

Chapter 6: *A Comparison of Experience and a Narrative of Educators' Experiences of ADHD in the Classroom*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Narrative research includes incorporating place and context and collaboration between researcher and participant (Creswell, 2002). In this chapter I will attempt to describe two different educator experiences and draw interpretations from the experiences that place the 'stories' of the participants/educators in context. This will be followed by a narrative, which is the 're-storying' of the participants, written by the researcher, based on the interviews conducted with the educator.

6.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCES

The two educators' experiences for this chapter were selected as they seemed to make an impression on me as a researcher and as a person. (The experiences of these two educators seemed to stand out for me the most in contrast to the other educators). For the purpose of this chapter and for clarification, fictitious names have been assigned to the participants/educators. The first person chosen is an educator from the first school, who is a novice educator, teaching for only three years in suburban Tshwane. The name that has been assigned to her is Sally. The second educator is an experienced teacher, who is a Head of the Department of Foundation Phase at a township school. The name that has been allocated to this educator is Moira. The educators are from very different contexts and thus have different experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. These two interviews were selected as the educators were forthcoming with personal experiences and understanding of ADHD. These two interviews have similarities in experiences, for example both educators felt that grouping learners is not always effective. The two educators also seem to have different experiences with regards to parental involvement. The following section illustrates the similar and different educator experiences of learners who may have ADHD in the classroom.

6.2.1 *Sally (Participant/Educator 1d)*

Sally is the fourth educator interviewed from school one. School one is a public school situated in a suburban area in Tshwane. Sally is a young (in her mid-twenties) white educator and English speaking. In the interview process she seemed to be particularly nervous. Sally teaches grade two and has 30 learners in her class. This is her third year of teaching since

she has qualified as an educator. This interview took place in one of the educator's classrooms.

Sally shared personal information that allowed me as researcher to understand her experiences as educator in the classroom. She is newly married and her husband is a medical student. Therefore, she is the breadwinner, providing the family with an income. Sally explained that although she is still new to teaching she has an interest in special needs and is studying further in this field. She is currently completing an Honours degree in Special Education, through the University of Pretoria.

6.2.2 *Moira (Participant/Educator 2f)*

The next educator is the Head of Department of the Foundation phase, from a previously disadvantaged school in Tshwane. Moira teaches grade two and is a black educator. Although English is Moira's second language, she is a mature and confident educator. Moira stated that she is married and appears to be in her mid-fifties. She has 35 learners in her class and has only five learners more than Sally. I explained ADHD to her and Moira seemed to be more at ease with the interview process and better able to answer the questions. The reason why I explained ADHD to Moira was that she explicitly asked for me to explain this to her. (*"Yes, I wanted to know because..." Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1805*). I was concerned that this would influence the data, and thus brought it to the attention of the peer examiner. The examiner expressed that although ADHD was explained to all the educators it does not seem to have influenced the data. (Refer to chapter 5, section 5.3.2 and also chapter 7, section 7.6.1.3 Peer Examination). This interview took place in the staff room after school hours, so as not to disrupt the teaching and learning.

6.2.3 *Different Educator, Different Experience*

According to information gained from the interview and informally after the interview Sally has been a teacher for three years

I have only been teaching for three years. So in class, when you are sitting in varsity and you like (sic), oh this is how you present a lesson, and you give these fantastic lessons. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 428).

She is experiencing teaching as being very different to what she has been taught at university. The stresses and strains that go hand in hand with being a novice educator seemed apparent in this interview. It seems that for Sally the experience of *actually* teaching and the theory of teaching are very different. The reality of teaching a class has meant that she has needed to adapt. It appears as if the novice educator is learning from her experience in the classroom.

So I have, you have had to (sic), I have had to learn how adapt to actually teaching children, because the theory of it is one thing, but the actual practical teaching is a different thing. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 430).

Moira, on the other hand, expressed that she has been an educator for a long time, yet still feels inadequate to respond to learners who may have ADHD. As a result Moira states that she would like to get more assistance from outside the school.

Yes, I just wanted to know otherwise, how can we (sic) deal with them, just like we, we have said with... these type of learners– do you have any idea how can we... yes, just later, we should just give them... because usually we do have some learners which are, you know you should pity for them, as teachers you know... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2062-2064).

Moira's text here above seems disjointed, but this could be due to the fact that she was revealing her uncertainty. It seems that Moira does understand that educators play an empathetic role (*"you know you should pity for them, as teachers you know"*). However the learners who may have ADHD could be shown understanding, instead of pity, if educators knew how to intervene. Moira asked the researcher if assistance could be given with workshops for educators and parents. The explicit request for assistance was not recorded, yet from the above quotation, the request for assistance is implied. Moira appears to have been more comfortable asking this request for assistance after the interview and thus, *"off the record"*. She mentions, however, that the other educators interviewed at this school asked her, as Head of Department, what they would get out of doing the interview.

Even some of our educators you know, they say no, we are going for (sic), interviewing but what about, what... how are we going to handle those things... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2219).

One could infer that the educator felt that she needed to ask for assistance so that she could inform the other educators on how *"to handle those things"*.

From this interview the experienced educator, Moira, refers to learners who may have ADHD as *"those learners"*. In the interview it seemed that it was easier to refer to learners who may have ADHD, than having to repeat the acronym "ADHD". However, most educators (i.e. 10 of the 17 educators) who were interviewed from the township schools referred to learners who may have ADHD as *"those learners"*.

Moira related that at first she was against inclusive education.

RESEARCHER: How has including these learners who may have ADHD been for you – how has it been like for you as a person?

MOIRA: I, I (sic) was against it because I thought that maybe during that time when they say if you have a, a learner who's this (sic) you keep them to the relevant school (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2024).

However, her experience in including all learners meant that she needed to prepare herself and make sure that she had her lessons prepared.

You just have to learn how to deal with them. But once you prepare yourself for them, they're not so much of a challenge (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2032-2034).

Thus, it would seem that accommodating learners who may have ADHD has been challenging to this educator, yet the outcome appears to be positive. As Moira has learners who may have ADHD in her classroom, she feels that she needs to be more prepared. Thus, it seems that she makes sure her lessons are well prepared. This could benefit all the learners in the class, not only the learners who may have ADHD.

In comparison, the novice educator (Sally) appears to be of the opinion that she can learn from her fellow teachers and ask for advice. The humility that she shows could be attributed to her personality as well as the fact that Sally is a novice educator. As a novice educator Sally can ask for assistance as it is seen as appropriate, as opposed to an experienced educator asking for assistance. Thus, as Sally is young and a novice educator it seems appropriate that she would seek assistance from other educators who are more experienced. It seems that the novice educator follows other educators in how she groups her learners and refers learners who misbehave to the Head of Department to discipline. In the following extract Sally is referring to the misbehaviour of the learner who may have ADHD in her classroom. She indicates that one method of discipline, as an experienced colleague does, is to separate a learner from his/her group, giving him/her "Time Out". Another method of discipline is to send a learner to the Head of Department.

The thing is they become very disruptive and when the one gets hyperactive it is almost like it rubs off on the others. It's been a big challenge for me this year and they're separated from the group like name: Educator 1c²⁰ does. Time out against the wall (sic). It doesn't. It works sometimes, but occasionally it doesn't and then I send them to our (indistinct) Educator 1a and they are petrified of her so they don't like that. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 341).

²⁰ In the interview the names of educators were stated, but to keep anonymity and confidentiality of educators the educator number has been assigned.

From the interview I got the impression that she makes use of her colleagues, knowledge and asks for advice where needed, but does not necessarily rely heavily on them. This was apparent when the educator stated at the end of the interview that she has learnt much from the experience of having learners who have ADHD in her classroom. In the following extract Sally expresses what she has learnt, including disciplining learners in her classroom. One of the strategies she used to assist learners who may have ADHD is to insert a screen around the learner. This is a structure, made of steel and plastic that forms a u-shape around the learner, so that he/she may not be distracted by other learners or objects in the class. The learner who has a screen placed around him/her is placed at the back of the classroom.

I think I have learnt a lot of patience this year and a lot of discipline. How to, how to (sic) handle the discipline. So, I think I would use, in future (sic), I would know exactly, right, this is where, how you do this and using the screen. I would use some of that information because that (sic) I got from colleagues, who knocked it up when I was in absolute desperate need, and said, well try this. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 424).

The screen that is used seems to assist the learners as well as the educator, as the learner is forced to focus on the task in front of him/her. The term that the educator uses “knocked it up” (a term that is used by English first language speakers) suggests that it was erected in a hurry. It seems that learners who may have ADHD challenged this educator to take active steps in her own learning and knowledge regarding discipline and learning strategies that work best in the classroom. Therefore, although the experience has been challenging it has also resulted in a positive outcome for this educator. However, the effects on the learner, needs further investigation.

The novice educator, Sally, expressed her need for assistance explicitly by stating “*I would use some of that information because that (sic) I got from colleagues*”. The novice educator also expressed her frustrations more openly than Moira. The novice educator expressed the frustration as “*absolute desperate need.*” Sally is a young educator and it is more socially acceptable for someone who is considered inexperienced to ask for assistance. In comparison the experienced educator (Moira) holds a position of power as Head of Department. The other educators in the Foundation phase would look up to her for guidance and leadership. It could be that as the Head of Department, she would be seen as someone who is supposed to have all the answers. However, Moira, did ask from assistance outside of the school by asking “how are we going to handle these things”.

Even some of our educators you know, they say no, we are going for interviewing (sic), but what about, what ... how are we (sic) going to handle those things... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2219).

It seems from the two different experiences of these educators that they feel the need to get assistance from other colleagues and from outside of the school in order to assist learners who may have ADHD. The need for assistance could be attributed to their different contextual circumstances and from their own classroom experiences. One of the contextual factors that could influence the educator is that township schools are less resourced than the suburban schools. Thus, the educator may feel that if she had more resources she would be better equipped to assist learner who may have ADHD in the classroom.

Especially if ever we can have some learning equipment, just to keep them busy. Even if, if I'm teaching this (sic)... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2005).

The novice educator could feel that her teacher training is inadequate, as she feels that she needs to put lesson plans together that work in the classroom.

So I have, you have had to (sic), I have had to learn how adapt to actually teaching children, because the theory of it is one thing, but the actual practical teaching is a different thing. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 430).

6.2.4 *Teaching and Learning*

The following section relates the educators' teaching and learning within the classroom. The schools are described in chapter 5; however the classrooms of these educators/participants are described here for the purpose of more in-depth clarification. The educators' classrooms are very different, due to the fact that the one school is more resourced than the other. School one is a well resourced school and therefore Sally's classroom reflected this. Sally's classroom is brightly painted in light blue; the walls are decorated with educational printed posters, self-made posters and the learners' activities. The desks and chairs have been arranged in rows, but the arrangement changes depending on the task that needs to be completed. The classroom is clean and seems to be brightly lit. The environment of the classroom can contribute to the learning and teaching of the learners (Downer, Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2007; Kohn, 1996; Lieberman, 1982).

In stark contrast, Moira's class seems to be dark, as there appears not to be enough light in the classroom. The walls are brightly decorated with printed posters. In some areas, including the learners' desks, the alphabet and certain words in English and Sepedi have been written out for the learners. An example of this is: there is a label of "desk" on the learner's desk in English and Sepedi. The classroom floor is dusty, as the dust tends to blow in from outside as there is no grass. (Grass would trap dust and soil). School two does have electricity and toilet facilities for learners.

Educators need to discipline learners in the classroom, as part of classroom management, in order for teaching and learning to take place. However, during the interview process, the more experienced educator, Moira, at times gave the impression that she was in a hopeless situation.

It's tougher for that teacher because she, she is even new in our school you know...She just see problem... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2107-2109).

If a new educator is exposed to learners, she may only see problems. However, it seems that Moira understands that an educator needs to understand the behaviour and academic performance of a learner in order to be an effective educator.

Because the, the previous teacher will come to you and explain to you, "this one is just like this." But the new one that are from outside, no one will tell you about them ... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1993).

Moira also expressed her frustration at her inadequacy to discipline and teach learners who may have ADHD.

Yes, it is, it's difficult because you'll be trying, and then sometimes you'll feel like you will just kick (sic), but you can't you know (laughter). He is just harassing you, but it's not good, it just make me sometimes just get fed up (sic), just say "sit down", that's the only way that you can concentrate. (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1917-1919).

6.2.4.1 *Class work and Homework*

According to Sally, there are five learners in her class who have been diagnosed with ADHD and are being treated with medication. The novice educator, Sally, seemed to believe that less class work is one strategy that appeared to assist the learners who may have ADHD in her classroom. Less work is easier for the learner with ADHD to complete and achieve. If one task is divided into smaller tasks the activity doesn't seem overwhelming or unachievable. However, the same amount of homework as other learners is given to learners who may have ADHD. Parent involvement and awareness seems to play a great role as to the amount of homework the learner can be given.

I think that they maybe (sic) a little bit less class work or maybe just a slightly modified worksheet, sometimes also help (sic). Homework, they do the same homework as the others. A lot of the parents in my class, they know their children's problems and they work with them as best they can at home. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 361).

With regards to class work and homework, Moira's experience seems to differ greatly from Sally's experience. According to Moira the learners who may have ADHD require more class work.

They require more work. Even if sometimes it's not the work that you wanted to give the, the (sic) whole class. (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1979).

Moira's main priority, it appears, is being able to keep the learners busy. Moira believes that learners who may have ADHD should get less homework. It seems that Moira believes that learners who may have ADHD cope better if they have less homework. The educator states that if she gives learners who may have ADHD the same amount of homework the learners will not be able to do it all.

Yes, because if you give them more, they (sic) will be no product. (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1991).

It would seem that different beliefs as to how much work to give to a learner who may ADHD differs according to the educators' different experiences. As with other educators as mentioned under the themes, one of the strategies implemented in the classroom is to keep the learners busy with work or other tasks. Moira gives her learners extra class work in order to keep them busy. This extra work is very often class work that is completed incorrectly, but fulfils the purpose of keeping the learners busy.

But if you give them something that will just keep them busy and try to concentrate, because if ever you say you want 1 up to 10 (sic), you just write something, maybe even if it's not correct (sic)... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1981).

It must be noted that although the work is incomplete or incorrect it does not seem that the work is corrected immediately. The educator did not state that the work is corrected or completed at a later date. Other educators (Participant 2a and Participant 2c), from the same school, mentioned that if work is not completed they keep the learners in after school.

PARTICIPANT 2A: That's why most of my, my (indistinct), I do them after school or I just keep carry the whole lot and then take it home to go and mark them at home. (Participant 2a, speaker turner unit: 481).

PARTICIPANT 2C: And then you must repeat your lessons ... For them you may repeat. Let's say it's after school, then the, the other group must go, they must be left behind (Participant 2c, speaker turner unit: 1259-1261).

If the learners are given the opportunity to complete work and to correct work that they have done incorrectly, teaching and learning does take place. If learners who may have ADHD who do not complete or perform incorrect work do not stay after school, then it is possible that there is little teaching and learning taking place.

From the interviews it seems that different experiences inform educators to give learners who may have ADHD more or less class work and/or homework. The novice educator (Sally) seems to be informed by her colleagues and by her experience in the classroom. Similarly, the experienced educator (Moirá) relies on her own experience and the situation in the classroom to decide what work to give, whether it is extra academic work or sweeping the classroom. In contrast literature suggests that learners who may have ADHD should get less class work or work that is adjusted (Glass, 2000; McFarland *et al.*, 1994). If a task is divided into smaller tasks or adjusted for the learner who may have ADHD, he/she may feel that the task is achievable.

6.2.4.2 ADHD in the Classroom

It seems that educators, in this study, have found that learners who may have ADHD are challenging, as this is one of themes that emerged from the textual data. Sally finds teaching learners who may have ADHD as being difficult.

This year has been very difficult because I have got so many. I have only got so many places in my class as well. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 331).

However, the educator illustrates that she attempts to teach all learners in her classroom, including those who may have ADHD. She does this by discovering what is special about each learner and using this to be able to teach them.

You have got to just (sic) also get to know them and find out what's special about them. What, what they (sic), what is the special quality in that learner. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 357).

Realising that each learner is different regardless of the label of ADHD, means that this educator can adjust her teaching strategies and classroom to improve teaching and learning.

You have to take each learner into consideration. Just because they have got ADHD doesn't mean that they are all the same. I think you have to also take their personality. You have got some kids who have got ADD more, and they are as quiet as mice. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 369).

It is interesting to note that that the novice educator feels at times that she cannot teach learners who may have ADHD. It seems that Sally finds that learners who may have ADHD demand so much from her, that she finds she is tired and feels that she can't do this.

RESEARCHER: *Now there is so many of them in the classroom, how has your experience been and how's this experience been for you?*

SALLY: *It's very tiring. It drains me every day and some days I think I can't do this. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 406).*

However, the positive attitude and the assistance that she receives from her colleagues allows her to carry on teaching.

Moira felt that teaching learners who may have ADHD is challenging and that one needs to be prepared for such a challenge.

Eish (sic), it was tough, it's tough, but it needs preparation (sic)... (Moira/ Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2030).

One can deduce that this educator does not feel that she is trained adequately to be able to manage learners who may have ADHD. Thus, preparation that takes into consideration the challenges and experiences that educators' face in the classroom could be beneficial for educators.

One way the novice educator (Sally) attempts to assist the learner who may have ADHD in her classroom is by being aware that ADHD is complex. Understanding that each learner is different means that each learner behaves differently in the classroom amongst other learners.

So it's not, it's not about the work actually that she's on the medication for (sic). She can't control her actions. She really can't. She literally explodes. So that, you know, to her (sic). I have got another one who also she is just also (sic) very disruptive and she will just, on purpose, pull things off peoples' desks. Vindictive. So there is definitely, I think there is a (sic)... (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 400).

Understanding that ADHD is complex and that other factors could be present (for example co-morbidities) allows the educator to understand her learners. Sally understands that this particular learner who may have ADHD cannot control her actions and has temper outbursts. Therefore, the educator takes this into consideration when planning class work, where the learner will not be disrupted and where the learner cannot disrupt other learners. Thus, the educator is better able to manage her classroom and the lesson.

In contrast the experienced educator (Moira) found teaching younger learners who may have ADHD as being difficult. The educator found that she needed to repeat herself many times before she could be understood.

But the small ones, you'll be saying the one thing I, I (sic) don't know how many times. It's difficult for the smaller ones (laughter). For me it was difficult... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1999).

It seems that for this educator what makes teaching learners who may have ADHD difficult is if they are young and starting school. It appears that if the learners who may have ADHD are young the educator has to repeat herself in order to be heard.

One other aspect that makes teaching learners who may have ADHD difficult is that their work needs to be constantly checked. According to the experienced educator (Moira) work that is completed in the classroom needs to be constantly checked and guided.

They are able to concentrate, they have... after doing whatever instruct (sic) I've given... I have to go back to them – and try to let them concentrate, and try to direct them (sic). (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1885-1887).

Moira contradicts herself in this direct quote from the transcriptions. In the context of the interview, I, as researcher and co-participant, understood that the educator was stating that the learners who may have ADHD do not concentrate as she often needs to check their work and repeat instructions. It seems that the educator can get frustrated with having to constantly check the learners work, realising that they often do their class work incorrectly. As stated above, if the learner who may have ADHD is given the opportunity to stay in after school to complete or correct work then learning may be taking place. However, if the learner who may have ADHD is not given an opportunity to complete or correct work then little learning is taking place. Thus, if little learning is taking place it reflects negatively on the quality of learning that is taking place at our schools.

Lastly, with regards to teaching and learning, the novice educator mentions that she has had to adjust her lesson plans to “actually teach” the learners in her classroom. Sally states that studying the theory of teaching and being able to teach are different. It seems from the educator’s experiences that planning a lesson that keeps the learners attention and learning is tougher than she expected. Lesson planning includes prior planning as to how the lesson will translate in the classroom with learners who may have ADHD. Being able to present a lesson where learners are learning seems to mean that she needs to be creative and alert.

They have made me go back and think about how I give the difference between how to present a lesson (sic). And then you put kids into those things and the lesson falls flat. So I have, you have had to, I have had to learn how to adapt to actually teaching children, because the theory of it is one thing, but the actual practical teaching is a different thing. How to keep their attention. You have got to be creative and on-the-ball all the time (sic). (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 428).

6.2.4.3 Grouping

One of the strategies used in classrooms as a method of managing behaviour and used as a teaching method is grouping. Grouping the learners in the classroom has not been successful for Sally.

RESEARCHER: Okay. So it sounds as if the learners have also been able to adapt to the way you group the children in your class, as well as to the screen etc. How do you?

SALLY: A lot of them have, but there are some who just don't, don't fit in at all. They can't work in groups, they fight, but on the whole, most of them have. I would say about six of them you can if you, with reassurance and with say talking to them, you can get them to work. But the others, yes, they, they can't work in a group at all. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 335).

Yet, the educator does attempt to use grouping with the help of other learners and by bringing back their attention to the task at hand. Her attempt shows the determination that she has in wanting to teach learners.

Well, I try, okay there are times when they have to do group work, then we just sit there with them and say, right now you have to focus. You have to keep talking to them. Talk them through the process actually. Because else they will just lose total concentration (sic). But, yes, I think just, just (sic) keeping them, trying, just trying to keep them (sic) focused on what they are supposed to be doing. The others seem to, seem to (sic) fit in and the other kids get them sorted out. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 337).

It seems that although, grouping is made use of, it is not a classroom strategy used with confidence, as educators believe that learners are not always able to work in groups.

In contrast Moira states that she finds it best to group learners with learners who do not have ADHD and can keep the learners with ADHD in check.

The, the best is just to, not them in one group (sic)– keep them with some of the top one that you know this one can behave (sic), because they will help you sometimes, even to let him come to order and do all those things (sic)... Yes. That's the best to include him or her in a group that is working. (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1967).

It seems that the participants in this study experience that learners who may have ADHD need to be checked on, either by the educator or by fellow classmates. The educator could also believe that learners who may have ADHD cannot work independently. The learner who may have ADHD could learn to depend on this, feeling that he/she may not be able to do work on his/her own. The learner who may have ADHD could enjoy the attention that he/she is receiving from the educator or from the fellow classmate and come to expect or demand it. "Being checked" up on could have negative outcomes both for the learner and for the educator.

6.2.5 Parent Involvement

The novice educator (Sally) mentions that the parents of the learners are involved and assist the learners with homework. She points out that the parent involvement is valuable to the teaching and learning of learners.

I think if it is not for (sic) the parents' involvement there is not much you can do as a teacher. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 379).

It seems that if parents are aware of their learner having ADHD, they assist their learner with homework. It would seem, therefore, that knowledge of ADHD can contribute to understanding what the learner's needs are with regards to his/her schoolwork and/or homework.

...A lot of the parents in my class, they know their children's problems and they work with them as best they can at home. So they set up their own programme at home. So they've set up their own programme at home (sic)... (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 361).

One of the concerns that came through in the interview with Moira is the fact that there is a lack of parental involvement at that school.

Mmm. Especially the parents (sic) are not involved in their children's education. They should be involved... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2129).

In the interview Moira expressed her frustration at the fact that the parents do not seem to be interested in their children's education. It seems that some parents cannot pay school fees as they are unemployed.

...most of them they don't pay school fees... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2149).

However, the school attempts to encourage the parents to be involved with the school by contributing time, for example: spending time reading with learners or assisting with the vegetable garden.

...because we usually say if a parent is not working, then he can come to school, we have many things... maybe he want (sic) to provide the tablecloth and all this. (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 2155).

The educator, Moira, also mentioned that parents from this school seem not to accept responsibility for their learner's behaviour. According to Moira, the parents state that the learner misbehaviour is because the learner is raised by a grandparent.

I even call the parents, but they say, "he is just like that (sic) because he stays with the granny"... (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1911).

It seems that, according to Moira's experience, one possible reason for lack of parental involvement at Moira's school could be due to the fact that parents do not seem to know what ADHD is. Therefore, if learners are left undiagnosed parents will remain uninformed of ADHD. That is, if a parent finds out that his/her child has ADHD subsequently the parent would be given information about the disorder from the health professional. Thus, if a learner remains undiagnosed then the parent will remain unaware of the disorder. Lack of education on ADHD could result in the parents not being kept informed regarding ADHD, not recognising the importance of education and their involvement in the learners learning.

6.2.6 *Sharing Information*

The educator, Moira, explained that the educators at the school do share information of learners at the beginning of the school year, but not throughout the school year. Although the educators make use of learner profiles, it seems that being able to discuss a learner's behaviour "prepares" the educator. If however, learner profiles have not been received from the learner's former school the educator is required to find out that information in the classroom.

RESEARCHER: And do you use learner profiles in your...?

MOIRA: Yes, I do... But if usually they are from outside you don't get them (sic). (2054). Because the, the (sic) previous teacher will come to you and explain to you, "this one is just like this." (sic) But the new one that are (sic) from outside, no one will tell you about them... (sic). (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1933).

It seems that sharing information between educators and through learner profiles, assists the educator in feeling "prepared". It appears as if the educator feels that being prepared is strongly linked to being able to cope with learners who may have ADHD. Feeling prepared as expressed by Moira seems to be linked to feeling empowered in the classroom.

6.2.7 *Explaining Medication to Other Learners*

One of the "stories" that Sally conveyed that needs mention, is how she was able to explain to another learner why some learners needed to take medication at break time. At break time the educator (Sally) issues medication to learners who have ADHD. She indicated that a learner, who does not have ADHD, asked her why they needed medication. The educator explained to the learner why other learners needed medication, being sensitive ensuring that they would not be labelled. The fact that the taking medication remained a "non-issue" illustrates the communication ability of the educator.

I remember last year I had one of the girls that was very confused why everybody else, or why some of the kids in the classroom get medication and she doesn't. Can she also bring her tablets to school. And she didn't have any idea of what it was

about. So I think it must just become a non-issue. Well I explained to her it's to help them think in the day. She said, oh but I can think, and perhaps I don't need it. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 416).

6.3 GENERAL IMPRESSIONS- COMPARING SALLY'S AND MOIRA'S EXPERIENCES

During the interview, I, as researcher and psychologist, got the impression that Sally is attempting to do as much as she can to assist all learners. It seems that being “prepared” plays more of an important role for the educators from the township schools. The coping strategies that are used in the schools, for example “*keep them busy*” are creative and necessary in order to cope. It seems that educators experience grouping as not working effectively, even though it is recommended to assist educators manage classrooms. This seems to be true for all the educators interviewed in this study.

As stated above, one educator, Sally related more personal information after the interview. It seems, therefore, that Sally related more to the researcher, than Moira did. One possible reason is that Sally is white, as am I, the researcher. Other factors that could have influenced Sally sharing personal information with me is that we speak English as a first language and cultural factors. As race, language and culture could have been factors that allowed Sally and I to relate to one another, unfortunately the same factors could have been barriers to relating with Moira and I. Therefore, race, language and culture could have been why Moira was unable to ask directly for assistance. Moira could have been influenced in the interview to give certain answers due to factors like the race, language and culture differences. Thus, my race, language and culture, as a researcher/person, could have influenced the interviews and therefore the kind of data collected from the 17 different educators interviewed. It seems, from the transcribed data and interpretation thereof, that my race, language and culture as researcher/person could have prevented the educators from being able to relate to me. It could have prevented the educators from feeling that they could have shared more information, including experiences with me.

Information was shared to get an understanding of how educators experience learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. From this comparison between the experiences of Sally and Moira it seems that there are commonalities and differences in the experiences. It appears that different educators have different experiences within different contexts. The context of the school and classrooms seem to affect the experiences of the educators. This is seen in how much class work or homework they give learners, parent involvement and the medication of learners.

6.4 THE NARRATIVE

According to Moen (2006) narrative research in which educators' voices are heard in their stories of experience offers an opportunity to present the complexity of teaching to readers and to stakeholders (such a principal's educators, teacher training institutions). A narrative can contribute to an understanding of a phenomenon as it provides the opportunity to engage a listener/reader in that experience from a safe distance (McAllister, 2001). In the re-telling of past experiences, it allows for reconstructing of a narrative in different ways that incorporates different perspectives on past events that may lead to an understanding of present experiences which could influence future events (Birch & Miller, 2000).

A narrative, as a story, has a plot, a beginning, middle and an end that describes a series of events or experiences that have happened (McCance, McKenna & Boo Re, 2001). The narrative that is developed should take into consideration the context (psychological context as described in chapter 3, and the cultural context) within which it is placed. The contextual features the story assists in generating a rich narrative.

The following narrative is based on the themes that were extracted from the interviews. The themes were used as the basis for the 're-storying' of the participants/ educators experiences as it was verified by the educators (Creswell, 2002). In understanding the experiences of the participants/educators, the knowledge that has been extracted from the interviews can be expressed in a narrative (Thorne, 2000).

I have chosen to write the narrative in the first person, making the narrative/story seem more of a personal story. Also, I have selected to use words that are commonly used in everyday language. Therefore, educators are referred to as teachers and learners are referred to as learners.



6.4.1 A story of a teacher's classroom experience

Dear Reader

I would like to share a story with you, a story of a teacher. I am a teacher who works in a primary school that is situated in a city in South Africa. The school is what is called a township school. The majority of the children in the school are black. Most of the children in my class are black, a handful are Indian or coloured. I teach grade two, in Foundation phase. There are about 35 children in my class. Many of the children that come to this school are poor; their parents are unemployed and cannot afford to pay school fees.

Although the school is in a poor community, the school is resourced due to the fund raising projects that take place at the school. The school has a feeding scheme for the children who cannot afford to buy food from the tuck shop. The school has a soccer field and a tennis court that doubles up as a netball court. There is also a computer room, where the children can use the computers that have been donated to the school.

I am well liked by the children and I think that is because I try to go the extra mile to help them with their class work. I like the children in my class and take the time to get to know each child. The children know that if they have any problems, either with their schoolwork or at home, they can speak to me as I will listen to them.

I try to get to know all the parents of the children in my class. I meet all the parents at parents evening, which happens once a term. I discuss the strengths of each child with the parent, as well as the areas where they need more support. The parents listen and promise to help their children where they can. But for various reasons they aren't always able to assist their children with their homework.

The children in my class are all different. They come from different home backgrounds; they have different personalities and different abilities. There are some children that are well behaved, they do their work and even at times get to help me around the classroom. Then there are some children that are more challenging to me as a teacher. There are the children who seem to be very busy and find it difficult to concentrate; they often cannot apply the work that is being taught. They seem to be very slow in applying themselves to a task. And sometimes they seem to apply themselves to a task and try to get it finished as fast as possible, even though the work is not correctly done. These children are very busy. They can, at times, annoy other children, by, for instance, taking their pencils from their desk. Sometimes they turn around in their seat to start a conversation with another child, forgetting that they have work to do in front of them.

I try my best in being prepared for all my classes. I prepare my lesson plans, knowing that I will need to give extra work to some of the children. I know that I will need to give extra work to those children who find it difficult to concentrate. I need to keep them busy, so that they do not distract other children in my class.



These children also often have to ask me, the teacher, to repeat instructions to a task. The child does not appear to listen to me. Sometimes they attempt the task on their own. Sometimes they ask me or a fellow classmate to help them with the task. At times the task is not completed, as the child is distracted by someone or something else in the classroom. There are also times where the child will finish before the rest of the class. I need to be close to this child and make sure that he or she gets to do her work. This means that I often spend more time with this child than I would with the rest of the class. I spend more time explaining the task or instructions to this child than I would with the rest of the class.

As a result I feel that this child can be very demanding and needy. I feel responsible for the whole class and therefore I feel that it is unfair that one child should get more attention than the rest of the class. I feel guilty that the rest of the class does not receive as much attention as this child.

When the child finishes the task, then I need to ensure that he or she is kept busy. I give the child extra work that will help him/her for tomorrow's tasks, give him/her extra work or even ask to collect books and clean up the classroom. This child needs to be kept busy at all times. If I do not keep the child busy, I know that he/she will distract other children.

Occasionally when the child does not finish his/her task, I need to set the task aside and carry on with the lesson plan for the day. The task that is uncompleted will need to be completed after school. This way the child does not lose out on school work.

The whole class is required to write down their homework. The children need to complete their homework under the supervision of a parent or guardian. However, the child that requires more attention in the classroom often comes to school with incomplete homework. I need to reproach and discipline the child. The child will say that he or she forgot to do his/her homework. Or forgot to ask his/her mother to help him/her with homework. After a whole school term of incomplete work I feel that I need to perhaps talk to the parents of the child. The child's parents are asked to supervise the child's homework and school work.

The child demands constant attention from me. The child is often disruptive in the class, in that he/she cannot sit still and cannot concentrate. I need to be fully prepared for all the tasks and for the behavioural situations that may take place in the classroom. I feel that it is stressful and difficult to teach such a child. Yet I understand that this child, as do all the children in my class, requires my attention, understanding, tolerance and patience, even if it is hard to do at times.

There are other teachers in the school who have had more experience teaching and, particularly teaching such children. I find that I can get tips and hints on how to assist and manage the behaviour of these children from other teachers. The teachers get together and are able to share their experiences and feelings of teaching and assisting children. These meetings only happen once in a while when we get time in our busy schedule. One of



the other teachers is considered an experienced teacher with working with children who demand so much from the teacher. She is able to give me some advice and information that adds to my understanding of the child.

One of the issues that arise from the meeting between teachers is that parents of children need to be more participative and involved in the children's learning. I realise that the other teachers also have difficulty with getting parents involved. I discover that the children who seem to be so challenging in class are the children that need their parents to be more involved in their learning.

The teachers discuss options of finding out how to get further specialists to inform all the teachers on how to deal with such children. The teachers talk about opportunities to get parents more involved, including asking education specialists from the Department of Education to help us.

Knowing that I can rely on the support of colleague's means that I can give my best, as a teacher, to all the children.

Yours truly,

A South African teacher of children who may have ADHD

6.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion to this chapter, the findings have been presented as a comparison between two educators' experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms and lastly as a narrative from the themes that emerged from the textual data. The comparison of the educators' experiences allows for understanding of how "Sally" and "Maira" perceive and create meaning out of their experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classroom. The narrative allows for the voices of all seventeen educators to be reflected as a narrative that tells of their experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. It seems that the two educators have had different experiences regarding learners who may have ADHD in their classroom. It appears that both educators have experienced frustration and feel challenged teaching learner who may have ADHD, recognising that theory and practice of teaching is very different. The educators have had different experiences managing the class work and homework of learners who may have ADHD. Both Maira and Sally recognise that parental involvement is important for teaching and learning to take place. Lastly, both educators feel that information regarding learners who may have ADHD needs to be shared between colleagues. The following chapter, chapter 7, expands on the findings of the study.

---oOo---

Chapter 7: Conclusion to the Study

7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore educators' experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. The literature available on ADHD is made up mostly of medical research (Brenton, 1994; Brocki & Bohlin, 2004; Brown 2000, Brown, 2006; Burnett *et al.*, 2001; Levy *et al.*, 2006; Miller *et al.*, 2006; Nadder *et al.*, 2002; Nadder *et al.*, 2001; Séguin *et al.*, 1999, Whitmore *et al.*, 1999). The literature on ADHD is discussed in chapter 2. The literature on ADHD assisted me in being able to define a research problem, together with previous discussions I had had with educators. As much of the literature available consists of medical and/or neurological studies one can assume that the medical model is often a lens, through which ADHD is understood and contrasted in literature that is strongly located within the training of medical doctors and other health professionals. The medical model proposes that a learner needs to be understood to 'suffer' from a disorder; that his/her misbehaviour is pathological. The misbehaviour that is construed as pathological could lead to further anti-social behaviour such as substance abuse and criminal offences. The medical model constructs the misbehaviour as being treated with pharmaceutical therapy.

Although there are many ways to view ADHD, a researcher or psychologist can easily lose sight of the fact that learners who may have ADHD are children. ADHD is rooted in a neurological disorder and has other complex co-morbidities. As a researcher I question how and why the symptoms are labelled as deficits. Learners who may have ADHD are viewed as being deficient, when there are certain aspects of their behaviour and attention that may be lacking, in no way does it render them deficient.

This study focused on the educators' experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. However, learners who may have ADHD, are situated within a system of different levels of interaction in their social world. Learners who may have ADHD cannot only be understood in terms of their medical/neurological disorder. It seems that learners who may have ADHD in a classroom can be best understood within an ecological systemic view where the medical model is not disregarded, but included. The medical model adds to the understanding of how the neurological may contribute to possible causes and treatment options of the disorder. Educator experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms reflect that their knowledge of ADHD is not viewed from a medical model. Educator knowledge of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms, therefore, can be

addressed at a level where they can meet the challenges in their classrooms. Learners who may have ADHD can be viewed within different systems and settings (refer to figure 10, below).

In this study the educators' experiences were framed within the ecological systemic view of learners who may have ADHD in the classroom. Their experiences, as reflected in the themes in chapter 5, reflect their knowledge, training and instructional practices, including their classroom management methods. Their experiences, as revealed in the themes, comparison and narrative in chapters 5 and 6, also reflect their knowledge of ADHD and the network of interactions that take place between the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems.

A narrative research design was selected for this study, as its focus is to be able to describe personal stories and discuss person's experiences (Creswell, 2002). The educators' personal experience of learners who may have ADHD in his/her classroom then is the focus, in order to be able to understand, explore and discuss the 'educational problem'. The 'educational problem' as understood in this study is educator experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. Therefore, the research question: **How do educators experience learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms?** and sub-questions were developed. The sub-questions are (1) How do educators experience teaching and learning the learner who may have ADHD?; (2) How do educators manage their classrooms with learners in their classrooms, who may have ADHD? and (3) How has the experience of educating learners who may have ADHD influenced or affected the educator? (In chapter 4 the narrative research design and research questions are clarified).

In this study, 17 educators from three primary schools in the Tshwane area were interviewed in-depth to have their experiences of learners who may have ADHD collected, analysed and interpreted and written into a narrative. In chapter 4 a comprehensive discussion on the research methodology is provided. Schools were asked to participate in the study, using purposive and convenience sampling. The schools were situated in different areas in Tshwane and therefore have different socio-economic and social settings. A description of the schools and the educators/participants are given in chapter 5. Informed consent was obtained from each educator for the interviews that were conducted which is explained in chapter 4.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed into textual data, which were then analysed using content analysis (as described fully in chapter 4). From the data, emerged five themes which were developed further into a narrative. The themes and the narrative, therefore, reflect the educators' experiences.

The themes that emerged are: (1) “They are not treated the same as other learners”, meaning that educators realise that they were not treating learners the same, giving learners who may have ADHD more individual attention than others; (2) “Keep them busy”; which was interpreted as educators using creative methods in managing the learners in their classrooms; (3) “It does challenge you, we’re not perfect” was interpreted as educator feeling that they are challenged with learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms; (4) “It needs sharing as teachers and help from a specialist” interpreted as educators feeling that they need to be able to share information between colleagues and needing support and assistance from education specialists and (5) “They don’t pull their part” which was seen as educators perception of parents lack of involvement (further elaboration on the themes is in chapter 5).

Two educators’ experiences from vastly different contexts were also compared and contrasted. From the comparison of these educators it seems that although there are different experiences in certain aspects of teaching and learning learners who may ADHD in their classrooms, they demonstrated similar need, namely those of information shared between colleagues, as well as assistance from parents, the community and the education specialists (refer to chapter 6 for more details). (The educators/participants confidentiality was kept through the use of assigning a number/letter or a pseudonym, as described in chapters 5 and 6).

This chapter provides the final conclusion to this study and includes the following sections: a summary of the findings of study in relation to the research questions; reflections on the study in relation to the methodology and the findings in relation to the conceptual framework; limitations of the study; strengths of the study; trustworthiness of the data; conclusions and recommendations combined with the implications for practice, policy and research.

7.2 A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to determine what and how educators make sense of learners who may have ADHD in their classroom. Understanding how the educators make sense of their experiences of learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms was explored through the themes that emerged, the comparison of Sally’s and Moira’s experiences and the narrative. The research question and sub-questions were designed to explore how educators experience learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms.

The Table 3 is a matrix, where the themes are a response to the sub-questions. Thus, the first question posed is: How do educators manage their classrooms with learners who may

have ADHD in their classrooms? Three themes that emerged seem to answer this question, namely Theme 2: “Keep them busy”, Theme 1: “They are not treated the same as other learners” and Theme 5: “They don’t pull their part.” The following section, 7.3.1-7.3.3 explains the themes and how they answer the research questions as illustrated by table 3.

Table 3: Themes that address the sub-questions

Sub-questions	How do educators manage their classrooms with learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms?	How do educators experience teaching and learning of the learner who may have ADHD?	How does the experience of educating learners who may have ADHD influence them as educators?
Theme	<u>Theme 2</u> : “Keep them busy”	<u>Theme 3</u> : “It does challenge you we’re not perfect.”	<u>Theme 4</u> : “It needs sharing as teachers and help from a specialist.”
	<u>Theme 1</u> : “They are not treated the same as other learners.”	<u>Theme 4</u> : “It needs sharing as teachers and help from a specialist.”	
	<u>Theme 5</u> : “They don’t pull their part.”	<u>Theme 5</u> : “They don’t pull their part.”	<u>Theme 5</u> : “They don’t pull their part.”

7.2.1 Sub-question 1: How do educators manage their classrooms with learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms?

In answering the research question “How do educators manage their classrooms with learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms?” Firstly, it seems that educators keep learners who may have ADHD busy with tasks (academic and non-academic). Secondly they seem to give more individual attention to the learner who may have ADHD in their classroom. Lastly, the educators feel that parents do not assist educators. An explanation of how the themes answer the research sub-question follows.

The first theme is “*keep them busy*”. A common strategy appeared to be to use extra work, which is either academic activities or non-academic tasks around the classroom, to keep the learner busy so as not to distract others in the classroom. The classroom management method of “*keep(ing) them busy*” appears to be a response to the educator’s experience in the classroom as well as the educator knowledge.

They will work up to a point and then they don't want to work any more so you have to keep them busy with something that they like to keep them away from the other learners or making as noise or being disruptive. (Participant 1b, speaker turner unit: 129).

McFarland *et al.* (1994) believes that the educator is responsible for making the learning environment accommodating for all learners. It seems that educators accommodate the learning environment by “keeping them busy.”

The second theme that answers the question: How do educators manage their classrooms with learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms? is “*They are not treated the same as other learners*”. Educators are aware that learners who may have ADHD are being treated differently to their peers. The educators feel guilty as they know that learners who may have ADHD receive more attention than their peers.

I try to give them individual attention, but sometimes I feel it's not very fair for those who don't have it. (Participant 2b, speaker turner unit: 1522-1524).

Therefore, educators also seem to give more attention to learners who may have ADHD in trying to manage their classrooms. The extra attention that they may give learners who may have ADHD influences the teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom, as discussed in chapter 5. Therefore, the instructional practices, such as grouping discussed in chapter 6, that the educator implements are affected (as depicted in figure 10), as other learners may receive less individual attention.

“*They don't pull their part*” is the third theme. This theme seems to reflect how educators feel about parents of learners who may have ADHD.

Parents today don't teach routine and structure. They run circles around the children so they cannot plan and organise for themselves. And because the learner has a problem at home, they just take, they don't allow the learner to do anything, in desperation they'll do everything for the learner instead of structuring and teaching that learner how to do I (sic), they just give it up and then the learners are spoilt. (Participant 1a, speaker turner unit: 37).

Thus, it seems that educator's believe that if parents were able “*to pull their part*” by providing routine and structure at home, then the learner who may have ADHD would not be so “spoilt” at school. Parents do not seem to assist learners with their homework; in getting their child assessed and diagnosed and not providing routine and structure at home. This is discussed further in chapter 5.

Looking at the conceptual framework, in figure 10, the question, “How do educators manage their classrooms with learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms?” is illustrated. It seems that educators manage their classrooms by the classroom management methods (keeping learners who may have ADHD busy with academic or non-academic activities), instructional practices (giving learners who may have ADHD individual attention) and by involved parents (situated in the exo-system).

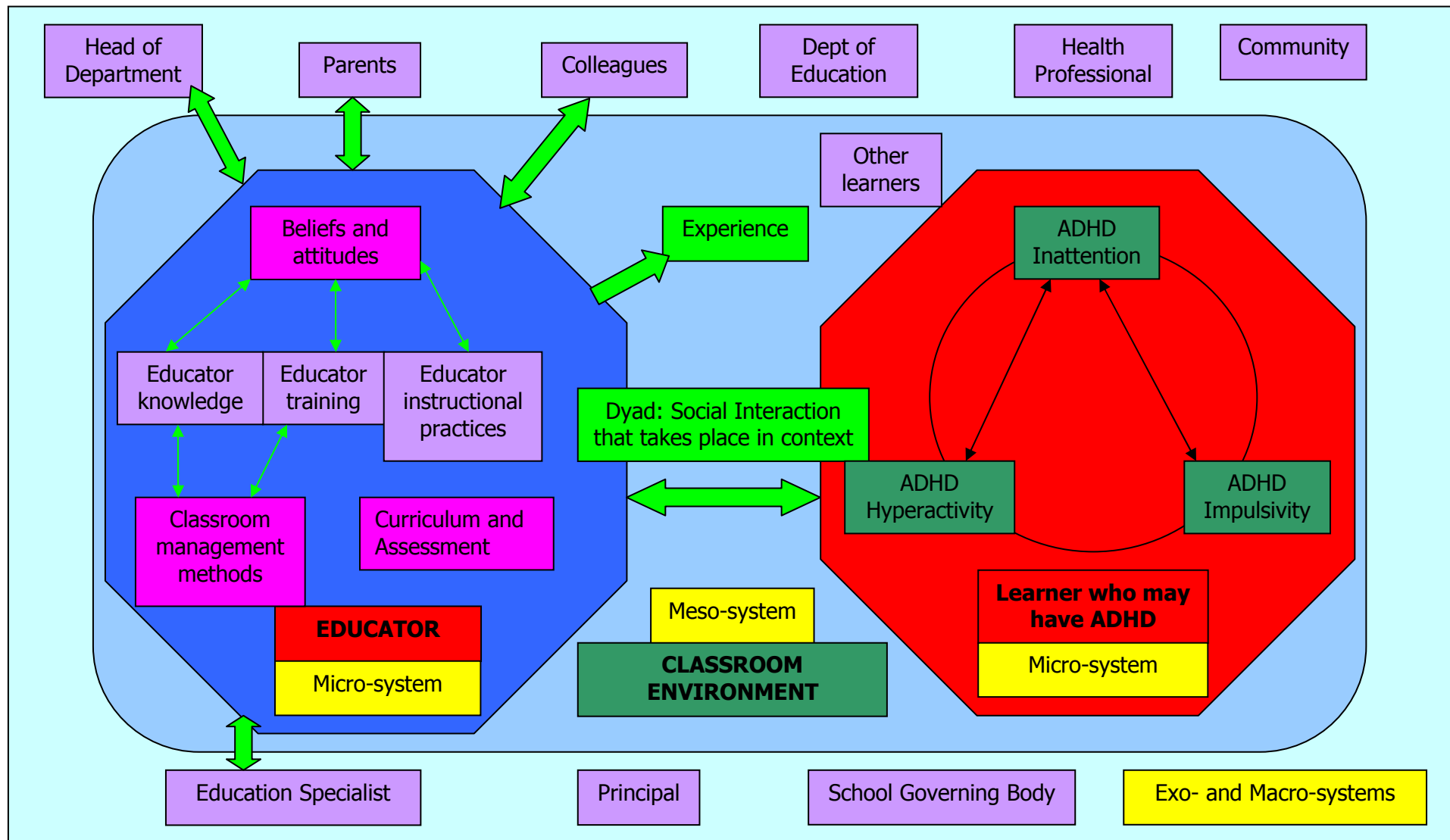


Figure 10: An ecological systemic view of learners who may have ADHD in the classroom

7.2.2 **Sub-question 2: How do educators experience teaching and learning of the learner who may have ADHD?**

In answering the research question “How do educators experience teaching and learning of the learner who may have ADHD?” Firstly, it seems that educators are challenged by learners who may have ADHD. Secondly the educators feel that educators should be sharing experiences and information that relate to ADHD and that they are assisted by an education specialist. Lastly, the educators feel that parents do not assist educators. An explanation of how the themes answer the research sub-question follows here below.

The first theme that appears to answer the second sub-question: How do educators experience teaching and learning of the learner who may have ADHD? is “*It does challenge you we’re not perfect*”. In this theme educators stated that they feel challenged by the learners who may have ADHD in their classroom. It seems that educators appear to be challenged on their classroom management skills and their knowledge of ADHD provided by the training that they have received. (This is discussed further in chapter 5).

Sho (sic), for the first time it was difficult – I, I felt like I, I (sic) don’t know what I’m doing in this class. I, I was so, so nervous (sic)... (Participant 2d, speaker turner unit: 1528).

The disruptions that take place in the classroom could impact on the learning and teaching taking place (Seidman, 2005). Learners who may have ADHD are viewed by educators as being challenging (Dietz & Montague, 2006; Holz & Lessing, 2002; Lucangeli & Cabrele, 2006; Volk *et al.*, 2005). If an educator is challenged in terms of their knowledge, instructional practices and training it may challenge his/her beliefs and attitudes towards learners who may have ADHD.

The second theme that may answer the second sub-questions is: “*It needs sharing as teachers and help from a specialist*”. It seems that educators feel that they need assistance for managing learners who may have ADHD. Thus, the experience that they have had teaching learners who may have had ADHD elicited a request from the educator for assistance either from within the school (exo-system) or outside of the school (macro-system), from a specialist.

The last theme that responds to the second sub-question is “*they don’t pull their part*”. It seems that educators feel that parents could be more involved with the learner who may have ADHD.

Most definitely. I think if it is not for the parents’ involvement there is not much you can do as a teacher. They need help with their homework, with remembering to bring things to school. (Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 379).

Parents can contribute to the teaching and learning of a learner who may have ADHD in different ways. If a parent does not recognise that the learner may have ADHD, the learner may not receive academic or emotional support needed (Sanders, 2002; Van Beijsterveldt *et al.*, 2005). The most common example is that parents can assist learners with homework. Parents, therefore, are responsible for the continuity of the teaching and learning at home (Bailey, 2000). However, as stated in chapter 3 parents' perceptions and interpretations of misbehaviour could determine how they seek out treatment for their learners (Bussing *et al.*, 2003).

It appears that educators experience teaching and learning as being challenging. Within the educator, the micro-system, as depicted in Figure 10, the beliefs and attitudes, educator knowledge, educator training and educator instructional could influence how he/she experiences "challenging" learners who may have ADHD.

7.2.3 *Sub-question 3: How does the experience of educating learners who may have ADHD influence them as educators?*

In answering the research question "How does the experience of educating learners who may have ADHD influence them as educators?" Firstly, it seems that educators feel that educators should be sharing experiences and information that relate to ADHD and that they are assisted by an education specialist and lastly, the educators feel that parents do not assist educators. An explanation of how the themes answer the research sub-question is given.

There are two themes that may be considered a reply to the third sub-question. The first theme is *"It needs sharing as teachers and help from a specialist"*.

And I think it needs sharing as teachers (sic)... Mmm, you must share with others in order to broaden your knowledge. (Participant 2c, speaker turner unit: 1304).

Educators feel that their own knowledge and training is not sufficient in being able to manage learners who may have ADHD. If educators feel that they need to share experiences and knowledge of ADHD with each other, then learners who may have ADHD cannot stand in isolation. Learners who may have ADHD cannot be understood in isolation if educators feel that parents are "not pulling their part". Educators can feel unprepared to deal with ADHD and disruptive behaviour (Mitchem, 2005). Learners who may have ADHD cannot be understood in isolation if the educators request assistance from specialists in the field. Therefore, it seems that learners who may have ADHD are understood and probably best assisted within an ecological system. The educator who teaches learners who may have ADHD is understood and probably best understood within a context of inter-connecting systems.

The second theme that answers the third sub-question is “*they don’t pull their part*”. It seems that if parents were able to be involved with their child who may have ADHD, educators would be less affected by their classroom experiences (Bailey 2000; Bussing *et al.*, 2003).

Educators’ experiences of learners who may have ADHD could also be affected by other members of the school (exo-system) and outside of the school (macro-system). That is if other members of the school were able “*to pull their part*” and “*sharing as teachers*”, educators would be able to receive information and support within the school structure. For example, if one educator received training on ADHD, he/she may be able to share that information with educators in the school. Also, the school may decide to form partnerships with organisations like ADHASA (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa). However, this would mean that one educator needs to take the initiative to attend training courses and workshops. Outside of the school structure, the Department of Education, could contribute by providing training and support through education specialists.

Educators feel that they need to share information with their colleagues and the support of an education specialist. Colleagues, principal, head of department and school governing body could assist educators in contributing their own knowledge and training. Parents, the Department of Education, education specialist and health care professional could also support the educator, as discussed in chapter 3. Lastly, educators feel that the cooperation of the parents would assist the teaching and learning. Referring to the conceptual framework, in Figure 10, it appears that different persons, within the ecological model, fulfil a role in contributing to the teaching and learning of learners.

In answering the main research question “How do educators experience learners who may have ADHD in their classroom” it seems that educators have devised creative methods to manage learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms (*Theme 2*: “Keep them busy”). Literature (McFarland *et al.*, 1994) recommends that learners who may have ADHD be given less class work or homework. Giving a learner who may have ADHD less work will allow him/her to feel that the task is achievable. (This is explained in chapter 6). Glass (2000) recommends that non-traditional methods of teaching and learning be considered including allowing a learner who may have ADHD be able to work at his/her won pace.

Educators do feel that they treat learners differently (*Theme 1*: “They are not treated the same as other learners.”). Literature states that learners who may have ADHD are treated differently by their educators (Calhoun *et al.*, 1997; Lane *et al.*, 2003) and are treated differently to their peers (Wagner *et al.*, 2006). Calhoun *et al.* (1997) found that that an educator’s tolerance level of ADHD behaviour will affect how a learner, who is perceived to

have ADHD, will be treated in the classroom. Lane *et al.*, (2003) states that learners who behave in accordance with an educator's social and behaviour expectations are more likely to get a positive response from the educator and from his/her peers.

One of the consequences seems to be that educators feel challenged (*Theme 3*: "It does challenge you we're not perfect.") and feel uncomfortable knowing that some learners get more individual attention. Educators view learners who may have ADHD as being challenging. Behavioural disorders, that are viewed as being challenging, like Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder often co-morbid with ADHD (Dietz & Montague, 2006; Lucangeli & Cabrele, 2006; Volk *et al.*, 2005). Co-morbidities such as behavioural and learning disorders are explained in chapter 2.

Educators feel that they are not being supported in managing learners who may have ADHD (*Theme 5*: "They don't pull their part."). Literature emphasise the support and role of parents in contributing to the academic success of the learner who may have ADHD (Bailey, 2000; Van Beijsterveldt *et al.*, 2005; Sanders, 2002). The role of parents is discussed in chapter 2. Educators feel that they do not have support or assistance from their colleagues, school, parents, and the community and education specialist (*Theme 4*: "It needs sharing as teachers and help from a specialist."). It seems that the findings from this study seem to be similar to what has been found in literature. Literature (Capper *et al.*, 2000; Polou & Norwich, 2002; Webb & Myrick, 2003) recommend educators attend workshops or access resources that are aimed at addressing ADHD (or Emotional and Behavioural Disorders). Sharing information between educators and education specialists is important that is true regardless of ADHD (Mitchem, 2005; Roffey 2004). The educator role, educator knowledge of ADHD, educator self-perception, classroom interventions and behaviour modifications and classroom management is discussed in chapter 3. The following section includes a reflection on aspects of the study, like the findings and methodology.

7.3 REFLECTION ON ASPECTS OF THE STUDY

7.3.1 Reflections on the Findings in lieu of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, which is built on the previous literature, is presented in chapter 3 but it is also presented here as figure 10. An understanding of the learner with ADHD within his/her social and learning world may highlight the fact that the learner can function with the 'deficits' at school. In understanding the learner in his/her social and learning world may explain the 'deficit' as being unique or individual to each learner. The context that the educator finds himself/herself in may determine how he/she manages learners who may have ADHD in his/her classroom. The unique context of the classroom, school and

community allows the educator to implement classroom management methods that are applicable and fitting for the context. The ‘fit’ and applicability of classroom management methods (and interventions) can only be effective with the necessary knowledge of ADHD. Therefore, an educator can apply effective classroom management methods and interventions if he/she has knowledge of ADHD.

However, as seen in the findings of this study (in chapter 5 and 6 and summarised in chapter 7) educators in the South African context have limited knowledge of ADHD and have requested that they receive assistance in this regard. [*Okay. I just wanted to ask if we can get a help from the specialist at least once a month, because we are not sure we are doing the correct thing (sic)... (Participant 2c, speaker turner unit: 1320)*].

In terms of the conceptual framework, the different micro-; meso- exo- and macro-systems influence the educator. Within the micro-system the educators inadequate or lack of knowledge could be influenced by inadequate educator training. [*So I have, you have had to (sic), I have had to learn how adapt to actually teaching children, because the theory of it is one thing, but the actual practical teaching is a different thing. (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 430)*]. Inadequate educator knowledge could also influence educator instructional practices. This is reflected in educators’ classroom management methods, like keeping learners who may have ADHD busy and also by treating learners differently, giving some learners more individual attention than others. Educator’s classroom management and instructional practices could be influenced by the educator’s beliefs and attitudes of himself/herself and also of the learners who may have ADHD. [*Yes, it is, it’s difficult because you’ll be trying, and then sometimes you’ll feel like you will just kick (sic), but you can’t you know (laughter). He is just harassing you, but it’s not good, it just make me sometimes just get fed up (sic), just say “sit down”, that’s the only way that you can concentrate. (Moira/Participant 2f, speaker turner unit: 1917-1919)*].

ADHD is a complex disorder, as described in chapter 2, and thus specific knowledge is needed to be able to assist learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. As mentioned above in section 7.1 and also discussed in chapter 2, in order for the educator to understand the complexities of ADHD the educator would need specific training and knowledge. As depicted in figure 10, the learner who may have ADHD could present behaviour that stems from inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. In order for the educator to adjust or accommodate his/her instructional practices or classroom management methods he/she may need to understand the prevalence, neuro-psychological causes, treatment and possible interventions of ADHD. Thus, as stated in 7.1 the medical model should not be excluded because of pathologising learners who may have a ‘disorder’. Although certain aspects of

their behaviour and attention may be lacking, in no way does it render learners who may have ADHD as being deficient. Therefore, medical model and alternative approaches to ADHD can be incorporated into an approach such as the ecological model. An ecological model can take into account different theoretical explanations of ADHD, considering the contexts that learners' who may have ADHD finds himself/herself.

Within the meso-system which is the setting of the classroom the interactions between the educator and learner who may have ADHD occur. The educator comes into direct contact with the learner who may have ADHD. Within the context of the classroom, the learner who may have ADHD and the complexities that may co-morbid with it is presented to the educator. Lack of knowledge on ADHD could contribute to the educator feeling that he/she needs support and assistance from other colleagues and from an education specialist.

Within the meso-system, the educator encounters the parent/s of the learner who may have ADHD. The parents contribute to the teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom. This is reflected in the parents assisting the learner who may have ADHD with his/her homework, seeking out remedial education where needed and seeking out health care professionals that can provide extra treatment and care where needed. However, in order for the educator to be successful in the teaching and learning of the learner who may have ADHD, the educator needs to be able to communicate with the parent/s. The educator cannot teach learners who may have ADHD in isolation, without knowing and gaining the support of the learner's parents. Thus, parents need to be able to *"pull their part"*.

The meso- and macro- system could provide the educator with specialised knowledge and training regarding ADHD. Thus, the support that the educators receive from the exo- and macro-systems (for example parents and the Department of Education) may influence his/her knowledge of learners who may have ADHD. Also, the educator teaches within a school, where he/she may receive support and assistance from colleagues, the head of department, and principal.

The community, which could include the local district office of the Department of Education, education specialist and the health care professional, could contribute to the support of the educator. The Department of Education and the health care professional could contribute to the care and treatment of the learner who may have ADHD. The relationship between the health care system and the public schools need to be improved in order for learners who may have ADHD to receive the proper care and treatment. The meso- and exo- system within the ecological of the school and community influence the educator's experiences within the

classroom and therefore also impacts on the learner who may have ADHD. (Refer to figure 10).

Although, the interconnectedness between the educator and the meso- and macro-system do exist, it needs to be strengthened. By this I mean that the communication and the support that exists between the educator and the Department of Education, education specialist, the health care professional and community need to be strengthened in order for the educator to feel that he/she is being supported. As stated above, the macro-system, that is the Department of Education, education specialist, the health care professional could provide the educator with specialised knowledge and training on ADHD that is not currently being adequately provided.

7.3.2 *Reflection on Methodology*

The research design and research methods that were implemented in this study were presented and discussed in chapter 4. Narrative research design was chosen as it allowed for participants/educators experiences to be reflected in a narrative. Narrative research design allowed for the experiences of the educators to be interpreted into a narrative. This narrative is presented in chapter 6. The narrative provides a format for readers such as principals, parents, ADHD support groups, and teacher training institutions to understand what educators experience in the classroom. The narratives of the educators may, therefore, inform relevant persons.

Qualitative research, and indeed any research, should be clear and transparent to the participants. Initial contact (that is requesting to do the study via facsimile) with the educators was followed up with a meeting with the Head of Department and/or educators explaining the study in person; providing them with the opportunity to ask questions. A possible limitation to the study is that the **interviews were conducted in English**. The research was made as clear as possible to the educators', however, an interpreter could have assisted the process. Most of the educators, 10 out of the 17, that were interviewed speak an African language as their first language and therefore, using English in the interviews could have been a limitation to the study. However, if the interviews could have been conducted in the participants'/educators' first language, the study could have yielded richer data. An interpreter could have communicated all correspondence with the educator/participants in their mother tongue, which could have improved their understanding of what the study was all about.

An interpreter could have, also, assisted with the interviews, providing more clarity with the questions. The answers could have been richer if the educators were given the opportunity to answer in his/her mother tongue. It was important for me to be able to reflect their experiences as truthfully as possible. This was difficult to achieve during the interview process due to the language differences. Thus, the fact that the interviews were conducted in English could have been a limitation to this study.

The **member checking process** with the educators allowed me as researcher to explain the transcripts and themes. I had the opportunity to explain the transcripts and themes individually to 11 of the 17 educators interviewed. This process meant that the transcripts and themes reflected the experiences of educators in a truthful manner, as educators were given the opportunity to change their answers.

In this study there were a number of limitations. A major limitation could be the use of purposive or convenience **sampling**. The narratives of participants could have been different if schools or participants were randomly chosen. The schools that did participate were from different areas that contributed to the varied responses and experiences. However, the schools and contexts could have varied even greater if a random sampling method was used.

One of the limitations that transpired is that, although field notes accompanied the interviews as data collection methods, **other data collection methods could have been included**. For example, classroom observation over a period of time could have added richer qualitative data to the interview data.

One of the strengths of the study could include the fact that **17 educators were interviewed**. The number of interviews substantiates the findings. Thus, different educator experiences were taken account and new insights were gained through the number of interviews that were conducted. Data saturation was not experienced, although there were also more educators (7 educators) from one school. However, it is possible that if more educators were interviewed that data saturation could have been experienced during the analysis and interpretation of the data. Also **a series of interviews** with each of the participants/educators could have yielded richer data. A series of interviews were not conducted with the educators as the interviews were time consuming and the interviews were conducted after school, when educators were either involved with extra-murals or concerned with getting home. (Also permission granted from the schools only allowed for one interview.)

Qualitative data **cannot be generalised** to different situations; therefore one cannot state that all educators feel that learners who may have ADHD are not treated the same as other learners. However, one can assume that similar findings may be found in other schools in similar settings (refer to section 7.5.2). The different contexts of each educator meant that each educator's experience was different. Further research in the rural areas of South Africa may yield interesting results. This is discussed further under the section of recommendations, 7.7.

One limitation to the study that can be stated is that the **learners were not formally diagnosed**. Although there were learners from two schools that had been formally diagnosed, for this study assessments were not conducted. Thus, inferences were drawn from the experiences educators had with learners whom they assumed had ADHD due to their behaviour in the classroom. Therefore, the findings in this study relied heavily on the educator's informal observation of learner behaviour in the classroom.

7.4 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

This study's strengths are discussed in this section. One of the strengths, of this study, includes the fact that **findings in this study have been presented in three different formats**, namely: thematic, comparative and narrative. The different formats allow for the educators' experiences to be expressed and analysed in different ways. The textual data needed to be interpreted in different ways. The coding of the data assisted in the interpretation of the data. However, analysis and interpretation was needed on certain extracts to provide a comparison between educators' experiences. Thus, the *different formats* allow for the experiences to be presented from different perspectives. It also allows for the researcher to make different interpretations, as the textual data is viewed differently.

Although the interviews were guided by the interview schedule (refer to Appendix D) the **interviews were in-depth**. The questions posed to the educators were explained so that the educators could understand what was asked. The interviews were guided by the interview schedule, therefore answers were probed for clarification and understanding. Thus, the interviews were in-depth, in exploring the questions that were put to the participants/educators. The longest interview with an educator was one hour long. The educators were encouraged to express themselves fully.

The **complications of everyday teaching and learning were expressed** by the educators in the interviews. It was not always easy to arrange the interviews and to follow up with member checking. The educators expressed that they were very busy with extra-murals at

about the time that the interviews were conducted. When the member checking was arranged, educators were involved in strikes. One school in particular proved to be difficult, as the educators were not always available for interviews or feedback. This could reflect that educators are busy with teaching, learning and other school activities.

A total number of 17 educators were interviewed. The number of **interviews from different contexts** allowed for rich data to emerge. Thus, different experiences from different contexts (which include different experiences, different training and different classroom management skills) emerged from the interviews. Therefore the number of interviews from different contexts can be considered a strong point of the study.

7.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA

Certain checks were put in place to improve the quality and trustworthiness of the data (Chenail, 1995; Creswell, 2003; Krefting, 1991; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Moen, 2006). The following section is a discussion regarding the trustworthiness of the data.

7.5.1 *Credibility*

7.5.1.1 *Reflexivity*

Throughout the thesis I have recounted the procedures taken in the study. Thus, the thesis reflects openly what occurred in the field with the interviews and with the member checking and with the coding and interpretation of the interview data. Thus, the thesis recounts a 'paper trail' of what steps have been taken throughout the research process. Reflection of the thesis has been included in this chapter under the section, 7.4 overview and reflection of the study.

7.5.1.2 *Member Checking*

The participants/educators were given the opportunity to check transcripts and the themes as described in chapter 5. Each participant/educator was given a copy of his/her own particular interview transcript with a summary of the themes (refer to Appendices I, J and K). Any comments or changes could have been made in writing on the comment and feedback form (refer to Appendices I, J and K). The one-on-one explanation of the themes given to the educators seemed to assist the educators in understanding the purpose of the themes and the study. Of the 17 educators interviewed, 11 educators checked and were happy with the themes and, thus, did not make any changes to their transcripts or themes.

7.5.1.3 *Peer Examination*

The transcripts and themes were also given to a registered psychologist and experienced researcher. The peer reviewer is African and could review the transcripts and themes from an African cultural perspective more especially for those educators who were teaching in an African cultural setting. Some of the issues that transpired from the peer reviewer include:

According to the peer reviewer who read the transcripts it appeared as if the educators did not understand English well, therefore they appeared to lack understanding of the questions posed to them. This came across in the interview and therefore sometimes questions were repeated and explained. The answers to questions, in turn, were also probed for clarity. The peer reviewer also stated that the educators appeared to lack comprehension of what ADHD is, and therefore lacked knowledge regarding teaching methods and ability to manage learners. Some educators were open about their lack of knowledge regarding ADHD. This is also reflected in some of the quotes used in discussion of themes and in the comparison of educators, which is discussed further in chapters 5 and 6. The peer reviewer commented that the educators expressed a lack of confidence in the subject matter. The lack of confidence in being able to teach learners who may have ADHD is reflected in the findings. This is discussed further in the conclusions, section 7.6 here below.

7.5.2 *Transferability*

Transferability is the assumption that data that has been 'interpreted' can be useful in other situations (Krefting, 1991; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Moen, 2006). Although it is unlikely that the same results will be replicated, the findings of this study may be useful in providing assistance and support to the educators and the learners who may have ADHD. The findings may also inform specialists as to what kind of assistance the educators from schools from the Tshwane area require, that are easily applicable in the classroom.

7.5.3 *Dependability*

Atkinson *et al.* (1991) state that the way the researcher presented the process and results, that is keeping to an air of openness contributes to the trustworthiness of the data. This thesis reflects the steps taken in the research process in an open manner. This is reflected in the way that each step taken has been recorded in this thesis.

7.5.4 *Confirmability*

The supervisors acted as auditors in this thesis, checking through the research process. Although my supervisors did not go through the transcriptions to the interviews, the peer reviewer went through the transcriptions thoroughly. The research findings, themes and narratives were confirmed and verified.

7.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section discusses the conclusions that have been deduced from the findings. The conclusions will also be discussed with regards to the implications for practice, policy and further research.

1. Educators, from various different contextual backgrounds, do encounter a number of behavioural disorders including ADHD in their classroom, but lack formal knowledge of what it is, including treatments and interventions.

They also appear to have little knowledge of the importance of the role they could play in being able to correctly identify and assist learners who may have ADHD. In most cases, educators seem to have no knowledge of how and where to refer a learner to appropriate health care professionals. Lack of educator knowledge is reflected in the discussion of theme three *“It does challenge you - we’re not perfect”*. Educators seem to be challenged by learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms. It seems that educators attempt to address teaching and learning in different ways, as discussed in chapter 6, under the section 6.2.4. However, formal knowledge of how to intervene and cooperation with a health care professional may empower the educator to communicate and cooperate with the parents of the learner and the health care professional. An educator prepared with formal knowledge could feel more confident in approaching parents and the community for involvement in learner and school activities. A confident educator may be able to refer a learner who may have ADHD to the correct health care professional and liaise with the relevant persons that could provide better care to the learner. If educators felt they were more equipped to make use of the referral system, it could improve the relationship between the public health care and public schools (this is explained in section 7.7.3).

In terms of policy, the Department of Education could provide educators with ongoing professional development in terms of the latest developments of teaching and learning learners who have ADHD and/or other behavioural disorders. The Department of Education has provided guidelines for educators as discussed in chapter 3 on how to provide

assistance to learners with ADHD. However, hands on assistance in their classrooms could provide the educators with more knowledge on how to manage their classrooms. The conceptual framework in Figure 10 highlights the connections between the Department of Education and the educator. Education specialists at the Department of Education may provide assistance and support to educators by offering training on ADHD, emotional and behavioural disorders and learning disabilities (which are common co-morbidities). As the school and the Department of Education system could address the issues of learners with ADHD, they also could prepare to meet the needs of learners and educators (Gantos, 2001).

Cooperation and communication between the health care system and public schools could be improved through the introduction of policy that promulgates the link between educators and health care professionals. The link between health care professionals and educators is explained in chapters 2 and 3. The links between the educator and the health care professional is also illustrated in figure 10, the conceptual framework.

Other areas of research that may contribute to understanding ADHD may include the relationship between the public health care system and the public schools. For example, if an educator from a township school would like a learner who may have ADHD to be assessed by a psychologist at a public hospital like Khalafong; what kind of relationship exists between the hospital and the school? How does the educator experience the referral system available at public hospitals? What treatment options are available for learners who may have ADHD from a township school? And/or what role does the educator from a township school play in the treatment and assistance of the learner who may have ADHD? Further research needs to be done on this topic to understand how education and health care interface.

2. Some educators have devised creative methods to manage learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms.

The creative methods to manage learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms is discussed in chapter 5, section 5.4.2, with special reference to theme 2, “keep them busy”. In chapter 6, educators explain that the management of quantity of class work and grouping is a method that is also employed to manage learners. However, these methods may not always be the best method of assisting learners who may have ADHD. The ‘traditional’ method of grouping learners, as discussed in chapter 6 is not always a satisfactory or effective method of managing learners who may have ADHD.

With regards to practice these creative methods could be discussed as part of a discussion between professionals. If educators were given the opportunity to discuss their ideas and

classroom management methods within a forum, consisting of other educators, education specialists and health care professionals, it could provide interesting insights into adapting classroom management methods for learners who may have ADHD. It seems that educators understand that their own classroom management methods need to be shared with their colleagues and possibly sharing with other persons, this is clarified in chapter 5, section 5.4.4.3.

The methods that are employed by the educators to manage learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms could impact the instructional practices of the educator. This is demonstrated in figure 10. Therefore, the 'creative' methods that are used could impact the teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom. The Department of Education could take cognisance of this in assisting learners with practical and effective classroom management tools and skills that include and benefit all learners.

This could lead to identifying, through the use of research, practical and effective management of South African classrooms for learners who may have ADHD. Research in the field of classroom management and instructional practices is suggested to elucidate best practices in these fields that could include all learners.

3. Educators realise that they treat learners differently; as a consequence they feel confronted with stressful situations. (*"Like I said it was... it stressful (sic) and it sometimes disrupts the whole class, so it's unfair on the other learners that are diligently willing to learn. Not all learners are the same."* Participant 3g, speaker turner unit: 3457) and others feel guilty (*"Yes, sometimes you feel guilty, and then at the same time if you feel this (sic), you can let this hyperactive one do whatever they want, then you lose control... (sic)"* Participant 3b, speaker turner unit: 2638). The statement that educators realise that they feel that they treat learners differently is discussed in depth in chapter 5, under section 5.4.1.1.

If learners are then treated differently in a classroom this could influence the teaching and learning that takes place. It seems, therefore, that some learners receive more individual attention than others and thus, some learners could be overlooked in a classroom size of thirty-five plus. The implications, thereof, would need to be explored further in researching the effect of the learners who may have ADHD being treated differently. Again the implications seem that practical and effective classroom management tools and skills need to be imparted to educators so that they feel that they are empowered to include all learners in their classrooms.

One area of cooperation or communication could be in encouraging the learner to complete tasks and to form friendships/relationships. Parent involvement and support can contribute to the learner establishing positive peer relationships. Parental support can also contribute to the learner being able to progress in his/her academic performance, in that parents can assist the learner with homework and reinforce any learning that has taken place in the classroom.

- 4 Some educators can feel powerless and lacking in skills and support in cases where a learner with ADHD is disruptive in class the teaching and learning is disrupted for the whole class.

One of the themes that emerged from the data is *It does challenge you - we're not perfect*". The theme is discussed in chapter 5, under section 5.4.3.3. The theme reinforces the fact that educators do not have the skills to be able to support. *"It's very tiring. It drains me every day and some days I think I can't do this."* (Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 406).

Educators who encounter challenging or difficult behaviour from learners are encouraged to meet to discuss and share knowledge regarding learners (Mitchem, 2005; Roffey 2004). Sharing information between educators is an informal method of gaining knowledge. Szabo (2006) suggests educators to write narratives as a means for educators to share their experiences in the classroom with other educators and training teachers. Polou *et al.* (2002) goes onto suggest educators prepare their opinion or feelings of learners with EBD (Emotional and Behavioural Disorders) when having to share experiences with others. Meetings between educators and even workshops that are aimed at addressing ADHD (or Emotional and Behavioural Disorders) could curb negative perceptions of learners with ADHD. Literature (Gordon, 1998) confirms that there appears to be a lack of integration between parents, health professionals and schools. Thus, educators could share information with the school, parents and members of the meso- and macro-system as depicted in figure 10. Sharing information between the different systems could allow for better understanding of ADHD, and thus, possibly implementing interventions at classroom level.

Schools and educators need easier access to information, expertise and the support and skill that will assist them in supporting learners who may have ADHD. The school could establish partnerships with higher education and special education resource centres like ADHASA, (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa) to improve learning and the learning environment for all learners (Baker, 2005). Special education resource centres could provide the school with workshops aimed at parents that will also aim at getting the parents more involved in the teaching and learning of learners. The Department of

Education could play a role in providing easier access to this information and expertise. This could be done through the use of not only relying on School Based Support Teams and School Governing Bodies as discussed in chapter 3. The access to expertise outside of the school and the wider community with information on ADHD needs to be made readily available to educators. This could mean that support groups such as ADHASA (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa) play a greater role.

- 5 Some educators feel that they are not being supported in managing learners who may have ADHD.

Educators feel that they do not have support or assistance from their colleagues, school, parents, and the community and education authorities and specialists. The fourth theme that emerged from the data is “*It needs sharing as teachers and help from a specialist*”. Chapter 4, section 5.4.4.3 discusses this in more detail with regards to support or lack of support that they receive from their colleagues and school. The following reference also illustrates the feeling of powerlessness that educators may feel. (*Okay. I just wanted to ask if we can get a help from the specialist at least once a month, because we are not sure we are doing the correct thing (sic)... Participant 2c, speaker turner unit: 1320*).

Educators thus, feel that they need more support in being able to assist learners who may have ADHD. Educators state that they need assistance from education specialists. Educators state that they need the support of persons that could assist them being able to teach all learners, especially learners who may have ADHD. The Department of Education could provide more hand on support in the form of education specialists being on site, providing assistance in the educators’ classrooms. The Department of Education could provide easier access and links to the health care system and more especially to health care professionals that specialise in ADHD. The Department of Education could provide a bridge between the health care professionals and educators and/or schools. The health care professional who specialises in ADHD could assist the educators and school by providing resources, giving workshops and talk and referrals to other specialists in the field. Also a health care professional that is linked to a Government hospital like Khalafong, may be able to support the educator and school by being able to providing a diagnosis and treatment of a learner who may have ADHD. This could be beneficial to learners who may have ADHD whose parents are not able to afford private medical care.

Educators could be encouraged to build up positive relationships based on mutual trust and respect with parents and colleagues in order for any cooperation to be effective (Mitchem, 2005). In order to promote positive dealings with families, parents can be invited to the

school (DoE, 2005). Once a positive relationship has been established between parent and educator, the “home and school team” can work together to provide the best possible care, assistance and support, considering a multi-modal approach, to a learner who may have ADHD (Gurian *et al.*, 2002; Powell, Welch, Ezell, Klein & Smith, 2003). A positive relationship between educator and learner may result in the learner, who may have ADHD, developing positive behaviour (McNally, l’anson, Whewell & Wilson, 2005).

- 6 Teacher training programmes appear not to prepare educators sufficiently to be able to manage learners with behavioural disorders especially ADHD.

It seems that educators are unable to apply the theory of education that is what is being taught at teacher training institutions, to practice of teaching, with regards to managing learners who may have ADHD. This statement is explained and discussed further in chapter 6, specifically section 6.2.4.2. A specific quote that an educator made refers to his statement directly:

They have made me go back and think about how I give the difference between how to present a lesson (sic). And then you put kids into those things and the lesson falls flat. So I have, you have had to, I have had to learn how to adapt to actually teaching children, because the theory of it is one thing, but the actual practical teaching is a different thing. How to keep their attention. You have got to be creative and on-the-ball all the time (sic). (Sally/Participant 1d, speaker turner unit: 428).

It seems that educators do not feel that they are equipped to support learners who may have ADHD. However, this could stem from the fact that teacher training institutions have not been able to provide adequate training in behavioural disorders, especially ADHD. It must be noted that not all educators have received similar training. Nevertheless, the youngest educator, who was exposed to teacher training and probably given access to the latest information in classroom management and instructional practices regarding learners who may have ADHD, felt that she was not sufficiently equipped to deal with the reality of teaching.

Thus, teacher training institutions could note of the fact that novice educators are feeling that they are not equipped enough to manage learners who may have ADHD in their classroom. Teacher training institutions could provide more information and support in this regard, as they have links with expertise from other academic institutions, both locally and internationally, and therefore contact with experts in the field.

- 7 It is crucial that parents support educators extensively in the management of the teaching and learning of learners who may have ADHD.

Educators view parents as not being as supportive of the teaching and learning of learners. Educators feel that parental involvement should be viewed as part of the support of the school and community and possibly a part of the management programme of a learner who may have ADHD. Lack of parental support is discussed in depth in chapter 5, under section 5.4.5.3. Chapter 6 also describes how two educators feel about the lack of involvement and how parents could contribute to the learners learning programme and thus, their academic performance.

Although the Department of Education supports the notion that schools and educators should involve parents and the community to play a greater role (as discussed in chapter 3), it seems that there is still a lack of parental involvement. Research in this field could establish what sustainable methods of achieving parental involvement in schools are. Schools could also share information regarding how they obtain the commitment of parents to be more involved. With regards to ADHD parents play an important role in being able to assist learners who may have ADHD at home with their homework. Thus, parents who have learners who may have ADHD have a vested interest in being more involved, taking note of what teaching and learning takes place in the classroom and at home. The parent of a learner who may have ADHD will also need to be able to communicate with the educator and the school. (This is discussed in chapter 3). The parent of a learner who may have ADHD also needs to be able to approach the educator and discuss issues that may pertain to academic performance and interventions; medical treatment and possibly any psycho-educational interventions.

7.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion reflection on the research process has been presented and discussed. The findings are presented with the aims of the study in mind. The conceptual framework allows for the findings to be understood in context. The study is presented in terms of its limitations and strengths. Finally, recommendations are put forward and discussed in terms of implications for practice, policy and further research.

As stated in this thesis, most of the literature that is available is based on a medical model, which views ADHD as being pathological and the behaviour associated with it as being deficient. Non-traditional literature of ADHD is growing but is still considerably limited. Thus literature that views ADHD as non-pathological or non-deficient is limited. This thesis has

contributed to the body of knowledge on ADHD in South Africa as it has allowed for educators' experiences of learners who may have ADHD in the classroom, to be written and viewed as a narrative. Educators' experiences of learners who may have ADHD contribute to the body of knowledge of ADHD in South Africa by highlighting the conclusions of this study, which are: (1) Educators, from various different contextual backgrounds, do encounter a number of behavioural disorders including ADHD in their classroom, but lack formal knowledge of what it is, including treatments and interventions; (2) Some educators have devised creative methods to manage learners who may have ADHD in their classrooms; (3) Educators realise that they treat learners differently; as a consequence they feel confronted with stressful situations; (4) Some educators can feel powerless and lacking in skills and support in cases where a learner with ADHD is disruptive in class the teaching and learning is disrupted for the whole class; (5) Some educators feel that they are not being supported in managing learners who may have ADHD; (6) Teacher training programmes appear not to prepare educators sufficiently to be able to manage learners with behavioural disorders especially ADHD and (7) It is crucial that parents support educators extensively in the management of the teaching and learning of learners who may have ADHD.

The study has elevated the point that learners who may have ADHD in a classroom can be better understood within the ecological systemic framework, as it allows for different people, including the educator, and settings to be taken into account.

---oOo---