

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In an assignment¹ submitted by an honours degree student recently, she narrated the following incident:

Before short break I send my grade 2 class to the toilet. One of the learners came to call me that a fellow learner had fainted in the toilet. On investigating I found out that the learner who fainted had a sister in a higher grade. In talking to the sister I learnt that they were staying alone and had only tea to live on. The younger sister fainted out of hunger.

How do educators respond to situations like these? The narrated incident may not be an isolated case. International organisations such as UNAIDS (2004), UNICEF (2003), USAIDS (2001) and FHI (2001) have reported an alarming orphan² prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of these publications quote the statistics from the Children on the Brink report (UNAIDS, 2004). The report estimates that the total number of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa by the year 2000 was approximately 39.2 million and projects that the figure will increase to 50 million by 2010. In South Africa, the number of orphaned children was estimated to be 1.8 million in 2000 and the forecast figure for 2010 is approximately 3.1 million (UNAIDS, 2004). Although the figures mentioned may not be accurate because the number of children who are likely to be orphaned was calculated by estimating the number of people who are likely to die from HIV/AIDS and other causes, the projection suggests significant orphan prevalence. Despite the statistics and the growing body of research on the emergence of orphaned children there is little systematic empirical and theoretical research on how educators construct theories of orphanhood and

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² The term “orphan” has been described in other studies as an individual younger than 15 years whose mother (maternal) or father (paternal) or both parents (double) has passed away (Hepburn, 2001; Bennell, Hyde & Swainson, 2002; Richter, Manegold. & Pather, 2004). In this study the term “orphan” will be used to refer to a child younger than 18 years who has lost one or both parents (Foord, Jallow, Paine & Sarr, 2004) and not limiting the death to HIV/AIDS but other causes as well.

respond to the needs of orphaned learners. Most of the international studies (Thompson, Kaslow, Kingree, King, Bryant & Rey, 1998; UNICEF, 2001; Bicego, Rutstein & Johnson, 2002; Makame, Ani & Grantham-McGregor, 2002; Adato, Kadiyala, Roopnnaraine, Biermayr-Jenzano & Norman, 2005; Atwine, Cantor-Graae, Bajunirwe, 2005; Gillespie, Norman & Finley, 2005; Andrew, Skinner & Zuma, 2006) focus on analysing the orphans' circumstances with the aim of making recommendations for intervention programmes that would benefit orphans and other vulnerable children, and not on how educators cope with the needs of the orphaned learners in the school setting.

This study seeks to explore the realities of educators' experiences in identifying and responding to the needs of orphaned learners. The knowledge produced from this study may be crucial to understanding the complexities in identifying the unique needs of orphaned learners, and the role capacity of and the extent to which educators support the learners. The findings of this study may also contribute towards educators' understanding of the needs of orphans and to defining the role they play in schools with orphans.

1.2 RATIONALE

Managing the needs of vulnerable children has been my concern since I started teaching more than ten years ago. My personal experience with vulnerable children goes back to the early years of my teaching career. My first posting was in a rural school where the majority of learners came from very poor families. The learners' parents were unable to pay school fees or buy school uniforms and stationery. After teaching for four years in this school I was transferred to a Catholic sponsored mission school in an economically disadvantaged area in the city of Nairobi. Learners in this school had unique needs that demanded attention that was beyond the scope of instruction. Apart from their inability to meet the school requirements there were other reasons that kept them out of school, such as drug peddling and criminal gang activities, along with other social and economic problems. We, as educators in that school, had to counsel the learners and encourage them to attend classes so that they could benefit from education. Our role was more like that of social workers than of educators. My experience of the two groups of vulnerable

children piqued my interest in that the challenges were diverse and unpredictable and needed to be managed before teaching and learning could take place.

When the problem of managing the needs of the orphaned learner surfaced while I was collecting empirical data for my Master of Education dissertation (Ogina, 2003), I started reflecting on my own experiences with vulnerable children. The research question posed was: *How do school principals understand and implement HIV/AIDS policies in schools?* Managing the needs of orphaned learners appeared to be a common problem in the ten schools that were included in the master's study. Similar concern has been raised by several researchers who have reported HIV/AIDS as leading cause of death in Sub-Saharan Africa (De Cock, Mbori-Ngacha & Marum, 2002; Stover, Walker, Garnett, Solomon, Stanecki, Ghys, Grassly, Anderson & Schwartlander, 2002). It has been estimated that more than 14 million children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS, the majority (95%) in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2004). The projection of the number of orphaned learners by 2010 is predicted to increase to 40 million and remain high through 2030 (Foster & Williamson, 2000). Foster and William (2000) argue that even if the rate of new infections of HIV/AIDS drops, mortality rates will remain high because of long incubation period of the virus. The number of orphaned children will therefore continue to rise even if the rate of new infection decline and would have impact on our education system. Educators are not excluded from this changing academic, social, cultural economic reality within the context of HIV/AIDS.

The principals interviewed in the study noted that the number of orphans in the schools was increasing and the schools lacked the resources to cater for their needs. The main concern for principals seemed to be the inability of the orphans to pay school fees, and buy books and school uniforms. In addition, this appeared to alienate the orphans from the other learners because of their inability to comply with the school requirements. The principals' response regarding managing the orphans' needs aroused my curiosity and interest. I started wondering what the situation was like in other schools with orphaned learners. How do educators identify these learners and their needs? How do the educators cope or not cope with the needs identified? Who do the educators consult in a situation

where there is no guardian, as in the case of child-headed families? These are some of the questions that puzzled me. There seemed to be no simple answers to these questions so I decided to do an exploratory inquiry into how the educators experience orphaned learners and how they respond to the learners in a secondary and a primary school.

1.3 CONTEXT

This study involved a secondary school and a primary school as an in-depth case study on how educators respond to the needs of orphaned learners. I will refer to the two schools as School A and School B to conceal their identities. Both schools are in Mpumalanga Province. I purposely identified the two schools after I had approached the Bachelor of Education (Honours) students during their contact session at the University of Pretoria and shared my research interest with them. Most of these students were educators currently teaching in different primary and secondary schools. Some of them confirmed that they had many orphaned learners in their schools and they volunteered to introduce me to their school principals so that I could explore the possibility of collecting data from their schools.

In seeking permission and gaining access for the purposes of my research to School A, I approached Kwamhlanga North East Circuit Office, and for School B I approached the Tweefontein North Circuit.

- School A is an intermediate day school (Grade 8 to 12) in the rural area of Kwamhlanga. The school serves two villages and was established in 1988 as a result of fighting between three villages. The community in which the school is built is made up of people expelled from the three villages because of their vigilante activities and for political reasons. After the expulsion, this group of people settled in the present location and built their own school for their children. The school expanded over the years and at present the school has three classes for every grade, 865 learners and 25 educators. Most of the learners come from disadvantaged families where parents are unable to pay school fees. The majority

of the learners' parents work in the city. Some of the parents commute every day, leaving their homes as early as 3 am and returning home at 9 pm. The children usually look after themselves and low parental involvement in school activities is generally a problem.

- School B is a primary school (Grade R to 7) established in 1985. The learner population is 1190 and there are 29 educators at the school. The enrolment of learners in the school fluctuated a great deal between 1991 and 2000, falling from 1150 to 850. The school grew again after vigorous marketing and the introduction of computer literacy to the teaching programme, which attracted higher income parents from a radius of 25 km around the school. The school is inclusive, in that it admits learners with physical disabilities. Most of the learners in the school are from a poor socio-economic background. The majority of the parents are migrant workers and unemployed. Most of the parents are between the ages of 18 and 28 years. Single parenthood is a common phenomenon and the majority of the learners do not have fathers. Most of the orphaned learners live with their grandparents, aunts or other relatives after the death of their parent/s.

1.4 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Orphanhood and child-headed households are becoming common phenomena in some schools (Hepburn, 2001; Giese, Meintjes, Croke & Chamberlain, 2003), and even the children are becoming more aware of friends and classmates whose parents have passed away. In a school setting, orphans may need different kinds of support compared to non-orphaned children because of the gap created by the death of the parents. Williamson (2002) asserts that, in addition to good physical care, children need affection, attention, a sense of personal identity and social connections that families and communities can provide. Furthermore, orphaned children need more emotional support than children who have not gone through the painful process of losing one or both parents because they may experience trauma when their parent die (Turkington, 2002; Makame et al, 2002).

In a study on the psychological effects of orphanhood in the Rakai district in Tanzania, Sengendo and Nambi (1997) found that educators lacked the appropriate training that would enable them to identify the psychological and social needs of the orphaned learners. The question that needs to be addressed is whether the role of educators living and teaching in environments where there are low numbers of orphaned children can be the same as those living and teaching in schools with a high number of orphans. This gives rise to a number of analogous questions, such as:

- If a child's parents pass away, who should take over the educative role in terms of the full development of the child?
- Is it a reasonable expectation to demand that educators play a greater educative role in the lives of orphaned children?
- Who should counsel learners traumatised by the death of their parents in the school environment?
- What should be the role definition of an educator working in schools where there are many orphaned children?

From these analogous questions I drew the research purpose and the questions that guided the study.

1.5 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was based on three significant grounds:

- Firstly, parents are normally expected to fulfil physical, social and psychological needs such as love, affection and a sense of belonging, among the other needs of their children (Pringle, 1975; Berger, 2000; USAID, 2000). Parents also form a partnership relationship with educators and learners. In this traditional triadic relationship the role of the educator is to create teaching and learning situations

and parents play a supportive role in this teaching and learning task (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). It has been established that the care, support and encouragement that children receive from their parents have positive effects on their achievement in school (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). Furthermore, the partner relationship between the educators and parents enables the educator to inform the parent about the child's academic progress and/or disciplinary problems (Jarolimek, Foster & Kellough, 2001). This implies that when a child is orphaned a gap is created in this relationship, in the learning experiences and in the provision of support for the needs of the child. Zappulla (1997) suggests that, in such situations, educators may be the only adults that the orphans can look up to for fulfilment of the needs that are normally provided for by parents. What is not known and the question that needs to be addressed is: How do educators identify and manage the needs that emerge as a result of the gap created when parents die?

- Secondly, an official education policy that advances learner centredness, such as the new curriculum design defined in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS),³ expects the educator to be able to identify the needs of learners and to develop programmes that respond to the needs identified. It has been argued that when educating a child one cannot separate emotional and social factors from cognitive factors, as they are interrelated (Powell, 1983; Hamm, 1987; Miller, 1990). This argument suggests that the teaching and learning process is more than a cognitive exercise. In this process educators are expected to be able to deal with intellectual, emotional, social and other aspects of a child's development. This seems to be a move toward a holistic approach to education, which asserts that the *whole child* should be educated (Powell, 1983). The aim of holistic education is to achieve cognitive understanding, and appropriate emotions and attitudes (Hamm, 1989). The *whole child* approach to education is relevant to all children and perhaps more important to the orphaned learner, who may need more guidance and emotional support than non-orphans (Hepburn, 2001).

³ South Africa Department of Education Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R – 9 (schools) Department of Education 2001.

- Lastly, there are studies that have acknowledged the critical role that the school could play in supporting orphaned learners and have recommended strategies that could be implemented to support such children (USAID, 2001; Richter, 2003; Giese et al., 2003). What is not adequately addressed in these studies is the possibility of the changing role of educators working in schools with orphaned learners. Department of Education (2000) Norms and Standards for Educators give seven roles of the educator and the competences within each role.

The seven roles of the educator are:

- Learning mediator
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
- Leader, administrator and manager
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- Community, citizenship and pastoral role
- Assessor
- Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

For the purpose of understanding how educators identify and manage the needs of orphaned learners in this study, I will concentrate on the educators' pastoral role. The community, citizenship and pastoral role requires an educator to "demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators". The practical competence of the pastoral role includes demonstrating care and protection and the holistic development of the child. Despite the fact that national education policy stipulates the role of pastoral care, the way in which the educators understand their role in terms of pastoral care and their willingness and readiness to take up the pastoral role remains under researched (Schierhout, Kinghorn, Govender, Mungani & Morely, 2004). For example, Rob McBride (2002) in his research project on HIV/AIDS education in primary and secondary schools in the Zomba area of Malawi reports "there is lack of

understanding about the sorts of lives experienced by orphans, their educational needs and school responses” (McBride, 2002:143).

To address the gaps identified in literature, the purpose of this constructivist grounded theory inquiry was to explore and describe how educators experienced orphans and conceptualised the role educators play in responding to the needs of orphaned learners. My intention was to develop a substantive theory grounded⁴ in the lived experiences of orphaned learners and their educators. The reason for using a constructivist grounded theory approach in this study is because of the potential and rigor of the strategy in generating substantive theory that could explain educational processes, such as managing the needs of orphaned learners. I chose to do exploratory research because the approach is open, flexible and inductive (Durrheim, 2002) enabling me to investigate how the educators encountered orphaned learners and how they made sense of the learners’ needs. In addition, I have provided rich description of the experiences of the educators and the learners through their narrations. Punch (2005) asserts that the explanation of a phenomenon requires descriptive knowledge of what is happening. In this study the narrations of the educators and the learners provided a base from which I drew my conclusions. Thick description also gives the reader a picture of the settings being described, what happened and how it happened, so that the reader can give their own interpretation, meaning and significance to the study (Patton, 2002).

1.5.2 Research questions

- How do educators experience and respond to the needs of orphaned learners?

Sub-questions

- What are the lived experiences and expectations of orphaned learners?

⁴ Grounded theory is a research approach where substantive theory is generated from data which has been systematically produced and inductively analysed, making it suitable for explaining or understanding the phenomenon under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1999)

- How do educators identify and manage the needs of orphaned learners?
- What explains the dominant understandings and behaviours of educators towards orphaned learners?

1.6 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

For the purpose of this study, I assumed that the orphaned learners themselves could describe the reality of their needs because they have firsthand experience of what it means to be an orphan. For us to understand the needs of orphans it is necessary for us to know what the orphans are going through by interacting with them. Such an assumption is also evident in the study done by Cook, Fritz and Mwonya (2003). These researchers conducted needs assessment research on understanding the psychological and emotional needs of AIDS orphans in Africa. They interviewed an eight-year-old orphan to determine the psychological and emotional needs of the orphan. The child was able to describe her reality of the consequences of AIDS. She gave firsthand information about her own experiences of psychological and emotional needs.

Likewise, in a study of changing patterns of orphan care, resulting from the HIV epidemic in Western Kenya, Nyambedha, Wandibba and Aagaard-Hansen (2003) used in-depth interviews to collect data from a sample of 20 orphans. The researchers reported interesting narrations of lived experience of emotional neglect and psychological abuse from a fifteen-year-old boy and a ten-year-old girl. In other research on children experiencing orphanhood, a ten-year-old boy was able to describe his experiences of living conditions at home in relation to the experiences and expectations at school (Giese et al., 2003). These studies revealed that children can articulate their lived experiences, and from their narrations and responses, researchers were able to establish their needs. For example, Nyambedha et al. (2003) concluded that the orphans in their study needed education, food and medical care, and lacked adequate emotional care due to rivalry between brothers and co-wives. After reflecting on these studies, I decided that to gain firsthand knowledge of the needs of the orphaned learners I needed to explore the experiences of the orphans by interacting directly with them.

Apart from interacting with the orphans, I conducted in-depth interviews with the educators who teach orphaned learners and collected rich descriptive data on their lived experiences. Researchers have also used interview methods in other studies to explore the experiences and perceptions of educators with regard to the needs of orphaned learners. Giese et al, (2003) for example used the interview approach to collect data on how principals from different schools in Limpopo Province addressed the needs of children made vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS. Similarly, Schierhout and others (2004) used interviews to establish how educators perceive their role in providing support for needy children. From my observation, when interviewing principals in another study, I realised that the principals were willing to talk about their experiences with the orphaned learners. Based on these studies and my own experience, I proposed that by employing in-depth interviews I would be able to collect rich data from orphaned learners and their educators.

1.7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study focused on understanding how educators experience and respond to the needs of orphaned learners. The theoretical perspective underpinning the methodology in this study is symbolic *interactionism*. Herbert Blumer describes symbolic interactionism as the process of making meaning through interaction (in Nelson, 1998). The assumption that underpins the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism is that people do not respond to stimuli in an automatic manner but take an active role in giving meaning to the stimuli they experience and then act according to meaning they attach to other human beings or things (Denzin, 1992; Prus, 1996). This point of view suggests that human beings have active minds that can construct meaning, define and redefine meaning and evaluate situations through interaction (Wallace, 1971). The interaction process involves interpretation of the meaning of the actions and remarks of others (Wallace, 1971).

The symbolic interactionism theoretical perspective is relevant to this study because it provides the premise for understanding and establishing the meaning of action. Departing

from the premise of symbolic interactionism, my assumption about the present study was that the way educators respond to the needs of orphaned learners depended on how they perceived orphanhood and then constructed the needs of the orphans. The theory generated in this study was rooted in the analysis and interpretation of the meaning that orphaned learners and their educators attach to their lived experiences and the corresponding action they took.

The ontological stance underpinning this study was that reality exists through people's experiences of the world. Furthermore, the reality that exists is socially constructed from symbolic processes among people and the meaning of experiences that reflects reality is mentally constructed and transmitted through social interaction (Ritzer & Smart, 2003). It follows that different people attach different meanings to things or people; therefore, to understand the behaviour of a person the researcher is required to see the world of meaning through the eyes of the people being investigated, so as to gain a deeper understanding of how they construct their reality (Ritzer & Smart, 2003). This means that a researcher whose work is positioned within the symbolic interactionism theoretical perspective, would seek to explore the perspectives of the participants through their lived experiences, interpret their construction and present the deconstructed versions of participant realities as research findings.

The assumptions of reality, how we get to know the relationship between the researcher and the participant, and the methodology in symbolic interactionism, are embedded in *interpretive/constructivist epistemology*. The aims of research procedures embedded in interpretivist or constructivist epistemology are to explain subjective meaning and reasons behind social action and to show how different versions of reality are produced and how the reality influences the actions people take (Terre Blanch & Durrheim, 2002). I probed how orphaned learners interpret their situation and how educators attach meaning to their experiences with the orphans. I further investigated how the meaning the educators attach to their experiences guided the actions they take toward orphaned learners. Consistent with this theoretical and epistemological stance I adopted grounded

theory as an appropriate methodological approach for this study because I intended to generate a substantive theory based on the multiple realities of the experiences of the orphans and their educators.

The process of theory building in this study is that of the constructivist design research approach developed by Charmaz (2000). This approach focuses on understanding the empirical world by exploring the feelings, views, values, beliefs and assumptions the participants in the study attribute to the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2000). Charmaz (2000) points out that the Glaser and Strauss grounded theory research approach is framed within a traditional positivist paradigm, since the two researchers advocate the objective external reality of the researcher engaged in the theory building process as being that of a neutral observer. Constructivist grounded theory, in contrast to the objective positivist research approach (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), assumes relativism of multiple social realities, encourages mutual creation of knowledge between the researcher and the participant, and focuses on interpretive understanding of the participants' meaning (Charmaz, 2000). Charmaz further argues that the focus on meaning builds on interpretive understanding of the phenomenon under study. I chose the constructivist research approach to theory building, based on my assumption that the orphans and their educators can provide the knowledge that would present insight into how the needs of the orphans are identified and managed in schools.

In this study I applied the basic procedures of theory building, that is, back and forth systematic data collection and data analysis, theoretical sampling, the constant comparative data analysis procedure and memo writing, to construct conceptual themes, identify core categories and explore them to develop a theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Charmaz, 2000). Another feature of grounded theory building is that a researcher does not refer to other existing theories at the beginning of the research; rather the researcher collects empirical data and allows the theory to emerge from this data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Departing from this premise, in the current study I introduced

the problem, then discussed my research methodology, after which I proceeded to the field to collect data.

The data collection methods employed in this study were drawings and written narrations, interviews and field notes. These techniques involved human interaction and interpretation of responses. Conducting interviews with various educators enabled me to explore the meanings that they attributed to their actions. I interacted with the orphaned learners and their educators on a continual basis; listening, asking questions for clarity and depth, and then interpreting the responses. The interaction process provided the opportunity for meaning to be mutually constructed and interpreted (Johnson 2002). I made multiple field visits to saturate the categories emerging from data analysis. After analysing the data, a comprehensive literature review was done to help generate the theory. The purpose of the literature review was to relate the ideas from the emerging theory to the existing body of knowledge (Glaser, 1978). A detailed research design is discussed in Chapter 2 of this study.

1.8 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study focused on orphaned learners in schools and a few of the educators who teach them. The focus of this study was limited to the lived experiences of orphans and educators in two schools in the greater Mpumalanga region. The study does not include the opinions and the lived experiences of non-orphans or caregivers. The initial purposive sampling and subsequent snowballing process identified eight female educators. The experiences of male educators with the orphaned learners that might have been different were thus not explored.

This study aimed at presenting a theoretical perspective of the participants from the two schools under study, with no intention of generalising the findings beyond the context of the field of study. Generalizability is the extent to which the findings and interpretive account of a study can be applied to a broader population as well as contexts other than the one being studied (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002; Kelly, 2002; Fraenkel & Norman,

2006). Although it is not possible to generalise the findings of this study to other contexts, the insights and the theory developed from this study could contribute to understanding how educators cope with orphaned learners in their schools. In addition, this study provides thick descriptions and detail information about the setting and the participants, enabling the reader to decide whether the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study could apply to their own situation – thus the concept of transferability (Seale, 2000; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002).

1.9 ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE STUDY

Seale (2000) describes several approaches to enhancing quality in qualitative research. In this study, I focused on enhancing the credibility, transferability, dependency and confirmability of the study. The credibility of qualitative research is determined during the research process when the researcher provides a rich account of the research process and looks for discrepant evidence or rival explanation (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002; Patton, 2002). To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, I triangulated data collection methods by using drawing and writing, interviews and reflective journaling. I asked the orphaned learners to draw a picture and or write (Appendix A) about a typical day in their lives or about a particular incident they would like to share with me. The learners then narrated what was happening in their drawings. Another form of triangulation in this study was seeking multiple perceptions from the learners and the educators to present different ways in which the phenomenon is being experienced and clarify the meaning of the experiences (Stake, 2000).

A detailed description of the context of the study and of the participants is provided to give a vivid picture of the phenomenon that would enable the reader to determine the transferability of the research findings to their own context or setting. A trail of data collection and data analysis procedures in this study is provided to confirm the findings of this study. In addition, evidence is provided to convince the reader of the findings of the research (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002).

The measure that I took to ensure a dependable result in data collection was to record the interviews on audiotape and to make additional notes in my reflective journal after every session (Appendix B). The reflective journal contained descriptive field notes and reflections on how and why I chose certain participants, nonverbal communication during the interviews, decisions taken during the data collection and data analysis and the reasons for taking those decisions. Follow-up interviews were used to verify information collected from the orphans and the educators. Field notes, drawings and narrations corroborated and verified interview data and crystallised the emerging themes.

Data analysis and interpretation was an interactive and iterative process between the participants and the researcher. Analysis and interpretation of the data were taken back to the participants to verify interpretation and understanding. Transcripts of data analysis were submitted to critical readers to verify the integrity of the data. Details of how credibility and trustworthiness were incorporated into this research are discussed in Chapter 2 of this study.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research that directly involves children has methodological and ethical implications (Mahon, Glendining, Clark, & Craig, 2002; Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). This study involved educators and learners as research participants. Some of the ethical issues that I was concerned about were dealing with the vulnerability of the learners and guarding against exploiting them. All children are considered vulnerable participants because of their level of maturity. Orphaned children are even more vulnerable because of the absence of parents. In my study I took care to ensure that the procedures used to collect data were ethical. Before I started the fieldwork, I applied for ethical clearance from the Ethical Committee of the University of Pretoria (Appendix C). I obtained written permission from the Department of Education district offices, under which authority the two schools fall (Appendix D). Verbal permission was obtained from the school principals of the two schools where I collected the data.

Since the study involved human participants, and more particularly children, the issues of informed consent, privacy and confidentiality were to be taken into account (Coyne, 1998). Before seeking informed consent from the participants, I informed the participants about the nature and the consequences of the research (Creswell, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Once I communicated the information about my study, I sought informed consent from the educators, the caregivers and the orphans. I asked the educators' consent to participate in the research because participation is voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the research at any time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Struwig & Stead, 2001; Creswell, 2002; Durrheim, 2002). The participants in this study included children younger than 18 years; in such cases the educators assisted me by obtaining oral consent by proxy (from the person responsible for care of the children) before interviewing the learners. In addition to the permission from the caregivers, I also sought consent from the orphans because, after I had explained what my research was about, they had the right to make a choice as to whether they wanted to participate in the research or not. I regarded the orphaned learners as authority figures in this study because their perspectives provided insight into the experiences of orphanhood and the needs of orphans. I prepared a consent form, which I asked the educators and the learners to sign before they participated in the research (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Creswell, 2002). The educators were reluctant to sign written consent forms although they did give verbal consent. Further consent was obtained to record the interviews.

The code of ethics in research requires measures to protect the identities of participants against unnecessary exposure (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Before starting the interviews, I explained to the participants that their identity and the information they gave me would be treated with strict confidentiality to protect the identity of the participants and the schools, so as to adhere to the code of ethics in research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I used pseudonyms when reporting the results of the interviews to conceal the identity of the participants and the schools. Using the learners' drawings and writing posed ethical challenges such as right to privacy, confidentiality in the use of drawings and in dissemination of findings and consent to use the drawings and written narrations (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999). To protect the participants, I obtained consent from

the learners and used pseudonyms on the drawings for anonymity and confidentiality (Yuen, 2004).

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, an overview of this study is provided. This includes a brief background and rationale of the study, the context of the two schools is explained, and a problem statement and research questions are presented. Further to this, the assumption on which this study is based and the theoretical perspectives are discussed. Strategies for ensuring the credibility of the study and the ethical considerations are briefly explained.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, the research design is described. The methodological grounding is presented; the choosing of the research site and sampling and the methods used to collect the data are explained. The data analysis strategy and my role as researcher is discussed and the ethical guidelines adhered to. A description of how I enhanced the quality of the study is also presented.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, the stories of three orphaned learners are narrated to represent the three different life worlds in which the orphaned learners who participated in this study live. Data from drawings, written text and interviews with orphaned learners is presented. The emerging themes were identified and presented. Furthermore, the research question: 'What are the lived experiences and the expectations of the orphaned learners?' is addressed. A description of the lived experiences of the orphans is reported on and, emerging from these experiences, their needs are deduced.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 reports on the data collected from the interviews with eight educators on how they experience and respond to the needs of orphaned learners. Lastly, constant comparative analysis of the data collected from the interviews is presented.

Chapter 5

In Chapter 5 the core research category and the other related categories, main themes and a set of propositions that summarises the dominant understanding of educators' responses towards orphaned learners are presented.

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6 the findings of a literature review on the existing studies that relate to the emerging findings of this study are presented. This helps to establish whether the emerging theory extends, confirms or disconfirms what is already known about fulfilling needs of orphaned children and their behaviour.

Chapter 7

In Chapter 7 a summary of the research is presented, conclusions are offered in respect of the theory generated and the shortcomings of this study are discussed. Finally, recommendations and the focus for further research are suggested.

1.12 SUMMARY

When a learner is orphaned it seems that a gap is created between the support structure and the learning experiences of the child. There is a need to address the gap created to ensure that the learner gets the full benefit of the educational experiences. Educators, being the adults in the lives of the orphans, are expected to fill this gap on a daily basis, as is suggested in the definition of the educator's pastoral role. Yet, little is known about how the educators experience and respond to the needs of such learners. The intent of this study was to explore the changing role of the educators, as judged from the experiences of the educators who participated in this study. Methodologically, I used the grounded

theory research approach, because it is based on the principles of theory building in which the researcher collects empirical data and allows the theory to emerge from the data, instead of departing from other existing theories at the beginning of the research (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).