a research paradigm is epistemology. Epistemology refers to the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what could be known and it denotes the nature of human knowledge and understanding that can be acquired through different types of inquiry and alternative methods of investigation (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). According to Urus (2013) and Antwi and Hamza (2015), epistemology attempts to address the following questions: What is the relationship between the knower and what is known? How do we know what we know? And what counts as knowledge? Our epistemological view thus guides us in the choice of research strategies and techniques that we may employ to answer our research question. It, therefore, influences us in shaping our research questions, selecting appropriate literature, choosing suitable data-gathering instruments and in employing analysis procedures when we try to contribute and add knowledge to the existing body of knowledge (Urus, 2013). Considering all these attributes of epistemology in research, the researcher in this book opined that any possible solutions to the challenges associated with the caring arrangement of learners left behind by emigrants could be sought if one appreciated what obtained within families affected by parental migration most particularly with reference to issues such as children's

lived perceptions from living apart from biological parents, learners' school attendance, learner motivation, parental participation in school activities that enhance effective learning of the children, the role of school authorities in educating such learners and the families' appreciation of all these. Thus while the participants were key sources of data, the researcher had a role in directing the orientation of the study in terms of research questions, selection of respondents, adoption of research tools, and choice of analysis techniques among other issues in one way or the other. This approach of considering multiple sources to gather data to answer research questions share similar characteristics with triangulation, an aspect of family systems theory extensively described earlier and on which the present study is framed and therefore on that basis the epistemology adopted fits into other aspects that characterise this book.

The third element of a paradigm is methodology. "Methodology refers to how the researcher goes about practically finding out whatever he or she believes can be known" (Antwi & Hamza, 2015, p.220). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) conceptualise methodology as processes followed in conducting a research project to gain knowledge about a research problem. The methodology one chooses is determined by the ontological and epistemological orientation one has. In that respect, researchers who believe that reality is objective may not select methodological strategies that call for the social construction of reality (Creswel, 2014). Anney (2014) opines that there should be a positive corresponding link between one's philosophical view of reality and the methodological view of every inquiry. Drawing from that view, this study adopted processes that were largely subjective since the aim was to gather data from human beings whose views of reality differ from one person to the other or from context to context.

The fourth element of a paradigm, as posited by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), is axiology; and this refers to ethical issues a researcher ought to

consider when planning how a study should be conducted. Axiology, therefore, addresses issues to do with what the researcher ought to do or not to do with the information obtained from participants or with the participants themselves with the key objectives of respecting the respondents' rights. This study gathered data from respondents attached to professional institutions in the form of learners, teachers and school heads. To meet basic axiological principles therefore assent and consent were sought from authorities respectively before the study was done.

Informed by the above explanations with regards to methodology and having considered the multiplicity of respondents demanded by the present study that sought free respondent participation to generate detailed data about how the stakeholders viewed schooling experiences of learners left behind by migrants from Mwenezi District, several methods were used and are described in detail in the ensuing discussion.

Several authors put paradigms in a continuum with positivism on one end and interpretivism on the other end based on the two opposed ontological and epistemological orientations (Yin, 2014; Thahn & Thahn, 2015). According to Urus (2013), besides positivism and interpretivism, the other paradigms that fall between the two are critical realism and soft positivism which borrow ideas from the two major paradigms. Critical realism concedes that while reality may exist independent of human beliefs and behaviour, there are social processes and forces beyond the control of humans which affect their behaviour hence reality is probably true (Urus, 2013; Livesey, 2011). More related to this is soft positivism which holds that objective reality exists beyond the human mind but is largely influenced by culture and one's experiences of the phenomenon under study. In this respect, therefore, the paradigm may be applicable where positivist case studies could be used where a fusion of interpretive analysis and

quantitative methodologies can be probably employed (Urus, 2013). This study was undertaken purely to generate qualitative data and needed an analysis from a distinct paradigmatic point of view hence the inapplicability of any of these two paradigms that fall in between the major identified paradigms hence their acknowledgement suffices.

However, to position this study in the appropriate philosophical and methodological paradigms, a candid description of the major opposing paradigms was done. First, an attempt was made to discuss philosophical paradigms namely positivism and interpretivism to show how they relate to the study where contributions of guardians, teachers and biological parents with respect to the provision of educational needs to learners left by emigrants had to be analysed. The second part looks into the technical dimension of paradigms hence an extensive discussion of research approaches is done.

As alluded to earlier, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) say paradigms are differentiated on the axis of four major elements that characterise them namely epistemology (how we come to know something or how we know the truth or reality), ontology (nature of reality), methodology (systematic processes observed in conducting a research project) and axiology (ethical issues or what counts as wrong or right behaviour when conducting research). An analysis of interpretivism and positivism, therefore, conargues that one looks at how the two paradigms compare and contrast in terms of the four elements.

Antwi and Hanza (2015) assert that a positivist paradigm assumes that reality is objectively given. By contrast, interpretivism holds that reality is subjective and is constructed by people in the course of their daily experiences (Macionis, 2012). Antwi and Hanza (2015) further observe that epistemologically, the positivist paradigm holds that true knowledge can be obtained by use of observation and experimental methods since the focus of the paradigm is on what people do or their

actions unlike in interpretivism where the focus is on people's understanding of their actions and the environment around them.

The other difference between the two is that the positivist paradigm claims that the researcher does not influence knowledge formation since he or she is detached from the phenomenon that can be studied at any time while interpretivism holds the view that the researcher is a participant who also contributes to knowledge generation since questions asked are determined by one's experience in the social environment (Urus, 2013; Creswell, 2014). From a positivist paradigm point of view, the purpose of research is to provide scientific explanations to empirical facts that are governed by laws of cause and effect (Anney, 2014). This contradicts interpretivist analysis which views the purpose of research as identifying potential, critiquing, understanding and interpreting phenomena as one experiences them (Macionis, 2012; Bhattacharjee, 2012).

According to Irene (2013), studies underpinned by the positivist paradigm generate quantitative data that can be analysed using statistical methods. Thus, a researcher who intends to apply positivism would need to generate hypotheses first before carrying out the study predicting relationships between phenomena or between variables to be tested hence ought to start with a theory to be either confirmed or rejected after the study (Irene, 2014; Urus, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, since the paradigm is scientific it can be applicable in a laboratory environment where a researcher can manipulate some objects with the intention of proving or disapproving a held view (Gray, 2014; Irene, 2014). Conversely, interpretivism advances the fact that the social environment is the better laboratory where people can learn through interacting with other people (Macionis, 2012). The author further differentiates the two paradigms based on methodologies that are applicable in each where positivism favours the quantitative approach which tends to generate statistical data while

interpretivism disputes numerical measurement of people and goes for the qualitative approach where the researcher's perceptions of how people understand their world are accommodated. Furthermore, Phothongsanan (2010) observes that in positivism, research starts with hypotheses that need to be either accepted or rejected due to their deductive nature while the interpretive paradigm incorporates methods such as interviews that use open-ended questions since the purpose is to generate new knowledge as opposed to knowledge confirmation as is the case with positivism. The interpretive paradigm involves idiographic studies that use small numbers of participants since the purpose is not to end up generalising results but simply to explore meanings that participants have about a phenomenon in question (Phothongsanan, 2010). It was based on the above narration and propositions of both interpretivism and positivism that the latter could not suit the present study whose key objective among others was to get in-depth data from participants who are subjective and who view reality contextually (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Though some tenets of interpretivism have been discussed in relation to positivism, others are further elaborated to show justification for the paradigm's adoption in the present study.

According to Creswell (2014), the interpretive paradigm holds that the truth is relative and is dependent on one's perspective. He further contends that from an interpretivist point of view, individuals make sense of reality differently depending on their worldview, experiences and circumstances prevailing at each particular time and place. The paradigm emphasises context as a major variable that influences how one views reality (Yin, 2014). In this regard, the reality is therefore multi-faceted. According to this paradigm, reality is not static but ever-changing since environmental factors and our life experiences may affect our appreciation of different forms of knowledge (Johnson & Christenson, 2014). In a study that draws views from the interpretive paradigm, the researcher just like the participants also contributes to

the generation of knowledge since he or she asks questions that are inclined to his ontological and epistemological view of reality (Antwi & Hanza, 2015). On that note, the interpretive paradigm was found instrumental in the present study since it informed the researcher to focus on appropriate respondents and to get deeper into their lives by interacting with them noting that each one of them could be experiencing or interpreting schooling experiences of learners left behind differently. Interacting with participants helped in the production of thick descriptions that would facilitate the basis of suggesting possible welfare programmes that would address challenges faced by learners with parents in the diaspora. Deep sourcing of data from participants and thick descriptions were not going to be possible if for instance positivism was adopted since the paradigm assumes that reality is objectively sought thereby side-lining the researcher and incorporating data gathering tools such as questionnaires, approaches that were not going to capture some issues such as learners' emotions which the researcher managed to capture through observing the learners during interviews. Emotions that the learners could naturally reveal as they interacted with the researcher were important aspects that could add to what the learners could have said regarding how they experienced schooling in the absence of their biological parents hence helping in revealing what was happening in affected households.

Additionally, according to Thanh and Thanh (2015), the interpretive paradigm calls for a close relationship between the researcher and the participants to enable the participants to contribute as freely as they can. The authors further observe that the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the participants influences the credibility of the study hence the researcher needs to build a good rapport with the participants so that they open up and improve the depth of the data to be gathered. The interpretive paradigm places a strong emphasis on a better understanding of the world through first-hand

experiences, truthful reporting and quotations of actual conversations from insiders' perspectives than testing the laws of human behaviour (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Furthermore, the paradigm employs data gathering techniques such as interviews, focus group discussions and naturalistic observations which allow participants to speak freely thereby promoting the exploration of rich and thick descriptions of social phenomena (Gray, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Since this study involved minor respondents (primary school learners) and their guardians who were all unknown to the researcher, the researcher had to build rapport with them to attract their participation and trust for them to supply more credible data and that was only possible through coming face to face and interacting with them. Such approaches may not apply when one undertakes research from a positivist point of view because the paradigm does not give due regard to the relationship between the researcher and the respondents as key to the generation of worthwhile data. Interpretivism was thus more informing because interacting with the participants helped the researcher collect data in a natural environment set-up where the researcher also gave direction through probing for the respondents to elaborate on issues raised concerning how the guardians and learners left behind experienced the learners' biological parents absence especially now in Zimbabwe where the updated educational curricula present more demands from the learner than before in terms of educational materials and content to be comprehended.

Research questions and objectives generally guide one's choice of a paradigm (Creswell, 2014). Since this study intended to evaluate the effectiveness of roles of different groups in the provision of educational needs of learners whose parents live in the diaspora, the interpretive paradigm was found suitable. Ontologically, the interpretive paradigm asserts that knowledge is socially constructed (Irene, 2014) and in the present study data on the experiences of learners whose parents are in the diaspora could largely be sought

from people immersed in the vivid experiences of the children through interacting with the children and through the provision of social, economic and educational support thus guardians, teachers and the learners themselves.

Yin (2013) posits that the interpretive paradigm is suitable for studies that aim at exploring little-known phenomena to get a deeper understanding of social processes that underlie the phenomenon with a possibility of generating a theory that could be used in the future to explain the phenomenon. In that regard, this study explored the effectiveness of strategies employed to assist learners left behind by emigrants to meet educational needs which are relatively unexplored in the rural area where the study was undertaken. It was anticipated that data that could be provided by the informants could illuminate critical areas in the realm of child welfare and thus invoke responsible intervention programmes from the various stakeholders inclusive of government, non-governmental organisations, parents, communities, and the church among others.

The researcher was guided by the chosen paradigm to adopt a procedure of collecting, analysing and interpreting data. While Leedy and Ormrod (2013) refer to research methodology as the general approach the researcher takes in carrying out the research project, Antwi and Hanza (2015, p.220) say “methodology refers to how the researcher goes about practically finding out whatever he or she believes can be known.” Creswell (2013) further elucidates and observes that research methodology is a process that involves a description and justification of techniques or procedures undertaken by a researcher for data collection, interpretation and analysis of research results. One, therefore, needs an in-depth understanding of the topic and problem before deciding which approach to use because methodologies involve a clear description and reasons for selection of research paradigm, research design, population and sampling

procedures, research instruments, data collection procedures, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and data analysis (Creswell, 2014; Antwi & Hanza, 2015). On that note, therefore, a detailed description and justification of each of the stated components of research which apply to the present study are hereby given.

This study adopted the qualitative research approach. Creswell (2014:32) defines qualitative research as “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” According to Starman (2013), qualitative research methods take into account possible changes that may take place over time and emphasise understanding meanings that are given by the participants as the study unfolds. In that regard, the approach is phenomenological and attempts to employ data-gathering instruments that promote flexibility for both the participants and the researcher (Urus, 2013). Creswell (2014:234-235) outlines the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

Natural setting: data are collected in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study

Researcher as a key participant: researcher collects data himself or herself through examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants

Multiple sources of data: researcher collects data from multiple sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual information rather than relying on a single data source. All data are reviewed, made sense of and organised into categories or themes that cut across all data sources

Inductive and deductive data analysis: researcher builds patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. The researcher works back and forth between themes and the database until a comprehensive set of themes is established

Participants' meanings: researcher keeps focus on learning the meanings that the participants hold about the problem or issue without imposing their meanings.

Emergent design: plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed and some or all phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field to collect data

Reflexivity: the inquirer reflects on how their role in the study and their background, culture, and experience hold potential for shaping their interpretation such as themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data.

Holistic content: researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. It involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation

In addition to Creswell's characterisation of qualitative research, Thanh and Thanh (2015) also observe that qualitative research is interconnected to the interpretivist paradigm in that the approach often provides rich reports that are necessary for interpretivists to fully understand contexts since interpretivism discovers reality through participants' views, their background and experiences. The present study sought data from participants in their natural environments about their experiences of educational welfare needs offered to learners whose parents migrated to other countries thus bearing an interpretive and qualitative paradigm and approach respectively.

While some studies fall under the qualitative research paradigm, others are quantitative. Examples of studies that fall under the qualitative approach are; ethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, narrative research, grounded theory, symbolic interaction and case study among others (Irene, 2014; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). On the other hand, Gray (2014) observes that surveys and experiments largely feature quantitative studies. The categorisation of studies as either qualitative or quantitative is chiefly due to their

ontological and epistemological orientation hence essentially there is no one paradigm which is superior to the other (Thanh & Thahn, 2015; Yin, 2013). Thus the choice of qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm in this study was not because of their supremacy over others but it was because of their suitability in gathering in-depth data which the study sought to get.

One of the differences between qualitative and quantitative studies is that the former generates non-numerical data such as words and pictures while the latter generates numerical data (Starman, 2013). These qualities of the quantitative approach do not resonate well with the present study where the experiences of people were sought. Experiences and feelings of people could not be quantified into numbers. Though prevalent rates of learners left by emigrants were inferred in the study, the objective of such an activity was merely to motivate and lead the researcher into the main objective of the study (latent function) (Antwi & Hanza, 2015) and could not warrant the study to be classified as a quantitative one.

Secondly, qualitative and quantitative paradigms differ in that the latter employs exploratory scientific and confirmatory methods where hypotheses are stated first before the study and then tested empirically for either confirmation or rejection, an approach which is contrary to qualitative research where researchers are interested in the phenomenon from which new knowledge will be generated from the views of the participants (Creswell, 2014). This study suited qualitative design in that it sought to gather data from people who could not be reduced to tools like what happens in quantitative studies (Irene, 2014). The type of data expected from this study was qualitative since unlike in quantitative studies where causal explanations for the relationship between variables are sought, the study sought to gather data from human beings whose behaviour is fluid, dynamic and ever-changing (Gray, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

The other difference is that the quantitative paradigm attempts to operate under the assumption of objectivity where the researcher is supposed to be detached from data gathering where his or her role ends at the construction and distribution of research instruments level while in qualitative research, the researcher is also an instrument of collecting data (Yin, 2014; Starman, 2013). In this study, the feeling was that detailed data about the experiences of the participants could largely be obtained if the researcher got immersed in the study and interacted with the participants to get inner feelings and emotions. Getting involved in the life world of the participants through interacting with them also helped in building rapport and subsequently enhanced getting some more secretive and valuable data that could not have been given had one administered an instrument such as a questionnaire which tends to be narrowly focussed (Johnson & Christenson, 2014).

The qualitative approach helped in the selection of participants who were both information-rich and willing to participate in the study since the purposive sampling technique was also used (Thanh & Thahn, 2015; Creswell, 2014). This was valuable since it was not certain that all those who had their relatives working outside of the country could be ready to supply information about factors that influenced treatment given to children left behind by migrating parents.

Starman (2013) and Baskarada (2014) commend the qualitative research approach in that it makes use of the non-random selection technique of its participants and is based on whether the individuals have information vital to the question being asked. The qualitative approach was therefore suitable for this study which was informed by the interpretive paradigm that emphasises the collection of natural data from subjective human beings (Creswell, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

The quantitative approach that seeks to establish, confirm or validate relationships could not apply in the present study since it was not premised on testing any known hypothesis about the schooling experiences of children left behind by biological parents (Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2014). Furthermore, the quantitative approach did not apply in this study since it holds that the social world exists externally calling for the measurement of its characteristics using objective methods (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016) which was not in tandem with the subjective human being who was the principal source of data in the present study.

The collection of data about school children is a sensitive exercise that calls for a sound recording of every episode and interpretation as the study unfolds. In that respect, Bory and Gall (2011) posit that qualitative research needs a holistic enquiry, more formal, subjective and inductive approach to problem-solving issues. It follows therefore that the study that sought to explore the effectiveness of parenting roles on the educational needs of learners be tackled using the qualitative approach where scrutiny of data needed to be done holistically (Creswell, 2014).

Every research study should be carried out within a methodological framework that will ensure that the objectives of embarking on the study are achieved. This framework is what is called research design. Smith (2007) defines a research design as a plan and structure of an investigation that one uses to obtain evidence to answer research questions. In another definition that seems to elaborate on Smith's (2007), Yin (2014) and Punch (2011) say a research design is a blueprint or overall plan of a piece of research that deals with the conceptual framework, questions to be asked, data relevant to the study, data to be collected and how the data are to be analysed and aims to avoid situations where evidence obtained does not address initial research questions. Others say research design is the overall strategy that a

researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study coherently and logically thereby ensuring that one effectively addresses the research problem, it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Urus, 2013). Also, Akhtar (2016) refers to research design as an arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure thus suggesting it should provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the study about and, what type of data are required?
2. What is the purpose of the study?
3. What are the sources of needed data?
4. What should be the place or area of study?
5. What time, approximately, is required for the study?
6. What should be the number of materials or number of cases for the study?
7. What type of sampling should be used?
8. What method of data collection would be appropriate?
9. How will data be analysed?
10. What should be the appropriate expenditure?
11. What should be the specific nature of the study?

Drawing from the above conceptualisations and in line with this study's problem and the key objective of establishing how learners left behind were catered for in Mwenezi District for the ultimate intention of suggesting possible strategies to ease the challenges the learners face, the current researcher accordingly identified, described and integrated the various elements of research namely, participants and their characteristics, how the participants were selected, participants' relationship to the investigator, ways of collecting data, type of data sought and data-gathering instruments, data interpretation and analysis procedures, ethical considerations and trustworthiness issues. That way the design for the study was comprehensively given.

Various authors contend that research designs are distinguished by their paradigmatic orientation (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Gray, 2014; Creswell, 2014). According to these authors, designs that are inclined to a positivist paradigm and those that generate numerate or quantifiable data such as surveys and experiments are called quantitative. On the other hand, those designs that are inclined to interpretivism paradigm that generate non-numerical data such as case studies and ethnographic studies fall in the qualitative category. In addition to the two methodological approaches, there is mixed methods research approach. According to Cameron (2015:3) “mixed methods research is research that involves collecting, analysing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon.” The major premise of mixed methods research is that there is better articulation and understanding of research problems when the two methodological approaches namely qualitative and quantitative are combined than when one is used. While that could be the case, this study adopted a qualitative descriptive case study design since it sought to get first-hand experiences, feelings and opinions of guardians, teachers and learners about the effectiveness of efforts put by biological parents, guardians and government in the provisions of educational needs to the learners and these feelings and experiences could not be quantified as quantitative designs demand.

While the qualitative research methodology generally befitted this study, it was envisaged that the study could be well articulated using the qualitative case study design. Yin (2014) refers to a case study as a strategy of doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence. More similarly, Creswell (2014) observes that a case study involves exploration and description of an event, people or individuals in natural form. What is striking from the two definitions is that the case study design could be used when

investigating phenomena in their natural settings. It is also clear from the definitions that one could gather data from many sources and possibly use different instruments in the same study when using a case study design. However, some authors do not regard a case study as either a method or design for data collection and analysis but only as a choice of what to study and further argue that other designs such as surveys and experiments may also make use of cases hence view it as a general approach of conducting research (Baskarada, 2014).

Baskarada (2014) observes that case studies can be applied in both qualitative and quantitative studies and that their choice is mostly dependent on the research question. In a related analysis, Cohen *et al.* (2011) observe that a case study should have a 'case' or object of study which should be a complex functioning unit, be investigated in its natural context with a multitude of methods and be contemporary. Yin (2013) states that a case study is used when: the focus of the study is to answer the how or why question, you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study, you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study or the boundaries are not clear between the phenomena and the context.

Furthermore, Baxter and Jack (2008) observe that a case needs to be bound, that is, deciding what one's case will not be to be specific and improve the feasibility of the study. The authors suggest that the cases can be bound concerning time and place, time and activity and definition and context. In the present study, two primary schools, heads and teachers who taught in those schools, learners who learnt at the identified schools and whose parents were working outside Zimbabwe and the guardians of those learners were the cases that were investigated to give their perceptions of the learners' schooling experiences in the absence of their parents who have migrated. The study also regards a case study as a research design.

There are several types of case studies that are largely distinguished by the philosophical views of various authors regarding the nature of knowledge and how knowledge can be known (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Baxter & Jack, 2008). Baxter and Jack (2008) further observe that case studies are classified according to whether one intends to describe a case, explore a case or compare between cases yet Starman (2013) posits that case studies are classified according to the time dimension and theory formation. Since the classification of types of case studies are inexhaustible and largely depended on the discipline under which one is studying, researchers generally choose types of case studies to use depending on what they want to explore, for what purpose, what they want to achieve and how they want to study (Urus, 2013). While this study was not informed by many case study types, the researcher felt that it could be better and more informing to the reader if some types of case studies could be briefly described and to show justification of the ones chosen for the study. In that regard, illustrative case study types by Yin (2014), Stake and Guba (1995) are analysed.

Some types of case studies as categorised by Stake (1995) are instrumental, intrinsic and collective (Creswell, 2014). Yin prefers to categorise them as explanatory, exploratory, descriptive and multiple case studies while Guba and Lincoln say there are factual, interpretive and evaluative case studies (Yin, 2013; Baskarada, 2014; Creswell, 2014). An illustrative description and analogue of some of these case study categories could help the reader discern the background to the types chosen in the present study.

Baskarada (2014) posit that intrinsic case studies are those studies in which the researcher has much interest in the phenomenon and wants to know more about it hence providing a deeper understanding of the case. Elucidating further, the author observes that such studies do not result in one conceptualising abstract constructs and cannot be based on when building a theory since it focuses only on a single case. Due to

that narrow focus, the results of intrinsic case studies, therefore, have limited transferability. This type of case study could not, therefore, apply in this study because the study was based on research questions that had to be responded to produce data that could be used to generate a model for assisting learners who were disadvantaged in education because of the absence of their parents who lived in the diaspora and rarely returned home. The other limitation of the intrinsic case study concerning this study was that it could not compare cases yet in this study, data had to be obtained from several cases where ideas and experiences were to be integrated to improve the worthiness of the study.

The other case study type by Stake (1995) is instrumental. The instrumental case study provides insight into an issue and hence enables the researcher to study the phenomenon of interest (Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to these authors under this case study type, the research question is important since it is from the research question where the phenomenon to be studied is derived. Cases are very important in instrumental case studies since the phenomenon is studied in the cases regarding how they experience it (Creswell, 2014). In that light, cases are treated as unique and it also enhances in-depth data to be gathered from various sources and could thus be used to refine existing theory (Yin, 2014).

Stake (1995) also talks of the collective case study. According to Johnson and Christenson (2014), a collective case study is similar to Yin's (2014) multiple case study. A collective/multiple case study is used when several cases are examined to understand similarities and differences between cases (Creswell, 2014). The goal of a collective/multiple case study is to replicate findings across cases hence is related to an instrumental case study in that both can accord more cases to be studied at the same time (Yin, 2014). This type of case study was suitable for the present study since the study was based on

stated research questions that had to be answered by different cases namely guardian parents, teachers, school heads and learners. Since several cases needed to respond to the research question, it too attracted the inclusion of a variety of instruments each commensurate with the demands of specific sub-questions hence some such tools included interview protocols and document analysis schedules.

Yin (2014) categorises case studies into four types namely, explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive and multiple case studies. According to Irene (2014), exploratory case studies are a prelude to other social research projects. They are carried out to define the questions and hypotheses of subsequent studies or determine the feasibility of the desired research (Baskarada, 2014). As postulated by Irene (2014), when we carry out exploratory studies, we test the applicability of our methodology ranging from the research paradigm, research instruments, and data collecting procedures, the research participants, and our choice of data analysis techniques and our bias as researchers. Creswell (2014) also adds and observes that an exploratory study helps us to find ways of perfecting our research design since it makes our weaknesses glare on our face. Guided by such advice, the researcher could not assume that the chosen methodology for the study was going to be perfect hence the inclusion of an exploratory study as the basis to improve data gathering instruments and other methodological-related issues especially after considering the sensitive nature of the study which involved among others interviewing minors (primary school learners) on their schooling experiences in the absence of their parents who had migrated to other countries.

The other case study categorisation by Yin (2014) is a descriptive case study. This case study type is similar to Guba and Lincoln's factual case study (Gray, 2014). According to Creswell (2014) in the descriptive case study category, an intervention or phenomenon is described in

detail in its real-life context. Since the present study intended to describe fully the schooling experiences under which learners left behind by migrating parents found themselves, it was opined that the descriptive case study type was adequately informing and more justifications for its choice are detailed later.

Yin also talks about the explanatory case study type. According to Creswell (2013), an explanatory case study is used when the intention is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions. Creswell further says it is used when our research question compels us to provide reasons or explanations to circumstances that link the object and the subject in a study. Since the present study was aimed at finding out how the educational needs of learners with parents in the diaspora were catered for in Mwenezi District, the researcher found it generally more descriptive than explanatory hence could not see the latter's major contribution even though some aspects of it are evident in the study. Due to the descriptive nature of the data that were sought in this study and the fact that the researcher collected the data from several cases namely school heads, teachers, learners and caregivers, the preferred terminology for the case study design is descriptive collective/multiple case study design.

Following extensive reading and analyses of various types of case studies and relating their major tenets to the research question and goal of the study, an appropriate case study type was chosen. Furthermore, after realising that the study sought descriptions of parenting efforts put in the provision of educational needs and experiences of learners who lived with non-biological parents, a bounded multi-site descriptive collective/multiple case study design was effectively adopted in the main study. A descriptive collective/multiple design was selected because the study involved the exploration of data from many cases that were supposed to give their experiences in detail and a real-life context (Starman, 2013; Irene, 2014;

Baskarada, 2014). The idea was to ensure that descriptions given by each of the respondents were integrated to form the basis of generating a model that could be used to institute welfare programs for learners whose parents migrate into the diaspora and rarely commit themselves to the children's educational welfare. Such an analysis could not be possible if for example an intrinsic case study type was employed because it lacks rigour and only focuses on a single case different from the present study that involved many cases. Urus (2013) outlines the utility of collective/multiple case studies as follows: help to develop a cross-case analysis to extend the theory, allow cross-case analysis and comparison and investigation of a particular phenomenon in diverse settings, enable prediction of similar results, help to produce contrasting results for predictable reasons, increase the generalisability of findings to theoretical propositions and yield more compelling and robust results than a single case study can increase methodological rigour of the study.

While case studies do not result in the generalisation of results due to their inductive nature, Filippa (2011) in a study in Zimbabwe on experiences of adolescents with parents in the diaspora commends the collective and descriptive case study designs in that they provide new insight into taken for granted phenomena as experiences are cross-pollinated among participants. In a related study on psychosocial effects of parental migration on children conducted by Zirima (2016) in the Mwenezi District, a descriptive collective/multiple case study design was adopted and generated detailed data that helped illuminate the challenges experienced by different groups of children. Likewise, a descriptive collective/multiple case study was appropriate in this study since it drew participants from a variety of cases inclusive of school heads, teachers, learners and caregivers who all viewed schooling experiences of learners left behind varyingly depending on what happened within their families or within the school system and that resonated with propositions of family systems theory to which the

study is grounded which contend that individuals perform different roles in families which roles help to bind families together. Similar views are shared by Yin (2014) who contends that a multiple case study design enables a researcher to explore differences within and between cases. From this view, the descriptive collective design further helped in broadening the scope of knowledge generated on schooling experiences of learners left behind since it accorded the researcher the opportunity to provide a comparative description of learner experiences from various sources involved in the welfare of the learners. In that way, the design also improved the research rigour and credibility of the results since the participants were rich in data due to their daily contact with the learners under the spotlight (Hancok & Algozzine, 2016).

The researcher drew the participants of the present study from a population that was rich in information required to respond to the research questions. Mae (2008) observes that any research is dependent on a clear definition of the population since it is to this group that results will be generalised. Asiamah *et al.* (2017) define a population as a group of individuals having one or more characteristics of interest while Tuckman (2011) refers to it as the target group from which the researcher wants to get information about the problem or phenomenon of interest and then draw conclusions. One can view the population as members who have information that can address a researcher's research questions. Since it is from the population where research credibility is determined, the choice of the study population should be carefully done (Baskarada, 2014; Asiamah *et al.*, 2017). In that respect, Irene (2013) advises that an accessible population defined as a population which can participate in the study willingly and which will be available during the study period should be selected. Drawing from all these conceptualisations of the population and guided by the key objective of the current qualitative study which aimed solely at

broadening an understanding of the schooling experiences of learners left behind rather than seeking to generalise the results to any group (Starman, 2013; Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2014), the population identified comprised people who were involved in various ways in the lives of learners whose biological parents were living outside Zimbabwe so that first-hand data could be gathered. The study was thus bounded on the quality of respondents to the research topic on experiences of participants on schooling needs provision to learners left behind and on that basis, the researcher found it plausible identifying a population rich in anticipated data although results from a qualitative approach would not be generalised to some such other members due to a small sample involved (Creswell, 2014; Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Patton, 2015). The members of the population all residing or working in Mwenezi District were: primary, school heads, primary school teachers, guardians of learners whose parents were living outside Zimbabwe, learners whose biological parent(s) was/were living outside Zimbabwe and those learners who were attending school in the Mwenezi District during the study period.

It was anticipated that guardians and teachers who taught learners who were left behind by their parents could describe in detail the circumstances that these learners were in since they mingled with them on daily basis providing moral, socio-economic and cognitive support that are essential for child upkeep and socialisation in general respectively. Teachers are mandated as part of their duties to interview learners in their classes about challenges they face both at home and school so that they could improve their pedagogy and hence were better placed to supply information about the learners they taught. Similarly, guardians who stayed with these learners and were equally responsible for the provision of learning materials, uniforms, encouragement towards educational goals, counselling, shelter, and food among other support systems that are essential for child upkeep and socialisation in general (IFFD, 2017) were considered appropriate

respondents. Furthermore, the learners left behind themselves were better placed to narrate their experiences and how they coped with schooling under the care of non-biological parents.

While an information rich population was identified, data were gathered from only a sample of the population. Fillipa (2011) refers to sampling as a step in the research process which entails making decisions regarding which people, settings, events, processes, and behaviours are to be observed. While Fillipa (2011) is silent on where these people or events come from, Anney (2014) elucidates and observes that sampling is a process whereby a small proportion or subgroup of a population is selected and analysed. Anney's (2014) analysis indicates that population and sample share similar characteristics and are only distinguished by numbers. Drawing from that logic, therefore, the researcher selected two primary schools from which teachers and heads who taught learners whose parents have emigrated from the Mwenezi District could be found. Studies related to this one done before largely focused on the experiences of adolescents (mainly secondary school or post-secondary school learners in Zimbabwe) (Filippa, 2011; Dube, 2014; Kufakurinani *et al.*, 2014) leaving out primary school learners. While Zirima (2016) conducted a related study in Mwenezi District on children aged between four and eleven years, the focus was on the psycho-social effects of parental migration on such children marginally different from the present study whose focus was on the schooling experiences of the learners with parents in the diaspora.

Anney (2014) identifies two types of sampling namely, probability sampling where every member of the study population has a chance to be selected into the sample due to a random sampling procedure which is done and non-probability sampling in which the probability of being selected is not known since the researcher has the freedom to select participants he or she thinks will provide the desired data

(Creswell, 2014). Considering the qualitative nature of the case study design adopted in the present study as informed by the interpretivist paradigm also chosen for the study with subsequent thrust on gathering detailed data from information rich respondents in a natural set-up, non-probability sampling techniques were preferable and adopted to select participants who could give their experiences of parental styles and their impact on the education of learners left behind by parents who were staying in other countries such as South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.

Some non-probability sampling techniques are judgemental/purposive, convenience, snowball and quota sampling (Gray, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Baskarada, 2014; Anney, 2014; Starman, 2013). Although non-probability sampling was preferred, not all techniques in this category were used in the present study since the researcher viewed others to be less appropriate regarding applicability to the research question. However, to enrich the reader and for justification of exclusion and inclusion of some of the techniques, a brief description of some of them follows.

The researcher had to choose the most fitting technique from among the various sampling techniques. One of the common non-probability sampling techniques is purposive sampling also known as the judgemental sampling technique in which the researcher chooses a sample that he or she thinks has information that will help address the research question (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). As these authors view it, the idea of purposive sampling is to obtain the most characteristic representation of attributes that will serve the purpose of the study.

Besides purposive sampling, the other non-probability sampling technique is convenient sampling also known as grab, opportunity, accidental or haphazard and it involves drawing a sample from that part of the population which is close to hand or readily available and

convenient to the researcher (Anney, 2014; Baskarada, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Though convenient sampling has the disadvantage that it cannot allow generalisations of results to the study population since it may not be representative of that population, its major positive attribute is that the researcher will never run out of participants from which data could be gathered since anyone within the study population could provide data as long as they are available to the researcher (Anney, 2014). Despite the above-stated advantage of the convenient sampling technique, it was not adopted in this study because it was reasoned that it could probably distort findings since it gave room for even participants not rich in the required information about schooling experiences of learners left behind to contribute based on their availability to the researcher.

The other non-probability sampling technique is quota sampling. Yin (2014) observes that quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the population is first segmented into mutually exclusive sub-groups and after which purposive or convenient or both techniques can be used to select the sample from each sub-group according to the proportion of the sub-group in the overall study population. Quota sampling ensures that all the different population categories are captured to represent their unique group in the study (Gray, 2014). However, according to Creswell (2014) if the technique is simply used to try to please a certain group within the population then it will not serve the real purpose of conducting a study. In that respect, Cohen *et al.* (2011) advise that researchers should select sub-groups for genuine reasons and after due consideration of the intended outcome of the study and the perceived population's probability of supplying the desired data. Since the present study desired qualitative data obtainable from in-depth interviews, the researcher felt that quotas were largely not warranted and hence could not adopt them.

Snowball sampling or chain referral is another non-probability sampling technique where a researcher selects a small number of subjects who have characteristics of the intended participants and then uses this small group to identify others who share similar attributes that are of interest to the researcher (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, Dragan & Maniu, 2013). Dragan and Maniu (2013) further commend that the snowball sampling technique is used when the researcher is dealing with hidden populations or populations on which there is no official information. While official information could not be there on the demography of learners affected by parental migration, the status of being a left-behind learner could not be regarded as a hidden one in Zimbabwe though sensitive in the sense that some such learners are susceptible to abuse by caregivers or by other people to the extent that their experiences remain closely guarded (Zirima, 2016). In that light, the learners may only be privy to their experiences and may not know what happens to others in similar circumstances hence the inapplicability of snowball sampling in the present study.

In this study, school heads, teachers, guardians and learners whose parents lived outside Zimbabwe were purposively selected. These respondents were chosen based on their involvement in the education and welfare of learners left behind and were seen as better equipped to describe and explain their experiences of parental involvement in the education of such learners in the Mwenezi District of Zimbabwe. The researcher used the personal experience of having worked in the district for fifteen years as a teacher and administrator in schools to choose two primary schools from a cluster of schools where many parents of school going age children usually migrate to neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Botswana. It was from those two schools that learners who had biological parents living outside Zimbabwe were selected. Consideration was made that to get the most detailed data, this could be obtained from learners who have been living under the care of non-biological parents for longer periods

hence class teachers were asked to rank their learners according to the period the learners could have spent staying with guardians due to biological parents' absence because of out-migration. The researcher opted for six learners because they all provided data in semi-structured interviews that allowed probing until data saturation could be attained. For guardians, teachers at each of the two schools identified them because they had records of learners and their parents hence could easily tell which learner stayed with who. Two primary school heads were automatically selected based on the inclusion of the schools they head. The table below summarises the selected sample and the key data generation tools associated with each category of the samples.

Table 4.1: Sample

CATEGORY	No.	DATA GENERATION TOOLS
Primary school learners with parents in the diaspora	6	Face-to-face key participant interview schedule
Primary school heads	2	Face-to-face key participant interview schedule
Primary school teachers	13	Focus group interview protocol
Guardians	6	Face-to-face key participant interview schedule
TOTAL	27	

Data were gathered using tools that were deemed appropriate for each category of participants. According to Liz (2007), research tools are designed to measure the variables' characteristics or information of interest. Since data generation tools seek to gather a specific type of information, it then follows that different categories of research will call for some specific type of tools. For example, quantitative research

designs such as surveys, tests and experiments that seek to generate statistical data may be better carried out using closed questionnaires where answers are provisionally suggested and to accommodate large samples that are usually involved (Creswell, 2014). However, Creswell (2014) further argues that the same cannot happen with qualitative designs where detailed descriptions and explanations of phenomena of interest may be required from the respondents. In that respect, this study which sought to gather data from participants in their real-life context could be better done using tools that promote respondent flexibility in answering questions hence semi-structured interview schedules for school heads, guardians and learners and focus group interview protocols for teachers were administered. In addition to the identified data generation tools, a document analysis guide was used too to analyse learners' school attendance and academic achievement from attendance registers and academic progress reports respectively. The selected data generation tools are further described below.

One important data generation tool for the present study was an interview. An interview is a conversation between two or more people sharing their views on a particular phenomenon (Gray, 2014; Urus, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Cohen (2011) observe that interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their point of view and commend that an interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used; verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard. In that respect, one can largely conclude that an interview is a suitable instrument to use when the intention is to gather qualitative data where participants ought to explore their experiences of a phenomenon. According to Gray (2014), in an interview, there is an interviewer who initiates questions and an interviewee whose responsibility is largely to respond to the questions asked by the interviewer though he or she might ask questions as well. Interviews vary depending on the nature of the topic being discussed and the type

of information being sought by the interviewer from the interviewee, the social distance or relationship between the researcher and the participants and the context of the whole interview process (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

While some interviews may require an interviewee and an interviewer to sit down and discuss an issue face to face, other interviews may be conducted by telephone yet others can be done through questionnaires (Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2014). The other categorisation is that some interviews may involve two people only, that is an interviewer and an interviewee (key participant interview) while others may involve an interviewer discussing a topic with many interviewees at the same time and this latter type is referred to as focus group interview (Makonese, 2012). In both cases, the choice of which approach to use depends on the information sought and the characteristics of the respondents concerning the questions to be answered. Interviews are also grouped according to how the interviewer intends to ask questions and his or her preferred quality of responses thus structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Urus, 2013; Makonese, 2012). These are briefly described below.

According to Urus (2013:93), structured interviews refer to “questions that are defined in advance and the interviewee has limited choices in answering them.” Structured interviews thus do not accord the respondents the leeway to explore the topic under investigation in detail. It shows that it is largely suitable in contexts where the participants are controlled and where the researcher has hypotheses that he or she needs to test. One would observe that it is largely suitable for such designs as surveys where large samples can be used to quickly gather data since responses can be given through circling or ticking preferred responses (Gray, 2014). The other advantage of a structured interview is that data analysis is easy since responses will be available and hence less varied.

Despite such strengths, structured interviews may not produce credible results most particularly so if employed in qualitative studies such as the current one where in-depth exploration of factors that influence parental systems was sought since it could not accord the participants the opportunity to describe and explain the circumstances in detail from their own experiences (Creswell, 2014). The other disadvantage of a structured interview concerning this study is that it is too artificial where the researcher has much independence on which questions to ask and which ones to avoid yet this study being qualitative required a natural set-up where the intention was to collect data obtained from less formalised encounters with the participants.

The other interview type is unstructured which is largely divergent from the structured interview. Unstructured interviews have fewer pre-defined questions and are more open-ended questions that intend to explore the interviewee's opinions in detail (Urus, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Concerning unstructured interviews, (Urus, 2013) argues that though the interviewer is the one who principally needs information from the interviewee, the relationship between the two is more equal than under structured interviews. The author further observes that in unstructured interviews, few questions are asked at the beginning just to introduce a topic and open a discussion and everything that follows is neither controlled by the interviewer nor by the interviewee. It, therefore, allows for the gathering of data in a natural environment and tends to be realistic. However, there are high chances that if not well directed, the discussion may end up picking issues that are irrelevant to the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2013). According to Yin (2014), its other weakness is that it usually generates a lot of data some of which may not be of any benefit to the researcher hence posing challenges to data analysis. It may however be used to generate sub-topics which may be separately explored in future. Though this study is qualitative and informed by an interpretivist paradigm that promotes the gathering of data in a real-life context, the

unstructured interview type could not be wholly adopted in the interest of serving time and partial adherence to suggested questions that possibly directed participants to respond to the dictates of the topic under investigation.

The third type of interview is the semi-structured interview. According to Urus (2013), a semi-structured interview sits in between the structured and unstructured interview types in that predefined questions should be established through the answers to the questions are not limited and that other questions could be asked during the interview. Gray (2014) says semi-structured interviews, are interviews that are focused around areas of particular interest yet still allow flexibility and are generally used to gain a detailed picture of beliefs and/or perceptions of a subject on a particular topic and are particularly well suited to gain insight into personal issues. Yin (2014); Gray (2014); Creswell (2013); Urus (2013) list the following characteristics of semi-structured interviews:

- it allows both the researcher and the respondents to discuss questions that are not clear so that they can be clarified and answered to the satisfaction of both parties.
- it enables the researcher to make follow-up questions to the participants' responses hence enhancing the gathering of exhaustive and new insights that could not be possible under structured interviews.
- the pre-defined questions ensure that the discussion is largely on target to address the phenomenon under investigation.
- it builds rapport between the researcher and the respondents thus likely to result in truthful data being provided.

Semi-structured interviews were administered to school heads, caregivers and learners left behind. While this study adopted a qualitative approach which tends to be inductive where the researcher could enter the field without prepared questions as is done in other

research designs such as surveys, it was opined that some questions were necessary for purposes of guiding the respondents since the topic being left behind was seen as sensitive especially to learners in that it provokes emotions (Zirima, 2016). Prepared questions ensured that the researcher was in control, and ready to direct participants to keep the research focus and avoid situations whereby the participants could end up supplying data irrelevant to the key research question on how learners left behind by emigrants' educational needs were catered for in Mwenezi District. However, Bhattacharjee (2012) advises that while questions could be prepared in advance, caution should be made to ensure that the researcher does not impose pre-conceived ideas on the participants but allow more room for the latter to empty their views regarding the topic at stake. Noting and respecting such views, however, the researcher felt that since interviews were done with primary school learners and caregivers probably new to interview experiences, especially with a stranger (researcher) it was necessary that guiding questions were there to introduce the topic to the learners and this also boosted rapport between the researcher and the interviewees in a way different from what could have happened had no hints been given at all.

Filippa *et al.* (2013) in a study in Zimbabwe where they sought to establish coping strategies for children left behind by emigrants noted that the topic induced stress on the children left behind and hence needed face-to-face encounters when one intends to seek data from the children. Semi-structured interviews that were conducted face to face between the researcher and individual participants also helped the researcher focus on similar or more related questions to various categories of participants and this eased cross-pollination of data at the analysis level since related themes emerged from the data collected. Furthermore guiding questions only meant that there was room for probing thus facilitating thick descriptions and such a procedure dovetailed into the descriptive case study design that was adopted for

the study. Semi-structured interview approach was seen as more appropriate to school heads after considering their busy schedule that required a carefully planned time frame and this was only possible through engaging them in discussions that were somehow directed since it helped serve time as opposed to what could have happened had the heads were not partially controlled. Generally, it was based on these attributes of the semi-structured interview that it was selected and used in the present study. The interview type allowed the researcher to immerse in the life worlds of the respondents hence facilitating easy capture of data suitable to the study.

The focus group interview was selected for its various strengths relating to the present study. Irene (2015) defines an interview as a data-gathering technique that brings the researcher in close contact with the participants. In a group interview, therefore, the researcher interacts with more than one interviewee at the same time. Makonese (2012) observes that focus group interviews help in the production of thick descriptions since participants can debate on issues raised by the interviewer depending on how they experience the phenomenon thereby generating detailed data that could be possibly not achieved in a personal or face-to-face interview. One can further deduce from such an analysis and observe that focus group interviews are semi-structured interviews and their success can be largely enhanced by careful selection of participants and planning of the context under which the interviews can be carried out. A researcher adopting the focus group interview technique should therefore select participants who are homogeneous in terms of how they understand the phenomenon under study and how they relate naturally in day-to-day life (Patton, 2015; Tuckman, 2011; Holloway & Wheeler, 2012). For this study, therefore, two focus group interviews were conducted, one at each of the two primary schools and both involved teachers who taught learners who lived under the care of guardians and those who made it into the sample.

Conducting focus group interviews involving teachers who taught at the same schools was done to improve the participation of the respondents since they knew each other and were open about what they observed and experienced about learners with parents in the diaspora with respect to their role as educators. Also, engaging teachers in focus group discussions helped in the generation of scholarly data that not only were descriptive but explanatory as well since the teachers gave their opinions as to what they thought could be done to improve parenting styles in households where parents and children lived separately. In other words focus group technique when administered to homogeneous and informed participants such as teachers who participated in the present study results in data saturation as debates and various experiences were extensively shared. What the researcher experienced in the focus group discourses was also echoed by Holloway and Wheeler (2012) who commend that in a focus group discussion, researchers interview participants with common characteristics or experiences to elicit ideas, thoughts and perceptions about specific topics or certain issues linked to an area of interest.

Besides the in-depth interview guide, the other tool used was a document analysis guide or template to analyse class attendance registers, welfare registers and academic progress records to establish school attendance, the probability of inclusion in welfare programmes and performance ratings of learners whose parents were not living in Mwenezi District respectively. Content analysis is a non-interactive method of data collection where the researcher makes use of information collected earlier by someone else without the intention of fulfilling the purposes which the present study intends to address (Yin, 2014; Gray, 2014; Creswell, 2013). For this study, class attendance registers were analysed since they contained official information pertinent to the challenges of school attendance and completion rate that too indicated school coping challenges by learners left behind by

parents who lived in the diaspora. Attendance registers also provided information concerning the orphanhood status of the learners and parental occupations hence quite valuable in this study that sought to establish how the learners learnt in the absence of their biological parents. Official documents are largely a reflection of reality on the ground. Cohen *et al.* (2011:249) say, "Documentary research typically makes use of documents produced previously and by others, rather than in the process of the research or by the researcher." One can therefore largely rely on the authenticity of the data obtained from natural documents since the documents are more likely to be clear of any possible bias from either the researcher or the respondent. Recognising the above positive features of document analysis, the researcher was however aware that documents could be incomplete and littered with errors thus likely to present credibility challenges (Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2014) hence triangulated the documents to cross-check congruence between learners' attendance from registers with written work in their exercise books.

While key participant interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis were the principal tools used to gather data in this study, some data were obtained through the compilation of notes about the researcher's reflections during interaction with the participants in the course of collecting data. According to Gray (2014), field notes record the feelings of the researcher about the researcher's experiences during data gathering. Stewart (2010) comments that field notes about what the researcher knows and how he or she knows it should be continuously taken as they help to expose the researchers' preconceptions and possible bias due to previous experiences hence forming the basis on how readers will evaluate study worthiness. In a related analysis, Creswell (2014:235) appraises reflexivity and comments:

In qualitative research, the inquirer reflects on how their role in the study and their background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data. This aspect of the method is more than merely advancing biases and values in the study, but how the background of the researcher actually may shape the direction of the study.

Though the intention was to carry out a scientific inquiry, it should be acknowledged that the researcher being a subjective human being and an experienced educator with his own experiences and preconceptions about learner caring strategies, could have affected the study results in one way or the other. This was the basis on which note-taking was done to enable reflection later and it worked.

There are one hundred and twenty-seven primary schools in the Mwenezi District from which a sample of two primary schools was drawn. Since the current researcher was born, bred and worked in the district as a teacher for fifteen years, the task of selecting the study sites was easy. The researcher selected schools from a cluster where he once worked and witnessed huge emigration of parents into South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. Since the study adopted a qualitative approach that sought in-depth data from the respondents, it was opined that areas that lost huge numbers of parents into the diaspora could be fertile ground for learners left behind hence good sources of data that could help answer the research question. Furthermore, the place is known to the researcher and is accessible hence anticipation was that maximum support from the school authorities would be obtained.

The choice of cases was guided by study research questions. Thus, the fact that the intention was to generate detailed natural data about how the educational needs of learners left behind were catered for meant that the selection of cases was to be based on those that were immersed in the phenomenon so that first-hand information could be obtained.

As such teachers, school heads, guardians and learners who were also willing to participate were selected. These cases were selected from the identified study sites.

One other important aspect of research is how one collects data. Data collection procedures are practical steps that a researcher takes in the field collecting data from participants using the research instruments (Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2014; Yin, 2014). These authors further advise that the way one collects data should correspond to one's chosen research design, research instruments, research questions, nature of participants, and type of data one intends to generate. It follows therefore that one needs to use research tools effectively so that all data availed by the participants will not be lost.

This study adopted a descriptive collective case study with a strong inclination to the collection of descriptive data from participants in their real-life contexts. To do that, the research instruments namely face-to-face key participant interview protocols, focus group interview schedules and content analysis guides were employed and this was done so that detailed data could be gathered from various sources to improve research worthiness (Yin, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2011).

Face-to-face key participant interviews were administered to two school heads, six learners and six guardians. Since the study sought rich and in-depth qualitative data from these participants on their views of parental care on the educational needs of learners left behind, semi-structured interview guides were prepared to guide the research process so that focus of the study would not be lost (Gray, 2014; Creswell, 2013). Interview questions were drawn from sub-research questions where respondents were asked to give their views on learning experiences and challenges faced by learners with parents in

the diaspora and the role of various stakeholders in the educational needs of the learners.

Prior to the collection of data, permission was sought from responsible authorities and participants for their consent. Realising that the bulk of the respondents were teachers and learners, permission to visit schools was sought from the permanent secretary Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Masvingo Provincial Education Director. Further permission was also sought from the Mwenezi District Schools Inspector and heads of schools where data were collected. In the case of learners, consent was obtained from their guardians and their assent was sought too.

After permission was granted to conduct the study, the second step was to seek consent from the prospective samples. After that was successfully done, timetables for each group of participants and individuals were made in consultation with the responsible authorities and the concerned members. Timetabling was done to ensure that all purposively selected participants who were information-rich would be available on the particular days and times when they were interviewed.

Before the actual data collection process began, the selected samples were assembled at each study site and briefed on the purpose of the study, and the expected procedures to collect data which in this case were face-to-face interviewing, focus group interviewing and document analysis. It was at this stage that an informed consent form was provided for each participant to sign. In the informed consent form, participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and hence were free to withdraw from the study without any repercussions. Secondly, they were advised that the study or the researcher was not going to harm them in any way. Instead, the results of the study could benefit them if recommendations could be taken up

by the government in future to improve educational welfare programmes for learners left behind by parents who stayed in other countries. The participants were also assured that they would be consulted to verify their contributions before the presentation and publication of the results.

To capture everything said by the participants in the oral interviews, a tape recorder was used to record the contributions of the interviewees and the respondents were made aware of this arrangement before the interviews to clear any suspicion that could have emanated from such and to ensure that respondents could be free to supply as much detail as they could. The tape recordings were to be kept in the researcher's password proof computer for at least three years before disposal to ensure that the information remained confidential and for future reference in case of any possible issues that could be raised by the participants against the content of the study. Furthermore, the researcher committed himself to keep privacy on everything that would be discussed to allow respondents to open up and supply qualitative in-depth data.

After rapport was built by being open and after supplying the respondents with all the information concerning the context under which the study was to be conducted, the researcher then embarked on the actual collection of data. Initially, it took two days to collect data from each of the two study sites. On the first day at each site, the researcher conducted focus group interviews with the selected primary school teachers. Due to probing that was done, focus group sessions took one hour to one hour thirty minutes per session. Focus group interviews were followed by face-to-face key participant interviews with learners and each session lasted for about thirty minutes. Furthermore, data were also collected during member checking thus data collection period stretched to six months.

The second day involved face-to-face key participant interviews with the school head and guardians. In addition to interviewing school heads and guardians, admission registers, class registers and academic progress reports of the learners were analysed too to establish enrolment patterns, attendance and performance progress respectively. The researcher got immersed into the data immediately after every encounter with the participants to discern meanings of everything said whilst fresh. Analysing the data during data collection helped the researcher further improve questioning techniques hence research rigour (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016).

The other documents analysed were welfare programme beneficiaries' registers at the respective schools. This was done to check the level of inclusiveness in school policies concerning different categories of vulnerable learners at the schools. The vulnerable learners searched for included orphans, those with disabilities, those with terminally ill parents, children of old aged parents and children who were vulnerable because their parents had migrated leaving them under the care of other parents or staying alone.

Thanh and Thanh (2015) identify corresponding constructs to quantitative investigators that can be applied in qualitative research as follows: credibility corresponding to internal validity, transferability corresponding to external validity/generalisability, dependability corresponding to reliability and conformability corresponding to objectivity. Accordingly, since this study is a qualitative case study rooted in the interpretive paradigm where reality is discovered through participants' views and experiences of the phenomenon under study, its rigour was established qualitatively; what has come to be known in research as trustworthiness? In that respect, terms that relate to trustworthiness are hereby expounded on.

One way to establish research rigour in qualitative research is to test research credibility. According to Anney (2014), credibility relates to the truthfulness of research results. Strategies that can be used to establish credibility include triangulation, prolonged exposure to the phenomenon, member checking, peer examination, time sampling, reflexivity, interview technique, and structural coherence among others (Anney, 2014; Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2014; Yin, 2014).

One strategy used in the present study to improve credibility was triangulation which is defined by Thanh and Thanh (2015) as a strategy of gathering data from various sources, and use of different data types or researchers in a single study. In line with the above definition, Anney (2014) categorises triangulation into three types namely investigator triangulation, data triangulation/informants triangulation and methodological triangulation and commends that triangulation helps to reduce bias, and cross-examines the integrity of participants' responses and enhances data quality. These ideas were made use of and methodological triangulation involved face-to-face key participant interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis. Data obtained through the use of all these techniques were compared and corroborated accordingly. In addition to the triangulated data gathering techniques, data were also obtained from various participants who were rich in information to do with the schooling life of learners left behind by their biological parents based outside Zimbabwe and these included school heads, guardians and learners left behind.

Besides, methodological triangulation, the time of data collection was stretched over six months including the initial interview, follow-ups and member checking stages during which time the researcher interacted with the participants and immersed himself in the life world of participants and this helped in building rapport. According to Yin

(2014), good rapport with participants helps to build trust and subsequently leads to the participants emptying issues that could not be told to a stranger. Since the study sought in-depth experiences of the respondents' feelings and their analysis of the role of biological parents, guardians and government in satisfying the educational needs of learners left by emigrants, it followed therefore that there was a need for the researcher to be part of the participants' community to have sensitive information released from the participants.

The participants in this study were accorded the opportunity to confirm the results of the study. This was done by taking the results of the study back to the participants so that the researcher's interpretation of the information provided by the participants could be verified. This was done to ensure that both parties shared similar data. To facilitate member checking, participants' verbal responses were audiotaped during data gathering and then played later at the stage of member checking. Thanh and Thanh (2015) commend member checking in that other than clarification of what could have been said by the participant during the interview, new or additional perspectives on the issue under study could be raised thereby improving the credibility of the study. True to the above observation, clarifications and corrections were done in the present study upon taking the findings to the two school heads who participated in the study.

The other technique adopted to improve the credibility of the present study was keeping of field journal or reflexivity. Reflexivity concerns keeping and maintenance of field notes where the researcher records observations, and own feelings about the phenomenon or the participants as the researcher experiences them in the field in a real-life context (Creswell, 2013). Keeping notes helps in that even the researcher can also evaluate self and improve on biases recorded based on one's prior experiences or held views before one immerses himself in the study. If one becomes aware of one's biases, there are high

chances that the biases can be corrected resulting in the recording of credible data. Accordingly, all notes were recorded as the researcher interacted with the participants.

Research rigour in qualitative research can also be established through testing its transferability. Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Thanh & Thanh (2015). According to Anney (2014), transferability can be established through thick description and purposeful sampling. Thick description can be done by critically describing and outlining the whole research process from the methodology used to research questions, techniques of data collection and context under which data were collected to the production of the final report so that other interested researchers can also replicate the study elsewhere to see if similar results could be obtained (Anney, 2014). In this respect, a detailed analysis of the chosen interpretive paradigm, qualitative collective case study research design, research instruments, samples and sampling techniques, data gathering, data presentation and analysis procedures were done through reading and re-reading to ensure that the whole research process was intact. In addition to these, research ethics applicable to the present study were outlined as recorded somewhere in this book together with research limitations so that whoever would be interested in replicating it could do so. However, even though thick descriptions were done, it should be noted that this study could not be transferred to any context or to participants who are not involved in the care of learners with absent parents. This is so because the study was drawn from two schools only with a sample of six learners whose biological parents lived outside Zimbabwe, thirteen teachers who were teaching those learners, six guardians and two school heads from the schools where these learners learnt. The argument is that such a small sample could only provide in-depth data that is particular to the selected members hence results may not be transferrable to other groups since contexts may differ.

However, the results of the study could be a valuable springboard on which welfare programmes for the education of disadvantaged learners could be built.

The third trustworthiness measurement in qualitative research is dependability. It is defined as the stability of findings over time (Anney, 2014). Anney (2014) further observes that dependability can be established through; audit trail, stepwise replication, code-recode strategy and peer examination.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2011), an audit trail is an examination of the inquiry process and product to validate the data and it involves the researcher accounting for all the research decisions and activities to show techniques used to collect, record and analyse data. To put in place a clear audit of the present study, raw data, that is, field notes and audios recorded during data collection were kept so that whoever may need to check the authenticity of the analysed data can refer to the raw data to verify the data. Information concerning the research process was shared with other researchers during such moments as thesis defence and weaknesses identified were improved. Besides, one high school English teacher helped in reviewing the transcripts translated by the researcher from the Shona language that was used to collect from data with learners and guardians. Other than the fact that the teacher could translate English, she hailed from the area where the participants of the study were drawn so could pick every dialectical issues that could have ensued. Furthermore, the input of research supervisors was made use of strictly.

The fourth and final construct of qualitative research that was considered in this study was confirmability. Anney (2014) refers to confirmability as the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers where they establish that the results of the study are a true reflection of what could have

happened in the field rather than the researcher's imaginations. Other researchers can corroborate findings if they have verified them and this can be done through audit trails, reflexive journals, and triangulation (Anney, 2014; Creswell, 2014). To ensure that the results of the present study were confirmed, all field notes were safely kept and made available to anyone who would like to see them. In addition to recording and keeping field notes, data were obtained from various sources namely teachers, school heads, guardians, learners and from class registers, academic performance reports and welfare registers. In addition to these different data sources, interviews and document analysis were also used to collect data so that data could be corroborated.

The other technique used by the researcher in a bid to improve the worthiness of the study was pilot testing. Gray (2014) observes that a pilot study is a trial run-through to test the research design with a subsample of respondents who have characteristics similar to those identifiable in the main sample to be surveyed. The pilot study allows any potential problems in the proforma of the research instrument to be identified and corrected. One can thus say this trial is a prerequisite in research since it provides the opportunity to refine and develop sound instruments and the procedures for conducting the actual project. Kilanowski (2011) outlines the vitality of the pilot study as follows:

- To identify design and methodological problems
- To establish the feasibility of recruitment and retention procedures.
- To test the feasibility of protocols, and interventions.
- To estimate the effect of size.
- To determine the time required to administer an instrument.
- To assess preliminary data about reliability, readability and applicability of an instrument.

- To develop calculated costs of an intervention and budget justification.

- To refine analysis procedures.

The study, therefore, informs both process and outcome and the researcher had to administer it.

The pilot study was done at different schools from which the main study was carried out. The respondents were asked to evaluate the research instruments and the content of the questions for possible modification to produce one that would improve the worthiness of the main study (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, some research questions were modified because of the input of participants in the pilot study.

Resnik (2011) defines ethics as norms for conduct that distinguish acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Ethical research avoids violating the rights of the people being studied or harming them in any fashion. Three major aspects cited by researchers as crucial to the keeping of the rightful ethical code relate to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent (Creswell, 2014, Yin, 2013). Gray (2013) suggests that respondents should be given an informed consent form before they participate which should include the following:

- The aims of the research.
- Identity of the researcher.
- Characteristics and composition of participants.
- Kind of information being sought.
- The participant's time required.
- That participation is voluntary.
- That responding to all questions is voluntary.
- People who will use the data.
- Preservation of respondents' anonymity.
- That data collected is the data to be used at last.

For this study, the researcher sought consent from the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Masvingo Provincial Education Director and District Schools Inspector Mwenezi District so that permission could be granted to get into schools. It was successfully done. Assent was sought for the learners to participate. None of the participants was asked to identify themselves by name. The introductory part of the interview schedule assured the participants that the researcher would commit himself to keep privacy and confidentiality. The participants were also told to withdraw from participating at any time whenever they thought or felt that their participation would negatively affect them or on any other personal grounds.

Once the data are collected, it needs to be analysed. Creswell (2014:245) says data analysis, “involves segmenting and taking apart the data (like peeling back the layers of an onion) and putting it back.” In a more related conceptualisation of data analysis, Filippa (2011:54) comments, “interpretive analysis can be looked upon as being a back and –forth motion between different dimensions and points of view, such as between different descriptions and interpretations, part and whole or foreground and background.” Data analysis is thus an exercise in which data gathered from various sources in a single study are extensively scrutinised, corroborated and explained so clearly that they become meaningful and acceptable to readers and seen as a true reflection of the perspectives of the participants about the phenomenon of a specific study. To analyse data in the present study, qualitative data analysis approaches were adopted since the study adopted a qualitative case study design that aimed to generate textual, descriptive, narratives, actual quotations and memos as data types (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Filippa, 2011).

There are several data analysis approaches under qualitative research ranging from hermeneutics, narratives/performance, discourse,

grounded theory, ethnographic, phenomenological, content, and inductive analysis among others and one's choice is depended on one's research questions, the design and instruments used to gather data, data type and the intended beneficiary of the data (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014; Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016; Filippa, 2011). However, despite this long list of data analysis approaches, it should be acknowledged that in real practice these approaches largely share more similarities than differences hence reference is made to a variety of them in the current discussion. Cognisant of that fact though, the present study is analysed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis (Vaisimoradi *et al.*, 2016) since the approaches were viewed by the researcher as more elaborate, detailed and fitting to analysing textual and naturalistic data that are usually generated from multiple sources in this qualitative descriptive case study.

Cohen *et al.* (2011) define content analysis as a process by which huge volumes of textual or pictorial data are summarised and classified into fewer categories that are easy to comprehend. The authors commend the approach in that; a researcher can analyse data unobtrusively without the cases being aware that they are being analysed, it is systematic and can be verified since the data will be permanently written down on paper, and it improves research worthiness since data gathered in the natural context of the participants will be analysed. In the present study, this approach was used in the analysis of official documents namely class attendance registers, academic progress reports and child welfare registers to depict attendance trends, performance and schools' welfare policies respectively. Since various records were analysed, corroboration of data were made possible and this improved research credibility as well.

Vaisimoradi *et al.* (2016) view qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis as complementary approaches that can be used in the same

study to enhance understanding of results. In their analysis of thematic analysis, Vaisimoradi *et al.* (2016:101) begin by conceptualising the theme which they characterise as follows:

- the main product of data analysis
- used as an attribute, descriptor, element and concept
- an implicit topic that organises a group of repeating ideas
- it enables researchers to answer the study question
- contains codes that have a common point of reference
- has a high degree of generality that unifies ideas regarding the subject of inquiry
- has subthemes or subdivisions

Thematic analysis is thus a qualitative research analysis approach in which themes that emerge from the data gathered form the basis of analysing and interpreting data. In this respect, Vaisimoradi *et al.* (2016:103) indicate the importance of theme and give phases and stages of theme development thus:

Table. 4.2: Vaisimoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove theme analysis

Phases	Stages
Initialisation	-reading transcriptions and highlighting units -coding and looking for abstractions in participants' accounts
Construction	-classifying -comparing -labelling -translating and translitering -defining and describing
Rectification	-relating themes to establish knowledge -stabilising
Finalisation	-developing the storyline

While these author's 'take' places much emphasis on phases and stages of theme development in both qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, Creswell (2014:247) outlines steps that researchers ought to consider when analysing qualitative data and arrange them from bottom to the top as raw data (transcripts, field notes, images), organising and preparing data for analysis, reading through all data, coding the data (hand or computer), themes description, interrelating themes/description and interpreting the meaning of themes/descriptions. However, Creswell (2014:245) says "Data analysis in qualitative research will proceed hand-in-hand with other parts of developing the qualitative study, namely, the data collection and the write-up of findings." In this respect, the identified steps are thus guidelines that may not be strictly followed in the given order.

The current researcher made use of the above authors' guidelines in the analysis of the results of this study. To begin with, the researcher recorded all data from personal and focus group interviews using a tape recorder during the sessions to ensure that correct raw data were always available. Besides tape-recorded data, notes were also recorded in a notebook where important accounts of the participants were captured during field visits. These data were interrogated through repeated reading to establish the general impression of the participants. de Hoyos and Barnes (2012) opine that repeated reading leads to data coding where the concern of the participants is established resulting in the segmentation of paragraphs, sentences and images into categories.

According to Vaisimoradi *et al.* (2016:102) "category refers to the descriptive level of text and is an explicit manifestation of the participants' account." The process of data categorisation was important in this study which intended to gather as much natural data

as possible. It was from these descriptive data in categories that themes could be developed from emerging data. For this study, narrations were captured verbatim across the various participants and comparisons were made against individuals, groups of participants and from information gathered from documents to establish key issues as raised by the participants.

Data coding (marking various sections of the text that seem to have the same theme) (Filippa, 2011) was done manually using coloured pencils. Creswell (2014:248) identifies three categories of codes which are: codes on topics that readers would expect to find, codes that are surprising and were not anticipated at the beginning of the study and codes that are unusual and that are in and of themselves, of conceptual interest to readers.

Since this study is a qualitative case study principally embedded in the interpretive paradigm where reality is fluid and ever-changing depending on the context, the researcher opted for open coding to allow new views to be accommodated throughout the study (Creswell, 2014). Opening coding helped in getting enriched data since some anticipated ideas could be captured from the participants who essentially should provide information about how they viewed schooling of learners with absent parents. The researcher related the coded themes to establish knowledge which was then presented as narratives, and words. A summary of the described methodology is hereby illustrated:

Paradigm Interpretive
Approach Qualitative
Design Descriptive qualitative case study
Sampling Technique Purposive
Sample 6 learners, 13 teachers, 6 guardians, 2 school heads
Data gathering Key participant interview, focus group interview, reflexive journal, document analysis
Data analysis Narrating, synthesising, content analysis, categorising, sorting, coding, developing themes
Trustworthiness Issues Credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability
Ethical considerations Informed consent, confidentiality, assent, voluntary participation, anonymity

Figure 4. 1: Overview of Research Methodology

Chapter Four outlined the procedures taken in the study to gather data intended to answer the questions. Interpretive paradigm, qualitative approach and qualitative descriptive case study design were extensively discussed and their relevance to the present study was shown.

The chapter also discussed population characteristics and sampling techniques that were used to select a sample of 30 respondents. Research tools used and discussed in the chapter were face-to-face key participant interview schedule, focus group interview schedule, and document analysis guide and field notes protocol. The other important aspects discussed were trustworthiness issues, ethical considerations, the actual procedure undertaken to collect data and data analysis. The next chapter describes data that were obtained from the actual study.