THE MANIFESTATIONS OF LEARNING SUPPORT IN THE LIVES OF HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS

M.R.N. NWANNA

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THE MANIFESTATIONS OF LEARNING SUPPORT IN THE LIVES OF HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS

by

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in the
Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
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PRETORIA
September 2006

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO

my late father, Peter Nwoyeoka Nwobu and my late mother, Monica Nwatoka Nwobu

whose love for literacy awoke in them the desire

and wish for me to attain this level of education, that I may become

a source of motivation and encouragement to children around me.

My husband BJ, and my daughters Ona and Chioma, whose love and support

strengthened me through the course of the study.

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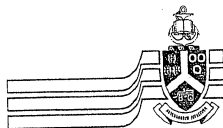
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DECLARATION

I, M.R.N. Nwanna (student number 24272346), declare that:

"The manifestations of learning support in the lives of high school learners"

is my original work and that all the sources that were consulted and quoted have been acknowledged in the reference list.

M.R.N. NWANNA
September 2006

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**CLEARANCE NUMBER :** EP06/09/09
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD (Learning support and Guidance) Manifestations of learning support for high school learners
INVESTIGATOR(S)	M R N Nwanna
DEPARTMENT	Educational Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	22 October 2004
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPROVED

This ethical clearance is valid for $\boxed{3}$ *years and may be renewed upon application*

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE	Dr S Human-Vogel
DATE	19 – 09- 2006

CC	Ms Jeannie Beukes Prof I Eloff

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

SUMMARY

The study is a qualitative explanation of the manifestations of learning support in the lives of high school learners experiencing barriers to learning. The primary research question that guided this study was: *How does learning support manifest itself in the lives of high school learners?* Nine learners repeating grade nine were sampled to participate in the study. Co-participating were nine family members, seven educators and the principal. Interviews and observations were conducted to determine the nature of barriers to learning experienced by high school learners, and the ways in which learning support manifests in their lives. Theme analysis was then used to analyze the data collected. This process yielded two main themes, e.g. *barriers to learning* and *manifestations of learning support*. The two main themes were then further divided into eight sub-themes and fourteen categories.

The findings of the study are articulated in terms of the ecosystemic perspective, which then indicated that barriers to learning issued from factors related to learners, educators, families, the education system and society. The sub-themes and categories that emerged on barriers to learning are discussed in detail in the thesis. The study further revealed that learning support manifests in diverse ways for the participants in this study, i) in terms of knowledge about and the availability of learning support, ii) in terms of guidance, advice, motivation, encouragement and one-on-one support, iii) in terms of extra classes, extra work and assistance with schoolwork and finally, iv) in terms of the mobilization of available resources. In conclusion, the study illustrates that there is low consistency in the ways in which learning support manifests in the lives of the learners in the study. It also shows a lack of formal avenues that can be accessed for learning support by the learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Keywords

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CHAPTER 1
IDENTIFYING THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This research explores multiple case studies of nine Grade Nine learners in a high school in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, who are experiencing difficulties in learning and are repeating the grade. The aim of the study is to explore how learning support manifests itself in the lives of these learners. Literature (Lerner, 2003:266 & 267; Tilstone, 2001:320 & 321) on learning support is dominated by learning support for learners in the primary school. However, we know that difficulties in learning often persist into the high school years and even into adulthood. In this study, the researcher will endeavour to explore the manifestations of learning support for *high* school learners.

The sources that will be employed in collecting data are:
- Interviews with learners, family members, educators and the principal
- Observation of learners in the classroom environment
- Analysis of learners' class-work, homework, projects
- Analysis of their scholastic reports
- Site visits and field notes.

This data will be used to explore the barriers to learning experienced by the learners, in order to then determine and explore the manifestations of learning support in the lives of these learners. But first, here is an explanation of how this study originated.

1.2   THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The idea for this study came from my experience as a teacher in Nigeria, where I had fifteen years of practical teaching in public high schools before coming to South Africa.

The first few years after starting to teach were all right; then things seemed to change. Learners began to exhibit a lack of interest in what was going on in the classroom. I was

alarmed and disappointed in 'me' because I thought I was not doing enough. I changed my teaching methods many times in an effort to get my students on board, but it all failed. I then decided to talk to colleagues in other learning areas and discovered they were also frustrated. This was confirmed at the end of the term when the results of the learners showed failure in almost every learning area. I went around schools asking what was happening and discovered that the problem was not peculiar to the school at which I taught. My colleagues in other schools were equally frustrated and did not know how to handle the situation.

This went on for years, and to my dismay, each year was worse than the previous one. The authorities did not seem to be sensitive to the increasing rate at which learners were failing in the public school system. This lack of sensitivity could have been due to the fact that most of these individuals had their own children in private schools or in schools overseas.

I will admit that some teachers began to take advantage of the situation to make quick money out of parents who often did not care whether their children were learning or not. I found it alarming that parents were prepared to pay to get their children into the next grade, but no one wanted to investigate what support could be given to help them learn better - not even school principals or teachers who began to award undeserved scores.

One year, a mother whom I had not seen throughout the academic year, came to me a few days before the end of the school year and asked what I thought could be done to get her child into the next grade. She had nothing to say when I asked why she had not organised any form of support for her child during the school year, as it was too late to render help at that point.

My last year in Nigeria as a teacher (from May 2002 – April 2003), before coming to South Africa was so disheartening that it got me wondering about learning support and thinking that help has to be sought; and the only way would be to go back to school myself, to do research into learning support and to determine how best to use this to get learners back on track.

Even though I know that South Africa and Nigeria are two different countries, and that the results from a study conducted in South Africa cannot be generalised to cover learning support in Nigeria, it is my hope that some of the results from this proposed study may resonate elsewhere. High school learners often experience difficulty in learning (for various reasons) and an understanding of learning support for them may perhaps increase the efficacy of learning support and/or the knowledge based on learning support for *all* learners.

1.3   RATIONALE BEHIND THE STUDY

South Africa's problems are often related to the policies of *Apartheid*, which adversely affected society by exacerbating problematic issues such as poverty, housing and health. This inevitably affected education, as it led to numerous barriers to learning. The path to *dealing* with these barriers lies in social reconstruction (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2004:18-19).

In South Africa, the challenge of tackling the state of the education system is still mainly policy work. Quality of education and equality in education are connected. Therefore, while quality education remains the primary task of any democratic government, equality in education is the overall goal of the educational policy (Steyn, 2000/20:47). Recently, however, there has been progress from policy formulation to implementation (Donald *et al*., 2002:19). Yet the challenge is still about transforming the *process* in education and in order to do this, the values, understanding and actions of parents, the community, learners and educators will have to change (Donald *et al*., 2004:20). Nonetheless, the aim of this transformation is to create a balance between *quality of education and equality in education* (Steyn, 1995/15:22 & 2000/20:47).

In the researcher's opinion, much seems to have been done for younger children in terms of learning support more than has been done for high school learners. In recent times, the trend towards inclusive learning environments has been increasing and so more young children experiencing problems are placed in inclusive settings, where they are able to learn with their peers (Lerner, 2003:266 & 267). The inclusion of learners with special needs is already entrenched in the United Kingdom's legislation. A great deal of effort has gone into helping educators to be more positive in teaching learners with varied needs (Tilstone, 2001:320 & 321).

In South Africa, the move towards inclusive education has been substantial. However, it has not included a particular emphasis on those learners who proceed through primary school to high school, but who are still experiencing barriers to learning and particular learning difficulties. This study will cast more light on learning support for high school learners experiencing barriers to learning.

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTION

The research will be guided by the question:

How does learning support manifest itself in the lives of high school learners?

To explain the question above, the following will be asked:

1.   What is the nature of barriers to learning for high school learners?
2.   What is learning support?
3.   What learning support is available for high school learners experiencing barriers to learning?

1.5   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine, explore and explain the manifestations of learning support in the lives of high school learners. After identifying the reasons why high school learners may be experiencing barriers to learning through a literature review, the author will endeavour to look into the available learning support and how this support manifests itself in their lives, in order to inform our theoretical understanding of learning support for high school learners. The findings of the research study may thus increase our knowledge and in-depth understanding of learning support for high school learners experiencing barriers to learning.

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Multiple case studies         │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Participants: 9 high school learners│
│                                      │
│  Co-participants:                    │
│            9 family members          │
│            7 educators               │
│            The principal             │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
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Data collection	Data analysis	Findings
1) Multiple interviews with 9 Grade Nine learners 2) Interviews with 9 family members 3) Semi-structured interviews with 7 educators 4) Semi-structured interview with the principal 5) Observation of participants in the classroom 6) Analysis of participants' classwork, homework, project 7) Analysis of participants' scholastic reports 8) Site visits and field notes	1) Textual transcription 2) Theme analysis 3) Coding 4) Categorization	1) Graphic representation of themes 2) Detailed descriptions 3) In-depth discussion

FIGURE 1.1:   **THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

1.6.1   PARADIGM

The interpretive research paradigm, according to Terre Blanche and Kelly (2004:123), is deemed appropriate for the study as this paradigm deals with understanding what participants in the study make of events in particular contexts. This study will rely on first-hand accounts achieved through interviews, observations and the analysis of documents (Bos & Richardson, 1994:182).

1.6.2   SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Judgemental sampling will be used. This implies that the educators in the approved school for the study will be requested to select learners who have been noted to be encountering difficulties in learning. The participants will consist of nine (9) learners, who are between the ages of fifteen (15) and eighteen (18), scoring thirty to thirty-nine per cent in three learning areas or more, and who are repeating Grade Nine.

All the learners identified will be assigned numbers. A random selection of nine learners will then be made from this group of learners. Finally, the inclusion of learners in the selected group will be confirmed through the application of the final selection criteria:

1)   Confirmation by parents that they are experiencing learning difficulties.
2)   An indication from their academic performance records that they may be experiencing learning difficulties.

The ratio of the gender of participants will be five males to four females. The rationale for this is to create a fairly balanced sample in terms of gender.

1.6.3   DATA COLLECTION

To make the findings of this research more convincing and accurate, the use of multiple sources of evidence will be employed in gathering information (Yin, 2003:98). This method is used in order to clarify meaning, as well as to verify repeatability and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation (Stake, 2000:443). The sources that will be employed in collecting data through the above method include:

1)   Multiple interviews with nine Grade Nine learners

2)   Interviews with nine family members

3)   Semi-structured interviews with seven educators

4)   Semi-structured interview with the principal

5)   Observation of the nine learners in the classroom environment

6)   Analysis of their class-work, homework, projects

7)   Analysis of their scholastic reports

8)   Site visits and field notes.
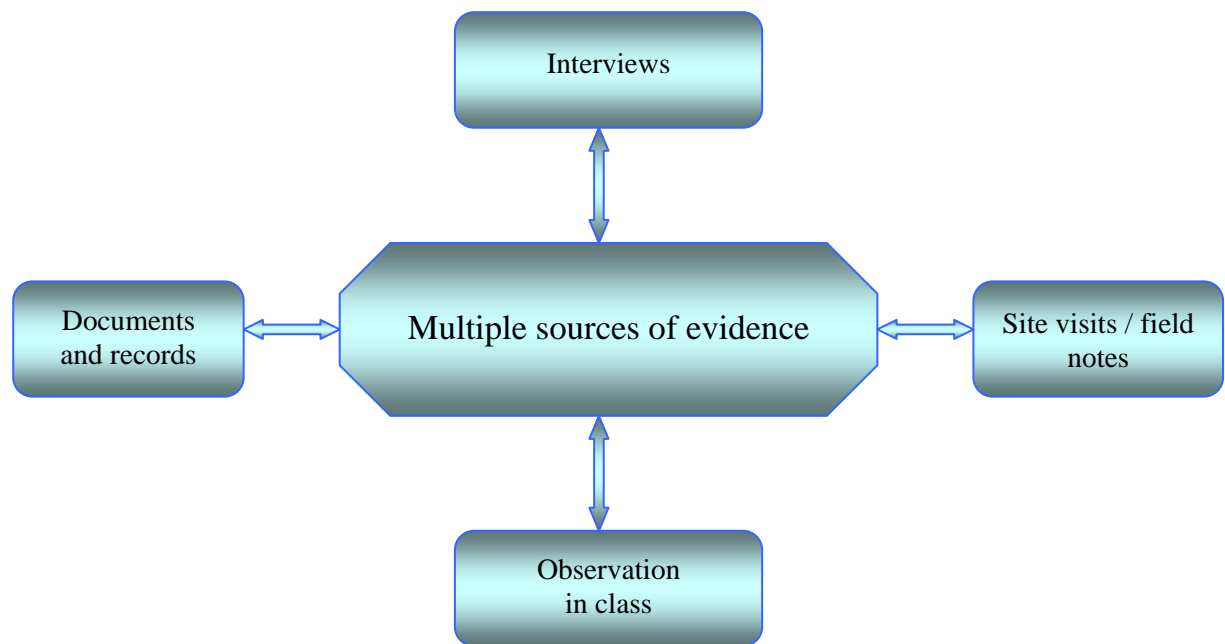
FIGURE 1.2:   MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE (idea from Yin, 2003:100)

1.6.3.1   Interviews

The interview is a valuable and reliable source of evidence, which will be used in the research to obtain the sequence of important events leading to barriers to learning and subsequent learning support. The interview will also be used to provide information concerning the learner's attitude to tasks and settings (Yin, 2003:89; Smith, 1998:308). The use of interviews as a source of evidence fits in with the interpretive research paradigm in this study, since it affords one the opportunity of getting to know the learners and of understanding how they feel, as this involves face-to-face verbal interaction (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004:128; Fontana & Fey, 2000:645).

The need for a few central questions for participants and co-participants necessitates the use of semi-structured interviews in this study. However, these will be laced with some unstructured questions, where the questions are not fixed but are allowed to arise from the exchange with the participants and co-participants. This type of interview is favoured because its flexibility makes it more likely to yield evidence not envisaged (Breakwell, 1998:231; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:159).

Interviews with learners: Nine learners in Grade Nine will be interviewed in the process of collecting data in this study. The interview sessions will be carried out in the school after visits to introduce the study to the participants have been made. The participating learners will be informed of their rights and freedom to withdraw if at any point they feel uncomfortable about continuing. They will also be assured of confidentiality. The sessions will be held at break or at the close of school.

Family members: Nine family members representing each participating learner will be given semi-structured interviews. Consent forms will have been sent to them prior to the interview sessions, which will be conducted in their homes or any other venue.

Educators: Seven educators will be given semi-structured interviews in the school premises during their free periods. The Head of the Department of Life Skills, appointed to give guidance and assistance to the researcher, will conduct the selection of participating educators. Their selection will be based on the learning areas where learners exhibit barriers to learning.

The principal: A semi-structured interview will also be conducted with the principal of the sample school in her office in the school. Prior visits will have been made, during which the study is introduced to the principal and permission sought for the use of the school in the study.

Follow-ups: Follow-up interviews will be conducted in the school for participating learners, educators and the principal. The family members will again be visited at home or any other convenient venue.

The interview sessions will be tape-recorded, in addition to some note-taking. The duration of each session will not exceed half an hour with each participant in order not to tire them, and

so that they do not lose concentration. All the tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed in order to convert the verbal data to textual data.

1.6.3.2   Observations/Site visits

To establish trustworthiness in this research study, observation will be useful in supplying additional information. It will be employed early on during the process as this aids in gathering evidence on how a problem shows itself in the real setting (Yin, 2003:93; Smith, 1998:308). The advantages of observation as a source of evidence are that it affords one the opportunity to get close to the participants to witness the actual happenings, makes accessible behaviours and environmental conditions and also brings to view gestural cues that make the interviewee's words during an interview more meaningful (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004:134, Yin, 2003:93; Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000:673). The researcher will heed Wilkinson's (1998:227) advice that participants should become accustomed to the observer's presence and be told what is being observed and why. Smith (1998:308) maintains that the conclusions from observations are seen by parents as more relevant than the results of standardized tests, and that the researcher is able to perceive the learner's frustrations in his environment. The conclusion by Smith (1998:308) is one of the reasons for the choice of observation as a source of evidence in this study.

It is important for the researcher to remain focused on the research question, while being open to any information that may be helpful. The learner's interaction with peers, other learners, educators and adults, as well as their reactions to what goes on around them, will be a source of information which will help one determine why there are problems. Participants will also be observed in the classroom environment.

1.6.3.3   Documents and Records

Documents and records, as useful and valuable sources of evidence, are used here mostly to corroborate and substantiate the information from other sources because they provide specific details (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:99; Yin, 2003:87). School records like class-work and scholastic reports may give a hint of when the learner's problem started and also provide an indication of what questions should be asked as well as what needs to be done (Smith, 1998:308).

For the study, an assessment of the participants' grades, progress and scholastic reports, as well as their class-work will be conducted and the results of the findings compared with the evidence from the other sources for corroborative purposes.

1.6.4   DATA ANALYSIS

As data collection is in progress, the researcher continuously reflects on impressions, relationships and connections. The field notes collected during interviews and observations are reflected and elaborated upon by explaining what was observed or discussed during the interview. This is aimed at helping the researcher to identify patterns and themes (Henning *et al*., 2004:127; Bos & Richardson, 1994:190).

Through inductive reasoning, the researcher, in analysing the data collected, will sort the data into manageable forms as themes, patterns, trends and relationships. In this way, there will be a separation of trivia from relevant factors and the identification of a real pattern can emerge (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:160; Mouton 2001:108; Patton, 2002:432).

In developing themes, the use of codes is employed as this means breaking the data up into labelled pieces, arranged in analytically relevant clusters under code names, for later analysis and comparison with other clusters. The sorting and categorization of data into themes, patterns and codes are useful in the description, interpretation and explanation of the final outcome, as well as in making predictions and/or recommendations if necessary.

1.6.5   FINDINGS

As stated, the researcher will sort the data collected into themes, patterns, trends and relationships through inductive reasoning. These are coded and named, and then followed by putting the evidence in perspective. To do this, the researcher provides a rich, vivid and detailed description of the processes and undertakings with all involved in the course of data collection. Finally, there is an in-depth account of the events and learners studied, structured around the key themes on the available learning support for the participants in this study.

1.6.6   TRUSTWORTHINESS

In this study, the researcher will ensure trustworthiness by applying the following strategies (Greene in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:991):

1)   The use of multiple data collection strategies such as interviews, observation and documentation/records.

2)   Sampling for diversity.

3)   Follow-up interviews for agreement on final results.

4)   Monitoring the researcher's bias through continuous reflection, literature review and conversations with practitioners and researchers in the field.

5)   Explicitly acknowledging the tensions that may exist in the data.

1.6.7   ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

Observations made during the researcher's years of teaching inform the assumptions for the study. The first assumption is that learners can experience barriers to learning, which can be intrinsic and extrinsic. It is assumed that there is learning support available in some form to assist these learners. This assumption may change as the research progresses. The need to understand learning support for high school learners who need it, has resulted in methodologically assuming that more knowledge can be obtained about learning support within a case studies design.

1.6.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher will adhere to the code of Ethical Guidelines of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria.

The consent of parents or caregivers of participants in the study will be obtained before the commencement of the project. Permission will be sought from the Department of Education to interview and observe learners identified as experiencing learning difficulties in a high school in Pretoria (see Appendix A).

The participants will be fully informed of the objective of the study, which is to explore learning support and its manifestations in the lives of high school learners encountering

learning difficulties. They will be advised of their right to privacy and the right to withdraw if they no longer wish to participate, even after the programme has begun (see Appendix B).

Participants who give any indication that they are uncomfortable about being included in the study will have the opportunity to withdraw from it with immediate effect. Beforehand, they will receive a written orientation towards the study that will explain the purpose and process of the study. During the course of the study, the researcher will also be available telephonically to all the participants, should any further questions arise.

All data provided by participants will be treated as highly confidential. Finally, to ensure anonymity, the identity of the school and names of the principal, educators and learners participating in the research will neither be mentioned nor used in the final write-up.

1.7   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the conceptual framework is to pinpoint a yardstick that will be a basis for interpreting the information collected in the study.

Learning problems can be caused by different factors, and the cause for one learner may be different from the cause for another. Adelman and Taylor's (1993:14) Types I, II and III causes of learning problems will assist in informing analysis of data collected in this study, which will have been narrowed down to themes and patterns. Also, Donald *et al*'s (2002:31) eco-systemic perspective on barriers to learning arising from 'disadvantaged educational environments', 'inadequate resources' and 'educationally inappropriate policies' will be used to interpret the evidence amassed. The question on how to create a system and process of education that is flexible, sensitive and responsive to the diverse differences of learning needs (Donald *et al*., 2002:29) will be employed as a basis for interpreting the emerging data in the research study. The conceptual framework will also be informed by literature on inclusive education, particularly the work of Dyson and Forlin (2004). Finally, the conceptual framework for this study will include literature that will account for the specific developmental phase of the fifteen (15) to eighteen- (18) year-old adolescent.

1.7.1   SYSTEMS, CAUSES OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND LEARNING SUPPORT

To analyse the development and interaction between the learner and the whole of the social system, Donald *et al*'s (2002:55) 'levels of system related to the education process' will be put to use (see Figure 1.3).
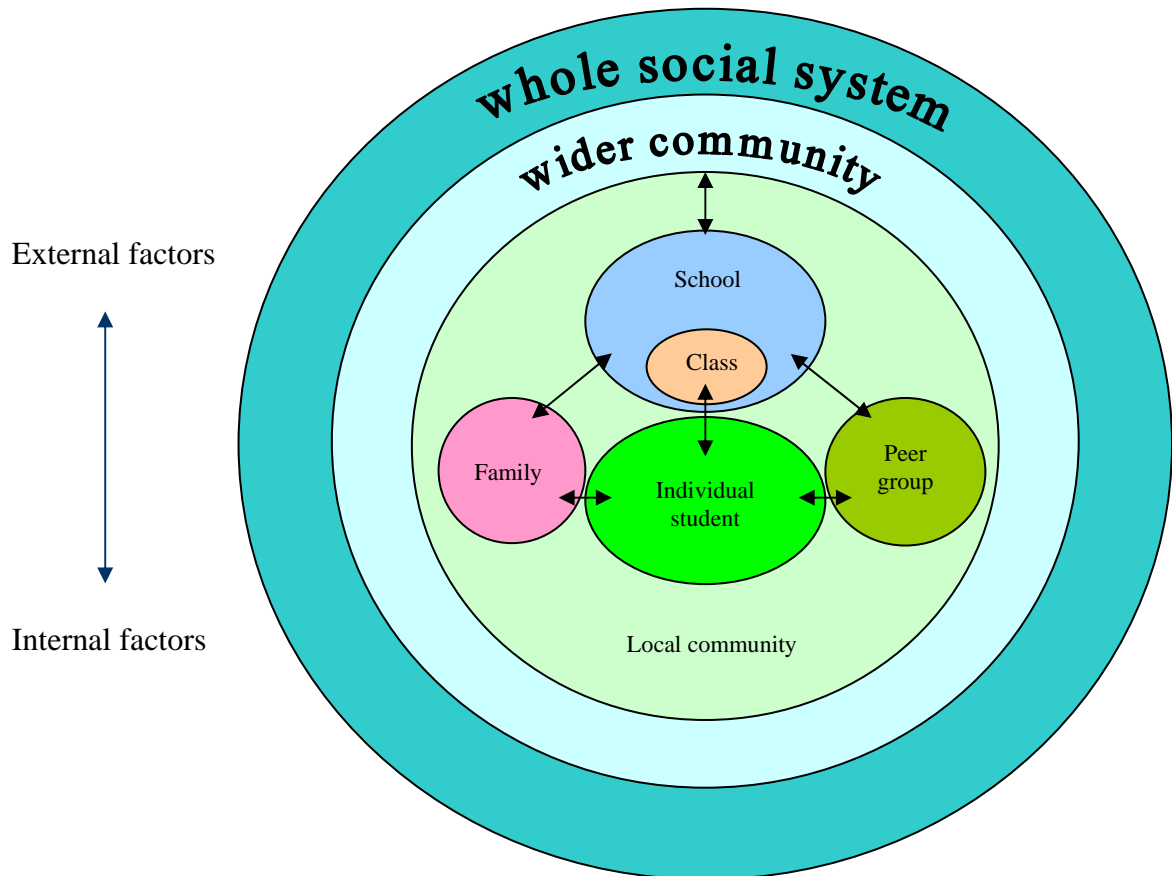
FIGURE 1.3:   LEVELS OF SYSTEM RELATED TO THE EDUCATION PROCESS **(Donald** *et al***., 2002:55)**

A barrier to learning is any factor that constitutes an obstacle to the learner's ability to successfully benefit from schooling; and this can be internal or external to the learner (Donald *et al*., 2002:4). Donald *et al*. (2002:31) maintain that learning needs are generated as a result of barriers of context connected to the socio-economic and political structure of the society concerned, as well as the influences of the communities, schools, families, peer group and the learner on each other. Influenced by the social system, poverty seems to be a major cause of barriers to learning, along with poor educational environments and the need to learn in a language that is not their mother-tongue (Donald *et al*., 2002:31). Social and interpersonal problems that constitute barriers to learning include alcohol or drug abuse, HIV & AIDS and

violence (Donald *et al*., 2002:31). However, there are barriers that are internal in origin, thereby resulting in learning disability. It is nevertheless important to note that the influence of the social context often affects the cause of learning disability (Donald *et al*., 2002:32).

In this study, barriers to learning will be considered as caused by factors outside the learner (poverty, interpersonal problems, lack of accommodation by the society and poor educational environment – which includes poor teaching methods), as well as factors within the learner. These factors within the learner include neurological factors and developmental influences such as physical, cognitive, social and emotional factors.

Adelman and Taylor's (1993:43) 'focal points of intervention' (Figure 1.4), which indicates the types of intervention required in order for learning to occur, will help to inform interpretation of data on support that can be given. The principle guiding the idea of Education for All, which is that schools will accommodate all marginalized learners in need of overcoming barriers (Dyson & Forlin, 2004:32) will be applied.

The critical question thus is: What makes learning difficult? One may hypothesize that the reasons for the problem may range from the society to the learner, the environment and to real disability. Learners with problems do not necessarily encounter similar difficulties, just as causes of the problem differ for each learner.

Theoretically, learning problems can be caused by different factors and these causes are categorized into three types, according to Adelman and Taylor (1993:14). To describe the three categories or groups of possible causes of learning difficulties, Adelman and Taylor's classification in the form of 'types' will be used (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:14).

The first category of causes, hereafter known as Type I, deals with factors outside the learner: that is, factors in the environment. A learner in a disadvantaged social and educational environment is likely to encounter learning problems due to poverty, language of communication at home and school, and family values regarding school. There may also be issues of drug and alcohol abuse, violence, HIV & AIDS, race and gender (Donald *et al*., 2002:32 & 56). The Type I learning problem signifies that the learning environment is deficient (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:14). Studies in the United States of America show that the Type I group exhibited high rates of school failure and dropping out (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:25).

The Type II category deals with problems caused by the learner and the environment equally. The learner displays some capabilities, which the learning environment does not accommodate because there is no room for developmental differences. The learner becomes susceptible or defenceless. The curriculum does not make allowance for reciprocity or interactive transaction between the learner and the environment, and this can result in learning problems (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:25 & 27).

The Type III group indicates neurological problems caused by minor central nervous system dysfunction, giving rise to learning difficulty even in a conducive learning environment. The Type III learning problem can safely be referred to as learning disability, and is intrinsic to the learner (Lerner, 2003:9 & 11).

Type I	Type II	Type III
Learning problem	Learning problem	Learning problem

| caused by factors outside the learner | caused by the learner and environment factors | caused by minor CNS dysfunction (e.g. learning disability) |
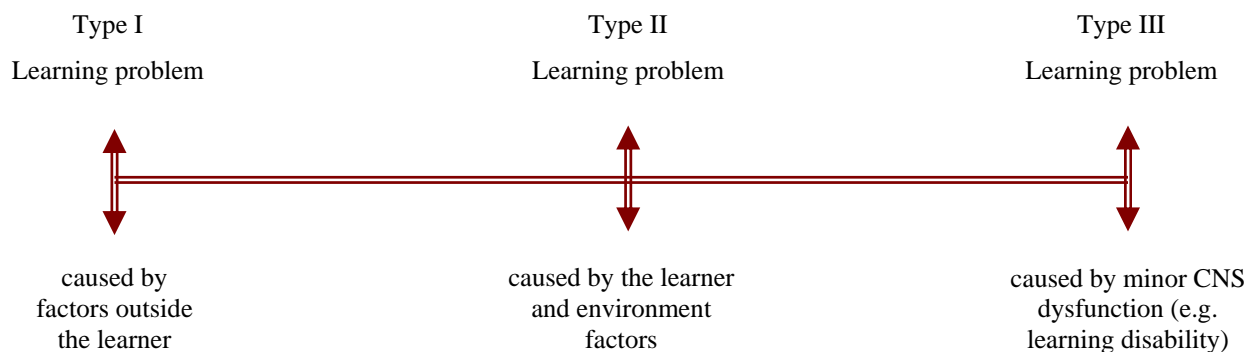
FIGURE 1.4:   THE CATEGORIES OF CAUSES OF LEARNING PROBLEMS (**Adelman & Taylor, 1993:14**)

Types I and II were the easily detectable causes of learning difficulties exhibited by learners during the researcher's years of teaching. Many learners from the Type I group either dropped out or persisted but failed the final examination, which is equivalent to the South African 'matric'. For most of these learners, the problem was detected early enough but the authorities and educators were apparently not disturbed by what was fast turning into a crisis, and so no support was rendered to improve learning. Even seminars and workshops that used to be organised for educators were stopped, thereby limiting learning support to learners indirectly.

Whether learning will be achieved or not depends on the learner's interaction with the environment, i.e. home, school and the society as a whole. The learner's experience at home can be regarded as the foundation for what will later unfold as he develops academically. The

school environment in which the learner spends a considerable part of the day, not only deals with academics but teaches other values that guide people in society. Failure to adapt could result in difficulties (Lerner, 2003:115 & 116).

What measures can be taken for learning to occur? To effect changes that will enhance learning, the structure and system of education can be modified so that the focus will not rest on the learner alone but also on the environment and society as a whole.

Structural changes have begun in South Africa since they are needed for the reconstruction of education, especially in the areas of curriculum, support services and the education of teachers. The change has to involve the family (home), the educators (school), other special professionals and the community (Donald *et al*., 2002:19 & 20). Their values, understanding and actions towards learning and its associated difficulties will be altered so that transformation can be appreciated fully.

In terms of learning support, the transformation process should depend on the cause of the learner's barriers to learning. This implies that if the cause is in the environment, the circumstance should be eliminated or adapted in order to accommodate the learner (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:44 & 45).

It would be short-sighted to centre intervention only on the learner. As the continuum of learning problems shows, the cause of learning difficulties does not rest with the learner alone (see Figure 1.4). It is a transactional affair between the learner and other essential forces. The full continuum of barriers should therefore be addressed in the intervention process as shown in Figure 1.5, which indicates the types of intervention required for learning to occur (Adelman and Taylor, 1993:43).
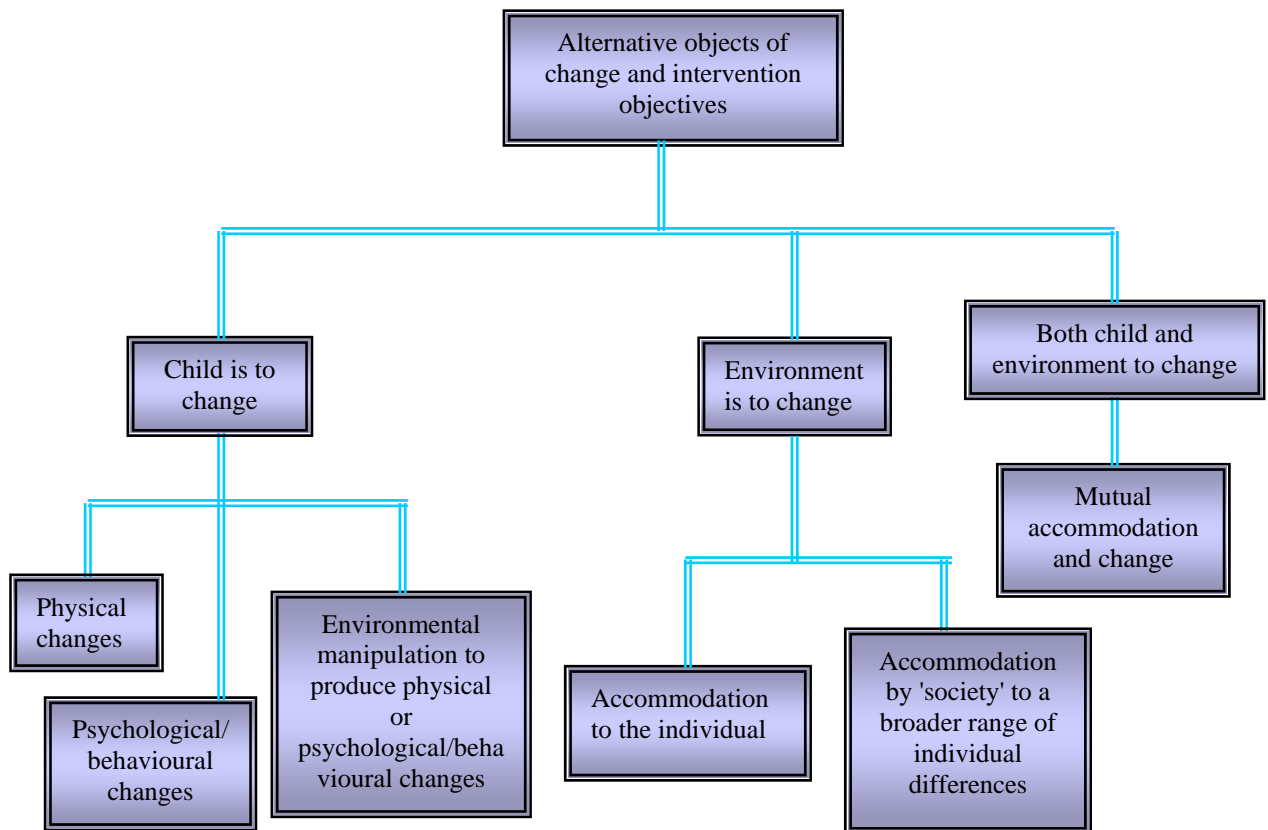
FIGURE 1.5:   FOCAL POINTS OF INTERVENTION (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:43)

The effort to make education possible for all gave rise to the inclusive educational system, where the learner's right to quality education is regarded highly. Inclusion deals with the education of all learners in a regular classroom, irrespective of their abilities. The right 'focuses on the need to ensure that all learners, regardless of disability, are able to access equitable educational opportunities that will allow them to achieve their potential' (Dyson & Forlin, 2004:30). The principle guiding the idea of education for all, is the fact that schools have to accommodate every learner, their abilities/disabilities notwithstanding. These abilities could be 'physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic'. In other words, inclusion does not only concern those with disabilities but deals with a whole range of marginalized learners who need to overcome barriers (Dyson & Forlin, 2004:32).

In South Africa, two forces are considered in handling barriers to learning. The first deals with transforming the society, schools and curriculum to enhance access to education by all learners, regardless of their needs; and the second is the provision of educational support to all involved such as the learners, school and staff, as well as parents. In the long run, the system is equipped to provide an accommodating and supportive learning environment for all.

Although this is still at the policy level, there is nevertheless an appreciation of the diversity of learners and condemnation of discrimination, while the participation and support of learners at all levels of teaching and learning is encouraged (Donald *et al*., 2002:32 & 33).

To summarise inclusion, the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:16) states that inclusive education and training:

- *Are about acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.*
- *Are accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience.*
- *Are about enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.*
- *Acknowledge and respect differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status.*
- *Are broader than formal schooling and acknowledge that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures.*
- *Are about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners.*
- *Are about maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.*
- *Are about empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.*

The full inclusion of learners with problems in regular classrooms is becoming increasingly recognised and is an accepted educational system (Hunt & Goetz, 1995/31:3; Pijl & Hamstra 2005/9:181), as the last decade has witnessed the materialization of inclusion as a fundamental international educational topic (Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Monsen, 2004/8:37). In the United States of America, the law demands that all learners, with or without disabilities, be placed in the 'least restrictive environment'. This means that all learners should be educated in a regular classroom environment except where it is absolutely necessary to place a learner separately (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:57). Since many learners experiencing barriers to learning are placed in the least restrictive environment in the

inclusive system, there is a need for the general classroom educator to be assisted by special educators (Noell & Witt, 1999/33:29), as this will enhance learning. In South Africa, the rights discourse stresses equal educational opportunities for all learners (Naicker, 2004:14). Education is therefore being restructured in order to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all learners, their abilities/disabilities notwithstanding (Engelbrecht, 2004:3).

In this study, learning support is regarded as the intervening help rendered to high school learners experiencing barriers to learning, in order to facilitate their learning capabilities. Support starts when the educator shows an understanding and appreciation of the learner's barriers to learning, as well as a willingness to help. The learner in turn, has to be helped to appreciate and accept learning support if success is to be achieved in the giving of support.

The educator may need to look at the teaching method and consider whether or not a change of method will be necessary to accommodate the learner's level of operation and readiness. Learning environments and materials have to be made conducive to learning and the learner helped to learn at his pace. Optimally, educators are to show understanding of the learner as he changes physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally, and help him to accept these changes as part of development.

The researcher will conceptualise 'learning support' in its broadest sense in this study. For instance, cooperative learning, which is a student-mediated learning process, focuses on cooperation and collaboration amongst learners, while allowing learners to help each other. Learners tend to want to support each other in learning and so they form an understanding and like-mindedness when working together (Sharan & Shaulov in Gillies & Ashman, 2000/34:19). Web and Farivar (in Gillies & Ashman, 2000/34:19) suggest that learners experiencing difficulties profit from this strategy as their peers are often more appreciative of their problems than are their educators and so can tackle the actual problem while making explanations easy to understand and giving these explanations exactly at the time the learner needs the help.

Assistance from the family to the learner will also be included in the researcher's conceptual understanding of learning support. The support of family members, albeit emotional or functional support, may well be a manifestation of 'learning support', and will be considered as such. These (e.g. co-operative learning, the use of illustrations, support by family members) are just some indications of the researcher's inclusive approach to the conceptual

understanding of learning support in the lives of high school learners. Going into the study, the researcher will remain open to all possibilities as to how learning support manifests itself.

1.7.2 DEVELOPMENTAL FACTORS OF ADOLESCENTS (15 TO 18 YEAR-OLDS)

Adolescence is a challenging stage of development during which a variety of transformations takes place in the individual. At this stage in life, the learner is affected by development in different domains. These domains include the physical, the cognitive, the social and emotional types of development, with each developing at different rates, in different ways and at different times for the individual learner. However, it is important to note that the development in one domain is dependent on the other domains as they are completely related (Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000:4-5; Louw, 1997:505). This can be a stormy and stressful period during which the adolescent learner goes through emotional confusion and may even become rebellious and defiant (Louw, 1997:505).

1.7.2.1 Physical development

A sudden burst of growth and pubertal changes usually characterise the commencement of adolescence. These changes are both external and internal. The external bodily changes are a visible increase in height and weight, body hair, size of breasts, menstruation and acne. The internal changes are physiological and manifest themselves in 'motor capabilities and skills, their strength and endurance', as well as increased nutritional needs and sexual maturation (Gouws *et al*., 2000:9).

The learner has to be accepting of the changes, fuse these into his self-image and retain the sense of being the same person, if he is to have a sense of identity (Gouws *et al*., 2000:10). The rate at which the learner grows is determined by factors such as genes, hormones, emotions and the environment.

As the rate of growth varies for individual learners, some adolescents may exhibit clumsiness and poor coordination due to uneven growth order, which they may find embarrassing (Gouws *et al*., 2000:13; Louw, 1997:506). A show of understanding of what the learner is experiencing can go a long way towards helping him build a positive self-image. Mussen *et al*. (in Gouws *et al*., 2000:36) state that things can be overwhelming for the learner, who at this stage in life is becoming independent, adjusting sexually, thinking of his education and

vocation, changing associations with adults and peers, and at the same time is experiencing remarkable biological changes.

1.7.2.2   Cognitive development

A connection exists between learning and cognitive abilities. Cognitive development deals with the learner's ability to become knowledgeable, being the domain that comprises of intelligence, the development of thinking skills and creativity. Cognitive changes usually occur alongside the physical changes. Each learner has his own pattern of development and so being the same age does not imply being at the same cognitive level.

At this developmental stage, the learner becomes more logical, tends to reason, to criticise, ask questions about things, argue, make use of his imagination and begin to form his own opinions (Gouws *et al*., 2000:37-38). As the adolescent often loses sight of reality, he may tend to rebel against norms and values that already exist and where the educator, parents and the society fail to empathise with him, problems may surface in the learning process (Gouws *et al*., 2000:44).

Vygotsky (in Gouws *et al*., 2000:47) believes that the higher cognitive process stems from social interaction and then goes inwards, thereby showing the relationship between the learner and the wider society (Stenberg in Gouws *et al*., 2000:47). Educators, parents and peers therefore have roles to play in the learner achieving a certain level of cognitive development. Other factors that affect intelligence include heredity, culture, gender differences, self-concept, language and motivation (Gouws *et al*., 2000:53-54).

1.7.2.3   Social development

Erikson (in Louw, 1997:516) believes that individuals face certain developmental tasks at a certain stage in life, and for the adolescent, the task is that of developing his own identity. Erikson's perspective is that if this does not go well, the learner may develop a negative identity and may then end up with low self-esteem, an unclear sense of values and a lack of clear goals. He may also assume the identity of others, thereby not developing his own values (Erikson in Louw, 1997:517).

Social and cognitive development can be seen as being dependent on each other since the way the adolescent learner thinks and behaves can be traced to cognitive changes (Bergevin, Bukowski & Miners, 2003:390). As Boyes and Chandler (in Shaffer, 1996:485) put it, cognitive development is very important in the achievement of identity, as those who have mastered the formal-operational thought level have better imaginations and may be better able to resolve identity issues than those who are intellectually immature. The social development of an adolescent learner is vital to his total development, and if this phase is found to be stressful, the learner may experience problems. This stage of development often includes changes between the learner and the people around him, such as parents, siblings, educators, adults and peers.

At the social development phase, as the learner struggles to find a place in society, he finds it more important to be accepted by peers, while gradually moving away from parents' guidance. As he begins to hold strong opinions on matters, he begins also to question the values, interests, opinions and attitudes of parents and other adults (Bergevin *et al*., 2003:401; Gouws *et al*., 2000:67). It is important for parents to be careful and understanding at this stage as they can influence the learner's social and emotional development negatively or positively and can even determine the nature of the conflict that will exist between them and the learner.

The adolescent learner regards the relationship with peers as very significant seeing that they share a great deal of experiences. The peer group is usually a different world, where members have their own traditions, language, dress code and conduct (Mwamwenda, 2004:65; Louw, 1997:519). *To belong* means conforming to what exists in their *own world*. Social acceptability by peers is of great value to the adolescent as he sees the group as a socialising agent, as well as providing comradeship and the chance to put into practice his social skills (Gouws *et al*., 2000:76).

Parents and educators need to be accepting of the learner by showing trust and love and helping him to come to terms with this phase of development. Educators also need to appreciate that learners come from a diverse society and so the social development of learners from a minority group will be different from that of learners from a majority group, just as their backgrounds and life conditions differ (Gouws *et al*., 2000:81).

1.7.2.4   Emotional development

The learner as an adolescent has to cope with different developmental tasks such as adapting socially, managing to relate to people, as well as controlling and expressing emotions in a socially acceptable fashion (Mwamwenda, 2004:69). The emotional state of a learner does not only affect him physically, but affects behaviour or actions around people either positively or negatively. The physical, cognitive and social factors may sometimes result in heightened emotionality. However, most important is the heightened emotionality arising from the learner's relationship with and adaptation to the environment and the need for independence. Excessive demands of educators, parents, peers and the general society are equal stress factors that may make the learner emotionally unstable (Gouws *et al*., 2000:96).

Educators and parents need to assist the adolescent learner in achieving emotional stability by fostering constructive relationships with him, being supportive, providing activities that will help in releasing pent-up emotions, and above all, being empathetic, accepting and understanding of the learner's developmental phase.

1.8   KEY CONCEPTS

In this chapter, the definition of the key concepts in the study is presented as conceptualised by the researcher:

▪   **Learning**
Learning is a continuous process of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes through experiencing or being informed (Reay, 1995:18 & 19). Learning may also be seen as a permanent change in behaviour due to experiencing education (Louw & Edwards, 1997:225).

▪   **Learner**
One who is in the process of gaining knowledge or skill through being informed or by experiencing education ('Own definition', deduced from above).

▪   **High school learner**
In this study, he is a Grade Nine learner between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, who is taking many subjects at school. He is experiencing dramatic developmental changes physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally (Gouws *et al*., 2000:4).

▪   **Parental involvement**

Parents are a learner's first educator, as the provision of academic inspiration, emotional security, and the advancement of self-esteem and curiosity about learning are dependent on parental support and back-up at home (Lerner, 2003:115). Thus, parents being the primary caregivers, parental involvement or participation in the lives of learners will be considered in this study as a significant factor in achieving successful learning.

▪   **Barriers to learning**

These are factors that cause obstacles to learning. They can be within the learner or in the environment (Donald *et al*., 2002:4).

▪   **Learning difficulty**

This means that the learner has problems meeting certain academic requirements. He may perform well in certain areas and less well in others (Bender, 1998:4 & 5). Learning difficulty may also be perceived as not being internal, as it may be linked to external influence in the learner's educational conditions or experience (Donald *et al*., 2002:340). The concept 'learning problem' here may be used when describing learning difficulty as a demanding experience due to external influences, and learning disability as resulting from internal factors (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:25-28).

▪   **Causes of learning difficulties**

Just like barriers to learning, these are blocks to learning which can be intrinsic and/or extrinsic (Reay, 1995:39). These could also be regarded as factors that prevent the achievement of effective learning.

▪   **Motivation to learn**

This will be considered as a base for the provision of learning support in this study. Adelman and Taylor (1993:163) explain motivation to learn as a requirement if learning is to be achieved, while Johnston (1996:27) describes the determination to gain knowledge as "the heart of the learning process".

▪   **Learning support**

The intervening help given to enhance a learner's capabilities in learning (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:42).

▪   **One-on-one support**

This support strategy is significant in combating barriers to learning experienced by learners who may be under achieving and may not voluntarily seek academic assistance in the class. One-on-one support may also be referred to as 'individualization'. Sands, Kozleski and French (2000:60) describe this support strategy as a means of caring for the educational demands of a specific learner. Thus, according to Sibaya and Kruger (2002:136), the strategy is such that it matches the exact learning needs of the individual learner, thereby enabling the educator to adjust the teaching method to the learner's capability and individual technique of learning.

1.9   LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The limitations and strengths of the study will be discussed in depth in Chapter Five of this thesis. For now, the researcher will thus content herself with the following synoptic limitations and strengths:

The findings from the study cannot be generalized due to the use of a small sample of nine learners and the fact that the site of the study is a bounded system (one school) that will be clearly delineated in the study. Furthermore, the study will also focus solely on learners from one grade grouping (Grade Nine), which will further limit possibilities for generalization. However, the depth that will be gained through the specified focus in the study will counter these limitations.

The findings of the study will or may increase our knowledge and understanding of learning support for high school learners who experience barriers to learning. On a design level, the strengths of the study are in-depth insights, high construct validity and good rapport with participants (Mouton, 2003:150).

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CHAPTER 2
EXPLORING THE LITERATURE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will, through a literature review, identify some reasons why learners may be experiencing barriers to learning. The researcher will also explore the literature on available learning support, in order to scrutinize and explain how this support manifests itself in the lives of high school learners. The views of the *Education White Paper 6* on inclusive education and training will be outlined in this chapter, and a review given of some of the literature on inclusive education.

2.2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning is a fundamental developmental process (Shaffer, 1996:302). Reay (1995:17) describes learning as a continuous and natural process, which is closely related to practical experience. Shaffer (1996:302) suggests that learning is a 'fundamental developmental process' because he believes that learning results from the numerous behavioural changes that take place as the individual advances through life. Reay (1995:21) maintains that the duty of the educator is to promote opportunities for learning by exposing learners to experiences that will help them learn. Muthukrishna (2002:149-150) also believes that educators have to regard themselves 'as facilitators of learning'. Ensuring this means creating meaningful classroom environments, inculcating in the learners the responsibility for their own learning and guiding them to use their skills by being fully involved in the learning process. The researcher appreciates Boyer's saying (in Kruger, 2002:107) that *it is our duty as educators to protect a child's potential, not destroy it,* as this complements Kruger's view (2002:109) that the way the educator views teaching and learning will influence the preparation of lessons, the content, the expected outcomes, as well as the assessment of learners. It may also possibly influence learning support. It should be noted that each learner is unique, with different educational needs and suppositions, and so it is expected of educators to identify learners according to their uniqueness in order for their needs to be adequately met by the learning environment (Moletsane, 2002:216).

According to Shaffer (1996:284), some psychologists regard learning as a change in behaviour where the individual thinks and reacts to the environment. This change results from one's experiences and can be attributed to study, observation, repetition and practice, and so is relatively permanent. The concern may be about the level and quality of learning achieved by the learner. Behaviourists (like Watson) are of the opinion that the environment and significant people in the life of a growing child will determine how that child turns out (Eysenck, 2002:97; Shaffer, 1996:54). They are also of the opinion that the individual is conditioned by events in the environment. This implies that the individual is born 'blank' and he develops and matures, thereby acquiring knowledge according to what the environment throws in his path (Slater, Hocking & Loose, 2003:50; Gouws, 2002:47). The researcher believes that being 'born blank' is relative in the sense that the individual is not born completely empty, as there is some degree of inborn *savoir-faire*. Nevertheless, the researcher concurs with Gouws' opinion that the maturity and development of the individual, as well as the acquisition of knowledge are dependent on various factors (such as environment, motivation, and so on).

Radical behaviourists (like Skinner) support the behaviourist idea and believe that individuals develop habits that are the result of their learning experiences. That is, responses given by the individual depend on whether the outcome is favourable or unpleasant and so the direction of development rests largely on 'external stimuli' such as reinforcers and punishers and not really on instincts and drives (Slater *et al*., 2003:50-51; Shaffer, 1996:55 & 56). Cognitive social-learning theorist, Bandura, agrees with Skinner's operant conditioning but stresses that cognitive processing has to play a part in the learning process, hence advocating observational learning as 'a central developmental process', where learning is a result of the observation of other people or *models*. The cognitive process is active, as the observed behaviour has to be digested, recorded and put away as information that will be used later. This type of learning enables the young learner to acquire numerous new responses with different models in different settings, even without an attempt at being taught by these models (Shaffer, 1996:56). In his *environmental determinism theory*, Watson maintains that young learners were regarded as passively becoming what parents, educators and other influential adults in the society wanted them to be. Skinner complements this view, as he believes that individuals have little to say in deciding the environmental influence. Bandura, however, contradicts the views of Watson and Skinner, as he thinks that the individual is an actively thinking creature with a say in how he develops. This is in accordance with observational learning, and as the individual gets to choose his models, he also chooses what to learn. In his *reciprocal*

determinism, Bandura proposed that the relationship between the environment and the individual is a two-way affair since the individual and environment influence one another. In other words, he believes that development entails interaction involving the person, his behaviour and the environment (Shaffer, 1996:57). In this study, it is important to understand the learner and the process of learning, as well as the fact that this process depends on factors like the learner's development, personality and the learner's living environment, and not just on his cognitive development (Kruger, 2002:13).

According to Turkington and Harris (2002:117), learners with difficulties exhibit problems with the way in which the brain processes information, which tends to affect the normal process of learning. Flynn (Flynn & Flynn, 1998:4) who has a learning disability, sees learning disability as indicating learning problems as a result of an inability to do things as fast as others do. Flynn's thought seems to issue from his experience as an individual with a learning disability. The researcher's view is that the disability may possibly lead to slow learning or learning difficulty, which could perhaps be ameliorated or overcome with some form of learning support. The problem may therefore reside more in identifying the cause and manifestation of the learning disability and the appropriate learning support for the individual involved, than in the learning disability itself. Turkington and Harris (2002:124) point out that learning disability indicates a serious gap between the learner's intelligence and the skills achieved at each age. Learners who cannot meet certain academic requirements are seen as experiencing learning difficulties and this may not necessarily be related to any other disability (Bender, 1998:4 & 5). Some learners may perform well in certain academic areas and less so in others. The researcher observed this to be true during years of personal teaching experience, as some learners who were labelled as 'learning disabled' actually achieved good results in some learning areas.

The question that arises from this is:

> *What are the causes of learning difficulties in high school learners*?

2.3   CAUSES OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:127), Flynn and Flynn (1998:6), Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:68), as well as Turkington and Harris (2002:123) argue that the causes of learning disabilities are not exactly known. Nevertheless, various theories exist that indicate that

learning difficulties can be caused by diverse factors and these may differ from learner to learner. It is important at this stage to point out that there is a difference between *learning difficulty* and *learning disability*. While learning difficulty may be perceived as arising from experiences due to external influences, learning disability is seen as resulting from internal factors (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:25-28), and the researcher's opinion is that this may automatically lead to learning difficulty.

In the following section the researcher will explore some of the possible causes of learning difficulties evident from the literature. Factors that cause learning breakdown can be regarded as barriers to learning. These may reside in the learner, the school or learning centre, the system of education, the wider society, and economic and political circumstances. Speece, Molloy and Case (2003:38) are of the view that a variety of factors could be responsible for the manifestation of learning difficulties, and these could reside in the learner, the instructional strategy or in both. Donald *et al*. (2002:29) see poverty as an external factor, which may lead to a series of barriers to productive learning. The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:7) also made note of a range of barriers that may lead to a breakdown in learning.

2.3.1   GENETIC OR HEREDITARY FACTORS

Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:128), Smith (1998:71), Gous and Mfazwe (1998:21), as well as Turkington and Harris (2002:123) maintain that there is sufficient evidence showing that learning disabilities tend to run in families. This implies that heredity is a factor here. Flynn and Flynn (1998:7) also share this belief. In this study, the researcher will acknowledge the considerable impact that genetic factors may have on learning difficulties. However, the consequent effects of environmental factors will also be considered, especially in the light of the ways in which learning support manifests itself.

Smith (1998:73) and Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:69) state that the study of identical twins has revealed a genetic role in learning disabilities- that is, if one twin has a reading problem, the other is very likely to have the same disability (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1991:128). The researcher agrees with Smith where genetic tendency is at play. Smith (1998:74) is also of the opinion that children may be found to perform at the same intellectual level as their parents. The genetic or hereditary factor can be seen as internal or as being intrinsic in the learner and so not easily detected by the educator. Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) regarded genetic factors as Type III learning problems.

2.3.2   FACTORS WITHIN THE LEARNER

According to Lerner (2003:11), it is often implied that learning disability results from neurological factors. A dysfunction of the central nervous system can lead to learning problems, which may, however, be modified positively or negatively by environmental events (Lerner, 2003:11). Worthy of note is the fact that irregular growth pattern of areas of mental ability could lead to learning disability. In other words, where some components mature at the expected rate, others may lag in their development (Lerner, 2003:11 & 12).

A learner can exhibit learning problems that could have arisen as a result of suffering slight brain damage due to trauma at birth, which could not be detected at the time (Eysenck, 2000:617), or as a result of the use of drugs or alcohol during pregnancy, Rh incompatibility and premature or prolonged labour (Turkington & Harris, 2002:123), or even under-functioning in certain areas of the brain that cannot be identified easily (Gous & Mfazwe, 1998:21). Flynn and Flynn (1998:7) hold the view that infection or illness before or after birth and an inadequate amount of oxygen at birth can lead to learning disabilities. Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) referred to this as the Type III learning problem, where a minor internal disorder can be responsible for the disability.

However, Turkington and Harris (2002:123) assume that it could be as a result of a disturbance to the central nervous system triggered by different factors. Flynn and Flynn (1998:6) agree that damage to parts of the central nervous system could be a possible cause of learning disabilities. Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:128) are also of the opinion that the dysfunction of the central nervous system could be seen as a primary cause of learning difficulties. The researcher, however, ponders on whether other causes outside congenital factors could result in learning difficulties. In the researcher's view, unwillingness of the learner to learn, deliberately choosing to be negatively influenced by peers in order to belong, and perhaps sheer laziness on the part of the learner could also count as factors leading to learning difficulties.

2.3.3   FACTORS RELATED TO THE EDUCATION OF THE LEARNER

The learner may experience barriers in his education if a good relationship does not exist between him and the educator (parents or teacher). Occasions may arise (as witnessed by the researcher), where the environment does not accommodate his skills and so may not offer

enough challenges, in that it may demand more than the learner's ability can give or less than he can take, thereby making him feel overwhelmed (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:161). If the learning environment is not motivating and tolerant of the learner's culture, language, gender and general ability, problems can arise in learning. Adelman and Taylor identified this as the Type II learning problem. Taking language and culture as examples, the researcher's impression is that language and cultural differences in a learning environment will inevitably result in unproductive learning. The researcher believes that proficiency in the language of instruction is of the utmost importance in a learning situation. Donald *et al*'s viewpoint (2002:340) complements that of Adelman and Taylor when they state that the learner could be experiencing difficulties due to poor methods of instruction and recurrent change of educators or even schools.

The quality of teaching and the organisation of instructions received by learners can cause problems, according to Van Kraayenoord and Elkins (1998:148). In agreeing with Van Kraayenoord and Elkins' point, the researcher needs to state that where the educator becomes the truant, or is not a trained educator (as was witnessed by the researcher), the learner often bears the brunt, especially if he has to write a unified examination in that learning area. Reay (1995:39) is of the view that lack of motivation on the part of the learner, inappropriate subject matter and inadequate study skills result in learning difficulties. This, in the view of the researcher, could have arisen from a lack of coordination between the learner, the educator and perhaps the parents.

The *Education White Paper* 6 (DoE, 2001:18 & 19) states that the greatest barriers to learning arise from:

- The inflexibility of the curriculum in the areas of the content, which means there is no balance between the educator, the learner and the content of work
- The pace of teaching and the time available for the completion of the curriculum
- Methods of teaching
- Materials used in teaching
- Language of instruction
- Organisation and management of the classroom
- How learning is assessed
- Non-involvement of parents
- The problem of inadequately trained educators and managers.

The researcher concurs with the above listed as barriers to learning. Having been identified by the *Education White Paper 6* as possible barriers to learning, there is a need to address them in order to avert potential learning difficulties, and where these barriers are already manifesting, thereby resulting in learning difficulties, the need for learning support consequently arises.

2.3.4   ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The learning difficulties experienced by some learners are related to their environments or the circumstances in which they are growing and learning. Successful learning therefore depends largely on the interaction between the learner and the environment; that is, home, school and the whole society. Poverty, poor educational environments and poor social conditions are often inter-related as barriers to learning, thus leading to learning difficulties (Donald *et al*., 2002:205). According to Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:129) and Corbett (1998:8), evidence has shown that environmentally disadvantaged learners or those from challenging socio-economic environments tend to exhibit learning difficulties. These learners have to deal with external influences such as poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, and violence in the society, HIV & AIDS, inadequate educational resources and often with poor teaching methods. Donald *et al*. (2002:31) see this factor as arising from barriers to learning that are a result of the social context. This is Adelman and Taylor's (1993:14) Type I learning problem, where the environment surrounding the learner has resulted in learning difficulties. In concurring with the above points of view, Prinsloo (2005a:28-31) outlined the following as barriers to learning:

▪   Poverty, which he believes shows itself in *ill health, undernourishment, deprivation of privileges, backlogs in education, unsupportive environment, communication and language deficiencies, limited social status and a negative view of the future.* Prinsloo also believes that the above could have resulted from a lack of jobs, low income and too little education.

▪   Unplanned urbanization and unemployment, ensuing from immigrants flocking into the cities in search of job opportunities.

▪   Moral decadence resulting from fading value systems. Disharmony exists in families as a result of the probable misinterpretation of the civil liberties of human rights. Moral and sexual freedom has escalated to the farthest limits, thereby resulting in sexual abuse of under-age children, contraction of diseases and teenage pregnancies.

Another debilitating factor is crimes and violence that leave inhabitants with a sense of insecurity.

▪ The HIV & AIDS pandemic that results in young children acting as heads of families and having to provide for younger siblings and sick parents without income.

Family values in scholastic matters and family motivation all come into play and can be a positive or a negative influence, or a mixture of both. Smit and Hennessy (1995:7) are of the opinion that schools located in poverty-stricken environments are often incapable of responding appropriately to tasks due to a lack of exposure to the world outside. Smit and Hennessy (1995:7) referred to the education provided in this type of environment as 'ghetto education'. The researcher does not agree with this point of view, as the response to tasks may not necessarily depend on the amount of exposure to the outside world but on the severity of the challenges, available resources, adequacy of educators, learners' level of motivation and readiness to learn. The poor environment may possibly result in:

▪ Limited educational stimulation for the learner (Eysenck, 2000:617)
▪ Having to learn in an unfamiliar language (Donald *et al*., 2002:31&219)
▪ Inaccessibility of services (DoE, 2001:18)
▪ Unsuitable work areas, which may affect the learner's self-image (Reay, 1995:39).

Exceptions abound where learners from disadvantaged environments excel in all learning areas and learners from advantaged environments exhibit learning difficulties despite all that is available to them. It was noticed personally during years of practical teaching, that some learners who grow up in more favourable socio-economic environments did exhibit learning difficulties which could have been due to possible unfavourable influences from the peer group, lack of concentration or short attention span due to hyperactivity, as well as possible problems at home.

2.3.5   THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

Under *Apartheid* in South Africa, the content of the curriculum and the structure of education may have been biased and limited, and was probably irrelevant to the economy and social values of some communities (Donald *et al*., 2002:210). The nature of the physical and socio-economic segregation of urban areas increased the problem of 'large-scale ghettos' outside cities and towns. The way schools are separately situated in residential areas serves to

reinforce the ghetto factor, so that schools in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods tend to have problems performing the proposed tasks due to the nature of the environment (Smit & Hennessy, 1995:7). The researcher, however, believes that the inability of schools to perform certain tasks may stem from other factors such as limitation of resources due to poverty and inaccessibility of support services due to the location of the school.

Poverty is regarded as a contributor to learning problems, and can lead to inadequate education, inadequate access to health services, undernourishment, unemployment, low social standing, isolation, violence, over-population and psychological degradation (Prinsloo, 2005a:28). When schools in the community are affected because of a lack of classrooms, the learner finds himself in an overcrowded classroom without enough resources, and probably with educators not trained well enough to facilitate learning effectively. Without adequate support or training, educators may get frustrated and some learners' way of coping may sometimes be to drop out of school (Donald *et al*., 2002:206). Inflexibility in the curriculum and the lack of support services in disadvantaged communities have also contributed towards learning difficulties and failure (DoE, 2001:18). Adelman and Taylor (1993: 14) referred to these as Type I learning problems.

Language and cultural diversity in South Africa tend sometimes to constitute barriers to learning, as learners whose culture and language differ from those of the school may experience barriers to learning (Prinsloo, 2005a:37). As language is closely connected to thinking and learning, the researcher's point of view is that when a learner has a good grasp of a language and is able to learn effectively in it, he automatically reasons in that language. Hence, any sudden change of the learning language may, unfortunately, affect those learners who may already be competent in a particular language, and this may constitute a barrier to learning. Evidence (Donald *et al*., 2002:219) shows that because of the link between language, thinking and learning, sudden disturbance in the accustomed language of learning can affect the child's cognitive development and academic performance. Learners often lack confidence when they fail as a result of being forced to learn in an unfamiliar language. The researcher remembers the effect on learners when every learner in Western Nigeria, regardless of whether he spoke the language, had to learn 'Yoruba'. Students were forced to take examinations in the language and this resulted in gross examination malpractice. The teaching and learning process become affected when both the learner and the educator feel incompetent and uncomfortable in the language used in class (Donald *et al*., 2002:219 & 220). Adelman

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and Taylor (1193:14) regarded this as the Type II learning problem, where the educational system is not accommodating or tolerant of the learner's first language.

There is always a tendency to situate problems within the learner, when often the opposite may be the case. If the learner's problem is not internal, that is, resulting from damage to the central nervous system, then it may result from the attitude towards the learner of the family members, the school authority and educators, the peer group or the whole social system; and sometimes, from all the levels (see Figure 1.3). If support is not administered the learner may become stuck in the system or may drop out of school. The practice in the state (of Nigeria) where the researcher had taught was often to expel the learner or he would be advised to withdraw. This piece of advice was given without compromise if the learner failed the same grade twice.

While it is feasible for barriers to learning to arise from the various factors that have been discussed, it is also significant to note that the development of the high school learner may be so tumultuous as to form barriers to learning. For this reason, the researcher has deemed it necessary to discuss some aspects of development as experienced by high school learners.

2.4 DEVELOPMENTAL FACTORS OF ADOLESCENTS (15 TO 18-YEAR-OLDS)

Development may be seen as changes in the individual. These changes are usually gradual, sequential and durable, and may arise from experiences, learning and maturation. Nevertheless, each individual is unique in his developmental rate, as this rate may be dependent on factors such as genetic differences, the environment and learning experiences (Kruger, 2002:14). Umansky (1998:192) explains development as an incessant progression, which may take place at varying rates in individuals, but is nevertheless sequential and methodical. Other factors include cultural and social environments, which to a large extent determine the experience and behaviour of adolescents (Louw, 1997:505). Educators, parents, social workers and others involved with adolescent learners need to have an apt knowledge and understanding of these changes and what they bring, as this may help to determine how to support learners in their learning.

Adolescence can be a challenging time for the adolescent, the educators, parents and the people around them, as not all adolescents cope smoothly and easily with the stress and

tension they may be encountering developmentally (Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000:6-7). Development in four domains will be identified in this review, and these include the physical, the cognitive, the social and the emotional domains. It may be unwise to assume that each domain is an independent entity, as each influences the other. The adolescence phase may be regarded as a phase of *storm and stress*, during which some adolescents go through emotional confusion and may become revolutionary (Louw, 1997:505). It is imperative to have an understanding of the various aspects of development, as the crisis arising from this could constitute barriers to learning for high school learners, who incidentally fall into the category of adolescents.

2.4.1   PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

A period of rapid physical growth and pubertal changes usually characterise the beginning of adolescence. This developmental stage is marked by external and internal changes. The external bodily changes are increases in height and weight, body hair, enlargement of breasts and hips (in girls) and then scrotum and penis (in boys), the growth of pubic and armpit hair, menstruation (in girls), an out break of acne, physical size and increase in body fat (Kruger, 2002:16-17; Louw, 1997:506-507; Gouws *et al*., 2000:9). Boys tend to grow taller and heavier than girls, and also develop bigger shoulders, facial hair begins to appear, as well as a deepening of the voice (Kruger, 2002:16). The internal changes, which are mostly physiological, may be exhibited in motor capabilities, skills, increase in strength and endurance level, an increase in nutritional needs and finally, sexual maturation manifesting itself in sudden erections and wet dreams (in boys) (Gouws *et al*., 2000:9).

The rate of growth varies for individuals. Some adolescents have problems adjusting to the sudden spurt of growth, for they may exhibit clumsiness and poor coordination as a result of the bumpy growth order (Louw, 1997:506; Gouws *et al*., 2000:13). Many adolescent boys especially, find it embarrassing when their voices suddenly deepen (Kruger, 2002:16; Louw, 1997:506). It is important to note that the rate at which the adolescent develops physically is influenced by internal factors such as genes, hormones and emotions, and external factors from the environment such as poverty, illness and malnutrition (Adams, 2002:32; Gouws *et al*., 2000:13).

An important task for educators (and parents) is to help the adolescent learner to be accepting of the physical changes and problems arising from them, fuse these into his self-image in

order to be independent, and also to have a sense of identity (Kruger, 2002:19; Gouws *et al*., 2000:10). Mussen *et al* (in Gouws *et al*., 2000:36) are of the opinion that the adolescent learner is overwhelmed at this stage in life as he is becoming independent, adjusting sexually, thinking of his education and vocation, changing associations with adults and peers, and at the same time experiencing remarkable biological changes while struggling with emotional development and the formation of a positive self-concept and his own identity. If these changes become unbearable for the adolescent learner and appropriate guidance is not given, they may turn into barriers to learning.

2.4.2   COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

There is a close connection between learning and cognitive abilities (Gouws *et al*., 2000:44). The necessity to understand cognitive development arises from its significance to education, as this understanding makes it viable to enhance the educational system in order to benefit all adolescent learners (Eysenck, 2000:409). Cognitive development contracts with the adolescent's ability to become knowledgeable, as this domain comprises of intelligence, the development of thinking skills and creativity. Of importance is the fact that cognitive changes occur alongside physical changes but are obscured by the turmoil caused by the physical changes. Noteworthy also is that each adolescent has his own pattern of development, implying that being the same age does not necessarily mean being at the same cognitive level (Gouws *et al*., 2000:37).

As Adams (2002:32 & 33) puts it, Piaget suggests that cognitive development takes place due to people incessantly attempting to make sense of their world. However, this development can be influenced by maturation arising as a result of genetics and lessons from experiences in life. In his theory, Piaget maintains that people relentlessly face new knowledge and experiences from the environment, which they have to adjust to through constant arrangement and re-arrangement, and thus suggests that this may be achieved by means of three closely related courses (in Donald *et al*., 2002:64):

1.   Assimilation, where new information fits into what already exists in the individual.
2.   Accommodation, where the individual has to make room for new information that conflicts with the existing information.
3.   Equilibration, which deals with creating a balance between assimilation and accommodation as the two processes constantly interact.

At the cognitive developmental stage, the adolescent begins to think in an abstract manner (Eysenck, 2000:416*;* Adams, 2002:39). He tends to be more rational, logical, critical, inquisitive about things, argumentative and tends to form his own opinions about things by reasoning and using his imagination. As he tends to lose sight of reality, he may begin to rebel against norms and values that already exist. Therefore, the adolescent's newfound independence is a source of conflict between him and the parents' thoughts of what is right for him (Gouws *et al*., 2000:37-38 & 44). It is also Donald *et al*'s (2002:68) belief that at this stage, as the adolescent engages in abstract reasoning, he may also begin to think of 'if' and 'then' conditions entailing abstract rapport. It is vital to note that the individual's social standing or circumstance plays an important role in the adolescent reaching this stage.

As Gouws *et al*. (2000:47) pointed out, Vygotsky believes, in his theory, that the higher cognitive process emerges from social interaction and goes inwards, thus showing the relationship between the adolescent and the wider society. Donald *et al*. (2002:68) suggest that development centres on the individual's *active engagement* with and scrutiny of the *physical and social world*. Therefore, the adolescent learner should be afforded the chance to experiment and explore in order to be able to question and learn to handle problems. Cognitive development is uneven across adolescents in the sense that each develops at his own pace, with the progression affected by the social context in which the adolescent finds himself, as well as the challenges of his circumstance (Donald *et al*., 2002:69). Donald *et al*. (2002:70) also maintain that Vygosky's theory is based on social connections in that the individual lives in social contexts, thereby developing knowledge through social interactions. Thus, seen in the social context, cognitive development emerges from social interactions.

In the light of the above, it should be noted that educators, parents, peers and the whole society have roles to play in the cognitive development of adolescents. For Gouws *et al*. (2000:53-54), other factors that may affect intelligence and thus the achievement of a certain level of cognitive development include heredity, culture, gender differences, self-concept, language and motivation. Adams (2000:33) summarises Piaget's four influencing factors as follows: the brain's biological maturation, the adolescent's activity, his social experience and the maintenance of equilibrium between new information and already existing knowledge. The educator should note that all adolescent learners would not be at the same level of cognitive development. The learning experiences therefore have to vary to suit different levels by matching learning tasks to learner's cognitive capacities (Adams, 2002:41).

2.4.3   SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Louw (1997:516) believes in Erikson's theory that individuals have to deal with notable developmental tasks. Bergevin, Bukowski and Miners (2003:389) are of the opinion that the adolescent at this stage is faced with the struggle of coming to terms with the changes in himself. The physical maturation and various other changes such as emotions, actions and interactions are all aspects of social development, which could either be exciting and filled with accomplishments and contentment, or be filled with tension, disorientation and dejection. For Shaffer (1996:482 & 483), an identity formation entails struggling with various options such as in *career, religion, morality* and *values*, and these may weigh the adolescent down, and may even end in an identity crisis and/or low self-esteem and may thus probably result in developing negative identity. For the adolescence phase it appears to be a universal requirement to develop personal identity, although this task depends on the individual. The researcher believes (from observation) that some adolescents go through this phase fairly quickly and with ease, while others find the stage difficult to cope with.

Social and cognitive developments are dependent on each other since the adolescent's thinking and behaviour can be traced to cognitive changes (Bergevin *et al*., 2003:390). Shaffer (1996:269) sees cognitive development as being noteworthy in the achievement of identity. This can be seen by the fact that those who have mastered the formal-operational thought level tend to exhibit better imaginations and may therefore be better able to resolve identity issues than their peers who are intellectually immature. In his search for identity, the adolescent has to create a balance between who he is with how he is regarded by people around him and how he is linked to the guiding norms and values of the wider society (Donald *et al*., 2002:78).

The changes in the adolescence phase result in a significant shift in personal evolution. The acquisition of identity involves three important phases, which are as follows (Shaffer, 1996:483):

1.   The adolescent's need or certainty concerning his own standing, thus requiring answers to the question: *Who am I?*
2.   His need for certainty concerning his social standing, and thus the need to answer the question: *To what group do I belong?*

3.   The need for certainty in connection with his personal ideals and values and the answer to the question: *What do I want to achieve?*

At this stage, the adolescent questions everything about his present and previous standing, as well as how people perceive him. This could be regarded as the adolescent's search for identity.

The adolescent's most vital tasks of development are *socialization, finding his place in society, acquiring interpersonal skills, cultivating tolerance for personal and cultural differences and also developing self-confidence* (Gouws *et al*., 2002:67). As he struggles to fulfil the above, he steadily detaches himself from his parents and finds it more important to be accepted by his peers. These authors also point out that as adolescents begin to practise autonomy they may also begin to clash with parents and as they begin to hold strong opinions on matters, they often question the ideals, interests, opinions and attitudes of parents and adults around them. Louw (1997:518) believes also that the social behaviour of the adolescent is marked by an increase in interest and involvement with his peers, thus spending more time with peers than with adults. The adolescent engages in inspirational associations with peers (Mwamwenda, 2004:66) as this helps him to learn and try out new roles, to be purged of emotional anxiety, to be drawn into close friendships, and to build up group identity. In other words, adolescents tend to share many experiences. They regard the group as a different world, with their own traditions, mode of communication, dress code and demeanour; and where *to belong* means conforming to what exists in their *own world* (Louw, 1997:519).

It is very important to the adolescent that he is socially accepted by the peer group, as he sees the group as a socialising instrument, as providing companionship, providing the possibility to exercise newly acquired skills and helping to determine whether he is doing well or badly in life (Gouws *et al*., 2000:76-77). The social development of the adolescent is vital to his total development as it often includes changes between the adolescent and the people around him- parents, siblings, educators, adults and peers. How the adolescent emerges, with certainty or confusion, will be determined by his experiences, his ability to cope with the stress of development, the identity he has carved out for himself and by the support available to him during the developmental crisis. If this stage is found to be stressful, the adolescent may experience difficulty in learning. It is thus most important for educators, and maybe other people that surround the adolescent, to be conscious of the need to help him to feel proficient

and valuable and to be compassionate about his fears without degrading him, but helping him to accept both his weaknesses and strengths (Kruger, 2002:23).

2.4.4   EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The outcome of development in the other three domains can affect the adolescent's emotional development to a large extent, as they are all inter-related. The adolescent is faced with the stress of having to cope with different developmental tasks such as adapting socially by relating to people, as well as controlling and expressing emotions in a socially acceptable fashion and also having to make moral decisions on which principles are correct or incorrect (Gouws *et al*., 2000:95).

The adolescent's emotional state affects his physical health since the whole body system will respond to emotional experiences. This will also have a positive or negative effect on his relationship with the people around him. The emotionality arising from the adolescent's relationship with and adaptation to the environment, as well as his need for independence may result from physical, cognitive and social factors. Moreover, the demands of educators, parents, peers and the wider society are equally stressful factors that could make the adolescent emotionally unstable (Mwamwenda, 2004:69).

Assisting the adolescent to attain emotional steadiness implies that educators (and parents) have to know when emotions manifest; have to foster a constructive relationship with him, especially where there is a manifestation of negative emotion; have to be supportive and provide activities that will help to release pent-up emotions; and above all, have to be empathetic, tolerant and considerate of the adolescent's developmental phase and its turmoil (Gouws *et al*., 2000:97).

As has been identified by literature and personal observation, the developmental phase may be stormy and stressful for the high school learner. Some are able to overcome the upheaval associated with development, while others may find it too much to handle. There is therefore a need for knowledge and understanding of this stage of development in high school learners, since this may make for easy identification when the crisis of development becomes a barrier to learning. This may also indicate what learning support can be provided in order for effective learning to occur.

2.5   LEARNING SUPPORT

According to Sibaya and Kruger (2002:125), for teaching to be effective, there is a call for an in-depth acquaintance with learners' ways of learning, factors that control the procedure of learning, learners' disposition at the various phases of development, and finally, of the ways to keep learners interested in learning. Ensuring that learners profit from the teachings in the class and using the knowledge acquired thereby, demands careful preparation by the educators (Sibaya & Kruger, 2002:125). In order to ascertain what is learnt, how it is learnt, what the learner feels and the use of the knowledge acquired, it is necessary for planning to include content organization, selecting and sequencing of actions, learners' inspiration and emotion. Planning should, however, be flexible enough to leave room for the unanticipated, as well as taking into consideration the settings and organization of the classroom, the diverse requirements and learning styles of learners and also many other factors that may be connected to the processes of instruction and learning (Sibaya & Kruger, 2002:126, 127 & 129). It should be noted that acknowledging that learners have individual differences, which make each learner unique in *talent* and *limitations* as to how he learns, might help in planning programmes to address the differences (Moletsane, 2002:215). In dealing with the problems of learning, one has to look at the different levels of the system associated with the learner's education, e.g. the whole social system, the community, the local community comprising of the family, school, peer group, and then the learner (see Figure 1.3). The system of interactions between the levels must also be considered.

There may possibly be an imbalance in the whole system due to the disturbances between each of the levels, and so it may be detrimental to view the problem as caused by the learner. This is because the problem is not exclusive to any one level, but lies in the relationship and interaction between them (Donald *et al*., 2002:236 & 237). When there is a problem in one level, it will most probably affect the others. Understanding that one level may have a ripple effect on the others is a step in the direction of a likely change where imbalance is the case, as exceptions may exist where the systems are perfectly balanced. Hence, effecting intervention has to be between and within systems, with the learner fully involved (Donald *et al*., 2002:238).

Robins (2001:120) states that there are two reasons why learners encounter difficulties or cannot learn. The first is that the educator does not know the most effective strategy for teaching a specific task, while the second is that the educator seldom appreciates how

different learners learn. Van Kraayenoord and Elkins (1998:148) agree with Robins' opinion. Although Robins, Van Kraayenoord and Elkins may be right, literature shows that these are not the only reasons why learners experience difficulties in learning. Donald *et al*. (2002:55) and Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) have shown that other factors can cause these difficulties (Figures 1.3 & 1.4). The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:7) also outlines some factors that can cause barriers to learning. The researcher thinks that the method of instruction used for a learner with difficulties should depend on what he needs to learn and how best to learn it, and so agrees with Donald *et al.* (2002:301 & 302) who encourage flexibility in the method of instruction to accommodate the strengths and weaknesses of the learner, relevance of materials and content of teaching to the learner's age and interests, flexibility in the learner's learning pace, and also, motivation that will aid in building the learner's confidence. The researcher equally concurs with Jones and Jones (2001:186) who have pointed out that as the learner spends so much time in school, it is imperative that the school creates a confident and supportive learning environment, where the learner feels appreciated, where the curriculum and teaching strategy complement the learner's educational readiness, and where the educator understands the uniqueness of each learner, especially in instructional strategies.

According to Bender (1998:242), learners encountering difficulties have certain instructional needs often not demonstrated by others. These needs have given rise to the problem of appropriate placement for the learners involved. The typical practice of placing learners with similar disabilities in the same classroom in order to enable the school system to plan for resource allocations is educationally doubtful (Sands *et al*., 2000:258), especially with the advent of inclusive education. The consideration of inclusive education (which advocates the placement of all learners in one setting, irrespective of their disabilities), brought about the restructuring and redesigning of education, moving away from the separate setting, and providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all learners, irrespective of their disabilities. The inclusive education system will be discussed in the next section.

2.5.1   THE WHITE PAPER ON SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In 1996, two bodies, namely the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), were commissioned by the Ministry of Education to look into the features of special needs and support services in the education system in South Africa. The findings of these bodies opened the doors to inclusive education in South Africa. Their findings indicated that only a

small percentage of learners benefited from specialised education and support so that the majority of the learners in need of support found themselves outside the system or sidelined. As the curriculum and system of education did not meet the varied requirements of learners, the consequence was large numbers of learners failing, dropping out or being pushed out. The bodies thus recommended the *promotion of education for all*, as well as inclusive and supportive learning centres that will support all learners equally in the process of education (DoE, 2001:5).

Some of the guiding principles of this new concept are the idea of *rights and social justice* to be enjoyed by all learners, all learners having equal access to an inclusive education, as well as access to the curriculum (DoE, 2001:5). The bodies suggested in their report that achieving this concept will require the following (DoE, 2001:6):

> *(i) Transforming all aspects of the education system, (ii) developing an integrated system of education, (iii) infusing 'special needs and services' throughout the system, (iv) pursuing the holistic development of centres of learning to ensure a barrier-free physical environment and a supportive and inclusive psycho-social learning environment, developing a flexible curriculum to ensure access to all learners, (v) promoting the rights and responsibilities of parents, educators and learners (vi) providing effective development programmes for educators, support personnel, and other relevant human resources, (vii) fostering holistic and integrated support provision through intersectoral collaboration, (viii) developing a community-based support system which includes a preventative and developmental approach to support, and (ix) developing funding strategies that ensure redress for historically disadvantaged communities and institutions, sustainability, and – ultimately- access to education for all learners.*

Nonetheless, the study by Laauwen (2004:210) exposed elements of *'non-reform', experiments with change, low priority for reform, absence of key leadership, lack of resources, changing structures, and undue 'political symbolism'.* This tends to highlight the lack of execution of the policy on Special Needs Education. Laauwen's (2004:210) study also showed that the delay in carrying out the policy was probably because the Department of Education had possibly not appreciated the full financial implications, as well as the technicalities involved. As most learners with special needs remain where they are because of the possible non-functioning of the projected reforms and shift, Laauwen (2004:211)

concluded, that 'in terms of operational policy, provisioning and changing the education system, the policy remains visionary'. The Ministry, on the other hand, acknowledges the fact that an extensive range of learning needs arising from different factors occur among learners in South Africa (DoE, 2001:17). The curriculum was identified as the greatest barrier to learning and the best way to address this is to ensure that both learning and teaching processes are flexible, compliant and can accommodate divergent learning needs and techniques of learning (DoE, 2001:20).

The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:28) views learning support as a major strategy in overcoming barriers to learning. Support is seen as enhancing learning through interaction with appropriate support providers (Implementation of Inclusive Education: Full Services Schools, August 2003:23), hence the need for full-service schools. Full-service schools are learning institutions equipped and supported to cater flexibly for a wide range of learning needs, while addressing barriers to learning (Implementation of Inclusive Education: Full-service schools, August 2003:10). The aim of a full-service school is to increase learning and the involvement of learners and so it embarks on the inclusion process where it judiciously analyses how to increase learning through removing barriers that hinder learning. These could be barriers arising within the learner or the environment. Another aim of the full-service school is ensuring the accessibility of schools so that learners of school-going age will not be left out. A third aim is the creation of a supportive environment where educators can be motivated and supported, where caregivers are fully involved and where learners can feel accepted (Implementation of Inclusive Education: Full-service Schools, August 2003:12). The full-service school has to be linked to the District Support Teams whose aim is to give indirect support to learners by the support of educators and school management, and also to supply direct support to learners if the site-based support teams cannot provide the necessary support. The site-based support teams are responsible for coordinating available services, which provide support for educators and learners. The full-service schools have to develop resource centres to be utilised by the educators and learners.

The resource room or centre was conceived as an answer to training for learners in need of specialised attention. Outlined as follows are diverse kinds of resource rooms (Bender, 1998:246):

- Categorical resource rooms are where learners with a specific disability are placed for specialised instructions.

- Cross-categorical resource rooms are where learners operating at the same academic level but having different kinds of disabilities are placed.
- Non-categorical resource rooms have no differentiations for the disabilities of learners placed there. In other words, learners of diverse needs are found in these rooms.
- Specific-skills resource rooms have educators catering for learners in an essential skill such as mathematics, reading or writing.
- Itinerant resource programmes entail the allocation of one resource educator to several schools in rural areas.

The resource room educator provides resources for not just the learners with disabilities, but also for their parents, the mainstream educators, professionals and others connected to the learners. The resource room educator also provides teaching methods that will enhance learning in the mainstream, and so has to be conversant with the mainstream curriculum and the learner's specific problem areas (Bender, 1998:247 & 249). The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:21) suggests that the operation of special schools as resource centres will be elevated qualitatively by getting their workforce schooled in their newest duties of assisting learners and educators through running training workshops and making learning materials available where they are needed.

As stated in the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:19), the areas to be addressed in terms of learning support include the:

- Working content
- Language used in the instruction of learners
- Organisation and management of the classroom
- Strategy of instruction
- Time available for completion of the curriculum
- Materials used for learning
- Assessment of learning.

Also to be addressed are the accessibility and safety of the learning environment, as well as the provision of adequate support services. Van Kraayenoord and Elkins (1998:167) state that it is necessary to have an ongoing partnership between support staff and the classroom educators on proposed achievements and instructional methods essential to guarantee that the

needs of the learner with problems are met. According to the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:28 & 29), the capacity of the education support service will determine the extent to which barriers to learning will be abridged. The education support service, when strengthened, will comprise of new district-based support teams made up of a workforce from *provincial district, regional and head offices* and also *special schools*. The main purpose or job of these support teams is the appraisal of programmes, determining their efficiency and making suggestions for modifications where necessary.

To help the learner, the educator has to understand how he learns, identify the conditions in the classroom that can make the learner achieve success, and create a supportive environment. Learners with barriers to learning require guidelines that will enable them to feel confident in the environment where learning is taking place. The educator has to ensure that:

- Learners are given lots of encouragement and praise if they are to give their best.
- Peaceful and friendly learning environments are provided.
- Clear instructions are given.
- Parents are involved by checking learners' work.
- Good relationships and trust exist between the learner and himself.
- Learners' self-confidence is built up by showing tolerance and being accommodating.

2.5.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Ainscow (2005/6:109), the inclusive education system has become an international challenge as a strategy to address the diverse educational needs of all learners in a general education classroom. The interest and encouragement in the vision of inclusion basically arose from the fact that learners' difficulties in learning result from the way schools are coordinated, as well as the instruction strategies (Ainscow, Farrell & Tweddle, 2000/4:212).

There have been dramatic changes in South Africa over the past few years, which have affected education. Education in South Africa is being restructured and redesigned to move away from the separate environments for learners with exceptional requirements, to providing an inclusive and supportive instructional setting for all learners. Hunt and Goetz (1997/31:3) recognise the educational system of full inclusion as becoming increasingly popular. Most

attempts at intervention for learners in need of assistance take place in ordinary schools which nevertheless have special education facilities (Lamminmaki, Ahonen, Todd de Barra, Tolvanen, Michelsson & Lyytinen 1997/30:354). Also, Farman and Muthukrishna (2002:234) suggest that the essential nature of inclusive education in South Africa lies in the move to a 'learner-centred' system of education. Also suggested by Farman and Muthukrishna (2002:234) is the evolvement of *curriculum 2005*, which is designed to guarantee that all learners effectively accomplish the vital outcomes, as it originated from the conviction that all learners can attain learning successfully. However, Lamminmaki *et al*. (1997/30:354) maintain that assistance provided will be effective if based on the receiver's strong points and weaknesses. Farman and Muthukrishna's view of learner-centeredness in inclusion is supported by Swart and Pettipher (2005:8), who believe that inclusive education removes attention from learners needing to conform to the educational systems and focus on the remodelling of the school system into accepting and attending to the various needs of learners and ensuring each learner is given suitable learning exposures. There are, nevertheless, some individuals who find it difficult to relate to the new changes of 'restructuring and redesigning education' to provide a supportive learning environment that will cater for the needs of all learners (Engelbrecht, 2004:3). However, Ballard (1995:10) is of the opinion that fears can be conquered only by involvement in the activities that are thought to be too difficult or different. Farman and Muthukrishna (2002:231) complement this thought by saying:

> *To create a classroom where all learners will thrive is a challenging task, but 'there is an island of opportunity in the sea of every difficulty'.*

Advocates of full inclusion such as Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:20-21) complement the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:5) on inclusive education in South Africa as follows:

▪ It is the learner's civil right to be placed full-time in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers.
▪ It will reduce the stigma of being educated in special settings.
▪ It is more efficient as there will be no pull-out programmes during which learners miss out on valuable activities in the general classroom.
▪ It promotes equity.

Fisher, Sax and Grove (2000/100:214) maintain that the all-important features in forming an inclusive education system are *resources*, *philosophy* and *leadership* in the internal functioning of a school.

As was mentioned in Chapter One, the last decade, according to Frederickson *et al.* (2004/8:37), saw the emergence of inclusive education as a major international scheme. Researchers and professional groups who promote total integration of all learners into general education have backed this move (Mamlin, 1999/33:36). June 1994 saw the approval of a new structure at the UNESCO world conference in Salamanca, Spain. The guiding code of this framework advocates the placement of all children in regular schools in their neighbourhoods, irrespective of their conditions. Being dedicated to education for all, the following known as the SALAMANCA STATEMENT emerged, saying that (UNESCO, 1994):

- *Every child has a basic right to education.*
- *Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.*
- *Education services should take into account these diverse characteristics and needs.*
- *Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools.*
- *Regular schools with an inclusive ethos are the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming and inclusive communities and achieve education for all.*
- *Such schools provide effective education to the majority of children, improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness.*

The Salamanca Statement went on to demand that governments:
- *Give the highest priority to making education systems inclusive.*
- *Adopt the principle of inclusive education as a matter of law or policy.*
- *Develop demonstration projects.*
- *Encourage exchanges with countries which have experience of inclusion.*
- *Set up ways to plan, monitor and evaluate educational provision for children and adults.*
- *Encourage and make easy the participation of parents and organizations of disabled people.*
- *Invest in early identification and intervention strategies.*
- *Invest in the vocational aspects of inclusive education.*
- *Make sure there are adequate teacher education programs.*

Ninety-two governments and twenty-five international NGOs adopted this statement. The plan for action stipulates that 'inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights'. This is demonstrated in education as 'genuine equalization of opportunity'. Special needs education includes instruction strategies that profit *all* learners, that regard the diversity in learners as customary, and the concept that learning has to be modified to suit the demands of learners. The basic precept of inclusion is the placement of *all* learners collectively in regular schools, where their varied needs are known and responded to, and at the same time the provision of support and services that correspond to the needs of learners (CSIE, UNESCO, 1994).

The children's representatives at the Children's Forum in May 2002 presented their vision in different areas including education. Their vision regarding education is as follows (Bellamy, 2003:67). There should be:

- *Equal opportunities and access to quality education that is free and compulsory.*
- *School environments in which children feel happy about learning.*
- *Education for life that goes beyond the academic and includes lessons in understanding, human rights, peace, acceptance and active citizenship.*

The education revolution during the last decade at international level was inevitable, for it became obvious that changes were required in order for learning to be effective (Bellamy, 1999:21). Guiding this revolution are the rights of all children to education, without bias, as well as admission to quality learning, where the learner is an active participant (Bellamy, 1999:21). The rights discourse, which stresses equal opportunities amongst other things, has influenced the movement in the direction of inclusive education in South Africa (Naicker, 2004:14). The rights issue is also upheld by Donald *et al.* (2002:295), who believe that all learners, whether disabled or not, have the right to be treated normally, have their educational needs met in a customary school system and to live at home while attending the neighbourhood school. The complexity though, is the assumption that appropriate facilities, resources and supportive help will be provided, as well as a curriculum that is flexible enough to cater for those with barriers to learning. Westling and Fox (1995:223), in complementing the above, state that an inclusive education programme does not only revolve around the placement of learners with special needs in the general education classroom, but also on *restructuring* educational centres so that they can cater for a diversity of needs. Obstacles also exist in the provision of programmes for inclusion in high schools. These include curriculum

in the content area, the gap between the learner's already acquired skills and the demands of the classrooms, as well as the regular classroom educator not being adequately trained to handle learners with disabilities in order for inclusion to be effective.

Naicker (2004:19) defines inclusive education as a scheme that is sensitive to the varied needs of learners. This is an integration that develops one system that recognises and responds to the diverse needs of all learners. Dyson and Forlin (2004:32) view inclusion as a means of providing educational opportunities for a previously segregated group of learners who may have had little or no access to schooling. Swart and Pettipher (2005:8) describe inclusion as *a reconceptualisation of values and beliefs that welcomes and celebrates diversity, and not only a set of practices*. Booth (2000:78) sees inclusive education 'as the process of increasing the participation of learners within and reducing their exclusion from the practices, curricula and communities of neighbourhood centres of learning'. This implies 'removing barriers to participation' for all learners. Barriers to learning and involvement can be witnessed at different levels of the educational structure, for instance in the classroom. This may involve both the teaching and learning environment. Supporting inclusion demands that the human resources, such as the educators, learners, parents and people in the community, as well as the material resources be identified (Booth, 2000:92). Idol (1997/30:384) described inclusion as the placement of a learner with 'special learning needs' in a general education classroom ' a hundred percent of the school day'. In addition, UNESCO (2003:2) pointed out that inclusive education does not only benefit learners with disabilities or other marginalized learners but inspires *policy makers* and educational administrators to search for obstacles in the system, to determine how these obstacles came about and how to overcome them.

According to Bender (1998:243), inclusive schools have learners with disabilities at every severity level in the mainstream classes with provision for the required assistance; i.e. they have special education and mainstream educators teaching in the same class as a team. Inclusion provides an unconditional acceptance and incorporation of learners with special needs, irrespective of the severity of the disability, into the regular classroom. However, Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:7) and Idol (1997/30:384) have distinguished between 'mainstreaming and inclusion' as follows: while mainstreaming refers to the part-time placement into the general setting of learners with special needs, inclusion refers to the placement of these learners in the general education classroom. The learner in mainstreaming is usually in the care of the special educator. The aim of mainstreaming is that the part-time placement of learners in a general education setting will afford the learners concerned more

exposure to the usual classroom schedule. Learners in the inclusive classroom are not solely the responsibility of the general classroom educator, since the educator and other professionals share the responsibility. In Farman and Muthukrishna's view (2002:236), mainstreaming entails the conditional placement of learners with exceptional needs in regular schools, as these learners have to prove that they can cope with the demands of the curriculum in place. These authors see inclusion as implying attending to the barriers that help to segregate learners, thus making the educational syllabus available to all learners in regular schools, irrespective of their ability or disability. Vaughn, Bos and Schumm (2000:32) maintain that while mainstreaming is the accommodation of learners with special needs in the general education classroom to the suitable point of meeting their requirements, inclusion means placing these learners with their non-disabled counterparts in the general education classroom, and making available special support and services to meet their needs. Nevertheless, Fisher, Roach and Frey (2002/6:66) maintain that the moves towards inclusion for learners with special needs notwithstanding, many are still segregated from their peers in the general education classrooms. This may be due to the belief of some that mainstreaming remains the most effective mode of teaching for these learners. Fisher *et al.* (2002/6:66) further pointed out that some writers have criticized mainstreaming as being 'fragmented, overlapping and lacking in the coordination of the content of the curriculum'. The implication therefore is that the problem is blamed on the learner and not on the teaching strategy and circumstances of learning.

Internationally, the wisdom of running two separate education systems has been questioned in a human rights context and from a productivity point of view (Ainscow *et al.,* 2000/40:211). The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:5) states that inclusive education should focus on the restructuring of schools where every learner belongs and is supported, whether disabled or able. The rationale behind the placement of learners of various needs in the same setting is that learners will benefit from each other, as those without disabilities will work as interactive associates, as well as models for those with disabilities (Wolery & Schuster, 1997/31:70). However, as a good percentage of learners with special needs are placed in the general education classroom in the inclusive system, it is necessary that the general classroom educators receive assistance from the special educators in order to achieve productive changes in the learners involved (Noell & Witt, 1999/33:29). As Idol (1997/30:384) pointed out, the principal strategy for the implementation of inclusion is the collaboration of a team of professionals. In concurring with Noell and Witt's opinion, the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:15 & 19) declares the creation of a broad range of educational support services

that will cater for the needs of learners with special needs, and also that educators will be trained and supported in the facets of teaching and learning with the emphasis on instructional methods that will enhance learning for all learners.

The concept of inclusion is not peculiar to South Africa, as educators worldwide have agreed that *all learners* will profit from this system, their differences and unique characteristics notwithstanding. The suggestion therefore is that schools and learning centres need to have the capacity to handle diverse needs through applying curricula flexibly (Ramphal & Ramphal, 2002:246). Some developed countries tend to appreciate the need for all learners to have appropriate education that meets their needs, for this to be done in the least restrictive environment and for the appropriate support to be provided. Only when absolutely necessary will the learner be placed in a situation separate from the general classroom. Salend (1998:11) maintains that the least restrictive environment implies educating learners with disabilities in the same general education classrooms with their able peers, bearing in mind the learner's educational needs and not the disability. Sands *et al*. (2000:57) also advocate the education of a learner in the least restrictive environment. Gable and Hendrickson (2000:10-11) are of the opinion that the number of learners to be served will be greater if the learning environment is less restrictive. They also believe that a more restrictive setting may be considered for a learner only if he cannot be placed in a general education classroom due to the severity of his disability. As all learners are entitled to participate in the process of education, the focus of attention should be the diverse needs of learners and the provision of equal opportunities for learning in order for learning to be productive (Ramphal & Ramphal, 2002:246).

The researcher has great appreciation for the concept of the inclusive education system but has difficulty in visualising its success at a grassroots level. The researcher understands this idea to entail the placement of all learners together in the same classroom, irrespective of whether they are deaf, blind, gifted, physically challenged or intellectually challenged. The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:49 & 50) outlined the revision of teacher education to encompass developing the *competencies to recognise and address barriers to learning and to accommodate the diverse range of learning needs,* as well as *eighty hours annual in-service education and training requirement of the Government in respect of educators…* The researcher can identify with recognising barriers to learning but thinks that accommodating the diverse needs of learners will probably give rise to practical problems. These problems include the demands this structure could place on educators, the poverty level in certain communities and schools, which might manifest itself in a lack of the necessary facilities, the

possible negative attitude of educators towards learners with special needs, and also probably over-population in the classroom.

In the 90s, Hunt and Goetz (1997/31:16 & 17) were of the opinion that little research had been done to check the effectiveness of inclusion. They felt that this was because the concept was based on human rights and not learning theories or productive tutoring. Hunt and Goetz (1997/31:17) also argue that the results of two studies conducted did not show noteworthy differences in either the academic or behavioural performance of learners of different categories. Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:21 & 22) point out that opponents of full inclusion believe that general educators may probably be in the system without the right disposition to handle learners with special needs, that inclusive classrooms may lack the resources necessary to fully integrate learners with needs, and that classes may possibly be overcrowded, especially if there is a need to provide adaptive tools such as *Braillers* and *speech synthesizers* for some of these learners. Nevertheless, the views of Hunt and Goetz have been contradicted by Vaughn *et al.* (2000:30 & 107), who gave a vivid description of the effectiveness of cooperative teaching in inclusive education. Vaughn *et al* (2000:30) argue that collaboration among professionals in education is the trend in the implementation of inclusive education. Agreeing with this view is Mamlin (1999/33:37), who believes that teamwork is important for the inclusive system to succeed, as all work together towards achieving the same goal. Collaboration is aimed at ensuring a discourse among the professionals that will give the support necessary to fulfil the educational and social needs of *all* learners concerned. Vaughn *et al.* (2000:30) therefore promote cooperative teaching, where the general and special educators work hand-in-hand in the coordination of programmes for *all* learners. Both educators indulge in co-planning the 'goals and desired outcomes' for the class members and specific learners, as well as assigning themselves explicit roles during lessons. In co-teaching, both educators are in the classroom, each carrying out their assigned responsibility, which varies according to the set goals and the demands of learners (Vaughn *et al*., 2000:30 & 107). Kochhar, West and Taymans (2000:90) also share this point of view. Planning the goals enables the educators to pinpoint learners for individual attention to outline the support required to assist learners and to also improve learning for *all* learners. The advantage of cooperative teaching is that learners, irrespective of their conditions, profit from both professionals who are required to work with *all* learners (Vaughn *et al*., 2000:30 & 107). Further support for the ideas of Vaughn *et al* is to be found in the work of Kochhar *et al.* (2000:37 & 38) who are convinced that the gains and outcomes of inclusive education system outweigh the problems that could be encountered by all learners and stakeholders. These

authors maintain that the gains for learners include the promotion of agreeable social behaviours, enhancing self-esteem, enhancing the adaptation of different instructional strategies, providing a broad range of support for *all* learners, as well as making available *specialised support in the general education environment.* For educators and the school, the benefits include improvement in accepting diversity in learners; enhancing educator application of 'specialised educational strategies' to non-disabled learners in need of support; educator consciousness of the needs of learners with disabilities; making educators aware of the available support services in the community; inspiring educators to demonstrate strategies that encourage cooperative learning amongst *all* learners; and assisting educators in the execution of instructional strategies that could benefit *all* learners. Inclusion also creates a sense of belonging, which positively influences the learner's *self-image* and *self-esteem*, while enhancing their *motivation to achieve* (Kochhar *et al*., 2000:88). Kochhar *et al.* (2000:67) argue that with conscious planning and dedication, any barriers to inclusive education can be surmounted. Educators are required to identify the strengths that learners possess so that the curriculum and method of instruction are complementary to their strengths and skills.

According to Ballard (1995:2 & 3), in order to make the inclusive education system work, inclusion has to be based on the mainstream curriculum and teaching methods, with educators giving support to one another. Westling and Fox (1995:229) suggest that learners with special needs be accepted as associates of the 'school community' and thus quartered in *grade-level* rooms along with their peers, as contrary placement will only indicate segregation. Bailey (1995:15) believes that an inclusive curriculum and inclusive approaches to schooling imply providing quality inclusive education programmes, while the *Education White Paper 6* recognises that all these things involve a great deal of time and planning and very difficult work, and therefore outlines the long-term goals as follows (DoE, 2001:45): The long-term goal of this system indicates a twenty-year plan of development. The vision is that in twenty years, a system would have been developed to identify and manage barriers to learning, and to acknowledge and attend to the varied needs of all learners. Also envisioned is that the system will include institutions such as special schools, resource centres and full-service schools and other schools that may be deemed necessary. Finally, included in the twenty-year plan is the provision of *life-long and high-quality education*. The short-term goal of this vision includes assessing the *weaknesses and deficiencies* of the present system of education and making schools accessible to those not accommodated in it. The Department will focus on and revise policies and structures vital to the process of transformation, carrying out a campaign to make the public aware, developing the facilities and expertise necessary at all levels, rationing and

combining limited resources and developing mechanisms that are already central in the system in order to boost access to diversity, as well as attend to barriers to learning. The short-term span will also ensure the development of a district-based support system, as well as assessment and follow-up procedures. In inclusive education, it is helpful to spread the learning content, the learning outcome, and also the teaching and learning process to fit the uniqueness of individual learners. As Gous and Mfazwe (1998:1) put it, 'every learner is unique'. There are teaching strategies that yield productive results for all kinds of learners and these can be effective for inclusive settings, as they can be used to teach learners with different needs (Choate, 2000:36 & 37). To achieve an effective out come with inclusion, some of the basic principles include:

- Teaching to fit the learners' learning profiles, accommodating their unique needs and learning styles.
- Using productive teaching strategies and methodology to reach learners.
- Teaching and giving tasks that are relevant to academic achievement, as well as to social development.
- Getting learners to be actively involved and engaged in the teaching and learning process (Choate, 2000:36-42).

Lombana (1992:6) states that mainstreaming requires the availability of support services because most learners with difficulties require supportive services or individualised instructional strategies if they are to be fully integrated into regular classrooms. Put differently by Farman and Muthukrishna (2002:236), the victory of a learner in a learning situation relies upon a setting that inspires the whole range of learners. Consequently, the educator is required to fully understand each learner so as to answer the demands of a variety of learners adequately by applying different teaching strategies and making available a variety of learning experiences. This calls for flexibility in the management of both the school and classrooms, bearing in mind the fact that these learners present different emotions and may come from different social backgrounds. Educators are therefore required to be mindful, as Keefe (1996:108) suggests, of the diversity of learners in meeting their diverse demands, and to cater for this in supplying equitable support. According to Ramphal and Ramphal (2002:251), the inclusive classroom gives learners a feeling of being part of a community, as they are also socially integrated.

Salend's (1998:5) opinion of inclusion is that it is an educational system designed to accommodate and answer the needs of *all* learners regardless of whether they are disabled or not. Salend (1998:6-7) advocates four principles of effective inclusion as follows:

(i)   Diversity is embraced when all learners are placed together in a general education classroom, irrespective of '*their learning ability, race, linguistic ability, economic status, gender, learning style, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, family structure and sexual orientation*'.

(ii)   Educators and all concerned should be susceptible to the individual needs and differences of learners and appreciate that all of them are valued as individuals.

(iii)   The educator in the inclusive classroom has to be flexible, sensitive and familiar with the learners' needs and should regularly examine himself for self-improvement.

(iv)   In order for inclusion to be effective, there has to be collaboration between educators, other professionals, learners and families. All involved must work cooperatively and responsibly, sharing resources for the good of learners.

In his work, Ainscow (2005/6:118 & 119) identified the following four elements of inclusion as being worthy of recommendation to any education system:

1.   *Inclusion is a process*, and this implies the continuous seeking of a better means of reacting to diversity, where differences serve as a positive incentive that can enhance learning.

2.   Inclusion deals with the recognition and elimination of barriers.

3.   Inclusion deals with the *presence*, *participation* and *achievement* of all learners concerned.

4.   Inclusion places emphasis on marginalized learners, as well as the underachiever.

The following could be regarded as a summary of inclusive education and training in South Africa, according to the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:16), which states that inclusive education and training:

▪   *Are about acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.*

- *Are accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience.*

- *Are about enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.*

- *Acknowledge and respect differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status.*

- *Are broader than formal schooling and acknowledge that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures.*

- *Are about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners.*

- *Are about maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.*

- *Are about empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.*

The participants in this study will not be selected because of a particular disability or 'special need'. However, in this literature review, 'learning support' is discussed in its broadest sense, because the researcher believes that most learners are in need of 'learning support' at some point in their school career. Inclusive education embraces the idea of support to all learners and therefore forms an essential part of this literature review.

In this section, the researcher will look at literature on the following aspects as learning support strategies: the curriculum, individualised curriculum, cooperative tutoring, peer tutoring, motivation, as well as instructional strategies such as the use of pictures, visual aids, animation as multimedia learning, knowledge maps, and maps and texts. The researcher intends for these to inform the learning support strategies that may be considered as possibly feasible for the high school learners participating in this study.

2.5.3   THE CURRICULUM

In Davis, Kilgo and Gamel-McCormick's view (1998:144), the curriculum helps educators to *know where they are going and how to get there*, while according to Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:157), it not only deals with the teaching materials necessary for learning but also

involves the span and order of study, and so could buttress and boost teaching goals if correctly applied. The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:19 & 20) has identified the curriculum as the greatest barrier to learning. To address this barrier is to ensure that the process of learning is flexible enough to serve different needs. As has been stated by Donald *et al.* (2002:302), it is important for both the materials and content to be relevant to the age and interests of the learner. Another important aspect is flexibility in the learner's learning pace, as he has to be given adequate time to master the material being worked on.

Since every learner cannot necessarily achieve what has traditionally been seen as the appropriate competencies, the school authority has to look into what changes are required in both the curriculum and the learning environment in order for learners to experience successful learning (MacIntyre & Deponio, 2003:88 & 89). The need for a flexible curriculum cannot be over-emphasised. The researcher personally thinks that educators mostly know and understand learners in their care and so should, with the support of the principal, be able to make changes that can make learning more productive. The learning tasks will have to be matched with the learning needs and not to the pre-existing expectations (MacIntyre & Deponio, 2003:89).

It is the opinion of Davis *et al.* (1998:145) that an appropriate learning environment is such that the learner's interests and experiences determine the activities. Hence the need to address areas of development, accentuate interaction with peers, as well as adults. Also, the physical environment should be concrete, real and relevant to the learner's life and should have meaningful educational goals. The need for additional learning support may arise in some instances.

2.5.4   INDIVIDUALISED CURRICULUM

An individualised curriculum can be an important strategy in supporting learners with specific difficulties. According to Sands *et al.* (2000:60), the individualised education programme takes care of the educational needs of a learner and not the group or the disability. There may be a need to bring in support assistants to help the regular classroom educators with learners who need additional support (MacIntyre & Deponio, 2003:92; Van Kraayenoord & Elkins, 1998:167). The educator needs to understand the preferred learning style of the individual learner (MacIntyre & Deponio, 2003:89) and then plan activities to take care of the overall requirements of the learner. He also has to observe, evaluate, as well as communicate and

collaborate with the family (Davis *et al*., 1998:146 & 147). Larkin and Ellis (1998:557) feel that the supreme goal of those working with learners experiencing learning difficulties is to get them to be autonomous, confident, proficient and productive. Ideally, this should be the ultimate goal of every educator.

According to Smith (1998:337), the learner may not learn what is expected for his age and intelligence levels if the content is not matched to his readiness to learn. The educator using materials and methods that will facilitate his progress tailors the individualised instruction programme to the learner's needs. Heron and Harris (1993:129), as well as Hammill and Bartel (1995:452) also advocate individualised tutoring, while Hammill and Bartel (1995:456) believe that parents should be involved by being made to feel welcome at the school, being informed about the programmes and the progress of their children. Parents can be partners with the school in helping learners to learn. Smith (1998:340) concludes that the curricular content has to be modified *to teach the right objective at the right time* having in mind the readiness and learning style of the learner.

Although the individualised educational programme is an important learning support strategy, it may be problematic in South Africa because of the dire needs in many classrooms and schools, high educator-learner ratios, extra stress on educators and a lack of resources and capacity.

2.5.5   COOPERATIVE TUTORING

This is a student-mediated learning process focusing on cooperation and collaboration and allowing for individual accountability, where the learner is responsible for his own learning, as well as helping other learners (Van Kraayenoord & Elkins, 1998:161; Meese, 2001:221 & 222). The researcher, having witnessed how effective it could be while observing learners at work often implemented this support strategy as an educator. The learners were actually seen to enjoy giving help and support to one another, as well as bonding and creating friendships. Hence the researcher advocates the use of cooperative learning as an effective strategy to support learning for high school learners experiencing learning difficulties. It is the opinion of Gillies and Ashman (2000/34:19) that learners working cooperatively in groups are very helpful as they make use of a language that is inclusive and helpful in understanding the explanations being given. The researcher did observe the point made by Gillies and Ashman and saw how productive learning became.

Learners are usually more conscious and understanding of their fellow learner's problems than their educators. Also observed is that they are able to dwell on the exact problem and give help with eagerness and sincerity in a language that the learner encountering difficulty can easily understand. However, Webb's argument (in Gillies & Ashman 2000/34:19) is that the cooperative assistance has to be related to the need of the learner, has to be given precisely at the time the learner wants it and at the level he will appreciate. Learners understand each other better possibly because they are on the same developmental or age level. They therefore tend to comply with Webb's argument of giving help when most needed. Giving assistance when not required may not produce the desired effect, as readiness to learn has to be considered if productive learning is to be achieved. Hunt and Goetz (1997/31:18) agree with the effectiveness of cooperative tutoring by outlining the success of getting some learners to acquire targeted skills through this strategy. Cooperative tutoring may probably work well in South Africa as a support strategy, due to the system of Outcomes-based Education, which stresses collaboration and cooperation, that is, learners working as a team (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:8).

A dimension to cooperative tutoring is cooperative learning, which involves group arrangements, where learners are given group activities to complete. Bryant and Bryant (1998/31:41) describe cooperative learning as a 'peer-mediated' teaching strategy that enhances academic accomplishment, as well as socially recognizing learners irrespective of their ability. This strategy gives those with difficulties in learning the chance to receive additional assistance from peers, as well as to contribute to the group effort (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:236 & 240), and work to attain a common result (Putnam, 1998:18). Johnson *et al.* (1994:9-11) maintain that the success of cooperative learning depends on *positive interdependence*, where the efforts of each member of the group benefit the others; *group accountability*, where the group accounts for the achievement of set goals, with each member making reasonable input; *promotive interaction,* where distributing resources among members, giving support and encouragement, as well as applauding each other's input promotes success and where this system ensures both academic and personal support; *interpersonal and small-group skills,* where learners acquire the art of effectual headship, judgment making, confidence building, communication and conflict management; and finally, *group processing*, where members discuss their achievements while maintaining successful working rapport. Putnam (1998:19-22) also agrees with the above points of view by Johnson *et al.* by outlining the importance of 'positive interdependence, individual accountability, co-operative skills, face-to-face interaction, student reflection and goal setting, heterogeneous

groups and equal opportunity for success'. According to Winebrenner (1996:16), this is different from the traditional group work and learners with learning difficulties involved in this type of strategy do better as it becomes permissible for learners to assist each other. Learners participating in cooperative learning have to differ in ability, gender, race and background and should share materials while working towards a common goal (Van Kraayenoord & Elkins, 1998:161; Meese, 2001:222). As a large group in cooperative learning ensures an ample stretch of knowledge, proficiency, skills, varied thoughts in handling tasks and a multiplicity of opinions (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994:24), diversity in ability, gender, race and background of group members may probably bring about the same effect (Bryant & Bryant, 1998/31:43). Nevertheless, learning has to be under the observation and supervision of the educator (Meese, 2001:222). All members of the group are responsible for the achievement of their common goal, and until this is attained, the member should not feel successful, since the success of each member of the group will determine the success of the whole group. It is possible that some members may need to tutor others in order to bring them up to the level where they can effectively contribute in the group. This process demands that each member of the group learns the commonly acceptable social skills required in group pursuits, and this can result in improved self-esteem, enhanced peer acceptance and active learning (Putnam, 1998:19, 25 & 26).

Nevin (1998:49) is of the view that the success of an individual in the present century depends on his ability to mix with a diversity of people. Cooperative learning can assist the individual in acquiring this ability, as it not only assists the individual learner in attaining a personal educational goal, but also helps others simultaneously. However, cooperative learning can only be effective if the educator is involved in planning and outlining the aim of the exercise and the materials to be used (Nevin, 1998:49 & 50), as there is a need to carefully decide the consistency of the group. According to Johnson *et al.* (1994:24), the size of the group is dependent on the outcomes of the lesson, the age of learners, available materials, time duration of the lesson and the experiences of squad members. A large group implies a wide diversity of abilities and resources. For efficacy, the class structure should ensure easy access amongst learners in each group, the educator and working materials (Johnson *et al.*, 1994:31).

2.5.6   PEER TUTORING

The researcher's personal observation reveals that learners tend to learn better from each other than from their educators. Peer tutoring is a form of co-operative learning where learners are

allowed to work and help each other, and it can take different forms (Van Kraayenoord & Elkins, 1998:162). As described by Heron and Harris (1993:130), peer tutoring implies a student giving help to another in a subject or with a problem. Winebrenner (1996:71) describes this type of tutoring as a system where learners who understand an issue or question explain it to those who do not. However, this should be limited to tutors who volunteer to assist their peers, as forced tutoring may result in erroneous and unsatisfactory imparting of information to learners who are already experiencing learning difficulties.

According to Van Kraayenoord and Elkins (1998:162) and Meese (2001:232), normally achieving learners could be used to tutor their counterparts experiencing difficulties. Learners with mild difficulties can also be made tutors for their younger peers (Meese, 2001:235). Then again, a group consisting of learners with difficulties can work together as tutors and tutees (Van Kraayenoord & Elkins, 1998:162). For Eysenck (2000:427), the ideal tutors in peer tutoring should be somewhat older than the tutees because they may still remember what they felt at a younger age with constraints of comprehending, and so would be better able to impart worthwhile knowledge to tutees. The above descriptions could be regarded as the distinction between cooperative learning and peer tutoring. Bender (1998:262) is of the view that peer tutoring yields positive results both for the tutor and the tutee. Westling and Fox (1995:233) view peer tutoring as a successful means of enforcing inclusive education and of promoting peer interaction. Van Kraayenoord & Elkins (1998:162) indicate that studies have shown that this system has resulted in academic improvement. Nevertheless, success can only be achieved if the educator is actively involved by planning structured lessons for the tutors and monitoring the performances of both the tutors and tutees (Meese, 2001:236).

2.5.7   MOTIVATION

Motivation is a fundamental and essential aspect of the teaching and learning process, as its absence can constitute a barrier to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:163). There is a tendency for educators to blame factors outside the school environment for the learner's lack of attention and participation in the class. However, research on motivation suggests that the learner's motivation to learn depends on whether his learning needs are being met, whether the learning material is relevant to the needs and whether the learner is actively involved in the process (Jones & Jones, 2001:187).

The will to learn is the very heart of the learning process (Johnston, 1996:27). The learner has to exhibit the will to learn if the learning process is to be effective. Some learners may regard school as an anxiety-producing and frustrating environment. The understanding of a learner's academic needs and the relationship thereof to motivation will help educators in providing motivating instruction (Jones & Jones, 2001:187). That educators need to develop in the learner the motivation and will to learn cannot be overemphasized, as this is needed for the learner's independence. The educator therefore has to explore how to encourage motivation to learn by the use of different teaching methods and different types of learning environments. In Muthukrishna's opinion (2002:145-146), this is achieved by ensuring that:

1. The learner's curiousity is awakened and maintained through giving tasks that are challenging enough to stimulate the learner's interest in learning.
2. The learner is given activities in which he is encouraged to make meaningful sense of the learning material.
3. The learning environment is such that the learner is able to interact with educators and peers, as learning can be seen as a social activity.
4. The learner has an in-depth understanding of the material being learnt.
5. The materials learnt are meaningful, relevant and related to the world outside school.

Ensuring motivation also necessitates presenting materials at suitable difficulty levels, presenting tasks that are clear, interesting and meaningful, and creating a learning environment where the emphasis is on successful learning and achievement of goals and not on the best performance (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:250-252). An unfriendly school environment with dull and uninspired teaching may result in a lack of motivation, thereby raising barriers to learning.

There are various necessary components that have to be achieved in order for learning to be successful and these include the learner's ability, motivation, affect (mood or emotion), social circumstance and the general climate in which learning is taking place. The absence of any of these components may affect positive learning (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:247). Motivation and affect usually overlap in the learning process. While motivation is the extent to which the learner wishes to succeed, affect is the learner's emotional mood as well as his personal mood. These two components are complementary, as one depends on the other for useful learning. So also are the social circumstance of the learner and the climate, which may be regarded as components within the learner and can adversely affect the process of learning.

Other factors that could give rise to barriers to learning, according to the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:18), include inflexible curriculum, language in use, communication breakdown, faulty policies, inaccessible environment, sketchy support services, negative disposition, untrained educators and lack of parental involvement.

Reay (1995:56) is of the view that people learn better when motivated, while Wolery and Schuster (1997/31:64) state that motivation increases performance and learning when variables such as learner's preferences and reinforcers are used. In other words, values attached to the learning process, as in rewards or punishments, are the motivational incentives (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:165). The competence of the teaching personnel and the physical surroundings where learning occurs, play an essential role in motivating learners to learn (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:204).

The learner's motivation may be intrinsic, where he participates either out of inquisitiveness, the inclination to be successful or to have a say; or it may be extrinsic, where his participation is actually in expectation of external reward (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:247; Adelman & Taylor, 1993:165). When the learning environment is poor, the transaction between the learner and the environment will often yield undesirable results (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:160). The learning environment has to offer challenges but should not be over-demanding or overwhelming if the learner is already exhibiting difficulties.

As it is important for the learner to be motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically, a match has to exist between the learner and the environment, to enable the learner to achieve what is expected of him (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:163) by the educational system and the wider society. It is therefore important for the educator to create a supportive classroom environment where all learners feel accepted and peer support is encouraged, where instructional materials and curriculum content are at the right level of difficulty and where the learning tasks are seen by learners as relevant and worth learning. This can improve the learner's motivation and at the same time create positive affect (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:249-251). As put by Adelman & Taylor (1993:163 & 166), the creation of an environment that matches the learner's motivation and level of development will make for proper learning, as well as boost the likelihood of success by the provision of support and guidance. The point therefore is that as motivation is essential for learning to occur, its absence may create barriers to learning, thus leading to learning difficulty.

Finally, Choate (2000:20) suggests that learners who struggle to keep up with their peers, the educator and the curriculum could be helped if educators were to abide by the following guidelines:

> *Slow the pace of instruction to match the student's learning rate, review and re-teach before each lesson, provide extended readiness and practice activities for each lesson, emphasize relevance and real life skills, provide ample talking and listening activities to expand language skills and concepts, shorten assignments to manageable units,* and *directly teach word meanings for all subjects.*

According to Jones and Jones (2001:183), educators need to study the curriculum and method of teaching to ensure that the learner's difficulty level is addressed, especially when the learner starts to play truant or fail in class-work.

2.5.8   PLAY ACTIVITIES

The researcher believes that play, if properly organized and supervised, and with the appropriate facilities, can serve as a learning support strategy for learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. A promoter of children's play is the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI). This association, as stated by Isenberg and Quisenberry (2002), is aware of and asserts the importance of and call for play in the lives of children, as play is seen as *a serious behaviour that has a powerful influence on learning.* Some of the positions upheld by the association in relation to the importance of play are as follows (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002):

1.   *ACEI believes that play- a dynamic, active, and constructive behavior- is an essential and integral part of all children's healthy growth, development and learning across all ages, domains and cultures.* Consequently, the view is that *non-attendance* at play activities may imply a barrier to the healthy growth of resourceful learners.

2.   *ACEI believes that play enhances learning and development for children of all ages, cultures and domains,* for play performs a significant role in the learner's physical development (as in the enhancement of motor skills and body consciousness). Play is important for social and emotional development (as in belonging to an assemblage

and learning to exist and work with groups. In other words, social skills and the sensitivity necessary to appreciate others' desires and ideals, as well as managing emotions and self control could be achieved through play). Play is also important in cognitive development.

3.   *ACEI believes that play is a powerful, natural behavior contributing to children's learning and development and that no program of adult instruction can substitute for children's own observations, activities, and direct knowledge,* for playing with newly acquired information makes it the player's.

As Bjorklund and Brown (1998/69:604) point out, the advantage of play activity is *in the form* of *a break from demanding tasks.* Bjorklund and Brown (1998/69:604) believe that younger learners have need of physical play, which provides breaks and changes from scholarly responsibilities. The researcher thinks that what functions for the younger learners could apply equally well to adolescent learners, especially in attempting to generate opportunities to unwind after experiencing academically challenging tasks.

In conclusion, the researcher's analysis is that play, as a recreational activity, could boost the learning process, as this form of exercise keeps the learner on top form and alert. The researcher also believes that play could serve as a learning support in that through play, a range of skills and ideas can be acquired, as Isenberg and Quisenberry agree (2002). For this reason too, the researcher supports the provision of organized and supervised play activities for learners in high school.

2.5.9   INSTRUCTIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT

2.5.9.1   Use of pictures

Although it has been found that the memory of a learner for pictures is often superior to that for words, most texts are dominated by words, and where pictures do appear, they are often merely decorative and so do not necessarily enhance the understanding of the text. It would be ideal if pictures could supply extra non-verbal memory on which the learner could rely should his verbal memory fail him. The use of adjuncts is regarded as vital in learning, as they are of immense assistance to learners in identifying what might possibly be in the text but is hidden from them (Robinson, 2002/14:1 & 2).

The use of pictures in learning has been seen to be valuable as they complement the text. With pictures the learner may be better able to perceive, understand and remember the information contained in the text. There are five main functions of pictures: they are decorative, representational, organizational, interpretational and transformational. Decorative pictures bear no relation to the text and consequently are not helpful in understanding it better. Representational pictures are used quite often as they are employed to illustrate the descriptions in the text. Organizational pictures are used to portray the structural plan of the text. Interpretational pictures are most useful where learning difficulty is exhibited, for these are very helpful in illuminating complex texts. Finally there are transformational pictures that are aimed at enhancing memory, as these help the learner to call to mind facts in the text (Carney & Levin, 2002/14:7). It should be noted that the pictures used have to conform to the text in order to improve content learning, as conflicting pictures can only hinder the learning process (Carney & Levin, 2002/14:8 & 9). Peeck's review (in Carney & Levin, 2002/14:10) indicates that apart from pictures promoting learning, they also boost motivation, learner's focus and profundity in processing, as well as shedding light on the text. The use of pictures may be better if precise directives are provided.

2.5.9.2   Visual displays

According to Schnotz (2002/14:101), visual displays are becoming increasingly vital in teaching and learning as these now make use of pictures, diagrams and graphs as text adjuncts. Such visual aids as 'static and animated illustration, geographic, thematic and knowledge maps, and graphs' are different, and are used effectively for divergent reasons that deal with correspondence, learning and reasoning. Regarded as icons are static and animated illustrations, as well as geographic maps. Graphs and knowledge maps are more acceptable as icons than as symbols, where icons are considered to be emblems indicating specific phenomena with similar structural qualities and are connected to the represented content on concrete or abstract grounds (Schnotz, 2002/14:102 & 103). While texts are in the class of 'descriptive representation', visual displays are seen to be in the class of 'depictive representation' which is made up of iconic marks. It is nevertheless worth noting that both descriptive and depictive representations serve different purposes and that the descriptive representation is regarded as being more effective. That is, while the descriptive representation gives a clear message (such as 'no pets allowed'), the depictive representation will give the same message in the form of a picture of a pet with the prohibitive symbol across it (Schnotz, 2002/14:103 & 104).

All types of visual displays employed in support of learning should be determined by the individual learner's cognitive processing. In other words, the success of visual displays as text adjuncts depends largely on the learner's pre-existent knowledge, intellectual abilities, as well as his learning skills and age (Schnotz, 2002/14:113). The use of visual displays will undoubtedly advance understanding, especially where the learner has little prior knowledge and has to deal with a difficult subject. However, the effectiveness of learning through these displays depends on the connection between the display and the requirements of the task, as well as the learner's previous acquisition and cognitive capability. Shah and Hoeffner (2002/14:56 & 57) have outlined the use of colour as beneficial in graphical displays, as this is employed in grouping the basics and in reducing difficulties that may be experienced by the learner as he deals with the graphic references. Thus the working memory is not overloaded by the use of legends instead of labels. It has been noted that it is easier for a graph to be read when the features are labelled with the referents.

2.5.9.3   The use of animation as multimedia learning

In the multimedia process of education, the learner is exposed to both the narrative (text) and pictorial (animation) form of illustration. Animation is a stimulating type of presentation that can be used as an instructive tool. This is presented as a pictorial illustration manifesting movement and involving objects brought about by drawing or through simulation (Mayer & Moreno, 2002/14:87 & 88). Whether animation will promote further learning depends on its use. The learner is assumed to engage in more meaningful learning in multimedia presentations than in the single medium. That is, the learner usually learns better if both verbal and pictorial are presented simultaneously (Mayer & Moreno, 2002/14:91; Schnotz, 2002/14:107). The researcher thinks this strategy could be true for learners with learning disability if the verbal presentation is at the intellectual level of the learners involved.

Mayer and Moreno (2002/14:93, 95-97) outline seven principles involving animation. These are as follows:

1.   The multimedia principle indicates that learning is more effective when both animation and narration are applied than when narration alone is used. This use of multimedia enables the learner to make a mental link between related words and pictures.

2.   The spatial contiguity principle implies that learning is more productive when words are presented next to the action (animation) being described, as it is easier to make connections than having to find the links. Mayer, Moreno, Boire and Vagge (1999/91:638 & 639) advocate constructivist learning, where the learner is capable of maintaining pictorial and narrative representations in both visual and verbal working memories concurrently. The result of the experiments by Mayer *et al.* (1999/91:639 & 642) shows contiguity effect, as learners could effectively build mental replicas when both visual and verbal representations were concurrently presented. As Moreno and Mayer (1999/91:358) put it, learning is enhanced when the printed text is substantially combined or merged with the pictures instead of being detached. Mayer, Steinhoff, Bower and Mars (1995/43:33) substantiate this view in proposing that the learner be presented with the text (verbal) and images (visual) simultaneously to enable him to carry out the selection, organization and integration of complementary portions of the verbal and visual information in his working memory.

3.   Temporal contiguity indicates that learning can be deep when related portions of words and pictures are presented simultaneously, as these work together in the learner's memory. This is consistent with the opinion of Moreno and Mayer (1999/91:358).

4.   The coherence principle implies that multimedia learning is deeper when irrelevant sounds, words or music are kept out since these may influence or affect the learner's attention, thus impeding his cognitive ability to make mental links between the important portions of the multimedia. Moreno and Mayer (2000a/92:118 & 124) maintain that the addition of extraneous materials overloads the auditory channel, thereby making it difficult to learn, as the learner has to distinguish between the relevant and irrelevant and may end up losing some important materials. He is left with a limited capacity to build a consistent verbal link with the auditory presentation. The experiments by Moreno and Mayer confirmed that the addition of unnecessary auditory material could be detrimental to learning, for this overload will hamper the learner's cognitive ability.

5.   The modality principle implies that the learner learns better when both animation and narration are presented than when animation and on-screen text are presented.

This is because the learner's vision may become overloaded when words are presented visually along with animation. Learners are better able to build links between narrations and animations than between visual words and related pictures. In their studies, Mayer and Moreno (1998/90:312) found that learning is effective when pictorial and verbal presentations are concurrently given. This, according to Mayer and Moreno (1998/90:313 & 314), is more effective than the use of pictorial and on-line text, as this could cause overloading for the visual channel, thereby resulting in the learner possibly missing out on points in the pictures or the on line texts. In other words, this may result in split attention. Moreno and Mayer (1999/91:359) agree with the above point of view, as they also maintain that on-screen text presented simultaneously with pictures diminishes the effect of learning, and so should be presented auditorily instead. Mousavi, Low and Sweller (1995/87:319) also share the opinion of Mayer and Moreno/Moreno and Mayer through suggesting that divided attention ultimately results in 'split attention effect', and also propose the dual presentation of information in order to increase the capacity of the learner's working memory, as well as enhance effective learning (Mousavi *et al*., 1995/87:321).

6.   The redundancy principle states that learning is more productive when animation and narration are presented than when narration, animation and on-screen words are presented, for the latter puts stress on the learner's cognitive ability to make connections between animation, narration and on-screen words.

7.   The personalization principle indicates that it is easier and more effective to learn from animation and narration when the presentation is conversational with the use of the first and second persons. Moreno and Mayer (2000b/92:731) in their experiment found that learners learned better when the presentation was personalised and they could resolve newly emerging problems using what was learnt.

These principles basically deal with the 'cognitive theory of multimedia learning' and not the 'information theory of multimedia learning'. Although multimedia learning potentially enhances learning and boosts profound understanding, the principles cannot strictly apply in all circumstances. Nevertheless, multimedia presentations need to be such as to foster the cognitive process needed to achieve productive learning (Mayer & Moreno, 2002/14:97).

The researcher sees the coherence principle as being prevalent in our lives and thus thinks that it is worthy of attention, as a lack of attention to this principle can be detrimental to effective learning. It is important to note the damaging effect of extraneous material to a text. Harp and Mayer (1998/90:414) referred to this as the use of 'seductive details', which implies the addition of irrelevant information or illustrations in order to make a text more appealing and entertaining to the learner. The result of the use of seductive details may be negative because it tends to reduce comprehension and remembering of the relevant idea, since the learner's attention is diverted away from the main idea to the irrelevant entertainment (Harp & Mayer, 1997/89:93; Harp & Mayer 1998/90:414).

Harp and Mayer (1998/90:414 & 415) outline three hypotheses on the damaging effect of seductive details. These authors believe that the use of seductive details affects the cognitive processes that enhance efficient management of the understanding of a text in the areas of selection, organization and integration. Selection deals with being attentive to the relevant ideas of the text, while organization deals with making internal links amid the selected ideas, and integration deals with making external links between the new ideas and the already stored information. Furthermore, the three hypotheses involve *distraction, disruption* and *diversion.* The distraction hypothesis states that seductive detail is detrimental, as the learner's selective mind is lured away from the vital message. It is, however, suggested that this damage could be minimized by assisting learners through verbally guiding their 'selection processes' in the direction of the main points. The disruption hypothesis affirms that applying seductive details is harmful to learning in that these interfere with the change from one essential point to another, thereby making it difficult for the learner to note connections that will enhance the organization of the textual information. Finally, the diversion hypothesis suggests that the learner may construct a representation around the seductive details and not around the main points of the text, thus bringing up an unrelated previous knowledge, which may not be consistent with the new knowledge. Harp and Mayer (1998/90:428) suggest that applying seductive details at the end of the text may not be too damaging to the learner's sense of recall and transfer, for the influence is on the already read portion of the text. The researcher, in concurring with the above hypotheses, believes that these are practical as they tend to manifest daily in our lives. The situation may be more taxing for a learner encountering learning difficulties, as he may get so carried away by the appealing and enjoyable presentation that he forgets to search for the main idea in the lesson.

The emphasis on the use of seductive details is thus based on the possibility that this use could turn into a barrier to learning, especially where the three hypotheses of distraction, disruption and diversion are involved. It may be easy for an educator to apply the use of seductive details in an attempt either to make his teaching more interesting and understandable or as providing learning support, without realizing that this may have a detrimental effect on effective teaching.

Adding a different dimension to the coherence principle is Harp and Mayer's view (1997/89:93) on *emotional interest and cognitive interest theories*. The emotional interest theory suggests the inclusion of irrelevant but engaging information to the text so as to galvanise the learner into being attentive and probably achieving more learning. The addition, while not connected to the description, is relevant to the topic and aimed at increasing the learner's inquisitiveness and boosting his enjoyment of the text, and perhaps having a positive effect on the learner's cognition, possibly leading to the learner being more attentive. However, the researcher thinks that caution should be exercised in the use of the emotional interest theory, especially where learning difficulty is exhibited, as the 'engaging and irrelevant' information may distract the learner. The use of seductive texts and illustrations, which serve as emotional interest adjuncts, is not advised in science, for this may cause distraction that may possibly result in the learner's ability to pinpoint the cause-and-effect sequence being disrupted. It is the researcher's view, nonetheless, that this could also have positive effects (such as prolonged engagement in the work in progress) if caution is exercised in its implementation.

The cognitive interest theory maintains that such cognitive interest as *explanatory summary* affects the learner's cognition by advancing his comprehension of descriptions given. This is also effective, as the learner is able to centre his selective ability on significant pieces of data. However, Harp and Mayer (1997/89:93) advise against the use of seductive texts and illustrations in science texts since the learner's ability to select, organize and integrate relevant details may be disturbed. In other words, the use of emotional interest adjuncts in texts will affect the cognitive interest theory, for learners are most likely to focus on the irrelevant instead of the relevant.

Mayer, Bove, Bryman, Mars and Tapangeo (1996/88:65) outline the significance of 'multimedia summary' in science and suggest that this should be *concise, coherent* and *coordinated*. These are terms explained as follows:

- ▪   'Concise' implies the use of a few clear illustrations in the visual presentation and a few words in the verbal presentation, thereby enabling the learner to single out words that relate to the illustrations.
- ▪   'Coherence' involves giving visual and verbal descriptions that are sequential (as in cause-and-effect).
- ▪   'Coordination' entails presenting visual and verbal forms that conform to the illustrations and words.

The results of the experiments by Mayer *et al.* (1996/88:72) suggest that multimedia summaries make for worthwhile learning outcomes, as they decrease the load that may weigh on the learner's cognition.

2.5.9.4   The use of knowledge maps

The use of knowledge maps as a learning strategy is especially effective for learners who have low verbal ability or learners with limited verbal exposure. Knowledge maps, according to O'Donnell, Dansereau and Hall (2002/14:72), are 'node-link representations' where concepts are placed at points and linked to other connected impressions by means of a string of marked connections. Hall and O'Donnell (1996/21:94) describe knowledge maps as a system of learning where text information is demonstrated 'in a two-dimension, spatial, node-link network'. Moreland, Dansereau and Chmielewski (1997/22:521) assume that the application of knowledge maps will promote recollection through equipping the learner with an easy layout of reading materials, as well as inspiring and furthering the formation of commentary such as questioning, as studies have shown that the generation of the learner's own questions while studying could result in useful learning (Moreland *et al*., 1997/22:523). These links often serve various functions with the use of arrowheads that signify the way ideas are connected. Chmielewski and Dansereau (1998/90:407) also view knowledge maps as presentation in a node-link chart (as in Figure 2.1), while believing that one of its virtues is the presentation of a diversity of connections and arrangements in one exhibition.
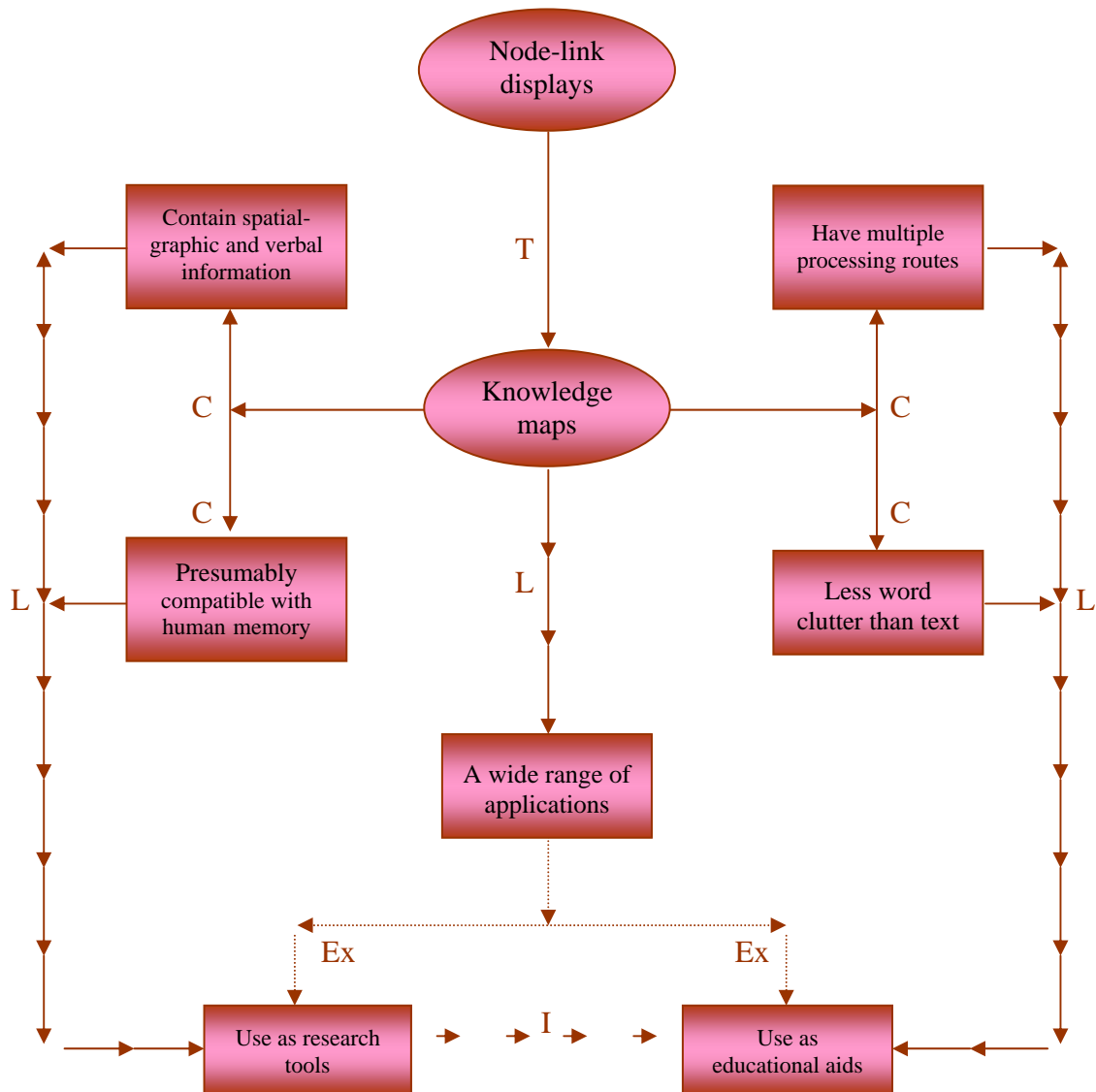
[C = characteristic; Ex = example; I = influence; L = leads to; T = type]

FIGURE 2.1:   AN EXAMPLE OF A KNOWLEDGE MAP (Chmielewski & Dansereau, 1998/ 90:408)

Knowledge maps are known to be effective in acquiring knowledge, supplying help to learners with low verbal skills. They serve as additional help in processing texts and supply retrieval avenues for already acquired learning. Knowledge maps are also known to make long build-ups of information more noticeable, as learners who use this strategy tend to recall more of the main ideas and are able to positively transfer knowledge. The strategy also promotes cooperative learning, which is achieved by training learners in the use of knowledge maps (O'Donnell *et al.,* 2002/14:74, 75 & 76).

As stated, the use of knowledge maps as a support strategy is notably beneficial for a particular level of learners – those with low verbal capability. The aim of the strategy is the reduction of cognitive load, since this system considerably reduces the amount of words to be processed, thus facilitating visual availability of the textual information (O'Donnell *et al.,* 2002/14:78). Hall and O'Donnell (1996/21:99), in their findings, established that the use of knowledge maps does not only rest on cognition, but also enhances elevation of motivation and absorption of materials in learning. The researcher thinks that the use of knowledge maps as an instructional strategy may work well in an inclusive situation. This complements O'Donnell *et al*'s view (2002/14:82) that knowledge maps are effective for learners with low verbal ability, the hearing-impaired, and learners for whom English is a second language, as these maps use limited words and abridged grammar.

2.5.9.5   The use of maps and texts

Maps are used by educators to indicate distant places, areas of historical features, and to supply facts that will upgrade learning if used with connected text (Verdi & Kulhavy, 2002/14:27). Using maps together with texts enhances cross-code association, as the learner is able to use the stored data in a code as a signal for getting back that stored in another code, and subsequently using this association or link to advance the knowledge gained from the use of map and text. This concurs with Novak's view (1998:31) on meaningful learning, which according to him, is built upon the alliance of the learner's feats, emotions and calculated thinking, and is not acquired by rote.

However, the learner's previous knowledge is important, for it determines the processing of a map and the linking of what is being learned with what is already learned. Also important is the use of feature information (Johnson, Verdi, Kealy, Stock & Haygood, 1995/20:457) such as 'icons' or 'words' on maps, the aim of which is to trigger the previous knowledge, thus making connections with the new learning (Verdi & Kulhavy, 2002/14:28, 29 & 30). According to Verdi and Kulhavy (2001/14:43), studies have shown that presenting the map to learners before presenting the text promotes effective learning because viewing the map first produces pictures that will engender a better appreciation of the text. The rationale (Johnson *et al*., 1995/20:458) is that the map is recorded in the learner's memory, while leaving room for the ability to recall the text information connected to the map. Johnson *et al.* (1995/20:458) conclude that the use of extra information in maps could be effective in calling to mind and recapturing the link with the texts.

The researcher believes that some of this instructional learning support could constitute productive support strategies for participants in this study and could be recommended if not already being exploited in the sample school. However, it would be necessary to identify which strategy best suits the individual participants, since the decision to employ a specific scheme depends on the nature of the barriers each exhibits. In any case, this falls outside the scope of this study.

2.5.10   THE ROLES OF PROFESSIONALS IN LEARNING SUPPORT

The promotion of effective learning may require the involvement of professionals in different fields in the provision of learning support for learners experiencing barriers to learning. The present situation of general education demands ' a more knowledgeable and skilled' team of educators (York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke & Ghere, 2005/9:193), which in the researcher's view should comprise of various professionals. This will inevitably provide a varied and rich collection of people to tackle the diverse range of needs in the classroom. To be considered as important support providers in this study are the general education teacher, the special education teacher, the educational psychologist/school psychologist, the guidance counsellor, the family, the social worker, the occupational therapist and paraprofessionals.

2.5.10.1 The general education teacher

This educator is the most important of all professionals in providing learning support for learners in need of it. Learners may sometimes require more support than can be received in the regular classroom. Therefore, for support intervention to be productive, there may be a need for collaboration between the general education teacher and other specialists or professionals. He is primarily burdened with the responsibility of catering for all learners in his care and he is in possession of detailed knowledge of the learners' daily needs in the classroom. For that reason, he becomes the first professional whose responsibility may be to bring in other professionals based on his suspicion as regards a learner's learning ability or disability (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:30; Smith, 1998:355).

2.5.10.2 The special education teacher

He may sometimes be referred to as the 'learning disabilities teacher' or 'learning support educator', with a diverse range of responsibilities. Apart from specialised teaching, screening,

assessing and evaluating learners with barriers to learning, he collaborates with the regular teacher in the design and implementation of instructions (Lerner, 2003:166; Smith, 1998:355). He also controls and coordinates the assistance provided for learners in need of it (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:31).

2.5.10.3 The educational psychologist/school psychologist

As stated by Mwamwenda (2004:5), educational psychology deals with 'the study of psychology as applied to teaching and learning in a classroom and school setting'. This field deals with the identification of conducive learning situations that will enable effective teaching and learning to take place, as educators are equipped to plan instructions according to the needs, age and interests of learners. Educational psychology involves 'human learning, teaching and instruction', hence the educational psychologist is traditionally seen as an authority in handling individual learners with difficulties, which include barriers to learning (Goedeke & Schoemann, 2002:281 & 282).

A thin line separates the educational psychologist from the school psychologist. The latter is knowledgeable in child development and drawbacks, as well as the structural and human elements in a school setting that can impede learning (Smith, 1998:357). A school psychologist carries out a significant task in the education of learners with barriers to learning, as he can identify the learner's 'cognitive, social, emotional and/or behavioural functioning', thereby giving an analysis of the learner's strong points and weaknesses (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:33). To provide support for the affected learner, collaboration should exist between the educational psychologist and the classroom educators. They should both work 'in a negotiated, mutual and ongoing problem-solving relationship' (Goedeke & Schoemann, 2002:282), as it is the educator's responsibility to supply the necessary resources.

2.5.10.4 Guidance counsellor

Guidance and counselling plays a crucial supportive role in the life of a learner encountering barriers to learning and may also provide assistance to a learner exhibiting 'personal, social or psycho-emotional problems' (Akhurst & Ntshangase, 2002:278). As Mwamwenda (2004:360) pointed out, 'counselling can assist learners and teachers to adjust themselves to their environment'. This view is supported by Friend and Bursuck (1999:33). Whether the learner receives individual or group counselling depends on the nature and/or cause of the difficulty.

Both types of counselling have their merits and demerits; hence the expected outcome should determine the type that will achieve most.

2.5.10.5 The family

The family network helps to build the learner's dispositions and propensities; have the necessity for the involvement of the family in resolving the learner's problem (Smith, 1998:359) through family-school collaboration (Lerner, 2003:169). Family counselling could be explored, as this involves members collectively working to bring about positive changes, not only for the learner with barriers to learning, but for the entire family set-up (Mwamwenda, 2004:371).

2.5.10.6 The social worker

The social worker is somewhat similar to a counsellor, as he assists the educator in dealing with social and emotional matters that affect learners who exhibit barriers to learning. However, he has the added responsibility of keeping the family and the school in contact (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:34).

2.5.10.7 The occupational therapist

The occupational therapist is called in where the learner exhibits problems with his motor skills. The therapist has the responsibility of evaluating the adequacy of the learner's use of his hands and fingers, and giving recommendations and plans for ameliorating the learner's motor skill disability (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:34).

2.5.10.8 The paraprofessional

The paraprofessional may be a certified teacher, who is a specialised aide to an educator and assists in delivering help to learners in need of support (Mastropieri & Scrugg, 2004:54). He may be needed to work with learners who require individual help in carrying out physical activities or otherwise, or to work in inclusive and special education classrooms, as well as the playground and other places where he is in demand. These paraprofessionals can serve as 'instructional assistant, teaching assistant or aide' (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:35).

2.6   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a review of literature that is related to the theme of this study. While it is by no means exhaustive, it does provide some conceptual parameters within which the data in this study will be analysed.

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CHAPTER 3
EXPLORING AND EXPLAINING THE MANIFESTATIONS OF LEARNING SUPPORT

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the procedure used in the research, with a description of the site for the research, as well as the method of selection of participants and co-participants. Also presented are a description of data collection strategies employed in the study, a description of the background of participants and co-participants, as well as a theme analysis of the data collected.

3.2   THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The proposed study is a qualitative explanation of the ways in which learning support manifests itself in the lives of high school learners. Bos and Richardson (1994:180) maintain that one purpose of qualitative research, especially for educational researchers, is to identify the problems and the processes that will be effected to improve education. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147) explain that qualitative research methods centre on the 'real world' or the natural settings in which events occur, and approach the study of the events in these settings with the understanding that there may be different dimensions to the events being studied. As this research is qualitative in nature, the researcher will be dealing with learners in the classroom environment at work. The researcher will also adhere to Terre Blanche and Kelly's direction (2004:128) to disrupt the circumstance and flow of events only minimally and to intermingle as a part of the environment where the incidents occur.

The following advantages of a qualitative research method resonated in this study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:148 & 149):

1.   It is descriptive as it can show the make-up of certain circumstances, surroundings, practices, connections and structures.

2.   It is interpretive, for the researcher is able to obtain an understanding of the make-up of a certain incident, establish new ideas about the incident and may uncover the problems that this presents.

3.   It permits the researcher to verify or corroborate the strength or legitimacy of certain assertions and beliefs.

4.   It may enable the researcher to evaluate the efficiency of certain schemes, systems and changes.

Informing this study are the assumptions that learners can experience barriers to learning both intrinsically and extrinsically and that some form of learning support may be available to assist those who will require it. Hence, the purpose of this study is to explain the ways in which learning support manifests itself in the lives of high school learners, and thereby increase our knowledge and understanding of learning support for high school learners who experience barriers to learning. To achieve this, the researcher employed a multiple case study design, as this type of study is best suited to acquiring knowledge on circumstances or conditions that are little known (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:149). Data was collected from learners through interviews, observation, documents/records and site visits/field work. Consult Figure 3.1 on the following page for a summary of the research process.

The search for a working title

Conclusions and recommendations

Findings
1) Graphic description of themes
2) Detailed descriptions
3) In-depth discussion of findings

Research question: How does learning support manifest iteslf in the lives of high school learners?

Sub-questions: 1) What is the nature of barriers to learning for high school learners?
2) What is learning support?
3) What learning support is available for high school learners experiencing barriers to learning?

Follow-up interviews with all involved

Multiple case studies

Request permission from GDE to conduct research at school

Data analysis & interpretation
1. Textual transcription
2. Theme analysis
a) Colour coding of themes
b) Categorization of themes

Review of literature (informed by Donald *et al.* & Adelman & Taylor)

Data collection strategies
1. a) Interviews with participants b) Interviews with families c) Interviews with educators d) Interview with the principal
2. Observation of participants in the classroom
3. Documents/records of participants (e.g. classwork, homework, projects & scholastic reports
4. Site visits/field notes

Sampling
1) Participants: 9 high school learners repeating Grade 9

2) Co-participants: a) 9 family members

b) 7 educators

c) Principal of sample school

FIGURE 3.1:   RESEARCH PROCESS

3.3   PARADIGM

As mentioned in Chapter One, the interpretive research paradigm is deemed to be well suited to this study, since this approach deals with understanding and describing what participants make of incidents in particular circumstances (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004:123; Bos &

Richardson, 1994:182). It also helps to understand participants' actions in specific contexts (Bos & Richardson, 1994:182). According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (2004:124), the interpretive approach depends on first-hand information, achieved through interviews, observation and analysis of documents (Bos & Richardson, 1994:182). This study aims to amass data through first-hand information obtained from interviews, observations, and scholastic documents and field notes.

3.4   PLACE OF RESEARCH

The setting for this research is Atteridgeville, a beautiful and homely community in the West of Pretoria. The town was named after a city council member, Mrs M. P. Atteridge. Founded in August 1939 following the forceful dislodgement of people dwelling in Marabastad, Newclare, Lady Selborne, Bantule and Hoves Ground, Atteridgeville has a current population of about two hundred thousand inhabitants. The community maintains a rich culture, with jazz as the most popular music, thus earning the title of 'the jazz capital of South Africa', in some circles.

In the town are several heritage sites such as the 'Ga-Mothakga Resort, Second World War Plaque, Mendi Memorial, Ou Staad Houses, Black Rock House, Schurveberg and Mrs Moloto's House Padi Street', as well as the Atteridgeville Super Stadium.

However, the town suffers a lot of environmental hazards such as dumping and littering as a result of many open undeveloped spaces. The special foods of the inhabitants of this town include *sphatlo, mogodu and maotwana*. See Figure 3.2 for the location of Atteridgeville on the map of the City of Tshwane.
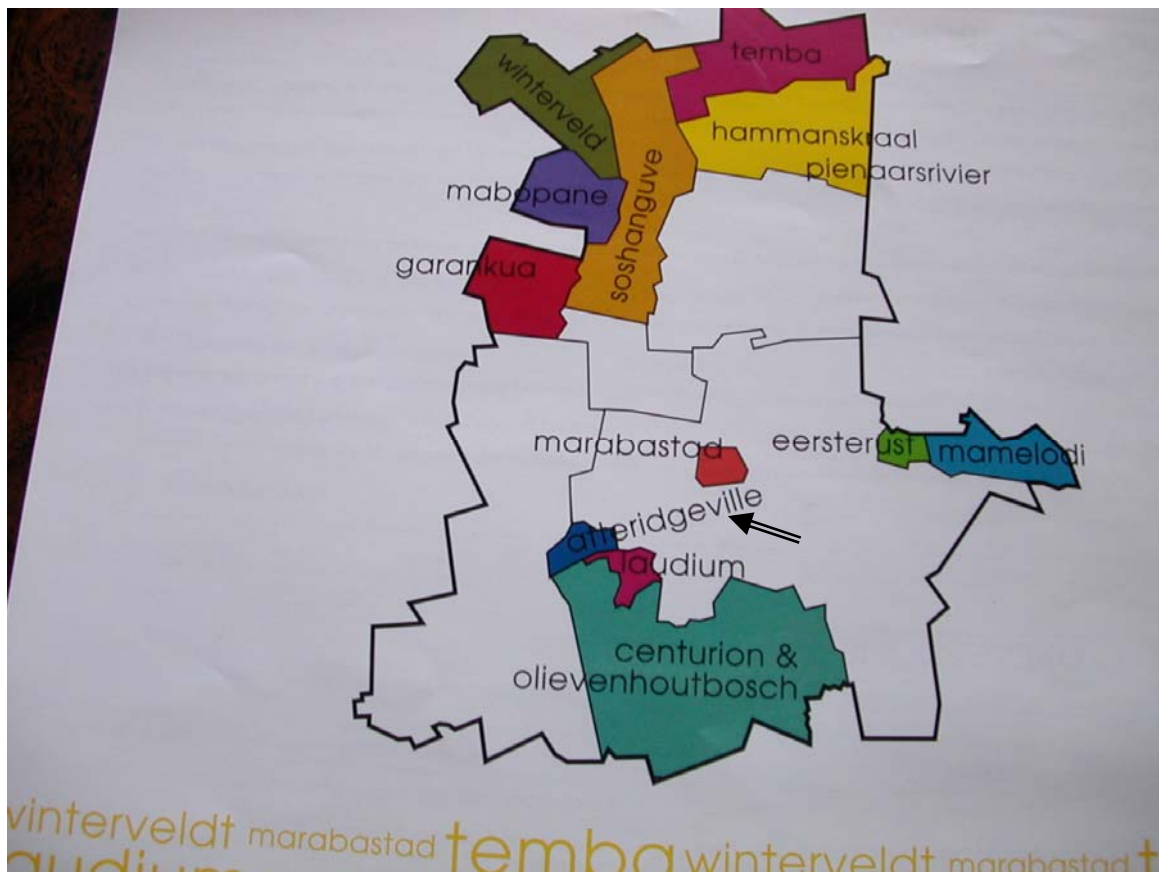
FIGURE 3.2:   **MAP OF THE CITY OF TSHWANE INDICATING THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF ATTERIDGEVILLE**

Learners from Atteridgeville and other surrounding communities populate the sample school and they come mostly from disadvantaged homes. As one of the educators commented, 'It is a disadvantaged school'. The researcher had the opportunity to visit the school before the start of a school day and was able to observe learners as they came to school. A good percentage of the girls came in extremely faded uniforms and some boys in mismatched stockings. Some children also wore tattered clothes.

Also observed was that the school has no playground where learners can unwind during break. They sit around in groups to eat and then go back to class. When the researcher enquired as to what they do for play, the reply was that they do not really play, and that very few schools in the town have playgrounds.

3.5   SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In the opinion of Van Vuuren and Maree (2004:274), the exercise of selecting participants in a study is an important feature of research, as it may affect the outcome of the research. Judgmental sampling was employed in this study. This means that an authority such as the educator was assigned to carry out the selection while bearing in mind a particular aim (Van Vuuren & Maree, 2004:281). The learners repeating the ninth grade were accorded precedence, as they had not achieved the required scholastic scores to be promoted, which could be indicative of the manifestation of learning difficulties. These consisted of nine learners from the ages of fifteen to eighteen, and scoring thirty to thirty-nine per cent in three or more learning areas.

The inclusion of learners in the selected group was confirmed through the following criteria:

1.   Confirmation by parents and family members with whom they live, that they are experiencing learning difficulties.
2.   An indication from their academic performance records that they may be experiencing learning difficulties.

The sample consisted of five male and four female participants, while the co-participants included three parents and six family members (comprising of aunts, sisters, brothers and a grandmother), seven educators (two females and five males) and the principal of the school.

3.6   RESEARCH DESIGN

3.6.1   PRE-PROCEDURAL MEETINGS

Having obtained the required permission from the Department of Education (Appendix A), the researcher proceeded once again to the community and school of study. The Vice-Principal, under the instruction of the Principal, appointed the School's Head of Department of Life Skills to give guidance and assistance through the duration of data collection. The participants were identified and introduced to the researcher (on 17 February 2005), who spoke to them, explaining what the study is about and requesting that they be part of it. The request was willingly granted. The researcher, however, also asked to speak to their parents. It was thus arranged that she be present at the Parents/Teachers' meeting on Sunday morning,

20 February, 2005. Unfortunately, only one parent out of nine was present. Hence the request was made that parents endorse the consent forms.

3.6.2   DATA COLLECTION

According to Yin (2003:98), the use of multiple sources of evidence makes the findings of a case study more credible and authentic. Stake (2000:443) is of the opinion that this method may be used to clarify meanings, as well as to validate repeatability, thereby limiting the chances of misinterpretation. For this study, the use of different sources of information was employed so as to make the conclusions of the research more convincing and accurate.

Interpretive researchers tend to endow feelings, events and social circumstances where incidents happen with meaning (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004:127). Hence, widespread information was gathered on participants in this study through interviews with learners, educators, parents/family members and the principal. Observation of learners in the classroom environment, analysis of documents/records such as class-work, home work and scholastic reports, and finally site visits/field notes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:149) were also strategies employed in collecting the data (see Figure 1.2). Notes were made of the physical environment (social context) where the research took place, as this might help in determining how far the findings may be generalised in respect of alternative circumstances (even though generalisation is not a purpose or goal of this study).

The interview sessions for the participants, as well as the educators and the principal (co-participants) were conducted on the school premises, while those with the other co-participants (families) were conducted in their homes. Co-participant A, however, was interviewed in one of the classrooms in the school after the Parents/Teachers' meeting, and co-participant G was interviewed telephonically, as it would have been difficult to conduct the interview otherwise.

The first two sessions of the interview were carried out in the new staff room, with an area of 84.9 square metres and walls painted in light sunny yellow. On the six windows in this room were dark red blinds. Also in the room were eight metal and wooden standing cabinets, three drawer cabinets, a wooden bookshelf and eleven tables and chairs arranged on the four sides of the room for educators. Although the researcher was promised a quiet room in which to conduct the interviews, this was not quite the case, as there was a steady stream of learners

and educators coming in and out. Fortunately, the venue was changed and the sessions continued in the office of one of the Vice-Principals. The walls of this room were painted in light yellow and in the office were file cabinets, a standing fan, a table and three chairs in the centre of the room. The interviewer and the interviewees sat side by side, facing each other. The interview with the principal took place in her office, which was a large room with file cabinets, bookshelves, a table and several chairs.

Co-participants B to F and co-participants H to I were interviewed in their residences. The houses were identical in structure and size. Appendix E (picture a) shows an example of the houses in which they live. Although co-participant G was interviewed telephonically, a visit was made to the informal settlement where he lives. Appendix E (pictures b & c) is an example of the type of structure he lives in.

Twenty-six interviews were conducted in total, and three sessions of observation were performed. Seven of the participants were observed at work during classes. Classes were carried out in clean and convivial classrooms, in which learners' desks and chairs were nevertheless tightly packed due to the high density of learners in class. Although the actual proceeding started on 17 February 2005 with the physical introduction of participants to the researcher, all the interviews and observations were carried out over a period of three weeks (between 20 February and 15 March 2005). The duration of the sessions varied between thirty minutes and fifty minutes for each interviewee and these sessions took place at eight in the morning and 13h00 on weekdays. Follow-up interviews were conducted between 27 and 30 March 2006 and 3 April 2006.

3.6.2.1   Interviews

The interview is a valuable and reliable source of evidence in qualitative research (Yin, 2003:89), as it is a natural way of interacting socially (Henning *et al*., 2004:66; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004:128). This method of collecting evidence could also provide the sequence of vital incidents leading to barriers to learning, as well as the subsequent learning support and information regarding the learner's attitude to tasks and settings (Smith, 1998:308).

The interpretive research paradigm in this study blends with the use of interviews as a source of evidence as this affords one the opportunity of getting to know the participants well and of understanding their feelings (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004:128), particularly because

interviewing involves face-to-face verbal interaction (Fontana & Fey, 2000:645). The view of Breakwell (1998:238) is that collecting evidence through interviews depends on the willingness of the participant to supply authentic answers to questions. On this basis, the researcher established some level of rapport with participants during the first meeting, at which the aim of the research was explained to them.

The participants were given semi-structured interviews, although these were laced with some unstructured questions evolving from the interchange between the researcher and each participant. The co-participants in this study (educators, parents/family members and the principal) were also given semi-structured interviews. Seven educators (two females and five males) who were interviewed, were selected based on the learning areas in which participants were experiencing barriers to learning. Three parents (mothers), as well as some family members and the principal of the school were also interviewed. Each interview session lasted half an hour to fifty minutes, and all sessions were tape-recorded, in addition to some note-taking.

3.6.2.2   Observation

The use of observation as a form of collecting evidence is deemed important in the interpretive approach, as this takes place while responses are in progress (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2004:135). In this study, observation is used as a data collection strategy in order to establish trustworthiness. The researcher agrees with Wilkinson's thoughts (1998:216) that it will be impracticable to observe everything and that what is observed should depend on the objective and hope of the research or on the research questions. Terre Blanche and Kelly's advice (2004:137) to never lose sight of the research questions was heeded by the researcher during the interview sessions and observations in class.

Direct observation of participants in the classroom was carried out while educators taught. In agreeing with Wilkinson's thoughts above, observations were made on the following: the general atmosphere (mood) in the class; the classroom setting (arrangement of desks and chairs); the attitude of all learners and particularly the participants in the study, that is, gestures such as facial expressions and general body language; attentiveness to educators; level of participation; and finally, level of interaction between participants and educators. Notes were made in a note pad as observations were in progress, and these included the

researcher's thoughts and impressions of occurrences in the classroom. The data collected during observation will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.6.2.3   Documents and records

Documents and records were also used in this study as a data collection strategy, mostly to corroborate and substantiate the evidence obtained from the other sources. The documents and records assessed include participants' class-work, homework, projects and scholastic reports (Appendix C).

3.6.2.4   Field notes

These formed a part of the data collection strategy, as the researcher made a general observation of activities and experiences during visits to the school, as well as taking notes of impressions and of what was heard or discussed before and after the interview sessions. Also noted were impressions while observing participants in the classroom, as well as the general atmosphere of the community (Appendix D).

3.7   DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND CO-PARTICIPANTS

A total of twenty-six individuals participated in this study. Nine of these were the learners and are regarded as the PARTICIPANTS, hereafter named after the first nine letters of the alphabets. Also, nine family members consisting of three mothers, three older siblings, two aunts and one grandmother are referred to as CO-PARTICIPANTS, and hereafter named after the first nine letters of the alphabets. The seven educators who are equally CO-PARTICIPANTS are hereafter to be identified by the name 'Educator, plus the first seven Roman numerals'. The principal, who is also a co-participant, will remain The Principal. The full description of participants and co-participants follows in Figures 3.3a, 3.3b and 3.3c.

Participant A

> Participant A is a 15-year-old female repeating the ninth grade. She resides with her mother in an extension of Saulsville. She has an older male sibling who lives elsewhere and visits. She was absent from the previous year's examinations due to illness, but nevertheless was reported as scoring less than 40% in three learning areas.

Participant B

> Participant B is a 17-year-old male repeating Grade Nine. He resides in Saulsville with his aunt and her family. His mother lives in Mabopane. He scored less than 40% in four learning areas in the previous year's examinations.

Participant C

> Participant C is a male, 16 years old and repeating the ninth grade. He resides in Saulsville with two older brothers and a sister. His parents are old and the father lives in Saulsville while the mother lives in Johannesburg. His scores in the previous year's examinations were between 22% and 25% in four learning areas.

Participant D

> Participant D is 15 years old, male and repeating the ninth grade. He lives in Saulsville with his mother who is hard of hearing, with a speech problem. An aunt also lives with them. His previous year's examination scores were less than 40% in eight learning areas.

Participant E

> Participant E is an 18-year-old female who is repeating Grade Nine. She is the only child of her parents and lives with her grandmother in an extension of Saulsville. She dropped out of school before the previous year's final examinations; hence no scholastic record is available. She nevertheless reported scoring less than 40% in three learning areas.

Participant F

Participant F is a 15-year-old female residing with her mother and siblings in an extension of Saulsville. She is repeating Grade Nine. She was on suspension during the previous year's final examinations. However, in the last examinations written prior to the suspension she achieved less than 40% in five learning areas.

Participant G

Participant G is a 16-year-old male living with his brother and the latter's family in an informal settlement in Brazzaville. He is repeating the ninth grade. His previous year's scholastic report indicated less than 40% in seven learning areas.

Participant H

Participant H is a female, 15 years old and repeating Grade Nine. She resides in Atteridgeville with her siblings, an uncle and grandmother. Her scores in the previous year's examinations were less than 40% in five learning areas.

Participant I

Participant I is male and the only child of his parents. He is 18 years old and living with his mother in Lotus Garden. He is repeating the ninth grade and his scholastic report for the previous year's examinations showed less than 40% in three learning areas.

FIGURE 3.3a: PARTICIPANTS

Co-participant A	→	Co-participant A is participant A's mother. She is 41 years old, employed and lives in Saulsville with the participant. She also has a son who does not live with them but occasionally comes to visit.

Co-participant B	→	Co-participant B is participant B's aunt who lives in Saulsville with her family and the participant. She is 41 years of age, ill, unemployed but receives a pension.

Co-participant C	→	Co-participant C is participant C's older female sibling. She is 19 years old and has a one-year-old child. She lives in Saulsville and attends an evening school between 18.00 and 20.00 hours.

Co-participant D	→	Co-participant D is participant D's aunt and lives in Saulsville with the participant and his mother, who is hard of hearing with a speech problem. She is between 41 and 45 years of age and unemployed.

Co-participant E	→	Co-participant E is participant E's grandmother. She is 54 years of age and lives in an extension of Saulsville with the participant.

Co-participant F	→	Co-participant F is the mother of participant F. She is 48 years old, ill with diabetes and unemployed. She is separated from her husband and lives with her children (including the participant) in a bond house in an extension of Saulsville.

Co-participant G	Co-participant G is the 34-year-old male sibling of participant G. He is employed as a delivery truck driver and is usually at work the whole week. He lives in an informal settlement with his family and the participant.
Co-participant H1	Two members of participant H's family were interviewed, as the first had to leave to take her child to school shortly after the interview commenced. She is an older sibling in her early twenties. She has a child of about two years old and is employed. She lives with the participant, an uncle who completed the interview, her child and grandmother in Atteridgeville.
Co-participant H2	Co-participant H2 is the participant's uncle, who is in his mid-to-late twenties and is self-employed. He operates a business in a building attached to their residence.
Co-participant I	Co-participant I is participant I's mother, 46 years of age, unemployed and lives with the participant in one of the RPD houses in Lotus Garden. She is separated from her husband. The husband also lives in a nearby house with another woman in the same community.

FIGURE 3.3b: CO-PARTICIPANTS (FAMILIES)

Educator I

Educator I is a 46-year-old male who teaches in one of the learning areas in which participants experience barriers to learning.

Teaching qualification: He has a Senior Teacher's Diploma obtained in 1984.

Teaching experience: He has 18 years of teaching experience and currently teaches the ninth grade.

Apart from his primary assignment as an educator, he is a member of the Sports, Security and safety, and Maintenance committees.

He resides in Orchards, Pretoria North.

Educator II

Educator II is 23 years of age, male and teaching in one of the learning areas where participants exhibit learning difficulties.

Teaching qualifications: 1) National Diploma in Technical Education, obtained in 2003. 2) Advanced Certificate in Education, obtained in 2005.

Teaching experience: He has 2 years of teaching experience and currently teaches Grade Nine.

He resides in Atteridgeville.

Eductor III

Educator III is male and 38 years old. He is responsible for one of the learning areas in which some of the participants experience barriers to learning.

Teaching qualification: BA obtained in 1995.

Teaching experience: He has 8 years of experience in teaching and is currently teaching the ninth grade.

Apart from his primary assignment as an educator, he is a member of the Sports committee and resides in Atteridgeville.

Educator IV

Educator IV is a 32-year-old male teaching in one of the learning areas where some participants experience barriers to learning.

Teaching qualification: Diploma in Education, obtained in 1999.

Teaching experience: He has 4 years of experience in teaching and currently teaches Grade Nine.

Apart from teaching, he is a member of the Teacher Component of The School Governing Body. He lives in Atteridgeville.

Educator V

Educator V is a 54-year-old female handling one of the learning areas where some participants exhibit learning difficulties.

Teaching qualifications: 1) Matric Exemption, 2) Senior Certificate Diploma (Vista) obtained in 1992, and 3) Senior Education Diploma (Vista) obtained in 1995.

Teaching experience: She has 24 years of teaching experience and currently teaches Grade Nine.

Aside from being an educator, she is a member of the Feeding Scheme, Greening the Environment and Gymnastics committees. She lives in Philip Nel, Danville extension.

Educator VI

Educator VI is a 46-year-old male, teaching in one of the learning areas where some participants experience barriers to learning.

Teaching qualification: He holds a Secondary Teacher's Diploma obtained in 1984.

Teaching experience: He has 18 years of teaching experience and currently teaches the ninth grade.

Aside from teaching, he is involved with the Feeding Scheme, Greening the Environment and Disciplinary committees. He resides in Atteridgeville.

| Educator VII | → | Educator VII is 46 years old, female and handles one of the learning areas in which some participants experience barriers to learning.

Teaching qualifications: 1) Senior Teacher's Diploma (STD) obtained in 1984. 2) Further Diploma in Education (FDE) obtained in 1996.

Teaching experience: She has 20 years of teaching experience and currently teaches Grade Nine.

She has no extra responsibility apart from teaching, and she resides in Atteridgeville. |

| The Principal | → | The Principal is a 50-year-old female and is the principal of the sample school.

Qualifications: 1) BA in Pedagogics obtained in 1981. 2) B.Ed obtained in 1990.

Teaching experience: She has 25 years of experience and resides in Atteridgeville. |

FIGURE 3.3c: CO-PARTICIPANTS (EDUCATORS)

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Mouton (2001:108) stated that the purpose of analysis is to fathom the divergent bases that make up collected data, by examining the connections between the assembled ideas or notions in order to create themes. Mouton (2001:109) maintained in addition that interpretation, on the other hand, involves connecting and comparing the researcher's findings to other works already in existence. According to Neuman (2000:420), 'a qualitative researcher analyzes data by organizing it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features… and examines the relationship among concepts'. The next step is thus coding, as its use is an important aspect of analyzing the data collected, and this of course is influenced by the research questions.

Reflections on impressions, relationships and connections, as well as field notes collected at interviews and observations are aimed at assisting the researcher in the identification of themes and patterns (Henning *et al*., 2004:127; Bos & Richardson, 1994:90). In analyzing the evidence gathered in this study, the researcher, through inductive reasoning, has sorted and categorized the data into manageable themes and patterns (Leedy & Ormrod, 2000:160). Two key themes have emerged through applying three coding systems. These include open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

In analyzing the evidence collected, the researcher first performed open coding by reading through and examining all the data sources, thus identifying possible themes, doing preliminary clustering of similar responses, as well as indicating initial codes (Neuman, 2000:241; Henning *et al*., 2004:131).

Axial coding was the second level of analysis performed, in which linkages were made and connections between the initial codes identified. At this stage of the analytical procedure the initial codes were re-examined in search of responses or concepts that formed clusters. Related themes were merged while some were divided into sub-themes (Neuman, 2000:423; & Henning *et al*., 2004:132). The preliminary coding yielded five key themes and twenty-five sub-themes.

Selective coding was performed as the final level in the analysis of data in this study. All identified themes were integrated into two core themes on barriers to learning and the manifestations of learning support. The themes were further categorized into eight sub-themes and fourteen categories emerged from the theme on barriers to learning, all given code names in colours. Figure 3.4 illustrates the emerging themes, sub-themes and categories as follows:

THEMES

BARRIERS TO LEARNING:

Sub-themes

1. Learner-related barriers to learning

Categories:

- Play and leisure activities
- Peer influence/adolescence
- Low motivation for learning
- Inability to read and write
- Drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime

2. Educator-related barriers to learning

Categories:

- Method of instruction
- Educator absenteeism
- Perceived uncaring attitude of educators

3. Family-related barriers to learning

Categories:

- Poverty (associated with limited financial resources)
- Family problems
- Lack of sibling support and non-involvement of parents

4. Education system and society related barriers to learning

Categories:

- Inappropriate curriculum and the Outcomes-based Education system
- Classroom sizes
- Poverty

MANIFESTATIONS OF LEARNING SUPPORT:

Sub- themes

1. Knowledge and availability of learning support

2. Guidance, advice, motivation, encouragement and one-on-one support

3. Extra classes, extra work and assistance with schoolwork

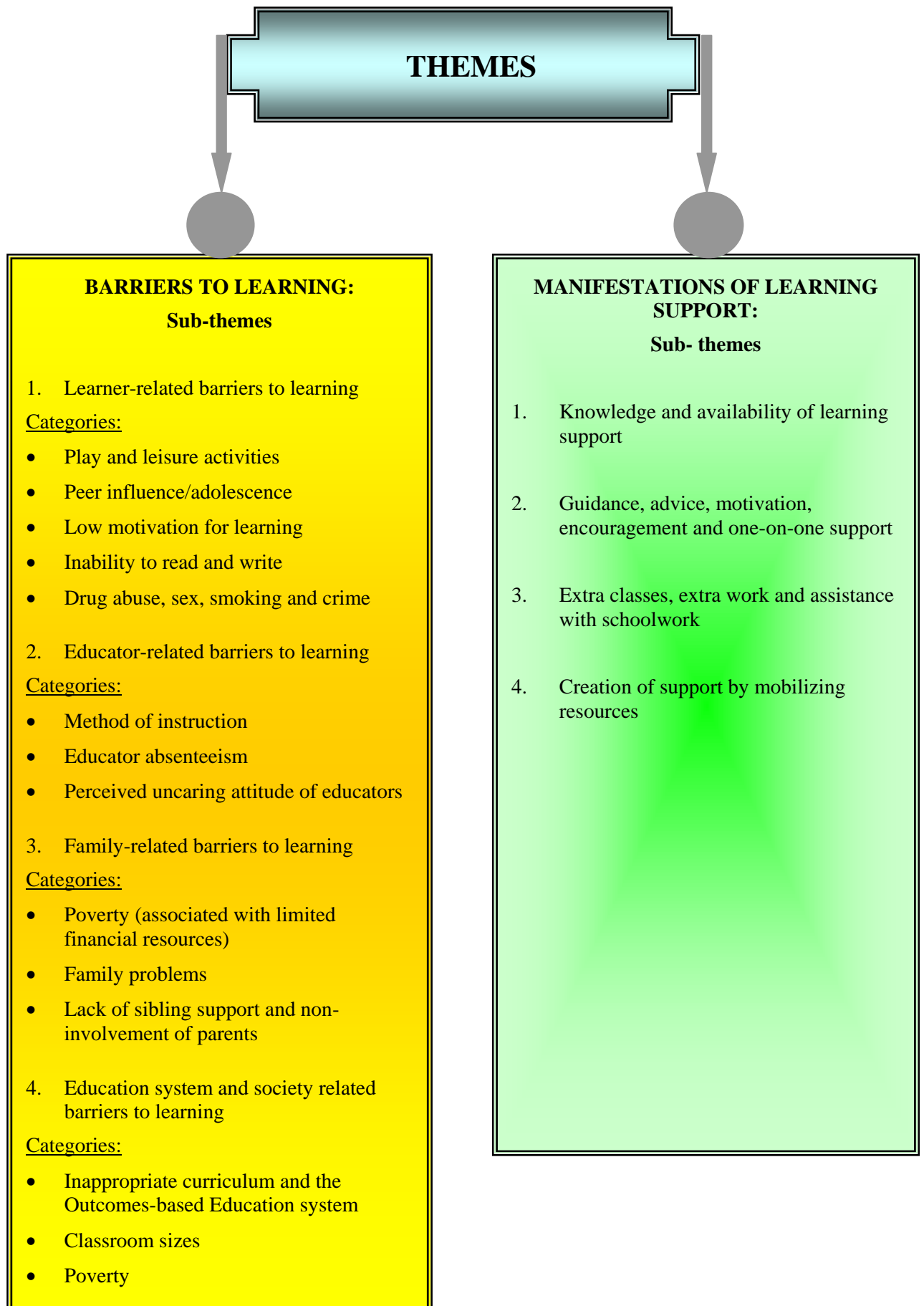4. Creation of support by mobilizing resources

FIGURE 3.4:   THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

3.9   THEME ANALYSIS

As is evident in Figure 3.4, two core themes emerged from the information collected, with each bearing sub-themes. The researcher will discuss these themes and sub-themes by substantiating them with evidence from the raw data. In the next chapter, she will integrate the themes identified in this study by relating them to the broader literature.

3.9.1   THEME ONE: BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Barriers to learning can manifest themselves in various forms. There is usually a tendency to apportion the blame for the cause of learning problems to the learner when, in fact, the problem often lies in the relationship between the learner and all levels of the system. It is a ripple effect, where all phenomena are interdependent, so that what happens at one level affects all the other levels (Donald *et al*., 2002:236 & 237). The reasons for the manifestations of barriers may therefore range from the learner to the environment, the family, peer influence and the society at large, as the researcher has indicated in earlier chapters. However, learners experiencing barriers to learning do not necessarily encounter similar difficulties, as the factors that bring about these barriers may differ from one learner to another. Various writers such as Speece *et al*. (2003:38), Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) and Donald *et al.* (2002:31 & 55) have expressed views on the factors that create barriers to learning. These views will be employed in the interpretation of the data amassed in this study.

The information gathered in the study reveals that barriers to learning originate from different factors. Hence the emergence of the sub-themes as follows:

1.   Learner-related barriers to learning
2.   Educator-related barriers to learning
3.   Family-related barriers to learning
4.   Education system and society related barriers to learning.

3.9.1.1   Sub-theme one: Learner-related barriers to learning

Learner-related barriers to learning were revealed as manifesting themselves in diverse ways in the participants in this study. The categories that emerged from the data collected on learner-related barriers to learning include:

- Play and leisure activities

- Peer influence/adolescence

- Low motivation for learning

- Inability to read and write

- Drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime.

3.9.1.1a Play and leisure activities

Prominent among the barriers to learning encountered by the participants and Grade Nine learners are *play and leisure activities*. Both participants and co-participants (families) identified these as factors impacting negatively on the learning of participants. Table 3.1 shows excerpts from the interview transcripts as they were reported by the participants and co-participants. The whole quotation may sometimes be given to show nuanced meaning:

TABLE 3.1:   EXCERPTS ON PLAY AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
227 / 7 / Participant B	'I'm playing too much. Yes I'm playing too much'.
354 / 11 / Participant C	'They play too much…'
442 / 15 / Participant D	'I play soccer almost everyday. I come from school when I find my mother sleeping and my brother sleeping, I just drop my bag quick and change and then I go. And when I come back home…I just sleep'.
670 / 26 / Participant G	'…maybe time some are playful'.
926 / 39 / Co-participant A	'Maybe they are playing…'
1109 / 46 / Co-participant C	'…I'm going to the street to play with my friends'.
1126 / 47 / Co-participant D	'I see his problem D is he is playing too much…He like the streets. He goes around the streets…every time he like to play. He like to play too much'.
1139 / 48 / Co-participant D	'They are playing too much…She like the street. She like to go to street…You can see maybe the teacher she wrote, maybe you are thinking about the streets you will see you will never learn…'
1215 / 54 / Co-participant G	'He plays too much with girls. He jumps the fence at school to go away'.
1219 / 55 / Co-participant G	'They are playing…'
1221 / 55 / Co-participant G	'Yes, he is playing…'
1247 / 56 / Co-participant H	'…just go to the all streets with ventures boys'.

Play and play-related behaviour, which could possibly have been influenced by peer pressure, came up twelve times during the interview sessions as constituting barriers to learning. The researcher, however, thinks that play and leisure activities can be positively applied with supervision in support of learning, as these could be therapeutic. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. This nevertheless draws attention to the next category.

3.9.1.1b Peer influence and adolescence

The peer-group effect is a strong factor in adolescent learning. It can be beneficial, negative or sometimes mixed, depending on the ideals of the group, as well as the needs of the particular learner. The degree of the power wielded by the group is often reliant on the 'inadequacies' of the family and school, as the learner is likely to seek what he lacks at the levels of family and school from his peers (Donald *et al.*, 2002:244).

This was identified as a major barrier to learning for the ninth graders in this study. These learners are at an age when they begin to seek answers to the question 'to what group do I belong?' (Shaffer, 1996:483). This is also the phase during which the adolescent learner begins to detach himself from parents, as he regards peer acceptance as more important. Thus there is increased involvement with peers (Louw, 1997:518), of either a positive or a negative kind. Group identity is built up and the group is treated as a world apart from that of parents and other adults. Social acceptance by peers matters to the adolescent. The extracts in Table 3.2 revealed how strongly peers could influence each other, and how identifying with friends is regarded as being more important to the adolescent than anything else, including studying.

TABLE 3.2:   EXCERPTS ON PEER INFLUENCE/ADOLESCENCE

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
568 / 21 / Participant F	'…We used to tell each other very naughty stuff. We didn't give each other good advice. Only bad advice'.
1132 / 48 / Co-participant D	'They are not all right. I'm not liking them because I know they are not all right. These friends, shuh! He will never learn all right'.
584 / 22 / Participant F	'Peer pressure. My friend and I thought we were the best looking girls and we had everything…'
570 / 21 / Participant F	'…and we started not going to school'.
442 / 15 / Participant B	'…At school I find my friends "ah, don't do it" and I follow

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
	them'. (Referring to homework not done).
1336 / 63 / Co-participant I (educator)	'The biggest barrier is peer pressure. Some of the learners got involved in activities which they themselves are not sure whether they are right or wrong because of the peer group, the age group. They want to associate'.
245 / 8 / Participant B	'Friends at home they use to play too much'
246 / 8 / The researcher had to ask	'Haven't you seen that this is not helping you?'
247 /8 / Participant B	'I see but my friend is my friend'.
1247 / 56 / Co-participant H	'She likes to go outside with girls and boys, group. Go there, sleep there, don't come back…'
1263 / 57 / Co-participant H	'I think the problem is their age now, 16, 17…They are just going out and make some friends, different boyfriends'.
1267 / 57 / Co-participant H	'I sometimes listen to her and her friends talking about boyfriends and stuff'.
1302 / 60 / Co-participant I	'Maybe the friends. He is got lot of friends. Everytime he is with friends'.
1308 / 61 / Co-participant I	'…some girls and boys they are having affairs in school'.
1375 / 68 / Co-participant II	'Some of the learners have difficulties because of their friends. They are listening to their friends…"
1482 / 79 / Co-participant IV	'Peer pressure…'
1627 / Co-participant VII	'So maybe they spend most of their time with their friends'.

Participants and co-participants (families and educators) acknowledged that peer influence is a core source of barriers to learning, because at this stage in their lives, Grade Nine learners who are in the adolescent phase want to identify with their peers.

3.9.1.1c Low motivation for learning

That learners in this study exhibit a lack of eagerness to learn has diverse results. These include lack of listening in class or at home, lack of studying and lack of interest in active participation in class activities such as writing of homework, classwork and projects. Table 3.3a depicts excerpts from the interview transcriptions:

TABLE 3.3a: EXCERPTS ON LOW MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1428 / 73 / Co-participant III	'…Some learners don't even want to do those portfolios. We just force them to do the portfolios'.
1434 / 73 / Co-participant III	'Eish! Our learners sometimes are not eager to do their work'.
1436 / 73 / Co-participant III	'…more learners are not willing to learn'.
1471 / 76 / Co-participant III	'…they run away from the difficulties in between the subjects…'
1588 / 89 / Co-participant VII	'…our learners are very, very, very, very lazy'.
1618 / 90 / Co-participant VII	'Our children are very lazy. They don't want to learn'.

Learners' low motivation for learning may have resulted in a lack of listening in the classroom to educators, or at home to family members who mean well, as shown in the following excerpts in Table 3.3b.

TABLE 3.3b: EXTRACTS ON LACK OF LISTENING

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
104 / 4 / Participant A	'Maybe they don't listen'.
802 / 31 / Participant H	'When the teacher is teaching they doesn't listen…they eat, they doesn't listen to what the teacher says'.
962 / 39 / Co-participant A	'Maybe they don't concentrate'.
1050 / 43 / Co-participant B	'When talking to him he don't (sic) listen to me'.
1130 / 48 / Co-participant D	'He don't (sic) want to listen surely. Sure he don't (sic) want to listen'.
1242 / 56 / Co-participant H	"She is stubborn…She don't want to listen".
1128 / 47 / Co-participant D	'…D come I must learn you…he don't understand. 'How do you learn me …you are not my teacher'…So a chap like that is hard to say'.
1151 / 49 / Co-participant D	'I say do like that you say I'm not your mother. So I leave him'.
1155 / 49 / Co-participant D	'…You never tell him nothing D'.

In the researcher's view, listening is a vital aspect of learning. A learner's inability to listen in class or to be attentive to educators could result in a diverse range of difficulties, which include inability to study, inability to write homework and inability to participate fully in various class activities. Participants and co-participants identified the inability of some

participants and Grade Nine learners to study and write homework as constituting barriers to learning. Excerpts are presented in Table 3.3c.

TABLE 3.3c: EXCERPTS   ON   THE   INABILITY   OF   LEARNERS   TO   STUDY   AND   WRITE HOMEWORK

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
243 / 8 / Participant B	'I'm not reading'.
354 / 11 / Participant C	'They are not reading'.
364 / 11 / Participant C	'When they give us homework I didn't achieve'.
438 / 15 / Participant D	'Some of them they do not study'.
442 / 15 / Participant D	'…Ah! I forget the homework'.
457 / 16 / Participant E	'I didn't write the homeworks. I'm just sitting'.
802 /31 / Participant H	'They doesn't (sic) read. When they give them homework they don't write homework'.
953 / 39 / Co-participant A	'Maybe she is not doing her studies for that subject'.
1107 / 46 / Co-participant C	'They don't give themselves time to read, they don't study'.
1109 / 46 / Co-participant C	'You must do your homework because of he knows that when I'm at home I can't have the time to write the homework. I'm going to the streets to play with my friends…'
1126 / 47 / Co-participant D	'…I didn't see D reading the books at home'.
1221 / 55 / Co-participant G	'…and does not study'.

A lack of listening may possibly result in a lack of understanding. Nevertheless, an exception to this is participant G, who reported a lack of understanding when he studies the learning areas in which he is experiencing barriers to learning.

Extract:

Unit 634 / page 24 Participant G: *'I do take some time to try to study but things that I'm trying to study I just don't get it going to mind'.*

3.9.1.1d Inability to read and write

A co-participant (an educator) and the Principal identified the above as a barrier to learning for some ninth graders. Even though this was just mentioned by two of the co-participants in

this study, the researcher still extracts it as a category because it may point towards broader systemic issues relating to learning support. Extracts appear in Table 3.4.

TABLE 3.4:   EXCERPTS ON LEARNERS' INABILITY TO READ AND WRITE

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1515 / 82 / Co-participant V	'We have some learners who are not able to read or write…Even when they are writing you can't really make sense of what they have written'.
1660 / 94 / Principal	'Some of the Grade Nine learners in particular come from the primary schools unable to read'.

So much of a learner's learning activities depend on his ability to read and write, as these form the foundation for academic success or failure. The questions that thus bother the researcher are: What went wrong? How was it that the learner got to the ninth grade from the lower grades while obviously exhibiting the inability to read and write? Who is to blame? Is it the learner, the parents, the educators or the education system?

3.9.1.1e Drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime

The influence of drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime is all around high school learners, who are at a vulnerable age. They witness these activities at home (for some), at school (for others) or see them dramatised on television and in books/magazines. This situation is worsened by the fact that most of the learners come from challenging socio-economic environments, which may compound the negative effects of drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime. Sometimes lacking in guidance and direction, some of the learners regard indulging in some or all of these activities as a pastime. Table 3.5 indicates extracts from the interview transcriptions on the manifestation of drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime as barriers to learning for Grade Nine learners.

TABLE 3.5:   EXCERPTS ON THE MANIFESTATIONS OF DRUG ABUSE, SEX, SMOKING AND CRIME AS BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
356 / 11 Participant C	'Some of them they are smoking dagga…'
438 / 15 / Participant D	'…"Oh I must buy cigarette" and they stand there and smoke'.

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
580 / 21 & 22 / Participant F	'Smoking, having sex, the pills, sleeping with sugar daddies, they don't want small boys. Boys they smoke, committing crime, talking naughty things like swearing, smoking in toilets and teasing other children'.
1008 / 42 / Co-participant B	'He go (sic) to smoke cigarettes'.
1236 / 55 / Co-participant H	'She like to go see the boyfriend and whatever and I don't like that because of she is still young'.
1302 / 60 / Co-participant I (family)	'I think those cigarettes and…are making him not to learn well. He will take 50cents to buy draw draw' *(cigarettes).*
1369 / 67 / Co-participant II	'…Learners have drugs and sex because of if you're taking drugs, more especially involving in sex life, it will be affecting you…If you are taking drugs your mind is not with you…and she can sleep with someone without being aware'.
1484 / 79 / Co-participant IV	'…There are so many things happen with these kids because they do drugs…'
1561 / 86 / Co-participant VI	'…They indulge too much in sex life, you see, going to clubs and this really create a problem…'
1660 / 94 / Principal	'…experimenting in drugs, experimenting sex…'

The above were the dominant learner-related factors reported by participants and co-participants as constituting barriers to learning for the Grade Nine learners in this study. These barriers sometimes culminate not only in failure and repeating a grade, but also in the learners exhibiting a negative attitude towards life and education and sometimes in the learners experiencing a drop in the standard of their work or even dropping out of school. Extracts are presented in Table 3.6.

TABLE 3.6:   EXTRACTS ON THE OUTCOME OF BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1338 / 63 / Co-participant I (educator)	'The barriers impact very negatively then the children become very negative towards life and towards their education…'
1340 / 63 / Co-participant I (educator)	'Some of the learners their standard drops…'
1484 /79 / Co-participant IV	'Obviously, the learner don't attend the school, he will be disrupted because he is going to stay at home…doing things that promote the diseases that we encounter, Aids, sexual diseases…'
1527 / 83 / Co-participant V	'…So when they see that this section is very difficult they just leave it, without putting more effort maybe to pass that chapter'.

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1563 / 86 / Co-participant VI	'…always the manner in which the child answers the question is not related to whatever will bring progress to her. One can say it is a negative answering, then you find yourself almost at loggerhead with the child…'
1623 / 90 / Co-participant VII	'We have drop out'.

As presented in the extracts above, the influence of drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime turns out to be harmful, since the resultant effects are barriers to learning for the participants in this study.

3.9.1.2   Sub-theme two: Educator-related barriers to learning

It is the responsibility of an educator to create and manage a teaching and learning process in an inspiring and motivating environment (Vakalisa, 2002:179), while bearing in mind the uniqueness of each learner. As a facilitator, the educator needs to review his instructional strategies frequently, promote productive learning and stimulate learners' interest to learn (Muthukrishna, 2002:149).

Participants in the study sometimes encounter barriers to learning that are educator-related. Some of the participants and some co-participants identified various barriers to learning that can originate from educators' attitude to work. These include:

- Method of instruction
- Educator absenteeism
- Perceived uncaring attitude of educators.

3.9.1.2a Method of instruction

In the researcher's view, the method of instruction is an important aspect of the teaching process. The failure of educators to apply an effective method of instruction could result in various types of maladjustment in the classroom. This could possibly have led to participants reporting an inability to understand educators in the classroom. Table 3.7 displays excerpts from the interview transcriptions.

TABLE 3.7:   EXTRACTS ON METHOD OF INSTRUCTION: LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1656 / 93 / Principal	'…Then the other thing is the medium of instruction. It looks like it is not well developed…educators in particular, their methods of teaching also maybe causing barriers to learning'.
968 / 39 / Co-participant A	'The child is pretending. The teacher is teaching maybe the child doesn't understand something or maybe the teacher ask her the question, you know that maybe the child doesn't understand the teacher, the other learner they are happy but they…oh my God. I just want to remember the word'.
833 / 32 / Participant I	'The subject is too difficult for me to understand because we don't have any serious teacher who is teaching the subject…'
754 / 29 / Participant H	'The others they just give us work and just get up and go. They don't explain anything. That is why we don't understand the subjects'.
527 / 19 / Participant E	'Some they didn't understand and they are afraid to tell maybe teacher…because some who understand are laughing…teasing, saying "stupid, you don't understand"…'
964 / 39 / Co-participant A	'Maybe sometimes the other learners do not understand but they are smiling to somebody, but you are not happy'.
102 / 4 / Participant A	'Because they not understand while the teacher is teaching'.
231 / 7 / Participant B	'I don't understand Mathematics. Serious!'
262 / 8 / Participant B	'Eish! I'm afraid to tell that teacher'.
264 / 8 / Participant B	'I'm so scared. Eish!'
457 / 16 / Participant E	'When the teacher was teaching in the class I didn't understand'.

Sibaya and Kruger (2002:125) maintain that effective learning could be achieved if there is a solid understanding of learners' ways of learning, the factors that could control learning, and the disposition of learners, and they are kept interested in the process. Therefore, when learners report a lack of understanding of educators in the classroom, one is left wondering if the method of instruction is to blame. For some learners in this study, the fear of the educator makes it difficult to admit a lack of understanding, and for some others it is the fear of ridicule by peers.

3.9.1.2b Educator absenteeism

Three of the participants in the study reported educator absenteeism from lessons as being a barrier to learning, as shown in the excerpts in Table 3.8.

TABLE 3.8:   **EXTRACTS ON EDUCATOR ABSENTEEISM**

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
410 / 13 / Participant D	'…he didn't come to class. Let me say he comes Monday, give us work and go out. Then we don't understand what to do because it is too long he is not coming to class. That make us fail'.
644 / 24 / Participant G	'Often time they are not in class'.
646 / 24 / Participant G	'We spend most of the time alone in the class. Maybe times two days they see us, maybe times I can carry on to practice on my own…'
658 / 25 / Participant G	'If they were always in the class I think I could here try to explain my problems to them. Maybe times two to three days we don't see one of them those who teach us subjects like those we are having difficulties to'.
660 / 25 / Participant G	'…But they take long time not coming in the class. I just don't understand…I don't know what is the problem that make them not to come to class'.
686 / 27 / Participant G	'The main thing is that we don't get the chance to talk to them because of they are not always available, you see…'
688 / 27 / Participant G	'…giving us notes and he is out…He tell us 'I'm gonna be right now back' but he never gets back…'
831 / 32 / Participant I	'…because most of the time those teachers who teaches us the subject don't quite meet the timetable. They don't follow the timetable. So that is why I'm not quite good'.
833 / 32 / Participant I	'That is why certain group of people does not understand the subject. I'm not alone'.
841 / 33 / Participant I	'They come sometimes when they feel to come to class. We can stay double periods without a teacher'.
849 / 33 / Participant I	'…he or she will tell that 'I was busy doing stuffs'. We try to understand because he is a teacher or she is a teacher. We can't question what business and how busy they are'.
887 / 36 / Participant I	'…and then when we need some jobs they are not around'.

Although only three of the participants identified educator absenteeism as constituting a barrier to learning, the researcher regards this as serious enough to be addressed. Teaching being an educator's primary assignment, the researcher believes that educator absenteeism may mean not completing the syllabus and consequently, learners not acquiring the full and scheduled knowledge for the year. The researcher did wonder if educator absenteeism could be linked to the next category that emerged from the data.

3.9.1.2c Perceived uncaring attitude of educators

The perceived uncaring attitude of some educators was reported as causing disillusionment among learners. Co-participants mostly expressed this lack of care, while a co-participant (the principal) also reported lack of self-development by some educators. These were presented as constituting barriers to learning for participants and Grade Nine learners. The questions the researcher wonders about are: If self-development is lacking, how do they keep abreast of educational development in the country and internationally? How does an uncaring attitude impact on the learners in their classrooms? Table 3.9 contains the excerpts on the above.

TABLE 3.9:   EXTRACTS ON THE PERCEIVED UNCARING ATTITUDE OF EDUCATORS

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
851 / 33 / Participant I	'…Some of them they don't give a damn about us…'
1168 / 51 / Co-participant E	'…there were other teacher there. Maybe I can say it is her who have made my child like this. You know, to shout her…'
1196 / 53 / Co-participant F	'…There was some teacher member calling again F shouting shouting "you will never pass go away from this school". So F told me "I don't want anymore that school. I don't want to go anymore"…'
1369 / 67 / Co-participant II	'…Another thing even us teachers, some of the teachers who are taking these drugs, who are coming into school being drunk. It is a very big problem…They are sleeping with Grade Nines. They are sleeping with the learners. It is really demoralizing and is really demoralizing other learners…'
1658 / 93 / Principal	'…lack of development- both self-development and development by the school…' *(Refer to Figure 3.3c on the description of co-participants (educators) for their qualifications and the years these were obtained).*

The researcher thinks that learners are often highly sensitive to the attitudes of educators towards them. A perceived negative attitude could produce in the learner low self-esteem and/or a lack of confidence in his abilities to carry out tasks given by the educator in question. Hence caution should be exercised in dealing with learners, especially if these learners are already experiencing barriers to learning. Also, the importance of self-development cannot be over-emphasized, as this will not only benefit the educators but the learners too. It is noteworthy that it was the co-participants who mostly expressed the views on uncaring attitudes of educators. The research design for this study is such that data was collected from a

variety of participants and co-participants, yet the dominance of co-participants' views in this regard may need further explanation (in another study).

3.9.1.3   Sub-theme three: Family-related barriers to learning

The vulnerability of the core family sometimes leads to family life being shattered (Prinsloo, 2005a:33). According to Donald *et al.* (2002:56), a child's learning could be affected at the level of the family due to various reasons. These range from the family's limited funds, the home language spoken, which fails to relate to the language of instruction at school, values regarding educational achievements, and the ability of family members in relation to the degree of motivation and support available to the child with regard to school activities.

The evidence collected in this study indicates the manifestation of barriers to learning for participants and Grade Nine learners due to some vulnerability at the family level. Three categories have issued from the data:

- Poverty (associated with limited financial resources)
- Family problems
- Lack of sibling support and non-involvement of parents.

3.9.1.3a Poverty (associated with limited financial resources)

Poverty, which is associated with limited financial resources in the family, could be linked to a contextual disadvantage, where parents or family members are unemployed and thus facing economic challenges and inequalities. Some participants and co-participants identified finance as a barrier to learning for the ninth graders. Table 3.10 contains excerpts on lack of finance as constituting a barrier to learning.

TABLE 3.10:   EXTRACTS ON LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES AS A BARRIER TO LEARNING

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
604 / 22 / Participant F	'Because sometimes my mother doesn't have money for me to eat at school…'
861 / 34 / Participant I	'…He just pay the maintenance money. But it doesn't feel enough. Three hundred Rand per month. He is paying money that I don't feel satisfied about'.

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
863 / 34 / Participant I	'…I am wearing clothes, eating and stuff like that for with R300. It doesn't cover all those things. I got no socks, I got nothing…'
1048 / 43 / Co participant B	'When I work I can do something. Now I don't work…I have no nothing to help her'.
1168 / 51 / Co-participant E	'…Also the things which make her so sometimes I can't pay this for her at school and sometimes, you see neh, they say they want this as school money…'
1178 / 51 / Co-participant E	'…and also to that spiritual man. Now he wants money and I haven't got money to pay for her…'
1205 / 54 / Co-participant F	'Maybe when I'm suffering about money to carry on with the school…'
1209 / 54 / Co-participant F	'My problem must go to my work and then can I help F with the things she want from the school…'
1317 / 61 Co-participant I (educator)	'…lack of financial support or lack of support of buying some of the materials we are using in Mathematics, then that particular child starts to be reserved…'
1336 / 63 / Co-participant I (educator)	'…Some of them are coming from very, very needy families whereby nobody is working in the family…Finance also is one of the biggest barriers because some of the activities which we are doing need the child to go and buy, needs a child to go to town to visit places of interest whereby they get information. So you find out the learner doesn't even have five Rand to go to town'.
1533 / 84 / Co-participant V	'…and some of the parents do not have money to pay the professional people to help their kids…'
1592 / 89 / Co-participant VII	'…No individual textbooks. They can't buy because they don't have money. They are from the former settlements so the parents are not working…'
1596 / 89 / Co-participant VII	'…They don't have material at home. They can't buy newspaper, magazines. It is difficult because they don't have any income'.
1548 / 85 / Co-participant VI	'…we know it is socio-economic problem. They come from homes where they did not even have breakfast and we know that a learner will not even grasp anything with an empty stomach…'

The financial constraints experienced by a Grade Nine learner's family impacts on their learning on many levels. It is problematic when a learner is unable to purchase materials to carry out tasks or projects in school, or when he has to walk long distances to and from school every day due to lack of transport fare. It becomes problematic when the learner has to sit in class hungry because he cannot buy lunch or snacks at break. A tired and hungry learner will often turn into an inattentive learner and this influences learning.

3.9.1.3b Family problems

Different types of problems in the family, including parental squabbles and illnesses befalling family members were pinpointed as causing barriers to learning for participants in the study. Excerpts on the reports are presented in Table 3.11.

TABLE 3.11:   EXTRACTS ON FAMILY PROBLEMS

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
608 / 23 / Participant F	'…but my mother doesn't want him back. Every time I tell her about my father she doesn't want to talk about him'.
883 / 35 / Participant I	'…my parents are fighting. They always do stuffs'.
1286 / 59 / Co-participant I (educator)	'…what I can say to you is I's problem as I have a problem in the house here right now so that is why I is having problem. Because why me and the father we are fighting a lot. So that is why I can't cope at school…me and my husband we fight a lot. He parted and stays with other woman somewhere next to us. This thing hurt him so he can't even read…'
674 / 26 / Participant G	'…because at home I'm the one who do some house work, you see, and I'm looking after kids…'
1254 / 57 / Co-participant H	'…and then eish, we don't support each other. Our family is not that tight'.
1258 / 57 // Co-participant H	'…maybe even now she is not at home. Maybe the problem like now is that we are not supporting each other…their father is not supporting them…'
1336 / 63 / Co-participant I (educator)	'…Some of them have very serious family problems; some of the learners are learners and parents at the same time. Some of them are coming from very, very needy families whereby nobody is working in the family. Some of the other barriers are abuse – sexual abuse, physical abuse by parents…'
1369 / 68 / Co-participant II	'…They tell you 'no I don't have time to play my mum is always after me even if I'm trying to play soccer'. And some will say my mum is sleeping with other men in front of me. Some say my mum has killed my father or my father has killed my mum in front of me…'
1373 / 68 / Co-participant II	'I can say it is domestic violence…'
1482 / 79 / Co-participant IV	'…Domestic violence at home do contribute as well. The learner come to the school full with everything that happened, or if there is a business at home the learner don't get a chance to study after school because he has to take the wheelbarrow with crates to buy beer or crates of drinks with the wheelbarrow. You see, all these things they disturb so many things…'

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1592 / 89 / Co-participant VII	'…some of them are staying alone in shacks without support of parents. They are their own parents and they take care of little ones'.
1660 / 94 / Principal	'…some of them are heads of those families unfortunately at 15…'
1664 / 95 / Principal	'…Another thing is migration. We have come to notice something, observe something in the school, that we are getting two primary languages- Sepedi and Setswana and we are now getting more Sepedi learners than Setswana…you find out they come from rural areas and they migrate to urban areas and that creates a problem…They end up playing truant and even absconding and no longer coming to school'.
893 / 36 / Participant I	'It was disturbing my learning because my mother she is a person who is sick with high blood pressure and stuff. She wasn't going to work anymore so I had to stay at home to help her with all the stuffs, take her to the clinic... Eish! We are living in a ghetto'.
970 / 40 / Co-participant A	'She just got the disturbance about the ear…'
974 / 40 / Co-participant A	'She was feeling something in the ear and then the ear was swollen'.
1048 / 43 / Co-participant B	'…I must get the pension money because I'm sick'.
1209 / 54 / Co-participant F	'…because I'm single parent. I got heart attack, high blood and sugar diabetes…'
1658 / 94 / Principal	'…And disease is catching up also with our learners. You find that they are heads of the family sometimes, and in other times you find they are home nurses of their own parents. So they really get exhausted in some cases…'
1662 / 95 / Principal	'The HIV / Aids. It is affecting them in their families'.

Quite often, a wide range of problems plagues families from disadvantaged environments. These often create barriers to learning. Problems such as domestic violence, which includes sexual and physical abuse, learners becoming heads of families and the breadwinners in the family, turning into parents and nurses for their sick parents, were reported to be rampant among Grade Nine learners. Difficulties in learning for the participants in this study seem almost inevitable then.

3.9.1.3c Lack of sibling support and non-involvement of parents

Some of the participants reported a lack of support from siblings, although this was sometimes due to lack of education or mere nonchalance. The non-involvement or non-commitment of parents to the educational affairs of Grade Nine learners was also reported.

TABLE 3.12: EXTRACTS ON LACK OF SIBLING SUPPORT AND NON-INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

Units / page / speaker	Quotes
98 / 3 / Participant A	'He don't help me'.
211 / 7 / Participant B	'They don't help me with schoolwork'.
225 / 7 / Participant B	'They don't want to help'.
332 / 10 / Participant C	'They do not help'.
334 / 10 / Participant C	'…They didn't get to school'.
650 / 24 / Participant G	'…He works every week Monday to Sunday. So he doesn't get the chance to be with me'.
1213 / 54 / Co-participant G	'…I left school in Grade Two…so I cannot teach G what I myself don't know. I can't help G'.
1250 / 56 / Co-participant H	'Ah! So far we are not doing anything'.
1258 / 57 / Co-participant H	'…and their father is not supporting them…'
1265 / 57 / Co-participant H	'…we don't support her very well. She is going out there and trying to explore…'
1369 / 67 & 68 / Co-participant II	'…Even parental involvement is a very big problem. Parents should be aware of everything that is happening in school because of he or she sent them here to be taught…how can you send a child here, finishing twelve months without consulting with teachers 'how is the progress of my learner'? Some of the parents are irresponsible and immoral because of they don't even take care of their children…'
1379 / 69 / Co-participant II	'…lack of commitment from parents…'
1438 / 73 / Co-participant III	'…but when they arrive at home there is no one to guide them to do their job'.
1474 / 77 / Co-participant IV	'…if the involvement of parents is not positive enough, obviously…'
1656 / 93 / Principal	'…Parental involvement is still some sort of barrier…'
1658 / 93 / Principal	'…It is lack of knowledge, lack of involvement because you find that if learners are being encouraged to read newspapers, newspapers are at home. But parents don't encourage them to read newspapers, parents don't monitor what they watch, parents don't monitor what they read and what they listen to over the radio…'

Support from family members for a learner could result in effective learning. It might be demoralizing for a learner experiencing barriers to learning when he does not receive assistance from some family members, and it may also be depressing to realise that parents sometimes do not participate in the academic lives of their children. Nonetheless, one cannot

overlook the fact that parents, siblings and other family members are subject to the same environmental stressors as the participants. The implication of this is that the progress of these learners may often not be monitored, thus making it difficult or even impossible for parents and or family relations to detect when quick and adequate support could have averted learning difficulties. However, some co-participants reported that the refusal of some of the participants to listen to the advice of older family members resulted in the members' decision not to render support. Participant D's lack of cooperation made Co-participant D resolve never to give him support until he asked for it.

Extract:

Unit 1151 page 49 Co-participant D- *'...I will never run after him because she don't hear all right...No I'm nothing. He answer me "leave me alone you are not my mother"...'*

3.9.1.4   Sub-theme four: Education system and society related barriers to learning

As has been explained in the previous chapter, the barriers to learning that learners encounter may sometimes be connected to the circumstances in which they find themselves as they go through growth and the learning process. There is a likelihood of encountering barriers to learning as a result of factors pertaining to the educational system and the society as a whole. The evidence collected in this study indicates that the participants and Grade Nine learners often experience barriers to learning caused by 'inadequacies' in the education system and the society. The identified factors are categorized as follows:

- Inappropriate curriculum and the Outcomes-based Education (OBE) system
- Classroom sizes
- Poverty.

3.9.1.4a   Inappropriate curriculum and the Outcomes-based Education (OBE) system

The data, as reported by some co-participants and a participant, portrayed the issue of inappropriate curriculum and the Outcomes-based Education system as leading to barriers to learning for participants and Grade Nine learners. Learners often encounter topics that they perceive not to be practicable or that are too difficult for them to grasp at their level of thinking. Also, frustration may set in when the number of learning areas learners are confronted with is unmanageable, especially if they have to carry out tasks in all of them, as

the Outcomes-based Education system stipulates that learners perform eighty per cent of the work (according to a co-participating educator).

Furthermore, the Outcomes-based Education system arose from the 'competence-based movement in education', where emphasis is placed on the learner's skill. In this structure, the focus is on the learner's actual achievement, on his ability to demonstrate and apply the acquired knowledge, and not on being better or worse than others are. This system is different from the traditional teacher-centred method of teaching, where knowledge is transferred from the educator to the learners, irrespective of their previously acquired knowledge or skill (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:6).

Some co-participants (educators) and the principal in this study identified the Outcomes-based Education system as a barrier to learning, and saw it as a promising venture except for the difficulties in its implementation. Thus, the above category was identified from the interview transcription as resulting in barriers to learning. Excerpts on the above as barriers to learning are contained in Table 3.13.

TABLE 3.13: **EXTRACTS ON INAPPROPRIATE CURRICULUM AND THE OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Unit / page/ speaker	Quotes
1375 / 68 / Co-participant II	'…And also the subject content as a whole. You find out that here the subject content is not in the same level as the thinking capacity of the particular learner…'
1519 / 82 / Co-participant V	'I think the barriers that they have is some of the lessons that they have in their books. They cannot understand what it is saying. The level is too high. They have this examination that they call Common Task Assessment. That one is very tough for them. It is not for their level because at the end there is nothing they write'.
1529 / 83 / Co-participant V	'Other factors are that some of the things that are in those books they are not available in our area, like the swamps. They talk about the swamps…And even some of the diseases connected to a lack of nutrition that we do in grade nine we don't know a person who has maybe Erasmus or Kwashiorkor and we can't take them from school and let them see those people in hospital…So they only do things that they won't be able to see in real life'.

Unit / page/ speaker	Quotes
1660 / 94 / Principal	'…Grade Nine they start to see the light, and unfortunately we have to work hurriedly because they are writing external examinations. Now they have great pressure. The educator has that pressure of completing the syllabus and seeing to it that he covers the syllabus and so forth'.
887 / 36 / Participant I	'On the subject, you know the subject…because on the grade nines we got too many subjects. For sure there are twelve of them. There is confusion because teachers sometimes when they give jobs they give many jobs the same day… Unexpected some they give us too many jobs so we don't focus on what we are looking at… So we can't cope with what they are giving us'.
1415 / 72 / Co-participant III (educator)	'…OBE is hard to us; it is difficult to apply in class. Some of us are not used to this kind of method of teaching so it is very much difficult…'
1453 / 74 / Co-participant IV (educator)	'They rarely do well because now since the structure is now OBE and they did not know about this before. It is a new structure in our schools. Most of learners and sometimes teachers do not do understand this or to give it out, to convey it to the learners…partially do not; I cannot say totally. It is a new structure because most of the teachers have studied the old structure…It is a good structure but it is just that we lack material. We do not have enough resources to handle the new structure…'
1476 / 78 / Co-participant IV (educator)	'…They know they are no longer going ahead with the OBE *(in the next grade)*, so they become discouraged saying why OBE, Why should we do this Grade Nine'.
1660 / 94 / Principal	'…OBE is very good I must say. I have seen it is very good but it has its flaws because they come from the primary and they are being taught by us educators who are not so well trained in as far as OBE is concerned. Maybe the educator learner ratio might be not affording educators the opportunity to express themselves OBE wise…'

Although only one of the participants in the study indicated the worrisome nature of the inappropriateness of the curriculum, the researcher regards this as important in the light of the Outcomes-based Education system, which encourages learner-centeredness, where the learner performs approximately eighty per cent of the work. Thus the Outcomes-based Education system could result in barriers to learning, especially as educators are not in all instances yet adequately trained to implement this new system. This could also explain its association with barriers to learning for participants in the study.

3.9.1.4b Classroom sizes

Both the learning environment and the population of learners in the classrooms were identified as causing barriers to learning for the ninth graders. Learning is inhibited when the learning environment is not conducive to learning, when the required number of desks and chairs are not provided and the classrooms are not spacious enough for free movement. Table 3.14 shows excerpts from the interview transcription that illustrate this point.

TABLE 3.14:   EXCERPTS ON CLASSROOM SIZES

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1359 / 66 / Co-participant II (educator)	'…The problem is that maybe the environment inside the classroom is not suitable for him or her…'
1531 / 83 / Co-participant V (educator)	'We haven't used much to help those kids because we have a lot of kids in our classes. Classes are full up to the brim and there is no time for individual attention'.
1533 / 83 / Co-participant V (educator)	'Fifty-five to sixty. So when one child or two children of them have difficulty you cannot, because when you concentrate on them alone the remaining fifty-five will be disrupting the class…'
1588 / 89 / Co-participant VII (educator)	'…And the number of learners in our classes, we can't just have individual attendance on learners. So it is difficult even for us as teachers to find out the children who are not doing their work… And the number of learners we have in classes is too much. For instance we may be having fifty-five learners to sixty learners in class. So it is very difficult'.

An over-populated classroom makes it challenging for educators to monitor learners' participation during the teaching process. Giving individual attention to a learner exhibiting difficulty becomes ruled out, as this may imply leaving the rest of the learners unattended and the classroom chaotic. This inevitably creates an unfavourable teaching and learning environment. It is important to note that co-participating educators and not participants expressed concern about the issue of over-population. The researcher's thought on this is that the system of over-population seems to be what operates in schools in their environment, and being the environment that participants are familiar with, it probably explains the lack of mention of this aspect by participants. It could be on this account that participants did not regard over-population in the classroom as an issue to dwell on or as constituting a barrier to learning. On the other hand, educators who have to deal with the situation saw it as a problem that might hinder effective learning.

3.9.1.4c Poverty

A disadvantaged community is generally associated with poverty. This may be because within such a community there is often 'ill health, under-nourishment, a deprivation of privileges, backlogs in education…limited social status and a negative view of the future' (Prinsloo, 2005a:28). Learners in communities assailed by poverty may exhibit disorderliness, as well as indifference towards their education. Poverty as a barrier to learning came up in different forms in the data. Apart from stark poverty, there was mention of the effects of poverty, such as a lack of play facilities, insufficient clothing and scarcity of textbooks. Excerpts are presented in Table 3.15.

TABLE 3.15:   EXTRACTS ON POVERTY

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1379 / 69 / Co-participant II	'…Lack of food and then poverty, they can't learn at the same time'.
1395 / 71 / Co-participant II	'…If we had money I can take them to these companies so that they can practice…'
1482 / 78 / Co-participant IV	'…and the poverty in our country. As the poor learner will see her or himself being expelled or not being considered because the pressure. The poor learner from a poor family or poor background will think he or she is not recognized at the school because if he looks at himself he will see a difference between him and other learners from advantaged background. His is dressed in torn uniforms and tearing shoes, he will not be able to eat anything on break…A learner who is hungry cannot concentrate in class…'
1592 / 89 / Co-participant VII	'…They are from the former settlements…some of them are staying in shacks…'
1627 / 91 / Co-participant VII	'…Maybe poverty…poverty under general. Poverty is the main issue'.
1656 / 93 / Principal	'It could be the socio-economic. That could be one of the greatest barriers…'
1660 / 94 / Principal	'…some of them are heads of those families unfortunately at 15…'
1342 / 63-64 / Co-participant I (educator)	'Outside school in the area of Atteridgeville facilities are not there, educational facilities for these learners. And you know a healthy body gives a healthy mind, so outside school whereby they should be playing and enjoying themselves and mixing, for example as I'm a sports person, meeting on sports grounds in the afternoon. That affects them in school because there is nowhere they can go and play as children, then they start to indulge in unnecessary things'.

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1379 / 69 / Co-participant II	'…You can see some of the environment in schools are not for learners because when learning desks are broken, obviously the learners won't be motivated. We don't have learning materials, lack of learning materials…Even the Department sometimes they don't deliver materials for learners. When we send something to them, we send a request to them saying please send materials for this subject and that. If they don't send the materials what are we supposed to do…'
1592 / 89 / Co-participant VII	'…And we don't have textbooks. No individual textbooks…'
1598 / 89 / Co-participant VII	'…And the material is not there. We don't have books to give each and every learner in class. For instance, the grade nine we don't have textbooks on grammar and then we don't have literature books… We don't have other materials, just the one textbook that I'm having'.
1658 / 93 / Principal	'In as far as educators are concerned it is a question of not affording educators to specialize in subjects they have done at college. For example a teacher majors in English, when he comes to school besides teaching English he teaches say Biology. You find that for a long time he is not specializing. So that is lack of specialization, and sometimes whilst the teacher has not specialized in the subject…'
1658 / 93 / Principal	'…Lack of development – both self-development and development by the school. It is not up to the standard…'
1658 / 94 / Principal	'…And then the other thing is community at large. It depends what they read and it depends what they do and how do they monitor our children outside the school…'

Poverty has a detrimental effect on any society. As it manifests itself in various ways and affects learners differently, it can easily result in an academically promising learner dropping out of school. Socially, this could increase crime rates and personally, it could limit long-term job opportunities.

3.9.2   THEME TWO: MANIFESTATIONS OF LEARNING SUPPORT

As different authors have shown (Donald *et al*, 2002:55; Adelman & Taylor, 1993:14), the reasons for barriers to learning arise from the relationship between the learner and the whole social system. Hence, combating barriers to learning takes different forms and should involve all stakeholders in the life of the learner experiencing barriers to learning. Learning support manifests itself in the lives of the participants at home and at school in various ways, as registered in the data collected thus:

- Knowledge and availability of learning support
- Guidance, advice, motivation, encouragement and one-on-one support
- Extra classes, extra work and assistance with schoolwork
- Creation of support by mobilizing resources.

3.9.2.1   Knowledge and availability of learning support

In this study, a wide-ranging interpretation of what learning support means, was presented to the researcher at the interview sessions. It seemed that each co-participant viewed learning support from a different perspective. Some, however, did not express adequate knowledge of learning support, while others discussed families and educators when learning support was mentioned. Three of the co-participants (families) went on to list the types of support their children receive, and a fourth did not understand the term after it was explained. One co-participant (educator) tried to explain the term but then mainly reported the support strategies used in her learning area.

However, even though very few of the co-participating educators acknowledged receiving some form of support from the Gauteng Department of Education, the availability of learning support to the other educators in their various learning areas was reported to range from 'not much' to 'non-existent'. Hence they often resort to creating learning support for learners in need of it themselves. Excerpts are contained in Table 3.16.

TABLE 3.16:   EXTRACTS ON KNOWLEDGE AND AVAILABILITY OF LEARNING SUPPORT

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1069 / 44 / Co-participant C	'Learning support is to help someone to learn in many things'.
1190 / 52 / Co-participant F	'Learning support like me I can help F when she ask me "mum, what is this", I must know and I must help her'.
1286 / 59 / Co-participant I	'Me as I's parent I need to support him by helping him like at school when they give him homework, helping him where he doesn't know what is this all about…'
1315 / 61 / Co-participant I (educator)	'*Learner* support I think is assisting the learners where they've got problems. Supporting them if they don't understand. Giving them assistance. Giving them extra materials to help them understand Maths'.
1324 / 62 / Co-participant I (educator)	'*Learner* support for a learner is when a learner struggles in certain aspects…and assistance and giving her extra work where she struggles…'

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1353 / 65 / Co-participant II	'Learning support is all about being accountable to each and everything, like in teaching situation…'
1400 / 71 / Co-participant III	'…when talking about learning support you might be talking about the material that we have supported to the learners and not only the materials but support from other stakeholders. Maybe talking about the support from different peoples in education'.
1451 / 74 / Co-participant IV	'Learning support I can say is the materials that the learners use in order to understand the subject. Or the sources from outside school that tend to help them to understand the subject…'
1497 / 81 / Co-participant V	'Learning support means anything that can be used to help the kids to understand…'
1542 / 84 / Co-participant VI	'Learning support I think is a program whereby a learner if he's got a problem in whatever learning area, his problems will be identified and then he will be able to be helped only in the parts he's got problems'.
1642 / 92 / Principal	'Learning support is encouragement capacitating, mentoring and everything that will enable effective learning taking place'.
1319 / 61 / Co-participant I (educator)	'There is support from the Education Department. Most of the time it comes in the form of work programs or work sheets…Also with the school sometimes if funds are available…'
1406 / 72 / Co-participant III (educator)	'From the GDE (Gauteng Department of Education) we have got teachers development here and we work in clusters (groups)…'
1357 / 65 / Co-participant II (educator)	'We do have them but some of them we have to create…'
1553 / 85 / Co-participant VI (educator)	'What is available to me is not that much. One uses the present textbooks that we have, you see…'
1592 / 89 / Co-participant VII (educator)	'Not much. The only thing that we are having right now is the library. And we don't have textbooks. No individual textbooks…'
1598 / 89 / Co-participant VII (educator)	'Unfortunately there is not much…And the material is not there. We don't have books to give each and every learner in class. For instance, the grade nine we don't have textbooks on grammar and then we don't have literature books. I only have one copy, come to class, read for the learners. Theirs is just to listen and meditate. We don't have other materials, just the one textbook that I'm having'.

Participants in the study were required to outline what supports their learning, while co-participants were required to describe what learning support means to them. Although some family members could not explain what learning support is, it may not be accurate to say that

they have no knowledge or understanding of the term. Some of the co-participating educators also exhibited limited knowledge of the concept 'learning support', which could possibly have resulted from a number of reasons, one of which is not having understood the interviewer's question. Interestingly, those co-participants who attempted to explain the term gave different perceptions that shed more light on the term and their understandings of it. Examples are when Educator II described learning support as ...*being accountable to each and everything like in teaching situation...* (Unit 1353, page 65), and Educator IV said ...*materials that the learners use in order to understand the subject...* (Unit 1451, page 74). There may be a tendency to view learning support as only that which is employed to assist learners, such as guidance, but there are other kinds of learning support that manifest themselves. It is for this reason that the researcher regards Co-participant II's description above as a different dimension of learning support. The researcher nonetheless thinks that knowledge and perhaps an understanding of the term may impact positively on knowing when and where to provide learning support for learners experiencing barriers to learning. The researcher perceives the use of the term 'learner support' by an educator to imply the individualization of support and assistance for a learner experiencing barriers to learning. This may be closely linked to one-on-one support strategy. However, the alternate use of the terms 'learner support' and 'learning support' by co-participating educators in this study may be an avenue for further inquiry in this field.

On the issue of availability of support, the researcher realized at a point during the interview that the educator who reported that not much support is available to her was not referring to the unavailability of what should have been provided by the Gauteng Department of Education, but to what she could employ as learning support in her learning area. The researcher also discovered that the library is not a source of support to everyone (as mentioned in the extract above). Examples are: *No. There are no textbooks unfortunately.* (Unit 1600, page 90), Co-participant VII (educator), and then, *Not even in the library.* (Unit 1602, page 90, Co-participant VII (educator).

3.9.2.2   Guidance, advice, motivation, encouragement and one-on-one support

Most of the participants pointed out that they received support from family members, educators and friends, such support often manifesting itself in guidance, advice, motivation and encouragement. The support received from co-participants (educators) is sometimes in the form of one-on-one support, thus giving special and motivating individual consideration to

Grade Nine learners who are in need of such attention. Table 3.17 shows excerpts from the interview transcripts.

TABLE 3.17:   **EXTRACTS ON GUIDANCE, ADVICE, MOTIVATION, ENCOURAGEMENT AND ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT**

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1389 / 70 / Co-participant II	'…The principal gave me guidance period to go and guide them, tell them about their skills. Sometimes I just go to them during technical period and say let's talk about your skills…'
511 / 18 / Participant E	'My mother she guide me. She say I must go to school, learn, no future without school, no work without school…'
871 / 35 / Participant I	'…Many things I can see as a person this guy is giving me guide…' *(Friend)*
869 / 34 / Participant I	'…So I get knowledge from him'. *(Friend)*
873 / 35 / Participant I	'It is helping me with my studies because most of the time when I talk to him many things that happen I get from him. I can see that there is a difference between this and this'. *(Friend)*
459 / 16 / Participant E	'I told myself "ok this year I want to be a learner, a good learner, I want to listen in class"…'
495 / 17 / Participant E	'She said I must come to school everyday and I must participate in the groups and I must write classworks and homeworks. If I didn't understand come to her told her and she help me'. *(Educator)*
505 / 18 / Participant E	'…Eish! She said I must listen and then try by all means so that I can know and I can learn'. *(Educator)*
187 / 6 / Participant B	'They ask me to read and practice…' *(Educators)*
348 / 11 / Participant C	'…He tell me I must read this and this…' *(Educator)*
895 / 36 / Participant I	'…The Deputy Principal told me that I must reach the goal level…'
885 / 35 / Participant I	'…so he gave me some advices…' *(Deputy Principal)*
426 / 14 / Participant D	'…If you have problem don't go to study. Tell your brother to help you to study…' *(Mum)*
461 / 16 / Participant E	'…and my grandmother told me I must go to school, no future without school…'
521 / 19 / Participant E	'…She told me I must go to school like her…I must go to school and learn'. *(Friend)*
560 / 20 / Participant F	'My mother she tells me to learn because she hasn't had the chance to learn…'

Unit / page/ speaker	Quotes
404 / 13 / Participant D	'…my granny can't read now but she ask my brothers and sisters to help me on how to read and how to do my homeworks. And then my friends at my class, we do group us after school and then we do the work…'
1119 / 47 / Co-participant C	'…When he gets back from school I'll tell him that 'eih, give me your books', I check if there is any homework and if I can't see any homework I'll tell him 'eih, don't go to sleep today, just to read your books…' *(Sister)*
1168 / 51 / Co-participant E	'…I say no you are behind. At least you must make standard nine…' *(Grandmother)*
1238 / 56 / Co-participant H	'I will tell him to learn and concentrate in school'. *(Sister)*
1240 / 56 / Co-participant H	'…like I will tell him like "you see, so many girls they don't have work, they don't have anything, they are staying at home, they have children, they don't have anything. So you must go to school and learn so that you can have whatever you want; the work and everything…' *(Sister)*
1288 / 59 / Co-participant I	'…just read your books and leave my problem…' *(Mum)*
1361 / 66 / Co-participant II	'Sometimes I'm just coming out with my own models, you know, coming to class and saying in Technology don't think you won't be able to make it. Just go for it, try it, it is been made by myself…'
1344 / 64 / Co-participant I (Educator)	'…I encourage also some of the learners in the class to assist… And I try to motivate the learners not to despair… I tell them to come to me if they've got problems'.
1296 / 60 / Co-participant I	'Trying to make him happy, buy him some nice things…' *(Mum)*
666 / 25 / Participant G	'…and she tries to tell me I must not be stressed, I'll be okay when I continue to want to know where am I getting problems and when I get it right'. *(Mum)*
507 / 18 / Participant E	'They are not teasing me or shout at me. They just talk nice to me'. *(Educators)*
925 / 38 / Co-participant A	'I'm encouraging her to study the books after school…' *(Mum)*
1213 / 54 / Co-participant G	'I just encourage G to read…' *(Brother)*
1223 / 55 / Co-participant G	'…encouraging him and helping him to find what I couldn't find…' *(Brother)*
1328 / 62 / Co-participant I (Educator)	'…and I encourage them to work as groups and to help one another'.
1359 / 66 / Co-participant II	'…I'm encouraging my learners not to laugh at another student…'
1383 / 69 / Co-participant II	'…I'm just making an individual accountability, calling them and say come and help me... I know learners well so I say come so that I can be able to teach you to demonstrate because some of the learners they are very shy… I bring them into my office and say how do you do this…'

Unit / page/ speaker	Quotes
1463 / 76 / Co-participant IV	'…calling the learner alone to the staff room, talking, asking the difficulties. Sometimes you see the problem that I think is that the learner does not understand…'
1546 / 84 / Co-participant V	'We do it by individualization…'
1555 / 85 / Co-participant V	'We communicate like father and child so they can trust me. As soon as they trust me they now become open then I'm able to help them in whatever way…'

As has already been pointed out, some participants do not have siblings, or may have them but do not receive support from them. There are nevertheless some siblings who render assistance, along with friends and mothers. Although some co-participants complained that parents do not commit themselves or show a sense of involvement in the school lives of their children, there are a few identified by some of the participants as providing assistance in various forms, such as guidance, advice, motivation and encouragement. Even though the use of one-on-one support was reported by a few of the co-participants (educators) who implemented this form of support, the researcher finds this important because of its individuality. It also seems that some participants and some Grade Nine learners are inclined to exhibit shyness; and the fear of being ridiculed by others may inhibit opening up about experiencing learning difficulties in class.

3.9.2.3   Extra classes, extra work and assistance with schoolwork

Participants and co-participants (educators) reported the manifestations of learning support in extra classes and extra work from educators, as well as in assistance with schoolwork from family members and some educators and friends. Table 3.18 displays excerpts from the interview transcripts.

TABLE 3.18:   EXTRACTS ON EXTRA CLASSES, EXTRA WORK AND ASSISTANCE WITH SCHOOLWORK

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1348 / 64 / Co-participant I (Educator)	'Personally, I've started Saturday school where I'm giving extra lessons. Although it is not only learners from my school alone. I'm using also learners from other schools to give them more lessons…'

Unit / page/ speaker	Quotes
1586 / 88 / Co-participant VII	'…Maybe giving extra lessons, maybe giving more classworks and lot of assignments, to keep them busy and give them maybe extra work in reading and visiting the school library…'
1328 / 62 / Co-participant I (Educator)	'…I support them by giving more work if they've got problems the very same area whereby they struggle a bit and after doing some corrections I give them more work…'
1490 / 80 / Co-participant IV	'…Sometimes you have to supplement by giving them work or assignments…'
1537 / 84 / Co-participant V	'Personally I give them practical work to go and work, maybe do a model of a plant cell, do a model of an animal cell, go out look for types of roots, types of leaves and when they come to class and they paste them on the board…'
1548 / 85 / Co-participant VI	'…Then wherever there are still educational problems one attends them by giving the learner more work'.
1637 / 91 / Co-participant VII	'…photocopy some lessons for them, extra lessons, giving them assignments, lots of assignments, researches…'
1509 / 82 / Co-participant V	'…usually I take them out to appreciate nature, show them the living things that we use and the non-living things that are also helpful to us. So from outside we go in the class. We use what we had from outside we bring it into the class and from there we go on with our lessons'.
1505 / 81 / Co-participant V	'…From the GDE we also get some competitions where these kids are to take part and by so doing they are going to impart what they have learnt from the school'.
1319 / 61 / Co-participant I (Educator)	'There is support from the Education Department. Most of the time it comes in the form of work programs or work sheets whereby the child is given extra work…'
241 / 8 / Participant B	'He gives me the homeworks'. *(Educator)*
374 / 12 / Participant C	'…He was calling that some of the children who don't understand like me will come after school and get study'. *(Educator)*
1361 / 66 / Co-participant II	'…I'm going to take them to Pretoria Show… I'm going to take them now to be exposed to these things'.
1383 / 70 / Co-participant II	'…I'm just taking them saying what I've been teaching you…like if I'm teaching them how to design a house, how to construct a house, I'm taking them and giving them examples…'
1406 / 72 / Co-participant III	'From the GDE (Gauteng Department of Education) we have got teachers development here and we work in clusters (groups), where we are trying to maybe…to work together to see that there is a progress, what is it that we can give to our learners…'
38 / 2 / Participant A	'…when I'm not understanding my mother can help me to do it…'
199 / 7 / Participant B	'To practice with me, to do with me my homeworks'. *(Friends)*

Unit / page/ speaker	Quotes
326 / 10 / Participant C	'Like when they give us a homework I don't understand I give her and say "you must help me, I'm not understanding" and she helps'. *(Sister)*
342 / 11 / Participant C	'Where I'm not understanding I tell them here I don't understand and they try to help me'. *(Educators)*
513 / 18 / Participant E	'…she help me in the homeworks, what what, when they give me assignment, she interview me…' *(Grandmother)*
430 / 14 / Participant D	'My brother he helps me a lot. He takes me down and reads for me and then he told me I can't write for you. Take a pen and then I will tell you what to do'.
408 / 13 / Participant D	'…He helps me how to read Setswana and write an essay and so forth'. *(Educator)*
656 / 25 / Participant G	'…he do (sic) show me how must I work on the subject like Mathematics. Like sometimes, additions he tries to help me with many works of it'. *(Brother)*
716 / 28 / Participant H	'…I told her that I don't understand what and what and she help me. My uncle if they give us homework in school I just go home and tell my uncle he must help me here and here, then he help me…' *(Sister / uncle)*
786 / 30 / Participant H	'…My sister and my uncle when I come back from school they ask me "didn't they give you homework? Come let us help you?" Then I take all my books and I go back they help me'.
909 / 37 / Co-participant A	'…Like the homeworks she ask me then I can help her if I understand, if I don't understand I just say you can go somewhere to others…' *(Mum)*
911 / 37 / Co-participant A	'To the neighbour'.
933 / 38 / Co-participant A	'Sometimes I like to ask her questions about the school, what she has done at the school and the rest'. *(Mum)*
982 / 40 / Co-participant A	'…If she don't (sic) understand and I understand I will help her. I can send her to the neighbour if I know that that person can help in the subject she don't understand…' *(Mum)*
1071 / 44 / Co-participant C	'I help him like when his teacher give him homework like in Mathematics I do sometimes help him…' *(Sister)*
1093 / 45 / Co-participant C	'First I ask him do you understand this homework already because he do sometimes in class generally…' *(Sister)*
1194 / 52 / Co-participant F	'When she's writing, neh, and then she doesn't understand her works then "mum, I want this answer. I don't understand the answer". Then I help, Ok, the answer is like this like this'. *(Mum)*
404 / 13 / Participant D	'…And then my friends at my class, we do group us after school and then we do the work... That helps me to learn more and more'.
594 / 22 / Participant F	'…They always talk about school and we have to do schoolwork everyday…' *(Friends)*

Unit / page/ speaker	Quotes
636 / 24 / Participant G	'…I try to practice them in class with my friends'.
668 / 26 / Participant G	'…When I have problem on Mathematics they do try to help me so that I must understand…' *(Friends)*

Participants in the study tend to receive a lot of assistance with their schoolwork. Although most of them turn to friends for support, they nevertheless obtain help with their schoolwork from educators, and some of the participants acquire assistance also from siblings, mothers and other relatives. In all, the researcher perceived that Grade Nine learners are not without assistance. However, the form it takes and the consistency of it seems highly variable.

3.9.2.4   Creation of support by mobilizing resources

Some of the Co-participants (educators) reported having to 'create' some of the support rendered to Grade Nine learners, especially where support is limited. Excerpts are displayed in Table 3.19.

TABLE 3.19:   EXTRACTS ON CREATION OF SUPPORT BY MOBILIZING RESOURCES

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1357 / 65 & 66 Co-participant II	'…but some of them we have to create… I don't expect The Department to give me all the things, materials on learning support… some we are creating, some we are just asking from other schools and colleges'.
1359 / 66 / Co-participant II	'…so we have to create the environment that is sort of inclusive, that is going to include all the learners…'
1503 / 81 / Co-participant V	'The support that we get is we usually made as educators during cluster meetings…'
1644 / 92 / Principal	'Besides having teachers teaching, we are having for them extra lessons that are being given by an outsider, we are having for them Saturday schools with an outreach body that is attached to the school and assisting the school... Then we are having class teachers who are working as guardians. And we are having an extra period for them two periods a week that we call life as a school and there is a teacher who goes there to further give them life skills in various ways and encourage them…'

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1648 / 92 / Principal	'…the Principal communicates problems and they go and assist and whenever there are courses, there are extra tuition for learners then they invite us. There is also besides what I've said the UNISA that is involved through outreach to try to get the level of the learners, their ability to read…'
1344 / 64 / Co-participant I (Educator)	'…maybe if we need some charts and they are not able to afford to buy charts or to buy some polish for the class, what we do I encourage them to sort of give them some tasks and then I…I don't want to say I'm paying them; I just give them something to go and buy whatever they need…'
1348 / 64 / Co-participant I (Educator)	'…I've started Saturday school where I'm giving extra lessons… Then if I feel that I can't reach them, or there is a big gap between myself and them I go an extra mile by going to other educators from other schools to get more work… or I invite them to come and help out because we are moving in the direction of forming an association of Maths teachers in grade nine to help one another in our township'.
1359 / 66 / Co-participant II (educator)	'…sometimes I'm just making peer support groups in class because of sometimes it is not that a learner cannot be able to learn…'
1666 / 95 / Principal	'We are using the local child protection unit; local community and policing forums… Otherwise we use our social welfare. There are other NGO's where we refer our learners. Most importantly at school we are having a peer support groups…'
1668 / 95 & 96 / Principal	'They are learners attached to Pretoria University under one of the life skills educator. They assist learners with minor problems- learner's go to them and tell them their problems or they are being encouraged to join the peer support group… And then we are having the SBST, School Based Support Team at the school… Then we are having our District, where if we fail as a school we refer them to our District… Another support is we are having what we call grade counsel where we are having grade teachers, class teachers of a particular grade who get down there with grade principal and taking care of learners. Then as a school we are having in addition a welfare committee to support those learners especially those whose parents are unemployed and have nothing at home…'
1652 / 92 / Principal	'All these strategies we are using, especially teacher development and the learner development…'
1507 / 82 / Co-participant V	'Sometimes we get like magazines, and sometimes we get the newspapers that have learning areas, like Sunday Times and Soweto and sometimes, we get materials from the Botanical Gardens, and sometimes we get materials from the television, the learning station…'
1557 / 85 / Co-participant VI	'…One get information from newspapers and I use what they use in their daily lives, then I try to compile some kind of notes and thereafter I run some questions…'

Unit / page / speaker	Quotes
1395 / 71 / Co-participant II	'…They are technology companies like Telkom, Anglo-American and others. They are sending them materials and sometimes the companies are taking them to their workshops…'

The session with the principal of the sample school revealed the type of support already available, as well as the efforts being made by the school to provide support for Grade Nine learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, by mobilizing potential resources. According to her report, these strategies have been quite effective in improving learning for learners experiencing barriers to learning.

3.10   FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

Follow-up interview sessions were conducted at the end of data analysis. The aim of this was to enable participants and co-participants to verify whether the findings were satisfactorily representative of the evidence they gave. Not all were available for the sessions but an adequate representation was established. In all, seven of the nine participants were available; six co-participants (educators) and the principal were also available for follow-up. Only three family members were accessible, as some of them have relocated.

The sessions with the participants and educators, as well as the principal, were conducted in the school premises. These were carried out on 27 March 2006, between the hours of 11h00 and 13h50 and 30 March 2006, between the hours of 8h20 and 10h45. The duration of each session was ten to fifteen minutes, except for the three tape-recorded sessions, the duration of which was about twenty to thirty-five minutes. Two sessions with family members were conducted on 30 March 2006, from 11h00 to 11h10 and from 11h30 to 11h40 respectively. The third was conducted on 4 April 2006, between the hours of 08h48 and 09h00.

Everyone involved indicated that the themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged were a satisfactory representation of the information divulged at the interview sessions. Educator III agreed with the outcome of the interviews, but nevertheless asked a few questions for the sake of clarity. Educators V and VI reported additional development since our last meetings.

In the researcher's thinking, the new additions were, however, quite enlightening, as Educator V reported that the problems leading to barriers to learning are escalating, with learners' inability to read and write identified as the topmost barriers to learning. Interestingly, Educator VI, in supporting this view, linked it to the Outcomes-based Education system, which he identified as the greatest barrier to learning. In addition to what was presented at the original sessions regarding the OBE as a barrier to learning, he reckoned that the problem could be traced to the foundation level (Grade One), when 'teaching' is replaced with eighty per cent of the work to be carried out by the learner. The repercussion is that from this lower grade, the child does not perform adequately but gets pushed up nonetheless.

Extract from the follow-up interview transcriptions:

Unit 56 / page 8 / Educator VI: *Now I will like to comment on the inability to read and to write, which is a very serious problem now more especially with the introduction of the new system OBE... which encourages 80% of work to be done by the learners, right. Then teachers resort to giving more of the work than teaching. The actual teaching is not taking place that much... Now the problem is that from the lower grades they are not performing well. They are being pushed. They keep on pushing them, you see...*

From the comments of Educator VI on the OBE system, the researcher perceived a link between this new system and educator absenteeism identified by some participants previously.

Excerpt:

Unit 56 / page 9 / educator VI: *...Then it is more of paper work. That is why you find that the teacher sometimes becomes reluctant in a way to get to class because they still have to sort out the papers, because the officials when they come to school they want to see a lot of work that has been done by learners...*

Educator VI also indicated that the difficulty with the implementation of the new system lies in the expectation that an educator who took three years to obtain a diploma can implement the OBE after a two-week training course.

Excerpt:

Unit 60 / page 10 / Educator VI: *...it took a teacher 3 years to complete to become a real teacher, to acquire a diploma or even a degree so that he can be ready to teach, but now to*

attend a course for one day or even two weeks and then you are expected to implement all these…

In her comment, Educator V stated that in her view, drug taking, sex, smoking and crime should rank second, as these are also on the increase. She maintained that too much sex is shown on television, and was particularly displeased with the advertisement on HIV & AIDS, i.e. *HIV wants you*.

Note the following extract:

Unit 29 / page 4 / educator V: *…Maybe it is the effect of some of the drugs that they are using. And the sex, there is too much sex on the television, and they watch television. There is this advert on 'HIV wants you'. They show there a boy sleeping with a girl and they want to experiment... And smoking and crime, huh...*

Unit 35 / page 4 / Educator V: *… maybe the crime has been committed maybe at home and he carries that to the schoolyard in his head...*

On the method of instruction as a barrier to learning, Educator V added that the language of instruction is English, which some of the learners do not understand, hence the difficulty in reading and writing.

Excerpt:

Unit 41 / page 5 / Educator V: *… the method of instruction truly and rightfully is English. Some of them don't understand English. So sometimes we use vernacular words to describe it but when it comes to writing down the test they have a problem in writing and they have a problem in reading…*

On the manifestations of learning support, Educator VI's comment on the knowledge of learning support is that parents do not prioritise and do not see the need to get their children to understand the seriousness and importance of acquiring an education.

Extract:

Unit 66 / page 11 / Educator VI: *… It's a question of prioritizing. Our parents have not yet realized how important it is to help learners in taking education serious…*

Finally, two participants (A and H) were found to be repeating Grade Nine for the second time. Both reported being ill and absent from school for a while, thereby missing out on examinations. For participant A, the same illness that resulted in her repeating the grade the previous year reoccurred. Educator I was reported to have left teaching for a job in Golfing. Educator IV informed the researcher during the session with him that he had gone back to school on a part-time basis, in order to acquire the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE).

3.11   CONCLUSION

A detailed discussion of the interview report has been presented in this chapter. A total of nine learners (participants), nine family members (co-participants), seven educators (also co-participants) and the principal were interviewed. The two themes that emerged from the data, along with the sub-themes and categories were all discussed with supporting quotes from the interview transcripts. Also presented in this chapter were details of the follow-up interviews.

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CHAPTER 4
FRAMING THE FINDINGS IN TERMS OF EXISTING LITERATURE

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This research used multiple case studies of nine Grade Nine learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, and are thus repeating the grade. The purpose of the study was to determine, explore and explain the manifestations of learning support in the lives of these learners. This chapter is intended to present the findings of the study as they relate to existing literature.

4.2   SUMMATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are based on two main themes, namely barriers to learning and the manifestations of learning support. These are connected to the research questions, which will be revisited in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the main research question guiding the study was:

> *How does learning support manifest itself in the lives of high school learners?*

The ensuing sub-questions were:

1)   What is the nature of barriers to learning for high school learners?
2)   What is learning support?
3)   What learning support is available for high school learners experiencing barriers to learning?

The findings of the study present an array of opinions and ideas emerging from the data regarding barriers to learning and the manifestations of learning support in the lives of Grade Nine learners.

4.3   FINDINGS AS THEY RELATE TO LITERATURE

4.3.1   THEME ONE: BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The findings of this study as regards barriers to learning complement the views of Speece *et al.* (2003:38) and the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:7) to the effect that a range of factors lead to barriers to learning. Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) also share the view along with Donald *et al.* (2002:31 & 55) who maintain that the factors that result in barriers to learning involve not only the learner but also the whole social system. Some of the divulged barriers that emerged in this study will now be linked to the literature.

Barriers to learning were identified as resulting from various factors. As has been stated in the previous chapter, these factors are grouped into four sub-themes in this study, as barriers to learning relating to learners, educators, family and the education system/society.

SUB-THEME ONE: LEARNER-RELATED BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Five categories emerged in the learner-related barriers to learning as follows:
1.   Play and leisure activities
2.   Peer influence/adolescence
3.   Low motivation for learning
4.   Inability to read and write
5.   Drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime.

1.   Play and leisure activities

This was a strong theme amongst the barriers to learning acknowledged for high school learners. Both participants and co-participants (educators and family members), found play and leisure activities to be worrisome in terms of their impact on learning. Although play and leisure activities were, in this study, very much pinpointed as negatively influencing learning, the researcher's opinion is that play can actually serve a positive role in the teaching and learning process. According to Jones (2005/81:292), play is a necessity for *all* children of the world, and *one way for children to have a better life is for play opportunities to be given to them in their homes, at school, at after-school programs, and in their communities.* McCune (1998/69:601) describes play as that facet of children's actions which is first linked to the inner being and then to the player's capabilities and views. Play and learning are thus

interconnected as they are in 'an interactive balance of assimilation to the self and accommodation to reality' (McCune 1998/69:601), for reality often infringes on play.

According to Byers (1998/69:600) and Pellegrini and Smith (1998/69:610), 'physical activity play' serves as a likely means of exercise that keeps the body fit and in shape. Although participants in the study indulge in a lot of play activities, albeit in a way that impacts negatively on learning, the study revealed a lack of facilities that might make organized and supervised play activities possible both in the school and the community, the aim being to boost learning.

The factor that could probably have resulted in the negative influence of play and leisure activities in this study might be the lack of organized and supervised play activities in the appropriate facilities. As a result, learners are left to indulge in play activities on their own. Hence the findings of the study in terms of play and leisure activities contradict the views of authors such as Jones (2005/81:292) and McCune (1998/69:601) on the positive influence of play on learning, in that play and leisure activities emerged in this study as a barrier instead of a facilitator of learning.

2.   Peer influence/adolescence

The developmental phase of adolescence is often associated with stress, as the adolescent goes through emotional confusion (Louw, 1997:505). In the researcher's opinion, the most challenging aspect of the developmental phase seems to be social development, during which the adolescent has to come to grips with the various changes he is experiencing. One of the key developmental tasks of the adolescent is character formation (Shaffer, 1996:483) and the need to achieve equilibrium between who he is, people's perception of him and how he relates to the norms and ideals of the society (Donald *et al*., 2002:78). He thus begins to search for answers to who he is, to what group he belongs and what he wants to achieve in life (Shaffer, 1996:483).

The adolescent's greatest challenges as he develops are fraternization, identifying where he fits into the society, securing interpersonal expertise, fostering acceptance of others and their beliefs and developing self-assurance (Gouws *et al*., 2002:67). The desire to achieve these draws him closer to peers, as being socially accepted by them matters above all else. Peer influence thus becomes a powerful force that often confronts the adolescent learner, and can either manifest itself positively or negatively, depending on the values upheld by the group

with whom the learner associates. In this study, peer influence and adolescence were acknowledged by participants and co-participants as constituting barriers to learning for high school learners, thus which is in accordance with the views of such writers as Donald *et al.* (2002), Shaffer (1996), Louw (1997), and others.

The researcher's opinion on this issue in the study is that some adolescent learners tended to turn to peers for what could not be obtained from the family or school, which is in agreement with Donald *et al*'s (2002:244) view that 'inadequacies' of the family and school would determine the amount of influence wielded by peers, who might provide for him what is lacking at family and school levels. Although peer influence and adolescence were recognized as a major barrier to learning for the high school learners in this study, some participants acknowledged that they received *learning support* from peers (whom they generally referred to as 'friends'). The researcher's conclusion therefore is that while there were negative influences from peers on participants and Grade Nine learners, one cannot overlook the positive influence that was provided by peers in the form of personal learning support. In other words, the outcome of peer influence and adolescence manifested both negatively and positively in the study.

3. Low motivation for learning

As this category started to emerge, the internal question that the researcher asked was 'why will a learner fortunate enough to be in school exhibit low motivation for learning?' The answer to this could possibly be found in the classroom culture, the school culture or the reflection of the whole social system. Various forces, visible or invisible, according to Donald *et al.* (2002:168), can affect the activities in the classroom, consequently resulting in low motivation for learning on the learner's part. A learning environment should be such as to meet the needs of all learners as well as possible in order to facilitate motivation to learn.

At this point, the researcher would like to link a lack of three interrelating features of a learning environment, namely physical, social and instructional conditions, to a possible unwillingness or lack of motivation to learn. This is in agreement with Adelman and Taylor (1993:160) who inferred that a poor learning environment might have a deleterious effect. The physical features that might impact negatively include inaccessibility of building facilities, noisy classrooms, poor illumination, poor aeration, irregular temperature, inadequate seating conveniences and over-population. The social features, which include the relationship between the learner and the educator, and between the learner and other learners,

could impact either negatively or positively (Donald *et al*., 2002:169-171). Finally, the instructional aspect, which is connected to the teaching and learning procedure, was recognized as a barrier to learning in this study and so will be discussed in more detail.

A few co-participating educators identified learners' low motivation for learning as troubling. They reported that learners involved are 'lazy', will not attend to their portfolios and avoid difficulties in subject areas. In the researcher's view, several things are important here:

- Adelman & Taylor's (1993:163) point that 'motivation is a prerequisite to learning, and its absence may be a cause of learning problems, a factor maintaining such problems, or both', and Muthukrishna's (2002:139) stipulation that learners are willing to take risks, to be drawn in and exhibit commitment to learning if they are motivated.

- The view of the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:19) that the barriers to learning experienced by learners in both special and ordinary schools are the result of facets of the curriculum such as learning area content, language used in teaching and technique of instruction, and implying that these might not be consistent with the learner's intellectual requirements.

- Donald *et al*'s (2002:31) contextual disadvantage, which might probably originate from 'disadvantage in particular social and educational contexts'. The researcher's intuition on this is that a learner confronted with the above may manifest low motivation for learning, as well as a refusal to participate in class activities like the writing of homework, classwork and projects, or a refusal to listen in class.

4.   Inability to read and write

Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) suggest that 'reading is essential to success in our society', as this skill is to a great extent significant for *social* and *economic* development. Even though only two co-participants, one of whom is the principal of the school, identified this category as a barrier to learning, the researcher sees it as a possible foundation for many high school learners' challenges in experiencing barriers to learning. This thought was confirmed at the follow-up interview sessions when two of the co-participating educators ranked it at the top of all the categories. The researcher believes that all academic activities largely depend on a learner's ability to read and write. Lyon (1999) shares this belief by stating that a learner who

cannot read at an acceptable level is likely to encounter significant barriers to learning in different educational capacities.

When inquiring about the possible causes of some of the participants' inability to read and write, Educator VI was of the opinion at the follow-up interview session that the Outcomes-based Education system is to blame, as the new system tends to relegate the old system of actual teaching to 'twenty per cent', with 'eighty per cent' of the tasks to be carried out by learners, even at the foundation level (lower grades) where the art of reading and writing should be taught. According to him, the implication is that very little time is allocated to actual teaching, thus eliminating most of what could have been acquired (such as reading and writing). However, the researcher believes that the causal factors of illiteracy (as manifested in the inability to read and write) probably stretch beyond the Outcomes-based Education system as well. They include teacher education, poverty factors, parental education factors, language barriers, school system factors and so forth. Snow *et al.* (1998), for instance, mention that most reading difficulties encountered by adolescent learners could probably have been *avoided* or even *resolved* at the foundation stage of schooling. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this study does not establish causal factors for the participants' inability to read and write; in this section, it merely mentions possible hypotheses.

According to the researcher's analysis, reading deals principally with appreciating written words; and failure to lay a firm reading and writing foundation at an early stage of the child's education could result in the inability to read and write at a later stage (high school). Lerner's (2003:397) outlook is that challenging school environments could be linked to a shortfall in reading. Van Kraayenoord and Elkins (1998:140) suggest that the inability to read might result from various factors such as brain damage, visual and or auditory impairment, as well as environmental influences that are due to differences in culture or language and poor instructional strategy. Poor phonological skills could also result in an inability to read. A learner experiencing reading difficulty may probably exhibit writing problems as well since reading and writing are connected. Dednam (2005:122) believes that although learners are decisively taught to read, reading and writing skills develop concomitantly, and Lerner (2003:397) also suggests that learning to read is a wide procedure that requires cautious instruction and determination. Lyon (1999) also recognizes that acquiring the knowledge of reading is an extensive process which should be instituted long before the child is enrolled in formal school. Also acknowledged as being at risk of failing to learn to read properly are those who begin their schooling with inadequate contact with English as a general means or

language of communication, and then having to cope with English being the language of instruction at school. Children from disadvantaged environments or homes may also experience reading problems due to poverty factors. However, the researcher's impression is that learners from advantaged homes or environments may equally experience limited exposure to the language of instruction where this differs from that spoken at home, and so can also encounter this barrier to learning. In summary, the inability to read affects a learner's ability to write, as he may not appreciate the representation of the alphabets in sounds and may not recognize the words to be written, thus creating a barrier to learning.

5.   Drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime

Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:129) and Corbett (1998:8) maintain that evidence shows that learners from challenging socio-economic environments tend to encounter barriers to learning, as they have to contend with environmental factors such as poverty, drug abuse, violence, HIV & AIDS and other societal challenges. Donald *et al.* (2002:31) describe these barriers to learning as arising from the social context of learners, and although external influences are at play, these tend to be linked to internal influences. For Adelman and Taylor (1993:14), this is the Type I learning problem, where the learner's environment has given rise to barriers to learning. Reasons abound why *any* learner would fall prey to drug abuse and consequently to sex, smoking and crime. These reasons include 'withdrawal or escape from painful reactions to life', peer influence, insubordination and an attempt to break away from boredom rather than indulge in challenging activities (Mwamwenda, 2004:382).

In this study, many of the participants and co-participants revealed that drugs such as dagga and pills, cigarette smoking, sex and crime impact negatively on learning for high school learners. As the data from the study did not establish the factors that could have given rise to the indulgence in the above (except for peer influence), the researcher assumes that it might issue from factors such as poverty in the family or society, relief and escape from family or personal problems, the urge to experiment and so forth.

SUB-THEME TWO: EDUCATOR-RELATED BARRIERS TO LEARNING

To be a teacher means to make a lifelong commitment to keeping the learner central to the teaching-learning process (Johnston, 1996:4). According to Landsberg (2005:69), part of the task of an educator is that of a *facilitator*, which goes beyond simply imparting knowledge to learners. That is why they also have the responsibility to facilitate events and activities in a

learning environment. Sibaya and Kruger (2005:125) believe that 'all learners can learn' if the educator provides the necessary aid required for them to achieve their distinctive and optimal potential. However, it follows that in the same way in which educators can support learning, they can also serve as a barrier to learning due to their integral role in the learning process.

Some participants and co-participants identified three categories of educator-related barriers to learning in the study. These include:

1.   Method of instruction
2.   Educator absenteeism
3.   Perceived uncaring attitude of educators.

1.   Method of instruction

A principal aspect of the teaching process is the instruction strategy that an educator employs. A positive outcome of teaching depends greatly on the method of instruction, as this can either enhance or discourage effective learning. The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:19) recognizes the method of instruction as a barrier to learning for many learners. Donald *et al*. (2002:31) refer to this as 'poor teaching' while Prinsloo (2005b:458 & 459) suggests that the flow of the lesson and the avoidance of barriers occurring will depend on the ability and competence of the educator to make it inspirational and engaging for learners. Therefore, the method of communication and instruction the educator employs is an important skill in facilitating learning in the classroom.

In this study, it emerged that the method of instruction could have resulted in participants reporting a lack of understanding of educators in class and perhaps, a lack of listening. However, these were perceptions expressed by the participants in the study. The researcher herself did not assess the method of instruction specifically, but rather focused on the data generated by the participants and co-participants on the manifestations of learning support.

2.   Educator absenteeism

The researcher sees teaching and thus an educator's presence in class as the primary assignment for an educator. In this study, numerous reports on educator absenteeism were mentioned. Although this category emerged in the study, the data collected did not ascertain the reasons for educator absenteeism, except where Educator VI blamed the Outcomes-based Education system for educators being absent from class due to an overload of paper work. The researcher, however, is of the view that other factors could probably have brought this

about, such as ill health, unavoidable family crises, a need to attend staff development seminars or training courses, lack of specialization in the subject areas, thus a feeling of inadequacy, and so forth. The high assessment load on educators may be a further contributing factor.

3.   Perceived uncaring attitude of educators

A participant described this as causing disillusionment for learners in Grade Nine. Exhibiting a positive attitude towards learners is often an effective means of achieving productive teaching and learning. This thought complements Mwamwenda (2004:389) who sums it up by stating, *it is important for teachers to be positive and enthusiastic about their work, as well as about the learners they are teaching. They should have high expectations of learners' achievements and do whatever is needed to encourage them to meet such expectations. As part of this process teachers should show warmth and empathy and a caring attitude towards their learners.*

A co-participating educator reported self-presentation as important, as some educators come to school unprepared and improperly dressed in his opinion, thus attracting disrespect from learners. This co-participant reported that some educators show disregard for learners by ridiculing, disparaging and degrading those who exhibit learning difficulties. The researcher needs to point out, however, that this was the opinion of one co-participant.

Some co-participating educators and the principal reported a lack of self-development by educators. The importance of self-development lies in the educator improving his capabilities, outlook and performance. Pandor (2006) addressed the issue of educator development in her education budget speech, where she reiterated that the structure for this development has almost been completed. The Minister also stated that the target of this development will be reading and writing, which constitute crucial areas that require attention at all educational levels. As has already been reported, this study identified the inability of learners to read and write as a barrier to learning that could possibly have begun at the foundation level of their education. Thus, the reading programme already in place will also assist in addressing this barrier to learning. Pandor (2006) further announced in the budget speech that steps have been taken to improve remuneration for educators. This package consists of improvement in the conditions of service for educators, and improvement of salaries. In the researcher's view, these steps may indirectly address the issue of the perceived uncaring attitude of educators

(identified in this study as a barrier to learning), through increasing the performance of educators, and promoting excellence in teaching and the performance of learners in general.

SUB-THEME THREE: FAMILY-RELATED BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Swart and Phasha (2005:220) suggest that each family is unique in respect of *skills, knowledge, resources and time available to promote the learning and development of their children.* However, as was stated in the previous chapter, the disintegration of family life is inclined to harmfully affect the educational adaptation of learners in high school. Most families of today are under strain due to several factors such as poverty, HIV & AIDS, death in families, and so forth. This may impact on learners emotionally and scholastically. Prinsloo (2005a:33) states that the susceptibility of the family has resulted in learners' insecurity emotionally and otherwise, as many of them are in single-parent homes, suffer from violence (such as sexual or physical abuse), or are orphaned and underprivileged due to poverty factors. Mwamwenda (2004:275) believes that a child who lacks parental love and care may also lack the culture of respect for parents and educators alike. Concentrating on school activities becomes a task for this learner who may be worried about the various tribulations at home, ranging from conflicts to poverty. As mentioned earlier, Donald *et al.* (2002:56) complement Mwamwenda's belief in maintaining that learning may be affected at the family level by various factors such as the family's values regarding education, the family's economic status and the language used at home if different from that of instruction at school.

The study revealed three categories of family-related barriers to learning experienced by participants and Grade Nine learners. These include:
1.   Poverty (associated with limited financial resources)
2.   Family problems
3.   Lack of sibling support and non-involvement of parents in the academic lives of their children.

1.   Poverty (associated with limited financial resources)
Poverty could affect a high school learner negatively in achieving academic competence. In this study, poverty was identified as constituting barriers to learning for some participants. Donald *et al.* (2002:56) referred to the family's resources and Mwamwenda (2004:275) referred to the economic deficiencies of the family as factors that may result in unproductive learning for those affected. Prinsloo (2005a:29) maintains that poverty and unemployment

impact on the payment of school fees and the purchase of books required in school. Donald *et al.* (2002:209) point out that parents in poor communities may sometimes not cope with the finances associated with schooling and so may require that learners take up responsibilities that will bring home money. The zero school-fee policy announced by the Minister of Education (Pandor, 2006) may start to address this, as one of the priority areas in her budget speech focused on the 'introduction of no-fee school', especially since the budget aims to *consolidate, strengthen and improve the education system.* As poverty tends to plague disadvantaged communities, thereby probably limiting their education resources, the Minister's introduction of an approach by means of which schools in disadvantaged communities will be supplied with educational support such as 'libraries, laboratories and teaching materials', increases the chances of successful education for learners in these areas.

Some participants and co-participants, in identifying poverty as a family-related barrier to learning, revealed that some learners in Grade Nine often walk long distances to school because they cannot afford the transport fares, and some report to school without books or materials required for the day's activities in class. One of the consequences of poverty identified in this study is hunger, for many learners were reported to be going to school without food or the money to purchase any at break, thus facing the barrier to learning due to hunger. The consequence is tiredness from the long walk to school, and/or demoralization due to hunger or due to lack of materials to carry out tasks. However, the school in this study operates a feeding scheme with the assistance of some non-governmental organizations that sometimes supply food items to the school.

The Minister of Education, Pandor (2006) addressed the issue of hunger as she highlighted the moves to improve the situation. She spoke about the National School Nutrition Programme in her education budget speech and stated that it is aimed at providing meals at schools for learners in order *to enhance active learning capacities*, as well as to improve learners' attendance at targeted schools. This programme is supposed to reach five and a half million learners at seventeen thousand schools. However, the National School Nutrition Programme was not identified by any of the co-participants in this study as being implemented in the sample school.

2.   Family problems

Family problems are diversified and seem to represent a major problem for the Grade Nine learners in this study. Mwamwenda (2004:373) states, 'The family is governed by explicit and

implicit rules, regulations and conventions that guide its behaviour and interactions individually, personally, interpersonally and jointly'. Family problems include illness of one or both parents, the effects of the HIV & AIDS pandemic, marital conflicts and violence. Prinsloo (2005a:31) points out that some of these learners are heads of their families at a very early age and have the responsibility of providing for siblings and sick parents without any income. Hence some of them turn to prostitution or crime, and may become traumatized and unfocused in school activities.

The following family problems resulting in barriers to learning for participants were identified in this study: parental illness and learners acting as home nurses and heads of households, lack of income, inadequate housing, family disunity, physical and sexual abuse, marital conflicts and learners witnessing violence.

3.   Lack of sibling support and non-involvement of parents

Some participants reported not receiving any form of support from siblings and/or parents. Swart and Phasha (2005:220) have pointed out that several factors could lead to a lack of parental involvement. These are 'family structure, employment, parental socio-economic status, level of education, parental attitudes towards education, sense of self-efficacy with regard to involvement, linguistic and cultural differences and parents' expectations of their child's performance'. Also to be considered as possible factors that could result in a lack of sibling support and non-involvement of parents are the fact that these siblings may be struggling with academics or other facets of life themselves; parents or caregivers may be working long hours; may not be educated enough to handle the academic work at their children's level; or may be too ill to appreciate the educational problems of these learners. These factors may also shed light on why fathers were not mentioned as providing any form of learning support for participants in the study.

In South Africa and elsewhere, the socio-economic status and the educational level of parents are very important, as these will probably determine whether there would be any involvement from the parents' side in the child's learning. Millions of parents were left illiterate during the period of *Apartheid*, with the order, framework and promise provided by education being alien to them. Without educational experiences and role models to look up to, these parents may possibly harbour a feeling of incompetence and may feel like unwelcome visitors to their children's schools. There might be parents who could have been put off involvement in their

children's school lives due to unfavourable encounters that might have resulted in mistrust, while lack of confidence may put some off completely (Swart & Phasha, 2005:221 & 222).

The above may be reason enough for lack of parental involvement in their children's learning, but the researcher believes that the welfare of the learner should be paramount, as academic achievement or the lack of it usually impacts on the family, especially on parents. This 'category' however, probably calls for further study due to the historical and other complexities involved.

SUB-THEME FOUR: EDUCATION SYSTEM AND SOCIETY RELATED BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The barriers to learning encountered by learners generally relate to their environment or circumstances in which they find themselves as they go through growth and learning. In the opinion of Donald *et al.* (2002:205), 'poor educational and social conditions' are usually linked together and this can in most cases result in barriers to learning. Authors such as Adelman and Taylor (1993:14), Donald *et al.* (2002:31 & 207), DoE (2001:18 & 19), Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:149), and Prinsloo (2005a,b:28 & 451) have identified diverse factors that relate to the education system and the society, as resulting in barriers to learning. To Adelman and Taylor (1993:14), barriers to learning can issue from the 'deficiencies in the environment' where learning occurs, and this they referred to as the Type I learning problem. They also identified a Type II learning problem, where the learner's characteristics and the unaccommodating environment with regard to teaching and learning are equally to blame for the manifestation of learning difficulties. The implication of this is that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds may have *capacities* and *attitudes* that do not correspond to the expectations in school, thus revealing the unpreparedness of the education environment to adapt to such situations (Adelman & Taylor, 1993:25).

The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001:18 & 19) recognizes some factors in the education system that can lead to barriers to learning. One of these factors is the inflexibility of the curriculum. This pertains in the areas of the work content, management and organization of the teaching and learning environment, the language used in instruction, instruction strategies, materials employed in the teaching and learning process, the accessible time for the completion of the curriculum, and finally, the teaching tempo. Other systemic barriers that might impact negatively on learning for high school learners include over-population of

learners in a possibly under-resourced classroom, as well as poverty manifesting itself in various ways in the lives of many high school learners.

Donald *et al.* (2002:31) view poverty as a social system factor. Poverty, being characterized by unemployment, insufficient facilities and reserves and inappropriate policies, obviously leads to barriers to learning. Donald *et al.* (2002:31) in agreeing with the *Education White Paper 6*, maintain that barriers to learning described above are *barriers of context that relate to the socio-economic and political structure of our society and the resources and responses of particular communities, schools and families within this structure*.

The study revealed three categories of education system and society related barriers to learning as:

1.   Inappropriate curriculum and the Outcomes-based Education system
2.   Classroom sizes
3.   Poverty.

1.   Inappropriate curriculum and the Outcomes-based Education system

Further to what was said in relation to learning area content, Prinsloo (2005b:451) points out that in order for meaningful learning to occur, the learning area content needs to be related to the learner's culture, environment and level of readiness. Learning area content that does not make sense to the learner could be regarded as irrelevant and so the learner might shy away from such learning tasks and other class activities. Prinsloo (2005b:452) advises that the learning area content should be learner-oriented and should relate to the learner's environment.

It was disclosed in the study that the learning area content is often perceived to be 'non-practicable' by the learners and is at a higher level than some learners can comprehend. Also revealed is the fact that some topics are so unrelated to learners and their environments that these are rendered meaningless and pointless, as learners do not appreciate what the educator is talking about.

The number of learning areas taught to Grade Nine learners was reported to cause frustrations, for it becomes problematic when most educators issue tasks simultaneously without consulting each other on the possible impact of task-overload on the learners. The researcher

agrees with Prinsloo (2005b:451) and thinks that topics and learning contents need to be made as practicable and relevant as possible and should be at the readiness level of learners.

Donald *et al.* (2002:24) explain that the Outcomes-based Education (OBE) system arose from the competency-based movement in education, which stresses the learner's ability. According to Naicker (2004:21), this system has shifted from the traditional system that was associated with *time, calendars, grades, passing and failing*; thus the idea of the Outcomes-based Education is that each learner performs at his own pace, with the school setting conditions for accomplishment. The main aim of the system is 'for all learners to succeed', with its inspiration being 'the production of self-directed learners with the ability to solve problems' (Lomofsky, Roberts & Mvambi, 2004:75). Also, Fraser (2002:199) describes the new system as promoting the amplification of a learner's chances of learning, as well as relating his accomplishment to achieving the conceptualised results without necessarily paying attention to the amount of time needed to carry out the work.

Despite the reported advantages of the system, such as structuring knowledge in the minds of learners, the learner's ability to connect previous experiences to any learning situation and the ability for recollection instilled in the learner (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:6 & 7), co-participants in this study found the difficulty in successfully implementing it troubling. They recognize the problem that many educators are not conversant with the new system, as they are used to the old system. Some co-participants complained that the training period to master the implementation process was insufficient. However, as the new system is a decade old, it is possible that these views are changing.

2.   Classroom sizes

Over-population in the classroom is a major barrier to learning in schools, as it is difficult to fulfil the needs of all learners. Donald *et al.* (2002:206) recognize that over-crowded and under-resourced classrooms cannot meet the demands of all learners. Ayers (2006:17) suggests that reduced class size will be beneficial for learners experiencing barriers to learning, as well as learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the researcher's view, this may ensure that the educator provides individual attention wherever it is required. In this study, co-participants (educators) identified over-population as a barrier to learning for high school learners, as this makes providing individual assistance complicated, since attending to a learner exhibiting difficulties often means leaving the rest of the class unattended, whereupon they become noisy and disruptive.

**3.	Poverty**

This theme is so pre-eminent in this study that it has already been mentioned under family-related barriers as well. Some co-participating educators also named the community of this study as 'disadvantaged'. According to Prinsloo (2005a,b:28 & 451), poverty is fast rising in South Africa, with overwhelming effects. This is exhibited in various forms, some of which include poor health, malnutrition, unaccommodating living conditions which manifest in unsanctioned settlements, limited technology, crime, educational backlogs and children catering for the household as heads of the family. Donald *et al.* (2002:207) relates poverty to 'inadequate facilities and resources', which includes 'overcrowded housing'. Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:149) suggest that complications arise in achieving success in life due to poverty and this could culminate in learners being at risk of failure. Connected to poverty also is 'low educational achievement of parents', unemployment and the fact that affected families find it difficult to make available the necessary learning materials or experiences that can enhance and support their children's learning (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:149). Poverty, according to Donald *et al.* (2002:209), sometimes results in learners dropping out of school because parents may not be able to afford the cost of having them in school.

The study identified poverty as a major barrier to learning for participants in this study. Interestingly, the findings of the study on poverty agree with the views of Prinsloo (2005a,b:28 & 451), Donald *et al.* (2002:207) and Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:149), as these were pointed out as manifesting themselves in the lives of participants in the study and high school learners in most cases.

Some co-participants recognized a lack of materials required for learning as a barrier to learning. Lack of development and learning area specialization of educators were also identified. This links up with Donald *et al*'s (2002:31) view that 'inadequate resources' or 'educationally inappropriate policies' can result in barriers to learning. Inadequately trained educators or an educator who does not engage in self-development may also be linked to a lack of overall development and learning area specialization. The researcher's opinion is that these factors may all be related to poverty.

Conclusion

In concluding, the researcher will refer to Figure 1.3 where Donald *et al.* (2002:55) sum things up by suggesting that the barriers to learning experienced by learners involve the whole social system, as all levels are interrelated. Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) are aligned with

the suggestions of Donald *et al.* (2002:55). The researcher recognizes that the barriers to learning encountered by Grade Nine learners in this study are diverse in nature and actually draw in all levels, as a number of factors were identified as negatively influencing learning at the levels of the learner, family, educator, education system and the society.

4.3.2   THEME TWO: MANIFESTATIONS OF LEARNING SUPPORT

Although many authors have given different perspectives on how to provide learning support in order to achieve effective learning, the researcher will base this discussion on the views of Donald *et al.* (2002:237) and Adelman and Taylor (1993:43), since their views formed the conceptual basis of this study. Donald *et al.* (2002:236) maintain that barriers to learning go beyond the learner to the whole social system, which includes peers, the family, educators, the education system and the society at large. An interactive relationship exists between all the levels of the society so that a problem at one level affects all the others. This opinion was evident in the findings of the study.

In addressing the problems, Donald *et al.* (2002:237) therefore suggest that all levels of the social system should be involved, as the interdependence of all the levels implies that a change at a level will have a *ripple effect* on the other levels. Complementing this are Adelman and Taylor (1993:43) as can be seen from Figure 1.5 where it is pointed out that intervention should be broadened to include all the types of learning problems (especially Types I and II in the case of this study). Donald *et al.* (2002:238) recommend 'multiple intervention between systems, within systems and engaging the learner' in order to eliminate a re-occurrence of the problem at a different level from where it is being solved.

Barriers to learning identified in the study run through all the levels of the social system. Addressing the issues therefore also involved all the signified levels. The second theme, manifestations of learning support, has four sub-themes:
1.   Knowledge and availability of learning support
2.   Guidance, advice, motivation, encouragement and one-on-one support
3.   Extra classes, extra work and assistance with schoolwork
4.   Creation of support by mobilizing resources.

The first sub-theme on the knowledge and availability of learning support will be addressed in the next chapter where the research questions are revisited. Therefore the researcher goes straight on to sub-theme two as follows:

2.   Guidance, advice, motivation, encouragement and one-on-one support

The manifestation of learning support in guidance, advice, motivation and encouragement was reported by almost all the participants. They reported this to have been a positive influence on their learning. Participants said they had received guidance and advice from friends, siblings, mothers, grandmothers and educators. The researcher noted, as will be reported in the next category, that although participants receive guidance and advice from family relations, not much assistance is received from them as regards the learners' schoolwork, which may explain the emergence of 'non-involvement of siblings and parents' in the first theme identified in this study. A co-participating educator is also assigned guidance periods during which he guides learners on their skills. Mwamwenda (2004:361 & 362) points out that personal guidance and counselling is required for learners who experience personal problems such as feeling inadequate, inferior to others, rejected or doubting their scholarly skills. Also important is educational guidance in attending to learning difficulties, amongst others, as it may be necessary to provide assistance for these learners and perhaps give encouragement to those not motivated enough in their learning.

Encouragement was received from some mothers of participants and also from some educators. The researcher views encouragement as being connected to motivation. It tends to work together in that a learner who is encouraged to exert himself is also simultaneously motivated to learn. In substantiation of this, Ayers (2006:57) points out that encouragement rather than disparagement will assist in escalating a learner's motivation to learn.

Only one co-participating educator reported applying motivational tactics as learning support through taking models of work constructed or produced by him to class in order to encourage learners to persevere, and to give them hope and the realization that they can also produce such models. The researcher regards motivation as a very important support strategy for a learner encountering barriers to learning. In the researcher's view, it should actually be the first step in assisting a learner because a lack of motivation will not allow for the successful implementation of any learning support. According to Adelman and Taylor (1993:163), 'motivation is a prerequisite to learning, and its absence may be a cause of learning problems…' and if the curriculum is such that it is sufficiently captivating to hold the

attention of the learner, then he will probably be motivated enough for learning to be effective and to blot out other prohibiting factors. This implies the necessity to instil in learners the drive to learn, for Johnston (1996:27) states that 'the will to learn is the very heart of the learning process', as this is closely connected to the motivation to learn. Adelman and Taylor (1993:187) also suggest that matching the syllabus to the learners' 'levels of motivation and development' is important, while Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:247) maintain that successful learning requires three vital components: the learner's skills, his desire to succeed (motivation) and his emotional state at the time of learning. Donald *et al*'s (2002:122) view that teaching and learning will not be productive 'unless attention is paid to every student's *motivation* or will to take on challenges of learning', and Lerner's (2003:211) advice to employ activities that will arouse a learner's interests and desire to learn, further support this view.

Three co-participating educators reported providing one-on-one support. The researcher thinks this could be a very effective support strategy for learners experiencing barriers to learning and who may be too shy or ashamed to open up or engage in class activities. According to Newman (2002/41:133), learners who might be poor achievers and, thus often exhibit *poor self-perceptions of ability and low self-esteem*, might not readily try to find academic assistance in the classroom. Lerner (2003:162) maintains that one-on-one support is a productive method of teaching that could result in significant improvement in learners' academic work. Friend and Bursuck (1999:125) referred to this strategy as 'one-to-one instruction', and in agreeing with Lerner (2003:162), infer that this enables the learner to embark upon tasks at his own level and pace.

Several authors, as stated below, supported the application of one-on-one support strategy, which they referred to as 'individualization'. Sands *et al.* (2000:60) describe this method of learning support as that which caters for the educational requirement of a specific learner who is experiencing barriers to learning. Sibaya & Kruger (2002:136) explain individualization as an instructional strategy that matches the particular learning demands of each learner, including the variation of learning time, provision of extra time, as well as the variation and adaptation of learning resources. In the opinion of Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:501) this support strategy could assist in the provision of appropriate activities to meet a specific learner's educational needs; and according to Adelman and Taylor (1993:147), activities are such that they match the learner's 'current developmental status and performance capabilities'. This strategy enables the educator to adapt the instructional method to the learner's distinctive

way of learning, as well as his learning abilities (Smith, 1998:318). MacIntyre and Deponio (2003:89) also state that the educator is required to appreciate the learner's favoured way of learning. Heron and Harris (1993:129), and Hammill and Bartel (1995:452) are also promoters of individualization. In this study, the application of a one-on-one support strategy by some educators made it feasible for learners in need of it to receive individualised teaching.

3.   Extra classes, extra work and assistance with schoolwork

For participants in this study, learning support also took the form of extra classes, extra work and assistance with schoolwork. Most of the co-participating educators revealed that in an effort to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning, they organize extra classes after school hours and/or on Saturdays, or give extra work to make learners practise, or sometimes both. The principal also pointed out that an outreach body gives Saturday classes to learners in need of them.

Participants receive assistance with their schoolwork from numerous persons around them. Nevertheless, it was significant that very few of them got assistance from family members such as siblings, mothers, grandmothers and/or uncle and aunts, even though they were part of the learners' lives. The limited assistance with schoolwork received from relatives could have been the result of factors such as their educational levels, work hours, illnesses and some other family problems. Most of the assistance with schoolwork was received from friends, as many learners tend to turn to friends rather than their families or educators. Newman (2006/41:134) points out that friendship represents assistance and support that comprise *reliability, affection, intimacy, and lack of conflict and rivalry*. Hence, it seems that learners who share friendships are often able to interact and direct their attention towards learning and solving problems. Friends often seek assistance from one another in a way that could result in building knowledge, thereby reinforcing productive learning.

Eloff (2006a:38) identified the peer group as an important connection to the asset-based approach to learning support for learners' peers, which could manifest in their provision of expressive, practical and motivational support, as well as in influences brought to bear in the learning process, in sharing the problems, in showing compassion and trust, and in coping with peers experiencing barriers to learning. This was the reason for the manifestation of these attributes in the reports on the supportive assistance that those participants in this study received from friends in dealing with difficult schoolwork.

Some educators were, however, also reported to assist in different ways. A positive interaction between the educator and learners might culminate in the educator understanding the learner and providing appropriate guidance for learning. Therefore, the educator exhibits his concern through listening to learners, ensuring that learners comprehend difficult work materials, thereby also making available, in 'a non-threatening way', assistance to a learner who needs it (Newman, 2006/41:133). Notably missing from the data as regards providing any form of learning support, were fathers, for no participant reported receiving help from them. The reasons for this may be complicated and can be hypothesized to be related to the absence of fathers, poverty factors and migration. It seems to call for further study, as the explanation of this phenomenon (along with limited support by family members) falls beyond the scope of this study.

4.   Creation of support by mobilizing resources

The needs of a learner experiencing barriers to learning could be addressed through mobilizing available assets for support, especially where conventional support is not adequately provided. It is the researcher's view that an adequately trained educator will not be rendered helpless by the unavailability of learning support for learners in his care. The researcher therefore applauds the fact that even though much is not available as support in terms of resources some educators manage to create support through the mobilization of accessible resources. One educator reports making models which he takes to class as a motivational strategy, and he also takes learners to fairs to experience things first hand; another uses newspapers, magazines and the learning channels on the television while some are involved in the feeding scheme where learners who have nothing to eat at home are provided with food to eliminate the barriers to learning caused by hunger. The principal also organizes for outside assistance from non-governmental organizations, an outreach body, students of some universities, as well as the school's social welfare committee.

Eloff (2006a:16) refers to the above means of providing support for learners experiencing barriers to learning as an asset-based approach to learning support, where the practitioner *identifies, accesses and mobilizes* the assets for learning support. In other words, this approach 'uses assets, resources, capacities and strengths to deal with challenges and to provide support' (Eloff, 2006a:20) for learners who need it, the advantage thus being that a mobilization effected on an individual affects the rest of the social system due to the interconnection between levels of the social system. According to Eloff (2006a:36), assets can be identified at all the levels of the social system such as the individual learner, the school, the

classroom, the family, peer group, and so forth. Thus, the mobilization of assets at one level will affect the rest of the levels as a result of the connecting relationship that exists between the components of the whole social system. This study identified the inadvertent application of this approach by some co-participating educators and the principal, as has been pointed out.

4.4   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the study as they relate to existing literature. The chapter also showed that the findings as they concern the first theme of barriers to learning are augmented when the views of Donald *et al.* (2002:55) are used as a conceptual framework. It shows that all levels of the social context are interrelated, with the result that problems often produce ripple effects. This implies that an interaction at any one level affects all the others. Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) also shared this view in their continuum of learning problems. The findings of the study veered toward these views, as the barriers to learning experienced by participants were revealed as emanating from all levels of the social context, namely, the learners, families, educators, the education system and society. Presented in the second theme are the ways in which learning support manifested itself at different levels of the society (such as families, educators and friends) in the learners experiencing barriers to learning. This supports Donald *et al*. (2002:238) and Adelman and Taylor's (1993:43) suggestion that intervention should take place at all the levels on which the problems arose, in order to avoid a re-occurrence of the barriers to learning.

The researcher believes that the reactions of some of the participants during observation in class could have been due to different factors. The researcher therefore concurs with Newman (2002/41:132) who suggests that learners may not apply themselves when they are faced with taxing academic exercises. They then hastily quit, are inactive in class or simply carry on unsuccessfully by themselves. Other factors that could give rise to a learner not exerting himself in class, according to Newman (2002/41:132), include the learner's socialization over the years and the environment in which learning is taking place.

It seems that several of the barriers to learning and manifestations of learning support that emerged in this study are currently receiving attention. The Minister of Education, Pandor (2006) indicated in the education budget speech that there would be an improvement in 'the provision of resources for learning to schools'. She also reiterated that books have been supplied to 710 high schools in terms of the recently launched reading programme. There is

the intention to make parents partners in education and active participants at all levels of their children's school lives. She mentioned the intention to fortify the appraisal and framework of the support system nationwide in order to have an idea of how schools perform, the educational demands of schools, and how districts and provinces will add to the attainment of national norms and principles. The Minister went on to say: 'Teachers in all schools will be encouraged to develop learning strategies for each learner so as to focus on success. Schools will be required to devise learning improvement strategies and to focus on supporting learners to succeed'. Plans are afoot to provide educational support in the form of *libraries, laboratories and teaching materials* to schools in disadvantaged communities (Pandor, 2006). Even the plans to improve remuneration for educators are likely to boost morale as well as serve as an incentive that might improve their performances. The researcher regards all the issues attended to above as a step in the direction of addressing barriers to learning and increasing sources of learning support for high school learners at a national level.

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CHAPTER 5
FINAL SYNOPSIS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study on the manifestations of learning support in the lives of high school learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. The research questions are revisited in this chapter and the link between the research questions and the findings of the study is showcased. Recommendations, suggestions for further studies, limitations, as well as the strengths and contributions of the study are incorporated in this chapter too.

As has been noted, the purpose of this study is to determine, explain and explore the manifestations of learning support in the lives of high school learners. The study thus looked into the nature of barriers to learning experienced by these learners, the support available to assist them in their learning and its manifestations in their lives. Two main assumptions informed the study, the first being that it is plausible that learners in high school could experience barriers to learning and that these could be intrinsic or extrinsic. The second assumption was that support might be available in various ways and formats, but that a fair amount of variability can be expected. These assumptions were confirmed by the findings of the study in the sense that several categories of barriers to learning encountered by high school learners were identified, along with diverse forms and manifestations of learning support for the participants in the study.

The barriers to learning identified in the study transcended the learners and applied to the whole social system. Also, the learning support received by participants and other high school learners issued from all around them, for instance from family members, educators and friends. Donald *et al*'s (2002:55 & 237) view that barriers to learning and the intervention process extend from the individual learner to the whole social framework, as well as Adelman and Taylor's (1993:14 & 43) continuum of learning problems and their focal point of intervention informed the theoretical viewpoint of the study. The findings of this study, in terms of barriers to learning and the manifestations of learning support in the participants, concurred with the views of Donald *et al.* and Adelman and Taylor stated above. Furthermore, the scholastic documents and records (see Appendix C) of most of the participants were

indicative of them encountering barriers to learning. Also, the observations in the classrooms revealed that some learners might be experiencing difficulties in their learning.

5.2   REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that guided this study, starting with the sub-questions, are as follows:

SUB-QUESTION ONE:

What is the nature of barriers to learning for high school learners?

SUB-QUESTION TWO:

What is learning support?

SUB-QUESTION THREE:

What learning support is available for high school learners experiencing barriers to learning?

THE RESEARCH QUESTION:

How does learning support manifest itself in the lives of high school learners?

5.2.1   SUB-QUESTION ONE: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF BARRIERS TO LEARNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS?

Authors such as Donald *et al.* (2002:31 & 207), Adelman and Taylor (1993:14), Prinsloo (2005a,b:28 & 451), Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:149) and the Department of Education (DoE, 2001:18 & 19) maintain that several factors could be responsible for the barriers to learning that high school learners experience. Donald *et al.* (2002:55), in agreement with Adelman and Taylor (1993:14), suggest that the problem does not lie with the learner alone, but involves the whole social system.

The nature of barriers to learning experienced by participants in the study was the result of diverse factors that pertained to the first main theme of the study: *barriers to learning*. Four sub-themes emerged from the whole social system as constituting the nature of barriers to learning that learners in high school encounter. Hence the barriers to learning are learner-oriented, educator-oriented, family-oriented and education system and society-oriented. Further categorizing these, the following emerged:

The nature of **learner-oriented barriers to learning** experienced by high school learners is associated with play and leisure activities, as was signified by participants and co-participants; peer influence and adolescence were also identified by all concerned; low motivation for learning and the inability of learners to read and write were reported by co-participating educators to be troubling; and drug abuse, sex, smoking and crime were identified by some participants and co-participants. All of these impacted negatively on learning for participants in the study.

Educator-related barriers to learning resulted from the method of instruction. Some participants reported a lack of listening and understanding in class. Others remarked on educator absenteeism whilst a perceived uncaring attitude on the part of educators was cited by some participants. Each of these factors had an unfavourable impact on learning for participants in the study.

Family-related barriers to learning: Some of these arise from poverty, for instance the incidence of learners not being able to acquire materials necessary for tasks at school and learners having to walk long distances to school on empty stomachs. Other family problems include illness of one or both parents, marital conflicts and violence, lack of sibling support and non-involvement of parents in their children's schooling. All of these factors result in unproductive learning for participants.

Education system and society related barriers to learning were identified as resulting from an inappropriate curriculum, where the subject contents are non-practicable and unrelated to learners and their environments. The number of learning areas was also reported to be bothersome when tasks are simultaneously issued. Moreover, some co-participating educators identified the difficulties that educators encounter in implementing the Outcomes-based Education system. Classroom sizes in terms of over-population surfaced as a barrier that renders giving individual attention impossible. Inability to provide suitable resources as a result of poverty was another of these factors, all ultimately resulting in unproductive learning for high school learners.

The nature of barriers to learning for high school learners that were identified in the study is in accordance with the views of Donald *et al.* (2002:55) and Adelman and Taylor (1993:14) whose work informed the conceptual framework of this study.

5.2.2 **S**UB-QUESTION TWO: **W**HAT IS LEARNING SUPPORT?

This sub-question informed the first part of the sub-theme, 'knowledge and availability of learning support' that emerged in the second main theme of the study: *manifestations of learning support*. In order to ascertain what type of support is provided to assist learners in their learning, the researcher needed to find out what learning support means to co-participants. A variety of interpretations emerged as family members and co-participating educators attempted to give their perceptions of the term.

Family members: A couple of family members gave an adequate description of the term, thus implying knowledge of learning support. Although some of them could not give what would pass for a 'dictionary definition', they were able to imply in their explanations of the term an understanding of what learning support is. Those who seemed to have been sidetracked by the question on what learning support means, nevertheless gave an outline of the support they provide, the implication being that even when they were unable to explain the term, they nevertheless understood and expressed it as best they could. One family member was more anxious to express the wish for the learner to obtain an education and so did not give an explanation of the term. However, this family member's response does not rule out knowledge of learning support, for she nevertheless provided support in the form of guidance, encouragement and assistance with schoolwork.

Co-participating educators: The descriptions that co-participating educators gave of the term spanned from *adequate* to *passable* and then to *puzzling*. A few co-participating educators expressed adequate knowledge of learning support in their description of the term, while some provided what the researcher regarded as passable descriptions; passable because the inadequacy of the descriptions also revealed some knowledge of the term but difficulty in expressing it. Some others gave explanations that puzzled the researcher, although they shed further light on the meaning of learning support. There is a tendency to regard learning support in terms of the assistance provided when required but not in terms of the accountability of educators and adults associated with the learners. A co-participating educator described learning support in that way.

The researcher's view of co-participants' knowledge of learning support is that the inability to explain the term (or the inadequacy of the explanations provided) might possibly suggest that the question asked on the knowledge of learning support was either not understood by or not

clear to the co-participants, who could not explain the phrase. It is possible too that they did not understand, or misinterpreted the context of the question, for they nevertheless provided learning support in various forms to learners who needed it (as was revealed).

5.2.3   SUB-QUESTION THREE: WHAT LEARNING SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO LEARNING?

This addresses the second part of the first sub-theme of the second main theme of the study. Some co-participating educators revealed that not much is available to them as learning support, thus giving them no choice but to cast about for whatever might be helpful. A few of the educators, however, reported the availability of some support in their learning areas (such as work sheets from the Gauteng Department of Education in one learning area, and the Schools Management Team supplying materials from the Department in another learning area, as well as a few supplies by the school in a learning area).

Other co-participating educators revealed indulging in collegial support, where they form a team in the learning area and hold meetings. Some educators share ideas at cluster meetings. Others use newspapers and magazines that have learning areas and also materials from the botanical gardens and from learning channels on the television. The principal also outlined some support available through an outreach programme that involves the University of South Africa (UNISA), Saturday school by an outreach body attached to the school for assistance (St Mary's Dominican School for Girls), two periods weekly of 'Life as a school' with an educator who gives learners lessons on life skills, and then other support identified by participants and co-participants such as extra lessons. The researcher's discernment of the situation is that the official availability or non-availability of learning support from the authorities has not ruled out the manifestations of learning support in diverse forms from the different levels associated with the participants in the study.

Relatives who co-participated in this study revealed that they gave learning support to learners in diverse ways. This support manifested itself in guidance, advice, encouragement and sometimes in assistance with schoolwork. Peers (friends) also gave support in the above ways. Two support strategies that the researcher found particularly resourceful and worth recommending are the mobilization of resources and one-on-one support. One-on-one support involves individualization, thus assisting learners to learn through employing the learner's unique learning style. The mobilization of resources, which involves the asset-based approach

to learning support, was reported to have been employed (though inadvertently) by some co-participating educators. One opinion was that the Department of Education should not be expected to supply all the materials for learning support, as some educators are inclined to focus on the deficit approach to learning support.

5.2.4   THE RESEARCH QUESTION: *HOW DOES LEARNING SUPPORT MANIFEST ITSELF IN THE LIVES OF HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS?*

As has been pointed out, barriers to learning can arise from the levels of the learner, family, educator, education system and the society. Indeed, many authors (Sibaya & Kruger, 2002:125-129; Moletsane, 2002:215; Donald *et al*., 2002:238, 301 & 302; Adelman & Taylor, 1993:43; Jones & Jones, 2001:186; Bjorklund & Brown, 1998/69:604) have highlighted diverse ways of providing learning support for learners in high school who are experiencing barriers to learning. Having noted in previous chapters that barriers to learning extend beyond the learner to the whole social system, countering these barriers should also go beyond the learner to the levels of the society involved. Thus Donald *et al.* (2002:238) propose multiple interventions to incorporate all involved so that a reoccurrence of the problem at a different level will be eliminated. Adelman and Taylor (1993:43) agree with this prescription in their focal point of intervention (Figure 1.5).

For the high school learners in this study experiencing barriers to learning, learning support manifested itself in various ways that involved everyone around them as all participants revealed that they received assistance at different points and from different sources, including friends, siblings, mothers, some other relatives and educators. The learning support received by high school learners manifested itself in the following sub-themes of the second main theme of the study:

1.   Guidance, advice, motivation, encouragement and one-on-one support
Guidance, advice, motivation and encouragement were reported to have issued from relatives, educators and friends, and to have impacted positively on learning for the high school learners in this study. Some co-participating educators employed the use of the one-on-one support strategy, which the researcher thinks is a significant strategy due to its individualistic character.

2.   Extra classes and extra work

Extra classes and extra work which were given by educators to participants in the study and other learners that needed the assistance. An outreach body also provided Saturday classes. Participants reported receiving **assistance with schoolwork** from some relatives and educators. However, most of the assistance with schoolwork came from friends (peers), as participants tended to turn to friends when they sought help rather than to educators and family members.

3.   Creation of support by mobilizing resources

This is another term for the asset-based approach to learning support, which the researcher views as being favourable especially where conventional support is not readily available. Some educators reported the mobilization of whatever assets or resources were available in assisting learners that needed support in their learning. Non-governmental organizations, an outreach body, and some students of universities also provided support through this means.

In summary, the ways in which learning support manifested itself in the participants in this study are in accordance with the views of Donald *et al.* (2002:238) and Adelman and Taylor (1993:43) whose work, as has been indicated, informs the conceptual framework of this study, i.e. that the manifestation of learning support should encompass all involved in the school lives of high school learners.

5.3   TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The criteria used as a yardstick of quality in this study include credibility, transferability and dependability, outlined as follows:

5.3.1   CREDIBILITY

The achievement of credibility in the study was derived from the use of multiple sources employed in the collection of data. The use of interviews, observations and analysis of documents/records served as a corroborative means of ensuring the same outcome in the findings of the study. The verification of the findings through follow-up interviews further enhanced the authenticity and credibility of the study.

5.3.2   TRANSFERABILITY

Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized due to the use of a small sample, the researcher believes that the findings are nevertheless transferable to other situations in that they can resonate elsewhere. The inference is that given the rich and detailed descriptions of the experiences of learners in terms of barriers to learning and the ways in which learning support manifests in their lives, a comparable study may provide a sense of similarity in a different community, with the same contextual factors.

5.3.3   DEPENDABILITY

The dependability of the study lies in the corroborativeness of the different sources of evidence employed. The themes, sub-themes and categories identified were based on multiple occurrences within the study's data sources. However, where necessary, exceptions were also highlighted by including them in the discussions. Contributing to dependability is the fact that participants and co-participants reported their actual experiences, as shown in the quotations from the interview sessions and learners' documents/records presented. As with credibility, the follow-up interviews conducted at the end of data analysis also confirmed the dependability of the findings of this study, as the study depended solely on the evidence gathered from participants and co-participants, and the observations of the researcher.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1   SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In the light of the findings of this study, the researcher would like to suggest further studies that can be carried out in disadvantaged environments in the field of learning support for high school learners. Studies could be conducted to compare the nature of barriers to learning experienced by learners in former Model C and Independent Schools and those experienced by learners in schools situated in disadvantaged environments. Also open for comparison would be the learning support available to learners in former Model C schools, Independent Schools and those in disadvantaged schools. These studies may assist in determining what can be borrowed from an area to support and improve learning in other areas, as the ultimate goal is effective learning for ALL learners. The following topics for further study are therefore suggested:

- Exploring the nature of barriers to learning experienced by high school learners in schools located in high socio-economic environments.
- A comparative study of the nature of barriers to learning encountered by high school learners in schools in disadvantaged environments and former Model C schools.
- The support available to high school learners in former Model C and Independent Schools, and the general manifestations of learning support in their lives: A comparative study.
- Exploring the effectiveness of employing the support available to former Model C and Independent Schools to improve learning in disadvantaged schools.

5.4.2   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING

The Minister of Education (Pandor, 2006) stated in her education budget speech that plans for *well-designed and relevant teacher-development programmes* are in the final stages. The researcher suggests that the professional development package for educators should consist of motivating incentives, as this will ensure skills development, and improvement in the disposition and accomplishment of educators in their learning areas. Also to be incorporated into the professional development of educators might be further training on creation of resources through the mobilization of any available assets in order to limit dependency on the Department of Education.

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:7) point out that those who employ an asset-based approach to learning support are conversant with the *assets, resources and capacities* available in whichever surrounding is in question. It is therefore demanded of the user of this approach to assess the significance of explicit assets in relation to the anticipated objective. Also, according to Eloff (2006a:36), assets can be found in the whole social system. The researcher therefore suggests a professional training for educators encompassing awareness of assets instead of focusing on the deficit approach as many are inclined to do; how to recognize what assets are available; how to appraise the value of an asset as regards an expected objective; and how to mobilize these resources from all around, in addressing different demands associated with barriers to learning.

To be incorporated too in the developmental training will be practical ways that educators can encourage and motivate parental involvement (to the best of their abilities) in the educational activities of their children, as well as instilling in them the awareness of assets in the

environment that can be employed to support learners' learning at home. This could be achieved through organizing seminars for parents on the mobilization of assets as learning support.

Although the Outcomes-based Education system was not the focus of this study, it did emerge that some viewed it as a barrier to learning. Therefore, on the grounds of the findings of this study based on the reports of educators in that regard, the researcher suggests that a longer period of training prior to the implementation of the system be considered, if such is not already in place.

5.4.3   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

That each learner has a unique learning style cannot be over-emphasized. It is therefore the duty of every educator to identify the most suitable learning style that will benefit all learners in their care. For this reason, the researcher suggests the following for the enhancement of professional practice:

- The adoption of a one-on-one support strategy by more educators, as the use of such a strategy encourages individualization or individual attention, thus accommodating the learner's distinctive learning style in combating his barriers to learning. However, this recommendation is made tentatively in view of the large classroom sizes educators deal with every day.

- The use of visual displays, such as animation in multimedia learning, to be considered as a possible resource for learning support. The researcher thinks that this could be explored as a method of teaching for effective learning.

- The researcher is of the opinion that the asset-based approach to learning support is a significant and holistic support strategy that can be utilized effectively for learning support. Since this is a system whereby an educator can mobilize whatever resources are available, not only from the school but from the whole social system, the researcher suggests that this be explored in countering barriers to learning experienced by high school learners. This will also limit dependency on the Department of Education in the supply of support materials, as well as reduce the

deficit approach, where educators have a propensity to frequently complain of the unavailability of learning support from the Department.

5.5   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every study has its own set of limitations. This research work is no exception, for it also recorded some limitations. These are as follows:

▪ **Small sample size**

The study was centred on a small sample size consisting of nine Grade Nine learners experiencing barriers to learning and thus repeating the grade. Information was also collected from nine family members, seven educators and the principal of the school. The sample size was not adequately representative of the entire body of Grade Nine learners in South Africa, because it consisted only of a small number of learners from one school. Therefore the findings of the study cannot be generalized.

▪ **Observer effect**

Reactions to certain questions during the interview sessions could possibly have resulted from some interviewees not quite understanding the questions put to them. Consequently, they might possibly have provided answers or reactions that could cause some bias in the study. Also, there was the possibility of participants exhibiting unusual behaviour, which they presumed the researcher expected during direct observation, consequently resulting in a bias in what was actually observed.

▪ **Possible sources of bias**

Other sources that could give rise to limitations in the study include the 'outsider' status of the researcher which might have placed restrictions on the openness of *all* participants in giving accurate answers to interview questions; the possibility of language barriers; context effects, where participants and co-participants might have misunderstood the context of the interview questions or the researcher may have misinterpreted the answers given; and the probable misunderstanding of some terminologies used during the interview sessions, such as learning/learner support, barriers to learning, learning difficulties, and so on.

▪   **Reduction of bias**

To reduce the bias due to observer effect and other possible sources of bias, the researcher established a high level of rapport with all who participated in the study. Several visits were made to the school involved in the study prior to the commencement of the data collection process. The aim of the visits was to get acquainted with participants, to explain the study, to get them relaxed, and to build a trusting relationship with them, especially considering that the researcher's status as an 'examiner' could be intimidating. Being aware of this status, the researcher took a genuine interest in the participants, while making a conscious effort not to influence the outcome of sessions through displaying expressions that might lead them on or indicate disapproval of their responses.

The move from the noisy and intimidating staff room where a few of the interview sessions were conducted to a quieter room also reduced the bias of uncertainty on who was listening in, since the quiet room where the sessions were carried out behind a closed door instilled the confidence of having anonymity in participants. Those who were hesitant in responding were made to feel comfortable through being given time to think and to compose themselves before responding.

5.6   STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The strength of this study was derived from several sources as follows:

▪   **Multiple interviews with a variety of participants**

These interviews were conducted with an assemblage of participants consisting of learners repeating Grade Nine, therefore indicating possible encounters with learning difficulties, and co-participants consisting of family relations and educators in charge of the learning areas where participants in the study seemed to be experiencing difficulties. The principal of the sample school was also a co-participant.

▪   The use of a **qualitative research design**

This embraced multiple sources of evidence such as interviews, observations and documents/records. Nine Grade Nine learners repeating the grade were interviewed, seven of them were observed in class and their scholastic records analyzed. Also interviewed were nine family members, seven educators and the principal of the school in the study.

▪ **Follow-up interviews**

The follow-up interviews conducted for agreement on the final outcome after the analysis of the data collected. This increased the credibility of the study, since participants and co-participants established that the findings were a satisfactory representation of what was divulged at the sessions and of their experiences.

▪ **The linking of the barriers to learning**

The linking of the barriers to learning identified to the **learning support** that was reported to manifest in the lives of participants in this study. This inherent link was then followed by another link where the findings from the study were linked to broader literature.

5.7   CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the limitations of the study, there have been notable contributions:

▪ The study has contributed to the practical knowledge of **policy makers** and **educators** on the actual nature of barriers to learning that high school learners in disadvantaged environments might be experiencing. This knowledge could facilitate policy strategy on the provision of effective support materials that would successfully address the barriers to learning experienced in schools in disadvantaged areas.

▪ This study revealed the fact that even though conventional support might be limited and perhaps not readily accessible, learning support is indeed available to learners experiencing barriers to learning in high schools. Learners are therefore not left totally stranded, as learning support manifests itself in numerous ways and from different sources in their lives. The types of support that became apparent in this study could be explored and enhanced by **policy makers** and the methods of implementation upgraded to benefit *all* learners, including those with **special needs**.

▪ The study contributed to the body of knowledge for **all stakeholders**, especially **educators**, showing that learning support can be derived from the society at large by means of the asset-based approach. This can diminish dependency on the Department of Education for the supply of support materials.

- The study contributed to **families** becoming aware that learners might be experiencing barriers to learning and so might require assistance from them.

- The study has contributed by enriching the body of existing literature on the nature of barriers to learning that high school learners experience in schools located in disadvantaged areas, as well as on the ways in which learning support manifests in their lives.

5.8   CLOSING REFLECTIONS

The art of instructing is complex and involves the concomitant management of many more variables than are involved in other fields of work, in that the educator often has to deal with more than a learner, and the educator's success depends on the tactics engaged in the accomplishment of an effective learning atmosphere (Cangelosi, 2004:4). The researcher feels that an educator must always be prepared for whatever unfolds in a classroom situation. Lefrancois (1997:29) puts it thus:

> *But good teachers cannot afford to be shocked too often by the behaviors of the young. If they are to teach them effectively, it's important that they know what to expect of them... nor should they be taken aback by the sometimes startling but often impractical logic of the adolescent.*

Being a learner can sometimes be a demanding task that becomes complicated when the learner also experiences barriers to learning. It is therefore important that educators be aware of the possibility of learners being overwhelmed by different factors related to academic tasks and other influences. Educators therefore need to provide assistance readily should this become necessary.

This study determined, explored and explained the nature of barriers to learning that high school learners experience, as well as the learning support that manifests in their lives. The findings of the study thus indicated that high school learners experience a range of barriers to learning that result from factors relating to the learners themselves, families, peers, educators, the education system and the society. Moreover, even though limited learning support is available through official channels, learners receive diverse forms of learning support from everyone around them, such as family members, educators and friends. Hence the conclusion

that learners who experience barriers to learning are not left stranded in respect of learning support, which is apparent in a variety of ways and formats in the lives of high school learners. The researcher's belief is that with the proper amount of encouragement and motivation, every child can learn successfully. By mobilizing the right assets or resources from surrounding sources, learning can be made as interesting for the learners as teaching can be for the educators.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Approval in respect of request to conduct research

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

APPENDIX C

Documents and records

APPENDIX D

Examples of field notes

APPENDIX E

Examples of structures (type of buildings where some participants live)

APPENDIX F

Interview questions

APPENDIX G

Examples of the interview transcript

APPENDIX H

Example of follow-up interview transcript

EXAMPLE I

Research diary

| UMnyango WezeMfundo | Lefapha la Thuto |
| Department of Education | Departement van Onderwys |

Date:	17 January 2005
Name of Researcher:	Nwanna Mma Rose Nwobu
Address of Researcher:	241 Orion Avenue
	Waterkloof Ridge
	0181
Telephone Number:	(012) 3471594
Cell Number:	0721379447
Research Topic:	Explaining the ways in which learning support manifests itself in the lives of high school learners
Number and type of schools:	2 Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Senior Manager – Strategic Policy Research & Development
Room 525, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001   P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000
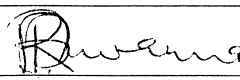Tel: (011) 355-0488   Fax: (011) 355-0286

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4. *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*

5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*

6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Senior Manager (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*

7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.* '

8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*

9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*

10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*

11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*

12. *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Senior Manager: Strategic Policy Development, Management & Research Coordination with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.*

13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*

14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Senior Manager concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

ALBERT CHANEE
ACTING DIVISIONAL MANAGER: OFSTED

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.	
Signature of Researcher:	Nwanna
Date:	25th January, 2005

<div align="right">**APPENDIX B**</div>

<div align="center">**INFORMED CONSENT**</div>

I hereby confirm that the researcher, Mrs M.R.N. Nwanna, has informed me of the nature of this study. I have received, read and understood that my participation in the programme and thus the interview is voluntary.

I understand that:

- My identity will remain anonymous during the analysis, processing of data and reporting of the study.
- I am free to withdraw from the programme at any point if I no longer wish to participate.
- My answers to the questions put to me during the interview, as well as the researcher's observations will be analysed for this research.
- I will have sufficient opportunity to ask questions.

I, _____, declare that I am prepared to participate in the study.

Participant's name: _____(Please print)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of witness: _____ (Please print)

Signature of witness: _____

Date: _____

I, Mrs M. R. N. Nwanna, hereby confirm that the participant has been fully informed of the nature of this study and what is expected of him/her in the course of data collection.

Researcher's name: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

Participant A

Learning areas	Classwork/homework/assignment/project				Average score
Human Social Science (HSS)	5/10	4/10	9/10	3/5	6/10
Technology	17/50	15/40	-	-	18/50
Arts and Culture	13/20	10/26	4/10	-	9.6/20
Scholastic Report	Absent from previous year's examinations.				

Participant B

Learning areas	Classwork/homework/assignment/project				Average score
Human Social Science (HSS)	2/5	7/10	10/10	-	7/10
Mathematics	21/31	-	-	-	-
Technology	41/50	19/40	-	-	32/50
Scholastic Report	Less than 40% in 4 learning areas.				

Particpant C

Learning areas	Classwork/homework/assignment/project				Average score
Human Social Science (HSS)	10/10	4/10	10/10	3/5	7.5/10
Economic Management Science (EMS)	4/9	-	-	-	-
Arts and Culture	10/20	13/26	0/10	-	6.7/20
Technology	45/50	13/40	-	-	30.6/50
Scholastic Report	Less than 40% in 4 learning areas.				

Participant D

Learning areas	Classwork/homework/assignment/project				Average score
Human Social Science (HSS)	9/10	10/10	-	-	9.5/10
Arts and Culture	10/40	4/20	1/10	8/26	4/20
Technology	0/50	26/40	-	-	16/50
Scholastic Report	Less than 40% in 8 learning areas.				

<div align="right">APPENDIX D</div>

<div align="center">EXAMPLES OF FIELD NOTES</div>

The researcher's first impression on entering the township was that Atteridgeville is a beautiful and clean community. Having obtained the necessary permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to proceed with the study in the sample school, the researcher went on to meet with the school authorities. Proceedings actually started on Friday 18 February 2005, when the participants were introduced to the researcher. Arriving early (at 07h50), the researcher had the opportunity to observe learners as they entered the school compound at the start of a school day. Black learners and educators populate the sample school. A good percentage of female learners were in faded school uniforms and some male learners wore mismatched stockings. One of the males had a tattered shirt on and some had on spotty caps and earrings. There is no noticeable playground on the premises.

Monday 21 February 2005: Comment (Participant A) – During the interview she wore a vacant look most of the time, even when she understood the questions. This made her appear as if she did not understand. She tapped constantly behind her on the chair while seeming to think of the response to the interview questions. Her lips were moving while she thought, but without saying anything audible. She frequently looked away while answering questions, presenting the side of her face and never looking at the interviewer except when her face was turned towards the interviewer (several times). She nevertheless denied being nervous or scared.

Link – The same characteristics were displayed by her mother, as she also turned away when being interviewed and was asked several times to turn towards the interviewer.

General observation of Grade Nine learners

1.   Teaching was in English but explanations were sometimes given in the home language.

2.   The classes in which the observations were carried out were clean and spacious. They were not as crowded as was expected, for the researcher had earlier seen over-crowded classrooms in the school.

3. Some of the learners tried to give explanatory answers to educators' questions in English but got stuck and switched to the home language, with the educator translating by repeating what learners said in English.

4. A female learner was specially noted to be unfocused. She was either banging on a chair with a tiny piece of chalk or was writing on the desk with the piece of chalk, and later with a pencil, or was drawing on the desk top while others were trying to figure out answers to questions. The educator took note of this and tried to get her involved by asking her a very simple question. She was expressionless and later gathered her books into the bag and continued to play while the lesson was in progress.

Notes on educators:

1. Some learners expressed anger towards some educators and complained they never showed up in class; or they showed up to give work and left with the promise to be back (which was never fulfilled).

2. The first educator interviewed was very busy, as he was involved in several other activities. The interview was interrupted at the third question and was not completed the same day. The researcher wondered how his involvement in so many other activities was likely to affect his primary assignment, which is to teach.

3. Some of the educators interviewed do not express a good understanding of 'learning support' and the term 'barriers to learning'.

APPENDIX E

An example of the structure of the type of building where some participants in the study live

(Picture a)

Examples of informal settlement where some grade nine learners live

(Picture b)

(Picture c)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Educators

1.   What do you think is 'learning support'?

2.   How do you think learning support manifests in the lives of grade nine learners?

3.   What support is available to you as an educator in order to support the learning of grade nine learners?

4.   What particular learning support strategies do you use for learners?

5.   How effective do you think these support strategies are?

6.   What do you understand by 'barriers to learning'?

7.   What is the nature of barriers encountered by grade nine learners?

8.   How do these barriers manifest in the lives of these learners?

9.   What do you think are the factors that cause barriers to learning for grade nine learners?

10.   How have you used the available learning support to support learners with barriers in your subject area?

11.   How effective has the application of the available support on learners with barriers in your subject area been?

12.   What else can you do to support learners with barriers to learning in your subject area?

Questions for the Principal

1.   What do you think is 'learning support'?

2.   What learning support strategies are available in the school for grade nine learners?

3.   Which of these strategies has the school used to support their learning?

4.   How effective do you think they have been in supporting learners?

5.   What do you regard as 'barriers to learning'?

6.   What is the nature of barriers to learning and what in your opinion are the factors that cause the barriers?

7. What do you think are the barriers to learning for ninth grade learners?

8. What support is the school using to help them?

9. How effective has this been in supporting these ninth grade learners?

10. What else can be done to support their learning?

Questions for the Parents

1. What to you is 'learning support'?

2. How do you generally support your child in his/her learning?

3. How effective do you think this has been in supporting your child's learning?

4. How does the support manifest in the life of your child?

5. What do you think is 'barriers to learning'?

6. What do you think is the nature of barriers experienced by learners in grade nine?

7. Do you think your child has barriers to learning? If so, how have you supported your child to overcome barriers to learning?

8. In what other ways can you support your child's learning?

EXAMPLES OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
		Participant G (Age 16) male	
615.	Q	You remember our chat the other day! I want to know, what are the subjects you are having problems in?	
616	R	Subjects that I'm having problem with?	
617.	Q	Yes. The ones you are not scoring well in, like you are scoring maybe less than 40 percent?	
618.	R	Mathematics.	
619.	Q	What did you score in Mathematics in your last exam?	
620.	R	I don't remember but it seems like it was 30 percent.	
621.	Q	What other subjects?	
622.	R	Science.	
623.	Q	Science. What science? What is the full name?	
624.	R	Natural Science.	
625.	Q	What did you score in Natural Science?	
626.	R	28 percent.	
627.	Q	Is there any other subjects that you are scoring less than 40 percent?	
628.	R	Economics.	
629.	Q	That is EMS?	
630.	R	Yes.	
631.	Q	What did you score in that?	
632.	R	32 percent.	
633.	Q	Tell me about everything that helps you with your learning.	
634.	R	Things that makes me to learn sometimes at home I do take some time to try to study but things that I'm trying to study I just don't get it going to mind, you understand, especially those three subjects. They the ones that give me mostly big problem in the classroom.	
635.	Q	But in all other subjects, what helps you to study them? What helps you to do well in them?	

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Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
636.	**R**	You know, the main thing that makes me to be good to them is that most of the time I don't study at home these subjects. I try to practice them in the class with my friends.	
637.	**Q**	But the ones you are not doing well in, you don't try?	
638.	**R**	I do try them but even though they try to show me how but I just don't undesrtand, especially Maths. It is the one that gives me problem. I just don't understand it well. I try to practice it but I get more problem in it.	
639.	**Q**	When you try to practice it you get more problem?	
640.	**R**	Yes.	
641.	**Q**	What are your teachers doing to help you? How are they helping to support your learning?	
642.	**R**	My teachers they don't help me.	
643.	**Q**	Why?	
644.	**R**	Often time they are not in the class.	
645.	**Q**	They are not in the class? What does that mean?	
646.	**R**	We spend most of the time alone in the class. Maybe times two days they see us, maybe times I can carry on to practice on my own. Maybe I can be well.	
647.	**Q**	What about your parents, how are they supporting you?	
648.	**R**	They do try to support me and they do try to help me in the subjects that I'm having problem with but not often time because I'm not living with them.	
649.	**Q**	Who do you live with?	
650.	**R**	I'm living with my brother. He works every week –Monday to Sunday so he doesn't get the chance to be with me.	
651.	**Q**	So what effort is he making to see that you are studying well since he is not there to help you himself?	
652.	**R**	Sometimes when he is around he tries to help me.	
653.	**Q**	How?	
654.	**R**	He is sitting with me and asking me which subjects am I having problems to but not often time.	
655.	**Q**	So what other help does he give to you in those subjects?	
656.	**R**	He tries to… he do show me how must I work on the subject like Mathematics. Like sometimes, additions he tries to help me with many works of it.	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
657.	**Q**	Let's go back to your teachers. I was asking how your teachers are helping you? You were telling me they are usually not in the class. Tell me more about that.	
658.	**R**	If they were always in the class I think I could here try to explain my problems to them. Maybe times two to three days we don't see one of them those who teach us subjects like those we are having difficulties to.	
659.	**Q**	Which particular subject is it difficult to get the teacher? Is it Mathematics, Natural Science, EMS or all of them?	
660.	**R**	EMS and Mathematics. Sometimes they do come. But they take long time not coming in the class. I just don't understand. Maybe times it is because of other classes or maybe times I don't know what is the problem that make them not to come to class.	
661.	**Q**	Did you students report this to the principal or vice principal that there are some teachers that don't come to class? What have you done about that?	
662.	**R**	We haven't even done anything in the class. We are just... actually, we didn't tell anyone about this.	
663.	**Q**	You were telling me about your brother. Your parents, where are they?	
664.	**R**	They are not with me. They are around but they are a little bit far.	
665.	**Q**	When you get to see them what help do they give to you concerning your schoolwork?	
666.	**R**	Actually, when I go to see them sometimes often times in the weekend my mother use to asks how am I doing with my schoolwork and I tell her I'm trying to do my best. I explain to her which subject do I have problem and she tries to tell me I must not be stressed, I'll be okay when I continue to want to know where am I getting problems and when I get it right.	
667.	**Q**	Your friends, how are they helping you to learn?	
668.	**R**	Mostly my friends we are having the same problems in the same subjects and we do try to discuss the matters in the class during the day when we are sitting. We try to say let's take some books and let's try to solve the problem that we are having on such kind of subject and such kind of subject. Maybe times I can get well. When I have problem on Mathematics they do try to help me so that I must understand and them too when they have problem in English I try to explain to them because English I know it well and I understand it.	

Speaker "turn" unit number	Transcript of interviews	Notes
669.	**Q** Generally, what do you think is making grade nine learners not to learn well?	
670.	**R** Some of them they are having family problems, so maybe time they are scared to explain to the teacher or maybe time some are playful. I don't think there is a problem if you can try to explain your matters to someone who knows better than you. He will try to help you if he needs to help you.	
671.	**Q** What about you? What do you think is making you not to learn well in your problem areas?	
672.	**R** Actually I was doing well last year but this year… I tried to do well last year I didn't do well so much. I tried my best so that I can do well. This year I don't know because it is at the beginning of the year, maybe time while time is going I'm gonna try hard. Maybe time by the end of the year I'm gonna do well.	
673.	**Q** But what do you think is stopping you from doing well?	
674.	**R** Not getting time to read because at home I'm the one who do some housework you see, and I'm looking after kids. That is the main problem.	
675.	**Q** Whose kids are they?	
676.	**R** No. They are my brother's kids.	
677.	**Q** How many kids are there?	
678.	**R** There are three kids. The first one he is attending a school now but the two they are still at the Pre School.	
679.	**Q** If I were your teacher, what would you tell me to do for you?	
680.	**R** To have an afternoon study. I will like to have an afternoon study so that I can understand the subjects those I'm having problem with.	
681.	**Q** Anything else?	
682.	**R** To show me how must I work on the subject so that I can understand it quickly and easily.	
683.	**Q** How have you talked to your teachers to help you?	
684.	**R** Since to now I haven't talked anything to them.	
685.	**Q** Why? Because you're having the problem?	
686.	**R** The main thing is that we don't get the chance to talk to them because of they are not always available you see. We see them often times and often times we don't see them.	
687.	**Q** But when you see them what do you do?	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
688.	**R**	Maybe time when I see him he just gets into the class, and maybe time giving us some notes and he's out. Maybe times he tell us "I'm gonna be right now back but he never gets back". By the time he must be back then he doesn't come back.	
689.	**Q**	All these people in your life – parents, teachers, brothers, friends, how will you like them to help you so that your study can go better?	
690.	**R**	I try maybe time I can just get a chance to concentrate on why am I having problem and maybe time to sit down and study hard so that they that I'm having problem to I must know them well and I must attend it well.	
691.	**Q**	And you tell me what you want to do for yourself so that you can begin to do well.	
692.	**R**	I want to help myself so that I can do well and I have to help other people, those have problem as I have problems now.	
693.	**Q**	But how do you want to do it? What can you do so that you can help yourself do better?	
694.	**R**	I have to tell myself that I have to do well and I have to study so that I can do well so that I must… those who don't understand things as I am now, I don't understand some of the problem of myself, so I have to know them and solve them. Maybe times someone can come to me and ask "can you help me with this"? If I don't help myself how am I gonna help someone.	
695.	**Q**	In other words, you want to help yourself so that you can help others?	
696.	**R**	Yes.	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
An interview with the Principal of the sample school			
1641.	**Q**	Please ma'am, what do you think is learning support?	
1642.	**R**	Learning support is encouragement capacitating, mentoring and everything that will enable effective learning taking place.	
1643.	**Q**	What learning support strategies are available in school for grade nine learners?	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
1644.	R	Besides having teachers teaching, we are having for them extra lessons that are being given by an outsider, we are having for them Saturday schools with an outreach body that is attached to the school and assisting the school, that is a few of them. Then we are having class teachers who are working as guardians. And we are having an extra period for them two periods a week that we call life as a school and there is a teacher who goes there to further give them life skills in various ways and encourage them. Otherwise, their learning areas are based on their development of life skills.	
1645.	Q	The outreach body, who are they?	
1646.	R	That is outreach St Mary's Dominican School for Girls outreach.	
1647.	Q	What do they do?	
1648.	R	They are assisting the school in developing wholly. They started with us some three years ago. So it was the staff first, it is now not only the staff. It is Principal orientated. That is, the Principal communicates problems and they go and assist and whenever there are courses, there are extra tuition for learners then they invite us. There is also besides what I've said the UNISA that is involved through outreach to try to get the level of the learners, their ability to read. So that is the programme.	
1649.	Q	Are they basically government, the outreach body?	
1650.	R	They are working together with the government assisting schools but they are on their own.	
1651.	Q	Which of these strategies has the school used to support their learning?	
1652.	R	All these strategies we are using, especially teacher development and the learner development. We cannot really afford to say we don't want the strategies because we are aiming at zero learning problem.	
1653.	Q	How effective do you think they have been in supporting learners? These strategies?	
1654.	R	They have been effective. Our learners show some improvement in their learning, in their research work, especially research work and the usage of the library. They are improving in getting interested in doing things on their own and also in taking part in extra curricula activities. It has improved at the school.	
1655.	Q	What do you regard as barriers to learning?	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
1656.	**R**	It could be the socio-economic. That could be one of the greatest barriers but I regard it as not like major because we can always improvise. Parental involvement is still some sort of barrier as far as I am concerned and that needs to be improved. Then the other thing is the medium of instruction. It looks like it is not well developed. We are using English as the medium of instruction instead of their mother tongue. That could be one of the barriers. Another thing is the human resources, educators in particular, their methods of teaching also maybe causing barriers to learning.	
1657.	**Q**	I was going to ask for the nature of barriers to learning and in your opinion what you think could be causing them. But I think you have given me the nature. But what do you think are the factors that cause the barriers?	
1658.	**R**	In as far as educators are concerned it is a question of not affording educators to specialize in subjects they have done at college. For example a teacher majors in English, when he comes to school besides teaching English he teaches say Biology. You find that for a long time he is not specializing. So that is lack of specialization, and sometimes whilst the teacher has not specialized in the subject. Lack of development – both self-development and development by the school. It is not up to the standard. And as far as learners are concerned, there is very little at home to encourage them to develop themselves. It could be because of poverty, we don't know. But I've come to realize having interviewed a number of parents that it is not only poverty. It is lack of knowledge, lack of involvement because you find that if learners are being encouraged to read newspapers, newspapers are at home. But parents don't encourage them to read newspapers, parents don't monitor what they watch, parents don't monitor what they read and what they listen to over the radio. I made a research last year in one of our classrooms trying to find out what may be causing this. Out of class of fifty-three learners only two were not exposed to either Television, Newspaper and or Radio. But the rest were exposed to these. These two that were not exposed to that at home were having an opportunity of visiting friends to watch those. So really we cannot say poverty is the cause because they are exposed but it is only what they want to be watched and monitoring by the parents. And then the other thing is community at large. It depends what they read and it depends what they do and how do they monitor our children outside the school. There are so many things. Some are psychologically related. And disease is catching up also with our learners. You find that they are heads of the family sometimes, and in other times you find they are home nurses of their own parents. So they really get exhausted in some cases. So that is in as far as I'm busy with the research, an informal research.	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
1659.	**Q**	For the ninth grade learners, what do you consider to be their barriers?	
1660.	**R**	They come from Primary Schools where we are having OBE. OBE is very good I must say. I have seen it is very good but it has its flaws because they come from the primary and they are being taught by us educators who are not so well trained in as far as OBE is concerned. Maybe the educator learner ratio might be not affording educators the opportunity to express themselves OBE wise. Some of the grade nine learners in particular come from the Primary Schools unable to read. That is our challenge as educators, unable to read and with the learning areas. There other learning areas at high schools are the same as at primary school but they can't read. You find that they come in grade eight, we start with our methods of teaching, they come in a new environment so they are just in grade eight. Grade nine they start to see the light, and unfortunately we have to work hurriedly because they are writing external examinations. Now they have great pressure. The educator has that pressure of completing the syllabus and seeing to it that he covers the syllabus and so forth. So that could be a barrier. But one other thing is the fact that they are fifteen years of age and they are teenagers and three-quarters of them, though I'm not so sure, are experimenting drugs, experimenting sex and some number of them belong to families where are headed by children. Some of them are heads of those families unfortunately at fifteen. Otherwise others are under the rules and laws of their brothers and sisters and grannies. And that is creating a problem. Others it's disease. That is what I've noticed about grade nine learners.	
1661.	**Q**	What kind of disease is this?	
1662.	**R**	The HIV/Aids. It is affecting them in their families.	
1663.	**Q**	Not the children themselves?	
1664.	**R**	No, not the children. Members of their families, especially our last years grade nine. I haven't started with these ones to check what is happening. They come from grade eight and they have problems. Another thing is migration. We have come to notice something, observe something in the school that we are getting two primary languages –Sepedi and Setswana and we are now getting more Sepedi learners than Setswana and each and every parent that comes to school you find out in this school as a learner…you find out they come from rural areas and they migrate to urban areas and that creates a problem. They adjust to the high school and also adjust to the environment at large. That is creating serious problems. They end up playing truant and even absconding and no longer coming to school.	

Speaker "turn" unit number	Transcript of interviews	Notes
1665.	**Q** For these learners, what support is the school using to help them?	
1666.	**R** We are using the local child protection unit; local community and policing forums for those are harsh and are professionals in their areas. Otherwise we use our social welfare. There are other NGO's where we refer our learners. Most importantly at school we are having a peer support groups and that is doing a wonderful job.	
1667.	**Q** What do they do there?	
1668.	**R** They are learners attached to Pretoria University under one of the life skills educator. They assist learners with minor problems- learner's go to them and tell them their problems or they are being encouraged to join the peer support group. This year they started but I don't know what days are they coming. Last year they came Mondays and Wednesdays. The peer support group is doing wonderful jobs because learners seem to respond well to people they are not used to like yourself and their peers better than they do to us here at school because they are used to us. And then we are having the SBST, School Based Support Team at the school. Even if it is not that functional but we do refer learners who have problems. Then we are having our District, where if we fail as a school we refer them to our District. That is how we support them. Another support is we are having what we call grade counsel where we are having grade teachers, class teachers of a particular grade who get down there with grade principal and taking care of learners. Then as a school we are having in addition a welfare committee to support those learners especially those whose parents are unemployed and have nothing at home. The staff here through the committee has been encouraged to adopt some of the learners.	
1669.	**Q** How effective has this been for the ninth graders?	
1670.	**R** It is working very well. They respond positively. Our grade nine learners that sometimes get shy, those that are a bit older or too old to be in that grade, those having serious problems until we called them and called their parents and we say you have to start this program. So it is effective.	
1671.	**Q** What else can be done to support their learning apart from everything else? Is there anything else that can be done in addition?	
1672.	**R** If we could have more of NGO's, more of business people assisting learners. Whilst we understand that just to be receiving and receiving and doing nothing is not helping parents should start employing themselves, they should start doing something and helping. I think NGOs if they can get involved not only with our learners outside the school, but come to school and at the school interact with us to know what is expected of the learners. Then I think we can really	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
		win. But business people especially local ones we are on a mission of involving them, telling them about the plight of our learners because of the parents who are unemployed so that we don't just have feeding schemes and so on, we have to look into the parents and if we can get the parents or families and enable them then we can win. Otherwise we need even tertiary institutions to get closer to us. They need to get closer to us. Pretoria University has started. If we can get more of those institutions, psychologists, because GDE does not afford to have a psychologist at each and every school at our districts. You find out there is one for thirty-nine schools. So we need people to volunteer their services to our schools, the community.	
1673.	Q	I just added this as an after thought; do you have educators in all the learning areas in grade nine?	
1674.	R	Presently yes.	
1675.	Q	You are fully equipped with educators?	
1676.	R	Yes. We did not start well but we are fine except for one class in grade nine. But I adopted the class teacher but they are having the Grade Principal who is also acting as the class teacher. That class does not have a class teacher but they have teachers in all the learning areas.	
1677.	Q	What do you mean by Grade Principal?	
1678.	R	He is an HOD who is in charge of the grade together with the class teachers for the grade. The grade counsellor comes from there. So we are having grade principals. Not everybody accounts directly to me. I'm having those grade principals. They are accounting to the Deputy Principal and the Deputy Principal accounts to me.	
1679.		Thank you so, so much, ma'am.	

AN EXAMPLE OF THE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Speaker "turn" unit number	Transcript of interviews	Notes
	Educator Vi	
55.	**Q** This is a follow-up interview on the last session we had. Based on the sessions we had I came up with two major themes, which are barriers to learning and the manifestations of learning support. The barriers to learning have been put into sub-themes and then categories. If you take a look at these you will see all the themes, sub-themes and then the categories that emerged. I want you to see if you agree with what I have here and if there has been any new development.	
56.	**R** Yes. I agree with most of the things you wrote. It is just that somewhere we can make some additions. Now I will like to comment on the inability to read and to write, which is a very serious problem now more especially with the introduction of the new system OBE. Yes. We in high school we experience that a child cannot read and write. Why when we trace it back we find that at very low grade, maybe from grade 1 to grade 7, at a lower, lower level, because of the OBE what has maybe confused the teachers is that system where they were teaching seriously, right. They have resorted to this system, which encourages 80% of work to be done by the learners, right. Then teachers resort to giving more of the work than teaching. The actual teaching is not taking place that much. Maybe it is taking place but not that much because we see the repercussions of it at the higher level. Then it is more of paper work. That is why you find that the teacher sometimes becomes reluctant in a way to get to class because they still have to sort out the papers, because the officials when they come to school they want to see a lot of work that has been done by learners. And then the actual teaching is not taking place. And now this has become a very, very, very serious problem when the learner reaches grade 12, the final stage, you see, of school, because that is where the officials expect us to be performing miracles. They expect the learners to pass. Now the problem is that from the lower grades they are not performing well. They are being pushed. They keep on pushing them, you see! But they reach a point where they cannot be pushed anymore and now they get frustrated these children and we too as teachers get frustrated, while on the other side there is this paperwork to be done. You see!	
57.	**Q** The lower grade. What grade is that?	

Speaker "turn" unit number		Transcript of interviews	Notes
58.	**R**	From grade 1, you see, because that is where the problem is starting from. Foundation level. And now there is also this new… I think it is an addition, part of OBE, which is New Curriculum Statement (NCS). We are always expected to attend courses. And from the courses we are expected to implement all that has been taught to us during the courses. And with these NCS courses, we do attend them but when we come out of there we become more and more confused. We don't know what to do in class.	
59.	**Q**	What is causing the confusion?	
60.	**R**	We are expected to implement all what we have grasped within a day or in a week. But when we look at this really it took a teacher 3 years to complete to become a real teacher, to acquire a diploma or even a degree so that he can be ready to teach, but now to attend a course for one day or even two weeks and then you are expected to implement all these and when we shift from the old way of doing things we just go because we want you to learn new things but when we shift completely we shift too much, we leave teaching and we give children work. And on top of it we find that with the same system of NCS or OBE we do not have enough textbooks. We are given 10 textbooks not 50. The learners must share. How do you divide it? How do you do it? You see! What if our children have to carry home to study because most of their books are full of exercises, You see! That requires you must make notes maybe.	
61.	**Q**	So anything else? Any more additions?	
62.	**R**	Any more additions! Let me see. Yah! As family problems are concerned we have realised there is an increase of learners staying alone at home, right, which could be… which is the result of that the father has left the family, right, and the mother has gone also to seek job so that she can feed the family. The learners or the child is left home the whole month a lot. So that is creating… it is a very serious learning barrier. And then another thing as far as the learning barrier is concerned what has emerged recently that I see here at school is lack of facilities, desks, chairs, and so on. You can't teach a learner standing the whole day. It is not possible. It is a very serious problem.	
63.	**Q**	Okay! Manifestations of support. Is there anything to add also?	
64.	**R**	As far as knowledge of learning support…are you talking of libraries and so on?	
65.	**Q**	No. That was when I wanted to know whether the educators and parents understand the meaning of learning support. I just wanted to know from them what they think learning support means. What does it mean to them?	

Speaker "turn" unit number	Transcript of interviews	Notes
66.	**R** You know, it is amazing. When I was just invigilating there, a learner came…they were busy writing test. A learner came she never wrote the test. Then she wanted me to give her chance to write. I wanted to find out what went wrong. She attended the funeral and what do the parents say? They agreed. You never told them that we are busy with the exam. It is very much important, you see. It's a question of prioritizing. Our parents have not yet realized how important it is to help learners in taking education serious, you see. But you can see the support is not that good.	
67.	**Q** A lot of the children said the support they get is in form of guidance, in form of advice, in form of motivation and encouragement. So these actually came from the learners. These are from teachers-One-on-one support, where they get to call the child to talk to him. And then where there is no support available some teachers create their own support using resources available.	
68.	**R** Yah! We normally do that. One-on-one support, which is very much important, you see because… And it happens because of when one is got a big class of 50 it takes time for me to realise that a certain learner has got a learning problems, you see. I find that I discover him or her at the end of the first quarter or at the end of the second quarter but I will try to do my best, to do something to help him or her. It's just that we do not know how serious do they take this because as a teacher, I give 100%. I give 100%, you see. When they go home, when they leave the school premises what is happening out there I do not know. The child is overwhelmed by so many problems that they encounter. Some they do not share with us but you know. As we started with the feeding scheme they come here without even eating for 2 to 3 days. It is a very serious problem.	

<div align="right">APPENDIX I</div>

RESEARCH DIARY

Dates	Proceedings conducted
January 2004	Registration as a postgraduate student of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria.
10 September 2004	The departmental defence of proposal was conducted and approval to go on to the Faculty level was given.
26 October 2004	The proposal was defended at Faculty level and approval to proceed with the research was issued.
November 2004 - March 2005	A review of literature was conducted.
2 November 2004	A letter was sent to The Gauteng Department of Education to inform the authorities of the researcher's desire to conduct research involving participants in one of the schools in the Province.
8 November 2004	The form to request authorization to conduct the research was obtained from The Gauteng Department of Education.
9 November 2004	The researcher made the first visit to the school in the study to request consent from the principal to involve some learners, educators and the principal in the study. This request was granted.
17 November 2004	Having been given the go-ahead by the principal, the form was completed and returned to the Gauteng Department of Education.
17 January 2005	Authorization was granted by the Department to proceed with the research.
1st week of February 2005	The letter of approval to proceed with the research was presented to the principal of the sample school.
17 February 2005	Participants were formally introduced to the researcher and letters requesting their involvement in the research were sent to parents and family members through them.
20 February 2005	The researcher visited the sample school in order to meet with parents and relatives after the Parents/Teachers Association meeting.
21 February – 5 March 2005	Data was collected through the following strategies: 1. Interview sessions with nine participants, nine relatives, seven educators and the principal 2. Observation of participants in the classrooms 3. Examination of documents/records and the scholastic reports of participants 4. Field notes.
20 March - 30 April 2005	Textual transcription of interview tapes was carried out.
June 2005 - March 2006	Data analysis and the interpretation of findings were conducted, as well as the writing of reports.
27 & 30 March and 3 April 2006	Follow-up interviews were conducted with some participants, educators, the principal and some relatives of the learners.
May - July 2006	Literature control was carried out, and final conclusions written.