

## CHAPTER 6

# EXAMINING THE EMERGING THEMES IN RELATION TO THE LITERATURE

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the emerging themes from the interviews with the orphaned learners and the educators. The relationship between the educators and orphaned learners in terms of fulfilling the needs of the learners emerged as the core category. In this chapter, a review of the literature on studies and theories related to the emerging themes are discussed. The literature review explores how the emerging themes relate to the existing knowledge of basic human needs and behaviour to provide an understanding of the responses of the educators towards the needs of the orphaned learners.

In the following section, I review the following:

- Attachment theory – which was developed by Bowlby and Ainsworth
- Choice theory – which was developed by Glasser

These authors and researchers theorise about the factors that contribute to fulfilling human needs. I chose attachment theory because the theory explores the relationship between a child and a parent or parent figure that facilitates the fulfilment of needs. The nature of the relationship described in the theory may provide insight into understanding the needs of orphaned learners and the relationship between the learners and the educators that emerged in the study. Choice theory focuses on involved relationships based on love and care as an essential component in the process of fulfilling needs. In this study the educators reported that orphaned learners tend to confide in educators who had a close involved relationship with them. I argue that these theories have relevance to the

emerging themes in this study and may provide insight into understanding the phenomenon.

## 6.2 ATTACHMENT THEORY

Parents are normally expected to provide for their children's material and non-material needs, including emotional and social needs. In addition, parents are expected to provide a secure base from which the child can explore the world and to which they can return if stressed or frightened, or for comfort (Marvin, Cooper, Hoffman & Powell, 2002). The **supportive relationship** that bonds a child to the parent and **facilitates the fulfilment of the child's needs** is explained by *attachment theory*, which was developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992; Holmes, 2003; Bettmann, 2006). I will present some of the principles of attachment theory and highlight those features that are relevant to the present study that could be used as a lens through which we can understand the behaviour of the orphans and the educators. The premise of attachment theory is that children are born with a predisposition to attach to the parent or caregiver and their behaviour is geared towards maintaining proximity with the parents (Bettmann 2006). In other words, when the parent or caregiver is around the child feels safe and secure. The bond established between a child and a parent or caregiver is mutual in that the child seeks protection from the parent or caregiver, who provides safety and security for the child (Goldberg, 2000).

Attachment theory further postulates that when a child is faced with a threat the child will seek to connect with the *attachment figure*, from whom the child may obtain comfort and, when the threat is eliminated, they will begin to explore again (Bowlby, 1988; Holmes, 2003). The behaviour of the child that develops when seeking a secure base is called *attachment behaviour* and it is triggered by separation from the attachment figure (Holmes, 2003). The relationship or connection between the parent or caregiver perceived by the child as the attachment figure not only meets the needs of the child (social, emotional and cognitive) but also determines the child's behaviour, in that the child internalises the

experiences with the caregiver in terms of the internal working model,<sup>26</sup> which determines the way in which the child perceives and develops concepts of the world and the self (Bretherton, 1992; Holmes, 2003; Fonagy, 2003).

Pringle (1975) concurs with the notion that the child's early experiences determine future behaviour and he asserts that the parents in a stable loving relationship provided by the mother and the father initially meet the child's need for love. The relationship established forms the foundational base for future relationships. Fonagy (2003) describes the process as "taking forward early relationship experiences into adult personality and functioning". In the context of this study, the **influence of the attachment figure** that may greatly influence the behaviour of the orphaned learner in some cases seemed to lacking. The results of this study revealed that two learners from child-headed families experience a gap in finding an appropriate attachment figure for **support and to fulfil the role-model function**. From the narrations of one learner it appeared that the learner was at risk of growing up without an appropriate parenting pattern or working model to form a base for future behaviour.

There are four major working models identified by certain attachment theory researchers (Bretherton, 1992; Marvin et al., 2002; Holmes, 2003). In the first model, the *secure attachment*, the child experiences autonomous parenting patterns in which the relationship with the parents or caregivers is one that acknowledges the needs of the child and provides security, protection, comfort, emotional reassurance and independence to explore the environment. Such attachment in the context of the current study would be orphans with caregivers who provide material as well as emotional and social support. The orphaned learners in such families, according to this model, are likely to develop internal working models of self as being worthy, reliable, responsive and loving and to view the self positively. The experiences of some of the orphaned learners interviewed suggest that most of the caregivers and educators were unable or unwilling to provide the orphans with holistic support.

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<sup>26</sup> Internal working models are generalised models of self and others built on repeated patterns of interactive experience between the child and the parent or caregiver (Holmes, 2003:16). The models are constructed depending on the experiences of the child with the attachment figure.

The second model is *insecure-anxious attachment*. A child experiencing this attachment pattern is one whose parental behaviour is characterised by avoidance and dismissal. The parents have minimum intimate attachment and care-giving interaction. With such experience the child may grow into an adult with a tendency to avoid or reject intimate relationships, shared experiences, feeling, goals and plans.

The third model is *insecure-avoidance attachment*. A child from a family with an avoidance behavioural pattern experiences parents or caregivers who portray ambivalent-preoccupied behavioural characteristics. Such a child is over dependent on the parents and the parents minimise the child's opportunities to explore because the parents feel uncomfortable.

The last model is the *insecure child* in disordered parental behaviour. The attachment pattern in this model lacks coherence and stability. The child grows up in fear and the roles may be reversed, such that the child organises emotional attachment care instead of the parent or caregiver. In the three insecure models the child generally experiences being rejected and not being given the independence to explore. The child tends to develop internal working models of self as unworthy of love, incompetent and ineffective and may display symptoms of anxiety, depression and disruptive personal bonds (Bretherton, 1992; Marvin et al., 2002; Holmes, 2003). Some of the experiences of the orphaned learners in this study suggest a sense of insecurity, the feeling of being rejected and unworthy of love, especially the orphans living in child-headed families without adult supervision.

The focus of relevance of attachment theory in the present study is that it provides an **understanding of the supportive relationship** (Bennet & Saks, 2006) **needed by orphans**, whose bond with the attachment figure is broken when the parent(s) pass away. Holmes (2003) points out that when children are separated or bereaved they may experience anguish, withdrawal, yearning, despair, apathy, anger, misery and protest. Some of the orphans in the study had similar emotions. Although some of the educators described them as delinquent learners, attachment theorists view such behaviour as the

consequences of the lack of an attachment base. The narrations of some of the experiences of the orphans suggest that they do not have a secure base to turn to when they need material, emotional and social support. One of the orphaned learners expressed:

*...I felt good because my mother was still alive and everyday she bought me something (Thato.1.4)*

Some of the orphans had caregivers who did provide well for their material needs but the small number of narrations involving a positive relationship may suggest that the social and emotional needs of the orphans were not being fulfilled. Two orphans interviewed from child-headed families did not have an attachment figure to provide a secure base for them. They relied on their older sibling for guidance and protection.

In one of these families the older sibling did not provide a secure base but instead the sibling was the source of threat. For example, the sister of the orphaned learner brought men into the house who threatened and raped her. Based on the experiences of this learner, it appears that in the absence of parents, orphaned learners have to find **new ways of meeting their needs** and, more particularly, establishing new safe havens with someone who is able and willing to provide support and protection. In response to this need of the orphaned learner, further research is required to determine whether educators are able to provide such a *secure base* for the orphaned learner.

Attachment theory explains that a child's internalised working model of attachment is developed during infancy in response to the behaviour of the attachment figure and could influence the way the child behaves and interacts with others in adulthood (Holmes, 2003). Knowledge of different attachment patterns may provide insight into the child's behaviour consequently providing appropriate assistance when necessary. The findings of this study confirm the necessity of having someone as a secure attachment base for the child when the need arises. The theme *parental longing* specifically highlights the material and emotional gap created when parents die and suggests that children who were attached to their parents feel insecure in the absence of the attachment figure.

*The day I will not forget is 11-04-2005 because this is the day my mother passed away. When I heard that my mother died I cried and asked myself a question: “Why did God take my mother?” Because my mother is the person close to me (Tshepo.1.25).*

The key findings of this study in relation to attachment theory are that when a learner is orphaned it seems that the child-parent supportive bond is broken. Some of the orphaned learners appear to be in need of an adult figure to provide an attachment base in addition to the need for material support reported by the educators.

### 6.3 CHOICE THEORY

Current and previous studies (Sengendo & Nambi, 1997; Black, 2005; Schoo, 2005) report on the relationship between the **fulfilment of human** needs and the way an **individual behaves**. Sengendo and Nambi (1997) report that most of the orphans in their study were still angry about their parent’s death, especially when they were deprived of needs and because of the situation in which they subsequently found themselves. Black (2005) points out that the behaviour of children between 15-17 years that involves mood swings; withdrawal from their friends, poor school performance and high-risk behaviour could be an expression of grief. In terms of theory, Glasser (1965) explains that the different types of behaviour displayed are as a result of the different ways in which people manifest their inability to fulfil their needs.

It has been noted in this study that the **relationship established** between the educator and the orphaned learner was **determined by how the educators identified the orphans, perceived the orphans’ behaviour and responded to their needs**. This theoretical position is consistent with Glasser’s choice theory<sup>27</sup> applied in reality therapy.<sup>28</sup> Choice

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<sup>27</sup> Choice theory asserts that all behaviour is internally motivated and an individual’s behaviour it is an attempt to satisfy one or more of the five basic universal needs, namely love and belonging, freedom, power, fun and survival (Glasser, 1985; Loyd, 2005)

<sup>28</sup> Glasser (1965:6) defines reality therapy as “[a] therapy that leads all patients towards reality, towards grappling successfully with the tangible and intangible aspects of the real world, might accurately be called therapy towards reality or simply Reality Therapy”. The therapy consists of seven distinct steps which include: involvement, current behaviour, evaluating behaviour, planning responsible behaviour, commitment to plans, no excuses, no punishment and never giving up (Glasser, 1980).

theory is based on the premise that all behaviour is chosen and an individual has control over his or her behaviour. The behaviour of an individual is a means through which one or more needs are satisfied (Glasser, 1985).

According to Glasser (1980), in a school situation the learners become disruptive when they cannot cope with feelings of not being worthwhile to others. Their behaviour might be a way of seeking the attention of an educator who seems not to care for the learner. Glasser's explanation of the relationship between needs and behaviour speaks to the emerging themes in the current study. The educators who were interviewed consistently talked about **orphans' behavioural problems** but **lacked strategies** for getting them to become responsible. In this study, there is evidence that alludes to the educators' comprehension of learners' deviant behaviour. This behaviour is seen as a means of **material gratification**. For example, some of the educators revealed that orphaned learners engaged in **risky sexual behaviour** and household theft to fulfil their needs for food and clothing. Another study also reported the link between needs and behaviour by pointing out that children who are still grieving might exhibit unruly behaviour, lash out at others or have a sullen attitude because they have not overcome grief (Haggard, 2005).

Glasser (1965) points out that having a loving, **caring and involved relationship** with someone is the **basic component of fulfilling our needs** and a key element in *reality therapy*, which is a process that aims at changing an individual's behaviour through commitment and involvement in the relationship. Glasser (1965) argues that the process of **being involved in a relationship facilitates an individual's acceptance of reality and fulfilment of their needs**, leading to responsible behaviour. The relationship between *choice theory* and *reality therapy* is that choice theory explains how reality therapy works, what needs to be changed and how to change it (Howatt, 2001). In applying reality therapy to the context of this study the relationship between the educators and the learners seems essential in helping orphans to cope with the reality of losing their parents and choosing behaviour that could help them satisfy their needs.

Glasser (1965) explains that we are all born with two basic built-in psychological needs. The needs **to belong and be loved**, and to gain **self-worth and recognition** are the foundation of all other needs. Glasser (1984) extends the two initial needs to five basic needs, which include four psychological needs, namely love and belonging, power, fun, freedom and one physiological need, the need to survive. According to Glasser (1965), everybody needs to love and be loved and, in the absence of love, psychological symptoms like depression, withdrawal anxiety, discomfort and other forms of deviant behaviour may arise.

Glasser further explains that when a person is **unable to fulfil** their needs they deny the reality of the world around them and start **behaving irresponsibly**. Maslow,<sup>29</sup> unlike Glasser, presents basic needs in a hierarchy of prepotency in his *motivation theory* (Huizinga, 1970). Maslow's basic needs appear in two categories. The first category consists of deficiency needs, namely physiological needs (food, water, shelter, sleep etc), safety needs (security, job, medical care etc), social needs (love, affection, belonging etc) and self-esteem needs (recognition, achievement, freedom, status, importance etc). The second category consists of the growth needs, which is self-actualisation (the desire to become everything one is capable of becoming). Maslow argues that physiological needs are the most basic needs and have the strongest influence on the motivation of behaviour and, therefore, they have to be satisfied first. Once the physiological needs are satisfied, the next category of needs in the **hierarchy emerges** and becomes the strongest needs to be fulfilled (Huizinga, 1970).

The difference between fulfilment of needs in Glasser's choice theory and Maslow's motivation theory is the emphasis on the most basic needs or the need to be fulfilled first before the other needs could be satisfied. While Maslow proposes that the **physiological need** is the most **prominent** need, Glasser emphasises the psychosocial needs and further explains that some **needs may suppress others**, depending on the individual's

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<sup>29</sup> Maslow's Theory of motivation identifies five basic needs and presents the needs in a hierarchy. The needs are related, the most basic need is the strongest because it must be satisfied first (Huizinga 1970)



circumstances. For example, the need for power may suppress the need for belonging (Glasser, 1985).

The findings of this study are in agreement with the Glasser's views on the fulfilment of needs. The interviews with the orphaned learners revealed that the value of self-dignity and self-worth seem to be more urgent than the need for nourishment such that the orphaned learners at times forego a free lunch to avoid being humiliated by their peers. The fact that some of the orphans in this study, in the face of hunger (basic physiological need), refused to accept food and handouts is a direct contestation of Maslow's theory and thus a rejection of the notion of a hierarchy of needs. There were other instances in the present study when the **need for love and belonging suppressed survival needs**. For example, some orphans isolated themselves during lunchtime and did not go for donated food because they preferred being with the other orphaned learners. This study appears to support the idea of contesting needs, where the need for self-respect may override the most fundamental material needs. Seen from the attachment theory point of view, in such instances the behaviour of the orphaned learners could be explained as being caused by the lack of a *secure base* to turn to for comfort. In this instance, the **orphaned learners turn to other orphaned learners as a substitute attachment base**.

Glasser (1965) emphasises that one of the essential components of the process of fulfilling needs is being involved with another person. That is, having someone you care for and who cares for you. The other person should be somebody who is able to fulfil his or her own needs and is in touch with reality. Bowlby and Ainsworth (Holmes, 2003) describe a person considered to be an attachment figure in a similar way. Apart from **involvement**, reality therapy emphasises that **self-worth and responsibility teach an individual to make choices** that may lead to the fulfilment of needs. In this study some orphans experienced being shunned by their peers. The orphans appear to feel that nobody cared for them or were involved in their lives after their parent(s) died. It seems that some of the orphans were unable to fulfil the basic needs for loving, being loved and belonging in the absence of their parents. The need for love and belonging encompasses the feeling of being respected, trusted, cared for and accepted by others (Atkinson, 2005).

Some of the narrations of the orphans suggest a **desire for acceptance by their peers**.

One orphaned learner narrated:

*Children at home and in school say that I am going to infect them with epilepsy. When we are working in a group they do not want me to touch their things and they do not want to touch me. If I touch their things they want to fight me (Mpumi.2.4, 5 & 6).*

The interviews with the educators revealed that some of the educators did not have an involved relationship with the orphaned learners. It appears that a **lack of interaction** between the orphaned learners and their peers or their educators may have reduced the orphans' chances of being involved in a **caring relationship**. This is more critical owing to the lack of an adult parent figure in their lives. Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that some orphans involved in the grieving process had a tendency to isolate themselves or engage in violent and disruptive behaviour in class, as indicated by the educators. Glasser (1992) explains that the learner's disruptive behaviour in class is a way in which the learner seeks to fulfil needs and wants by drawing the attention of the educator and other learners to him. Such behaviour occurs when the images of schoolwork and the relationship with the educator starts diminishing from the learner's quality world<sup>30</sup> (Glasser, 1992). In other words, the failure to relate schoolwork and a relationship with educators in the learner's quality world is the result of an inability of the school or educator to fulfil the learners' needs.

Glasser (1992) suggests that the action taken by the educator should not be coercive, as punishment does not work. Rather, the educator should **discover what unfulfilled needs** the learner has, then find strategies to fulfil these needs. Some of the educators in the study had experienced orphans with **disruptive behaviour** and recommended that other educators should talk to the orphans to **establish the cause** of their problems and attend to them.

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<sup>30</sup> Quality world is a mental picture that a person develops out of memories of past experiences of fulfilling needs. People have different quality worlds because our perceptions and experiences are unique (Glasser, 1992).

*I normally say: “If you see the learner who is clumsy or a little bit funny, you just call the learner and if you see the learner cannot open up, bring the learner to me.” When they are with me, although I am strict, they are at ease when they talk to me. They can open up (Mtlala 44-48).*

When some of the orphaned learners talked to their educators they revealed the **need for food** in relation to social acceptance by their peers. It appears that non-orphan and other learners at School A isolated orphans who did not bring lunch to school, while at School B learners who brought food from home to eat during lunch did not associate with learners who ate lunch provided by the Government Feeding Scheme. It seems that learners form **different social groups** during lunchtime depriving some learners of the freedom to associate with others.

The results of this study indicate that while some orphaned learners had no power over being **isolated by other learners**, other orphans seem to take control of the situation by isolating themselves and building up relationships with other orphaned learners who did not eat lunch. In the latter case the orphans seemingly attach themselves with other orphans to fulfil the need to belong and to have a *secure base*, which the other orphaned learners helped provide. The emerging theme of **social deprivation** in this study is in agreement with Haggard (2005), who proposes that other learners in the school need to understand what their peers are going through and provide support and friendship. Providing support and friendship is part of being involved with someone and shows that the other person cares. According to Glasser (1965), an involved relationship is crucial in enabling people to fulfil their needs. Some non-orphans in this study, as mentioned earlier, teased and stigmatised the orphans because of their deprived needs. Such responses could further aggravate the inability of the orphans to fulfil their needs.

Glasser (1985:45) explains that “regardless of how we feel we always have control over what we do”. Having control over our behaviour by making choices about what we do and being responsible for our actions are the basis of choice theory (Howatt, 2001). In applying choice theory, Glasser points out that our behaviour is made up of four components: acting, thinking, feeling and physiology. The four components constitute

our total behaviour. How individuals act and think affects their physiology and emotions; since people do not think in the same way they will behave in unique ways in an attempt to bring their perceived world closer to a quality world (Glasser, 1998). When explaining or trying to understand a person's behaviour, one should examine all four components of total behaviour and understand the person's quality world. Similarly, in gaining an understanding of an individual's behaviour through the lens of attachment theory it is crucial for internalised working models to be part of analysing an individual's behaviour. In this study and the study reported by Sengendo and Nambi (1997), the participants explained the behaviour of the orphaned learners from the physiological component of the behaviour. The educators interviewed explained that orphans in their schools were involved in criminal or risky sexual behaviour in order to fulfil their material needs. The educators seem to analyse the orphans' behaviour by concentrating on their actions and the physiological components, with less focus on the cognitive component, which might influence the choices the orphaned learner makes on how to fulfil their needs.

According to Glasser (1985), what can be changed is how we think and what we do. The feeling and physiological component of one's behaviour may change when one changes how one thinks and what one does. Consistent with the present study, orphaned learners seem unlikely to be able to change the feeling of grief. They have no control over the fact that their parents have passed away and that they are missing them. However, the orphans can control the actions they take to fulfil their needs and to fill the gap created by their parents' death. Glasser (1992) argues that our behaviour is internally motivated and the external factor informs the choices we make on the type of action we take. This implies that the orphans can change the way they think and make better choices of behaviour, which are not destructive, provided that there is an external support structure.

Furthermore, certain educators reported that some orphaned learners lack concentration, fall asleep in class or become disruptive when they are hungry. Based on the findings of this study in relation to Glasser's concept of total behaviour, I argue that if orphans are encouraged to think of actions that may lead to fulfilling their need for food, they may become less irritable and concentrate in class once they have eaten. Furthermore, it is

likely that the orphaned learners have total control over their thinking and action component. The problem is that some of the responses from the orphaned learners give the impression that they may not be aware of their capabilities or self-worth and therefore underestimate what they can achieve on their own. Some of the orphans may fail to develop a positive self-identity and a possible way of influencing their thinking may be by establishing positive involved relationships that empower the orphaned learner.

*I see the other learners they are beautiful. I do not like myself. I do not want to be sick everyday. I have epilepsy and it is not right for me. I want to be beautiful (Mpumi.1.16 & 29).*

Developing our own identity is to develop who we see ourselves as being (Glasser, 1969). Positive self-identity<sup>31</sup> emerges from fulfilling the need for love and self-worth, while loneliness and negative self-identity are consequences of an unfulfilled need for love and self-worth (Glasser, 1969). Glasser's view of the formation of self-identities links up with the core category of the relationship between the educator and the orphaned learners. The interviews with the orphaned learners revealed that some learners are isolated by their peers or isolate themselves from their peers and are reluctant to open up to the educators because they do not share an interactive relationship. Narrations of the learners who experience isolation give an impression of negative self-identity.

As an illustration, in one of the schools in the study there was a learner who had epilepsy. The interview with her revealed that she felt powerless about her health condition and other learners did not want to share learning materials with her or allow her to be part of their group in class. When the learner reported the matter to the educator, the educator moved the learners to the next desk. Isolating the learner reduces the opportunity to be involved with others and a chance of giving love and to be loved and to establish a relationship that fulfils the need to belong. It is likely that the learner was unable to develop a positive self-identity due to the lack of a relationship with others (Glasser, 1969). The learner felt that she did not have worth for others because she was ill and

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<sup>31</sup> Positive self-identity results from taking a path that leads to fulfillment of the need for love and self-worth (Glasser, 1969).

expressed that she wanted to get well and be beautiful like others. The longing to be like other learners is a desperate plea for social acceptance, a need highlighted in both choice theory and attachment theory.

As gathered from the interviews, there was evidence of a need for power and self-esteem. For example, orphans talked about wanting careers that involved helping other people who are less fortunate or even other orphans. The professions they mentioned (nurse, social worker, doctor, police) put them in a position where they could gain control over their lives and have power and control over the lives of others. Certain of the orphans could not take donations, although they needed the material support. It seems that educators and the others who supported orphaned learners by providing them with material needs are in a power position, while the orphans – on the receiving end – felt powerless and experienced low self-esteem. Choice theory and reality therapy may apply to such situations: where possible, instead of just supplying the orphans' material needs, the educators could help the orphans realise that they have the power to make choices about the way in which they fulfil their own needs and so be in control of their behaviour. Bennet and Saks (2006) assert that adults who show the capacity for empathy and emotional regulation are those who had secure attachment figures who were responsive, predictable and sensitive to fulfilling their needs during childhood. In the current study, the educators who responded and took up the responsibility of caring for the orphans were the educators who were involved with the orphaned learners. The motivation for the positive response was from their past personal experiences. However, as responsibility is learnt, educators can learn to establish a relationship with the orphans and help the learners to help themselves by teaching the learners to fulfil their needs through love and discipline (Glasser, 1992).

The central argument in Attachment and choice theory is that involved, loving and caring interpersonal relationships are likely to facilitate the fulfilment of needs and may have a positive influence on behaviour. Attachment theory highlights that the bond a child develops with a parent or a caregiver acts as a secure base for fulfilling the needs of the child and the relationship established may have an influence on the child's behaviour

(Bowlby 1988; Holmes, 2003; Bettmann, 2006). Glasser (1965), in choice theory, also alludes to the importance of relationships and points out that the need for love and belonging, which is normally fulfilled through relationships with others, is the foundation from which other needs are met and failure to satisfy this need for love and belonging may result in disruptive behaviour. The basic premise of these authors is that the relationship that a child develops with others may influence the child's behaviour. What needs to be further explored is what happens when the relationship with the attachment figure is broken, as in the case of orphaned learner and more so orphans in child-headed families with no adult role model or adult figure to emulate the role of parents. The question that we need to reflect on is that whether, as a result of the gap created by the death of parents, it would be a reasonable expectation for the school – being an educational institution – to provide a *secure base* for the orphaned learners and the possibility of educators becoming attachment figures. One may argue that the role of providing care is not an educational activity and, as such, should not be part of the responsibilities of the educators. For the purpose of this argument I reviewed literature on how scholars define the role of education, followed by the expected role of educators.

#### 6.4 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

*Education* as a concept has been contested and there are different views and definitions of this term. There is no universal meaning of what *education* should entail because the concept is normally defined in relation to what people value and different people value different things (Pring, 2000). In addition, the aims of education are debatable and depend on the nature and ideals of the society (Noddings, 2005). In this study, I examine the term *education* from a **formal** and **holistic** perspective. Formal education involves the process of teaching and learning, which is normally associated with schooling (Feinberg, 1983). From a formal education stance, a school is a social institution where children go for learning and are expected to acquire knowledge and skills that would enable them to become socially responsible, productive and financially successful members of their society (Smith, 2003; Carr, 2004). The formal nature of education takes up a **utilitarian approach**, that is job oriented and aims at equipping individuals with knowledge,

understanding and skills that would make them economically productive (Feinberg, 1983; Pring, 2000; Winch, 2002; Carr, 2004).

It would seem that an educational aim that views schools as institutions where learners are equipped with knowledge and skills for the labour market would concentrate on the academic needs of the learners. The pedagogical approach to education would imply that the **role of educators** mainly be to ensure effective **teaching and learning**. This presents a major challenge in environments where educators are faced with such large classes and limited resources that they can hardly be expected to take up additional roles such as caring for the orphaned learners, as this will *dilute* their focus on teaching and learning. The needs of orphans would then be defined away from schools, with strong recommendations that other agencies should take up this role. This would effectively take away the **pastoral role** or emotional perspective of the educators' identity described by Jansen (2005) and would restore the educators as teachers' **professional identity** and, in the process, reduce the emotional stress and burden on educators, especially in schools that cater for many orphaned learners.

Another line of argument would be that the utilitarian approach to education is limiting, as it emphasises the process of equipping learners with skills for the job market and pays little attention to other aspects of the learner's life. Moreover, the educational approach that emphasises economic outcomes would probably lose its value in the event that it fails to ensure economic returns (Winch, 2002). Hamm (1989) proposes that education should prepare children for a good life, not only in terms of economic status but also in fulfilment of emotional needs, transmission of values and ethical considerations. In line with this thought, White (2002) points out that the central aim of education is to promote the well being of the learner. Nodding (2005) concurs, and argues that the aim of education should be more than producing a literate person, because a learner is a whole person with other needs besides knowing how to read and write, and the school not only serves an individual but the society as well. The implication of such an aim of education is that the educators would be expected to help the learners in fulfilling their needs; to promote the learners' sense of well being. In other words, a school would be seen as an



environment where children receive emotional support, supervision from adults, opportunities for socialising and a chance to develop social networks (UNICEF, 2003; Richter, 2003; Blasco, 2004) The role of the school would thus be defined in broader, more inclusive and holistic terms.

Holistic education targets the education of the whole child and aims at achieving cognitive understanding, appropriate emotions and attitudes (Hamm, 1989). Hamm (1989) further explains that, when educating a child, one cannot separate emotional and social factors from cognitive factors because they are interrelated. The implication of Hamm's perspective is that educators should be able to deal with intellectual, emotional, social and other aspects of the child's development during the teaching and learning process. The holistic approach to education seems to be relevant to all children and, perhaps more importantly, to orphans; whose needs, as established in this and other empirical studies, may go beyond mere academic support (Hepburn, 2001; UNICEF, 2003; Richter, 2003; Blasco, 2004). In this study it has been established that the needs of the orphaned learners – such as food, peer acceptance and overcoming grief, among other needs – if not fulfilled, may interfere with the teaching and learning process. Hepburn (2001) also notes that orphans might need guidance and emotional support in the process of teaching and learning.

According to Miller (1990), the educational approach that emphasises the utility function of education fails to be humane if it neglects values, such as: compassion, love, justice and peace, which contribute to the emotional development of a child. In addition, it has been argued that social and emotional security is imperative for developing the child's personality; therefore educational objectives should incorporate the holistic principles of *whole person learning* (Powell, 1983). Powell further points out that the learning process should include affective, physical, mental, cognitive-intellectual and personal development of mind, body, spirit, feeling and imagination. In the same line of thought, Miller (1990) points out there should be a **balance** between **intellectual and emotional development**, for education to be regarded as holistic.

## 6.5 THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Comparing the formal and holistic view of education, the findings of this study suggest that education should aim at addressing the cognitive as well as the emotional and social needs of the learners because the needs of the learners interviewed were interwoven and appear to affect their behaviour, as well as the teaching and learning process. It would appear that to engage learners in a teaching and learning process the educator has to attend to needs of the learners, which were not necessarily academic but seem likely to be a barrier to the teaching and learning process. For example, in this study, some of the educators reported that there were orphaned learners who appeared to be still **grieving**, while others felt **socially isolated** by their peers and, as a result, were **withdrawn or disruptive** during class. This kind of behaviour could have a negative effect on the teaching and learning process.

It is likely that the view of education that emphasises teaching and learning, while paying little attention to the other learner needs, may overlook causes of learners' disruptive or withdrawn behaviour in classroom. Pomeroy (1999) points out from his study that the educators' willingness to help the learners to pay attention to their learning is as important as the ability to teach. This implies that the **teaching and learning** role of an educator and the role of providing **pastoral care** are inseparable, and there is need for **balancing** these **roles** of caring and teaching – especially in the case of orphaned learners. The Department of Education (2000) Norms and Standards state seven roles of educators. Among the seven roles the educator is expected to be a learning programme designer, learning mediator, assessor, learning area specialist, an administrator and a scholar in addition to the role of providing care.

Literature, as indicated in Chapter 1, highlights the fact that the task of educating the child is a shared responsibility between educators and parents. The care and support the child gets from the parents and the educator contributes to a positive educational experience and the child's behaviour (Hepburn, 2001; Jarolimek, Foster & Kellough, 2001; Hunter & Williamson, 2000). Furthermore, parental involvement in the activity of

the school increases the possibility of establishing a partnership between the parent and the educator. This **partnership** between the **educator and parent** enables the educator to inform the parents about the child's academic progress and/or disciplinary problems, academic strengths and weaknesses, and also provides opportunities to inform the parents on how to help their child learn (Jarolimek et al., 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & DoanHolbein, 2005).

These researchers assume the reality of a *normal* situation, where there are parents to support the child. The assumption is that parents will provide a supportive environment for the child, not only by providing for the material needs of the learners, but more importantly, the emotional and psychological needs (love and affection). Apart from the triad relationship in school between the educator, parent and learner, the parental or guardian duty to educate the child is contained in section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act 84 of 1996).<sup>32</sup> The SASA is consistent with section 29(1a) of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), which stipulates that *everyone has the right to basic education*. The right to education imposes a legal obligation and responsibility on parents and guardians to educate their children. For instance, SASA section 6(a & b) imposes a penalty on parents and guardians who fail to comply with section 3(1) of the Act. The policy assumes the presence of a parent figure who will ensure that the child attends school. However, the **policy** remains **silent** on who should be accountable for **educating orphans**, particularly children from child-headed families where there is no parent or guardian to be held liable for failing to enrol, support or ensure that the children attend school. There is also a gap created in the educator-parent-learner partnership and it remains uncertain as to how the gap should be filled – although there seems to be an urgent need to fill the gap. For example, it was evident from the current study that some of the orphaned learners had nobody to help them with their homework. The educators interviewed also confirmed that some of the orphaned learners had nobody to represent them at school functions, to collect report cards or to

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<sup>32</sup> South African School Act (SASA) (Act 84 of 1996) provides that: "Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible for to attend school from the first school day of the year the in which the child reaches the age of seven years until the last day of the year in which the learner reaches the age of fifteen years or in the ninth grade, which ever occurs first."

discuss their academic progress with the educators. In such cases the assumed partnership does not exist, raising the question as to **who should act as surrogate parents**.

In addition, it is a common law practice for educators to take up the duty of care – in place of parents or guardians of the child – *in loco parentis* (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001). The **duty of care** means that the educator is supposed to take care of the child, as a parent would take care of his or her own child (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001). The type of care *in loco parentis* involves being a parent representative who is expected to control the behaviour of children when they are in school and not the role of feeding, clothing and buying materials for the learners that emerged in this study. Given the emerging situational role of the educators in providing needs to the orphaned learners, it would imply that the educators take up pastoral care alongside pedagogical responsibilities. However, the Norms and Standards policy statement (2000) is not clear enough on how educators should provide pastoral care to fulfil the needs of orphaned learners. Moreover, the educators interviewed in this study seemed not to be aware that they are expected to play a pastoral role, among their other responsibilities. The educators voiced the opinion that it was not their responsibility to provide care and believed that helping orphaned learners was an individual's choice. In the absence of training that would enable the educators to meet the current challenges, it is likely that they will continue to regard their role of providing care in terms of showing good behaviour.

Researchers have found that the concept of pastoral care lacks a clear and shared definition (Best, Jarvis & Ribbins, 1997; Watkins, 1999; Chittenden, 1999). According to Best and others (1997), pastoral care encompasses the educators' response to the non-academic personal needs of the learners, which may include guidance and counselling. In Pomeroy's (1999) study, students described the pastoral role as *establishing a meaningful relationship, preventing disruptions, guidance and showing concern for the well being of the learners*. Pastoral care could also be viewed as official institutional structures that provide for the non-academic needs of the learners (Nodding, 2005). The common element in these definitions is the care and the emphasis on relationship, which goes beyond the traditional pedagogical role of teaching that focused on content delivery.

According to Grove (2004), respect and responsibility are other components, besides relationships, that contribute to pastoral care. The findings of this study demonstrate that educators are responding to the needs of the orphans in different ways and may be in a position to provide care to the orphaned learners; however, they need training in how to identify the learners' needs – especially the emotional and social needs.

Based on the findings of this study it would seem that one cannot separate the needs of a child because they are spontaneous. Hence, the educator's pedagogic and pastoral roles are not exclusive but complementary. For instance, some of the educators were of the opinion that orphaned learners were underachievers in class and their poor academic performance could be due to lack of fulfilment of their emotional and material needs. The challenge that this situation posed to the educators in the two schools in this research study was the ability to identify these emotional needs and provide appropriate support. Two distinctive identities of the educators emerged from the study. There are *educators who help orphans* and *educators who refer the orphaned learners to other educators for assistance*. It would seem that the action the respective educators took was determined by the way in which they perceived their role. Some of the educators interviewed reported that providing care for the orphans was not part of their responsibility. This understanding was according to the premise that the role of providing care was optional; therefore the educators responded to the needs of the orphaned learners by referring the orphans to educators who volunteered to help.

A common factor among the educators who helped the orphans would seem to be their motivation, which seemed to come from their own experiences. Some of the educators could reflect on their own experiences and empathise with experiences of the orphans. In addition, the educators talked of internalised family and religious values that underpinned their altruistic response to the orphans' needs. Although some of the educators were willing to provide emotional support, there is a need to assist the educators to support the orphaned learners – by providing skills, material support and, in some cases, specialist support (depending on the nature of the need). For example, the educators reported that

some of the orphaned learners had been raped. Learners that have had such an experience need care that the educators may not be able to provide.

It appears that owing to the lack of a clear definition of the role of pastoral care and the necessary training, educators respond to the needs of the orphaned learners on the basis of the relationship they establish with the learners, intuition, sensitivity, empathy and the perception of their role. Holland (2000) suggests that schools should have a policy on loss and education on loss should be part of the school curriculum. They should also seek a variety of outside support in teaching about death and bereavement – with an aim of supporting the educators in their efforts. The research finding of the study done by Cooper (2004) on the role of empathy in educator-pupil relationships revealed that empathy had a significant effect on the relationship between the educator and the learner, learner behaviour and the quality of learning. This finding supports the argument being presented in this study that pastoral care should be seen as part of teaching and learning. However, educators need to be assisted to support orphaned learners.

Some of the educators who help orphaned learners seemed overburdened with responsibility and were concerned with the lack of help from their colleagues and/or external assistance from social workers. Assistance with some of their responsibilities, such as administrative duties and helping children with homework, could leave these educators with more time to build relationships, through which the emotional and social needs of the orphaned could be fulfilled. Blasco (2004) and Cooper (2004) identify overfilled curriculum, poor educator/pupil ratio, and lack of management support, lack of resources and lack of time as factors that serve to constrain educator displays of empathy, such that even empathetic educators could not find time to interact with learners.

Educators interviewed in this study seem to respond to the needs of the orphaned learners depending on their self-conceptualisation of the role of the educator. The educators who assumed providing care to be part of their role interact with the orphans and give emotional and material support, while other educators who seemed to be uncertain of the role of care referred the orphans to other educators for help. The educators committed to

providing care in this study felt overburdened with responsibility because they had to take care of so many learners. The findings of this study suggest that educators could make a difference in the lives of orphaned learners, provided that the role of the educator is redefined to emphasise the building of relationships based on care, trust and empathy, to encourage interaction and facilitate identification and fulfilment of the material, social, and emotional needs of the orphaned learners.

The motivation for involving educators in providing such care is grounded in the fact that, after a death in the family, the grieving child comes to school with emotional needs and may find it difficult to concentrate in class. It therefore calls upon the educators to be able to support the child through the grieving period. It also became apparent from this study that some educators were uncertain of how to deal with the emotions of a grieving child. For example, one educator viewed an orphaned learner who could not stop crying as weak. Other educators could not understand why some of the orphans were withdrawn and emotional and regarded orphans as children with behavioural problems. Literature indicates that children who have been traumatised by death may experience detachment and withdraw from others (Cohen & Mannarino, 2004). A normal grieving reaction may include pain, anger, anxiety, sadness, loneliness and longing for the deceased (Willis 2002; Cohen & Mannarino, 2004; Haggard 2005; Black, 2005). Foster (2002) points out that children at times portray different reactions to grief, they may weep at one point and play soon after. Such behaviour may cause confusion and the educator and other adults may not understand it. According to Willis (2002), grieving children often do not understand their own feelings and may exhibit unacceptable behaviour as a result of the disruption of their daily routine or confusion surrounding their feelings.

In a school situation, the grieving child may need support from the educator and understanding and friendship from peers to cope with the grief (Haggard, 2005). In both the schools from which the participants of this study were drawn, there was no school counsellor, psychologist or social workers to attend to the non-academic needs of their orphaned learners. The educators seem to be the only adults, besides relatives, to support these orphans – though some of the educators seem unprepared or uncertain of how to

handle the emotions of a grieving learner. The Reid and Dixon (1999) survey on educator attitudes toward death and how they cope with grief in a public classroom indicates that educators need to be prepared to deal with grief. Grieving is a process that may have emotional and social implications, that manifest as behavioural problems in the classroom. Haggard (2005) points out that most educators and counsellors do not know how to support a grieving child, although the educators may be willing to support the children despite their other responsibilities. The Spall and Jordan (1999) study of a group of educators' personal perspectives on working with bereaved children revealed that the educators had high expectations of themselves and they mentioned they would find extra energy to help a grieving child. The question that arises from both these studies and the findings of this study is: *If educators are not trained to support a grieving child, is it reasonable to expect these educators to cope with death and grieving, while in the process of providing pastoral care to their orphaned learners?*

Research done previously (Bowie 2000) that aimed to determine the opinions of learners and educators on including death education in the curriculum identified two main views. The first view was that death should be discussed as the need arose. The second view supported death education as a subject in the curriculum, with the argument that it would develop a healthy attitude towards death and prepare learners for future deaths. In my opinion both views require that the educator is to have prior knowledge about death and grieving in order to be able to respond appropriately either way in preparing the learners for the eventuality of death or to help a learner who is **grieving** the death of a family member. In order for the educator to create an atmosphere in the classroom that promotes teaching and learning, the educator needs to be able to support the learner in **coping with grief**. Educators with orphaned learners in their classes also need to be aware of behavioural problems that may be due to learners experiencing difficulties adjusting to parental death, in order to differentiate reaction to loss from other forms of misconduct.

The findings of this study support the literature indicating that instruction on how to deal with grieving children is not part of educator training (Reid & Dixon, 1999). Given the length of time the orphaned learner interacts with the educator in school it seems that



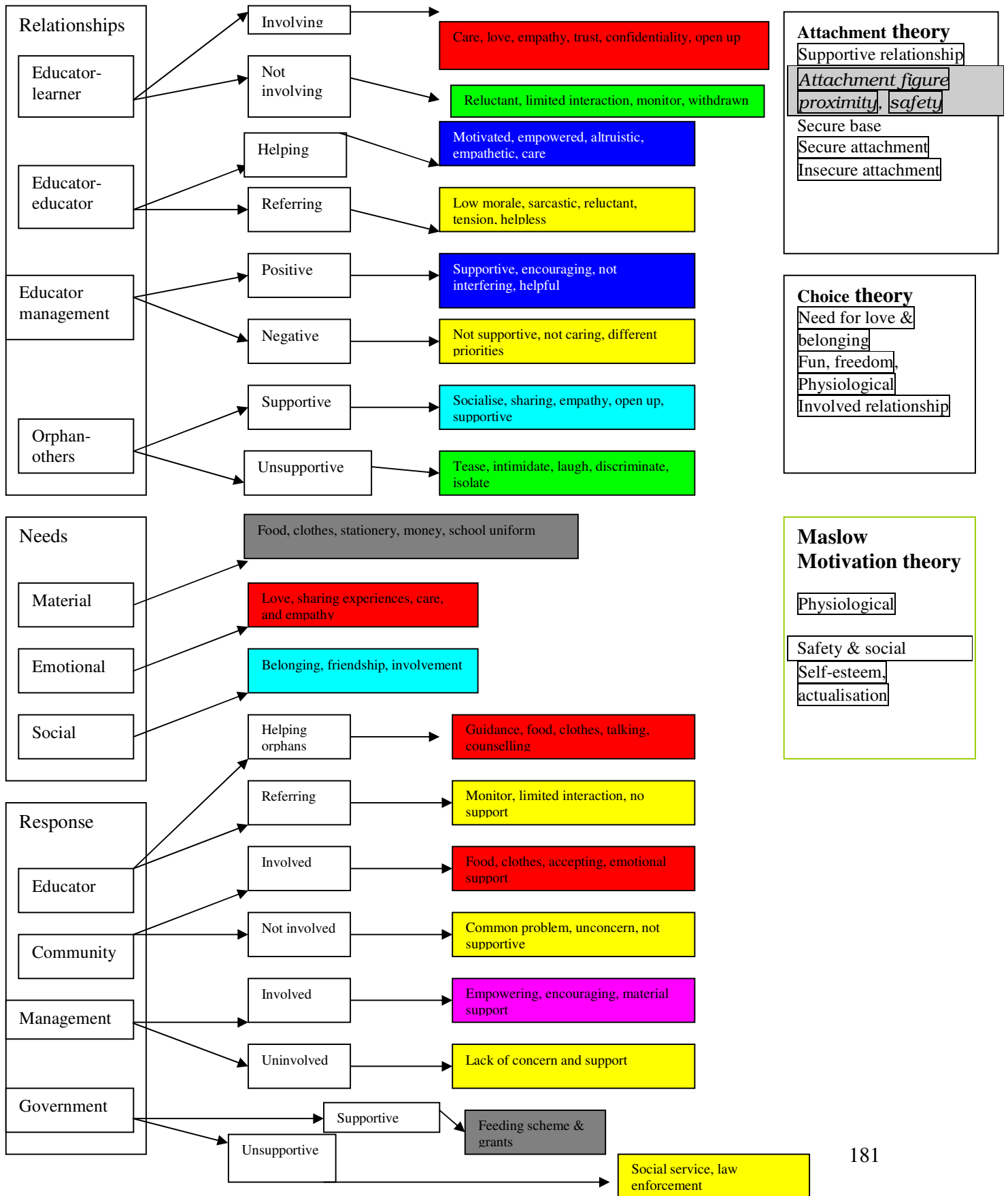
educators may be in a position to provide pastoral care to the orphaned learner and deal with grief in the classroom or refer the orphans for external help, as and when the need arises. For the educators to be empowered to support orphans during the grieving period, they need to be prepared through pre-service and in-service training to counsel learners in the school environment who are traumatised by the death of their parents.

There are training programmes that prepare educators for teaching learners about AIDS. For instance, the Life Style Education Programme for Secondary Schools in South Africa, which teaches learners behavioural intentions, gives them information on HIV/AIDS and teaches them attitudes towards people with AIDS (Visser, 1996). Similar programmes have been introduced in Uganda, Tanzania and Nigeria, among other countries. The intentions of the programmes are to reduce HIV/AIDS transmission by increasing the level of knowledge, influencing attitude and encouraging safe sexual practices (Klepp, Ndeki, Leshabari, Hannan & Lyimo, 1997; Kinsman, Harrison, Kengeya-Kayonda, Kanyesigye, Musoke & Whitworth, 1999; Fawole, Asuzu, Oduntan & Brieger, 1999). What seems missing from these programmes is how to care for not only people infected by HIV/AIDS but also those affected by deaths caused by the infection, such as orphans. One of the educators interviewed believed that knowledge and skills of providing care should be part of the Life Skills Programme. It might be of benefit to the orphans if a pastoral care programme were incorporated in the educator training curriculum, which would then lead to encouraging care and relationship building in schools based on Life Skills/Orientation programmes.

Figure 6.1 on page 182 is a graphic representation of the themes that emerged from this research study. The column on the far left represents the three main themes emerging from the study namely, **relationships, needs, and response**. Moving towards the right the second column shows the nature of relationships identified between educators and learners, educators and management team, among the teachers and between the orphaned learners and their peers. The **first theme, relationships** was described as involving/not involving, helping /referring, positive/negative and supportive/unsupportive. Examples of codes that constitute the categories are represented in the coloured boxes. The **second**

**main theme** includes **the needs** of the orphaned learners identified in the study. The categories of needs are material, emotional and social; the codes that constitute the three categories are listed in the coloured boxes. The **third theme** entails the educator, community, school management and government **response to the needs** of the orphaned learners. The type of response and the codes that describe the responses are presented. The **last** column on the right **presents the three theories** (attachment theory, choice theory and motivation theory) that relate to the emerging themes in this study. The directional arrows indicate connections among items.

Figure 6.1: Emerging themes and theory



## 6.6 SUMMARY

In studying the relationships between all the emerging themes of this study, it became evident that how educators **respond** to the needs of the orphaned learners seems to be **driven** by how they **perceive** orphaned learners and how **they identify** the orphaned learners and their needs. The different responses of the educators towards the orphans appear to be **determined by the relationship** between the educator and the orphaned learner. In this study I have applied some of the concepts from *choice theory* and *attachment theory* to provide insight into the emerging relationships and the behaviour between the orphaned learners and the educators. The common factors between the two theories were discussed in relation to the emerging themes of this study, which are the **relationship between the fulfilment of needs and behaviour**. They highlight human interpersonal relationships as a central factor in fulfilling needs and hence determining behaviour. In *choice theory*, the need for love and belonging sets the foundation for fulfilling other needs. Likewise, *attachment theory* highlights that the relationship established between the child and the attachment figure during infancy is internalised and influences the child's future relationships.

It is evident from the current study that an **involved relationship** between the educator and the orphaned learner may provide opportunities for the orphaned learner to confide in and interact with the educator. When an orphan confides in the educator he or she is likely to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and subsequent behaviour of the orphaned learner and to develop a more accurate assessment of the learner's needs, which may shape how the educator then responds to the orphaned learner's needs. What also emerged from this study was the impression of a compromised relationship between orphaned learners and some educators with concurrent uncertainty of how to respond to the needs of these learners. The findings of this study reveal that the *educator who helped orphaned learners* responded out of **empathy and not necessarily as a result of fulfilling the pastoral role**, as one of the seven roles of an educator stipulated in the Norms and Standards.

The findings in the study suggest that the educator's life experiences are likely to be a source of motivation for initiating interactive and involved relationships with the orphans. Some of the educators in the study helped orphaned learners by reflecting on own experiences that were related to those of the orphans. It appears that the process of helping orphans possibly also fulfilled the educator's own need for recognition, self-worth and being worthwhile to others. Though not obvious, certain educator narrations implied that the educators responsible for supporting orphaned learners seemed – in the minds of their colleagues – to acquire power and status, while others who were less involved, felt disempowered and lacked self-worth when other educators were appointed or volunteered to care for the orphans. An alternative explanation could be that a lack of involvement in supporting orphaned learners by certain educators was a means of protecting themselves from becoming emotionally attached to the orphans and the feeling of disappointment and helplessness should they not be able to meet some of the orphaned learners' needs. This hypothesis could be further explored in future studies.

Another concern raised in this chapter is the role of education and of educators. The researcher present a view that argues that the aim of education is to equip learners with knowledge and skills and the educators' role be mainly teaching and learning (professional identity) while an alternative view presented argues that education should aim at addressing cognitive as well as emotional and social needs of the learners because the needs are interwoven. The second view advocates for integration of teaching and learning role of the educator with pastoral care. This study suggests the need for balancing the role of teaching and caring especially in case of orphaned learners.

## CHAPTER 7

# EMERGING THEORY, FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of educators in managing the needs of the orphaned learners in their classes. The scope of this study included an investigation of how educators identified and then responded to the needs of the orphaned learners. It was argued that orphans might have needs that can only be served by the educational system and their educators – if the role of an educator working under such circumstances was broadened or redefined. Literature reviewed on this subject, as was indicated in Chapter 6, tended to focus on the material needs of these learners (e.g. food and clothes), while less attention was paid to their social and emotional needs, which seems significant from the interviews with the orphaned learners (Foster, 1995; Walker 2002; SCOPE-OVC/Zambia, 2003; and Chatterji, Dougherty, Ventimiglia, Mulenga, Jones and Mukaneza, 2005). Furthermore, in most of the studies reviewed for this research, it was often the caregivers and the educators who described the needs of the orphaned learners (Sengendo and Nambi, 1997; Bennell 2002; Foster, 2002; Schierhout et al., 2004; De Witt & Lessing, 2005). However, for this study I assumed that the reality and knowledge of the needs of the orphaned learners could best be established by talking to the orphaned learners themselves. I then explored how the educators who work in schools that have a high percentage of orphans in their student numbers make sense of their daily experiences when dealing with these children; how they construct their knowledge and respond to the unique needs of these learners.

To provide an understanding of the realities being constructed, it was necessary to see the orphans' world and the perceptions of their educators from their individual points of view. This I did by exploring the lived experiences of the orphaned learners and their

educators from two schools by listening to their different voices, each representing different lived experiences and perspectives. I engaged learners allowing them to express their needs through individual narrative interviews, thus giving them an explanatory voice. The responses from the orphaned learners and the educators, each presenting different versions of their reality, were analysed in accordance with the *grounded theory research* approach and then interpreted in order to give a balanced perspective of and possible explanations for the way in which the educators identified and responded to the orphans' needs.

I opted to use a grounded theory approach in this study to enable me to generate a substantive theory on the educators' experiences with orphaned learners based on the data instead of imposing existing theories on the data. Using a grounded theory approach, issues that were important to the educators were allowed to emerge from the data to provide a theoretical understanding of how and why educators respond to the needs of the orphaned learners in the way they do. In addition, the theory generated using a grounded theory approach is more likely to be relevant to the context of the study – in this case the experiences of educators in schools with orphaned learners.

In the previous chapter, I interpreted the emerging themes in terms of relevant literature. In this review, the relationship between the educators and the orphaned learners emerged as a core theme that seems to influence the way educators identified and responded to the needs of the orphaned learners. From the literature reviewed, it would seem that the educators' knowledge of the orphaned learners' needs was lacking and the response to the needs identified was inadequate. Most literature reports on the material assistance that the orphans receive from the educators; emotional and social needs, although mentioned in some studies, were given less precedence (Foster, 1995; Sengendo & Nambi 1997; UNAIDS, 2001; Giese et al., 2003; Schierhout, 2004). The results of this study show that orphaned learners need emotional and social support as much as material support. It is evident from the theme of *relationships* that emerged prominently from the interviews with orphaned learners and their educators that concern for social and emotional needs

sometimes preceded material needs. The educators' narrations suggest that identifying the learners' social and emotional needs was problematic.

## 7.2 FINDINGS AND EMERGING THEORY

Educators in this study responded to the needs of the orphaned learners in different ways. It appears that what determines educators' responses to the needs of orphaned learners and how educators perceive their role was influenced by a combination of factors such as the relationship between educator and learner, the way in which educators identified learners' needs and the educators' background experiences.

The central underlying theme that emerged from the interviews was the relationship between the educators and the orphaned learners. This relationship, which was based on communication, empathy, confidentiality, trust, friendship and sharing experiences, seemed to encourage the learners to confide in the educators and to disclose their needs. Such a relationship seemed to develop a mutual understanding between the educators and the learners. Education theory has always claimed the importance of relationships that facilitate teaching and learning. The kind of relationship that seem to influence the way educators responded to the learners' needs is one that is **built on empathy** of what it means to lose a loved one, and the ability to establish a **trusting relationship** in which the orphaned learner can express his/her hurt, pain, frustration and other emotions related to grief. In this study, the interviews with the orphaned learners revealed that physiological, social and emotional needs were intertwined such that it was important to fulfil these needs simultaneously. The interactive relationship between educators and learners seems to provide insight into the social and emotional needs of the orphans that could not be inferred from experience or behaviour.

Through interaction, some of the educators seem to be able to identify the most crucial needs of individual orphaned learner. Supportive relationships between the educator and the learner established the bond and attachment figure relationship that had been compromised by the death of a parent or parents. The educators who were involved in



interactive relationships with the orphans seem to have more understanding of and empathy for the orphan's experiences, thus becoming emotionally attached to the learners and responding to their needs.

On the other hand, educators who are less involved with the orphaned learners seem unable to identify emotional needs that might have been internalised by the learners. These educators were more likely to deduce the needs of the orphans from appearance and behaviour and respond to the needs identified by referring such orphans to educators who were more involved in helping orphans. The findings of this study suggest that educators who refer orphaned learners to other educators for assistance possibly may not know how to respond to a grieving child or be able to handle grief. Educators are trained to be teachers. The knowledge and skills acquired during training focus on teaching and learning and not emotional involvement with learners' pain and hurt. They may therefore feel totally disempowered in the face of dealing with bereavement and the hurt and emotional pain of learners. The educators' lack of knowledge of the grieving process could have resulted in the educators' misunderstanding of the orphans' behaviour and they may have assumed that the orphans were troublesome learners. Because of this lack of communication, the learners might also have assumed that the educators were not interested in their problems.

Based on the findings of this study, the different ways of responding to the needs of the orphaned could also be influenced by the educators' motivation to respond to the learners' needs. The educators' background experiences may have been a source of motivation for initiating an interactive relationship through which the needs of the orphaned learners are identified and fulfilled. The common factor among the educators who responded to the needs of the learners by providing support seemed to be intrinsically motivated by their background experiences that related to the orphans' experiences, religious beliefs and values of caring for other less fortunate people. Some of the educators could reflect on their own experiences and empathise with the experiences of the orphans. The educators seem to be addressing a situation that they were familiar with and understood from their own lived experiences. In addition, the

educators talked of internalised family and religious values that underpinned their altruistic response to the orphans' needs. The educators' intuition, sensitivity and empathy seem to influence how the educators perceived their role of providing care.

It was evident from the interviews that educators perceived their role in managing the needs of the orphaned learner in different ways. The more involved educators tend to perceive the role of providing care for the orphaned learners as part of their responsibility while other educators believed that this was a voluntary responsibility and not part of their role. Lack of understanding of the educators' role expectations, and lack of the training and support that educators may require to perform the seven roles of the educator as stated in the Norms and Standards (Department of Education, 1996) may have resulted in the different role perceptions and how the educators responded to the orphans' needs.

The two educator identities that emerged from the two schools ("educators who help orphaned learners" and "educators who refer learners to other educators for help") seem to empower certain educators and disempowered others. The educators identified as "educators who help orphaned learners" seem to be in a more empowered position than other educators according to the narrations of some educators. There were incidences where other educators felt that their efforts at helping the orphans are not recognised because they are not "educators who help orphaned learners". It may be that the process of helping orphans also fulfilled the educators' own needs for recognition, self-worth and being worthwhile to others since the educators talk of their past experiences as a source of motivation for helping orphaned learners.

The theory emerging from these findings is that the kind of relationship established between educators and orphaned learners seem to influence the way in which the educator identifies and responds to the orphans' needs. A sound relationship between the educator and the orphaned learner seems to create trustful relationship in which learners open-up to educators and express their needs and concerns in this relationship of trust. There is a pattern that suggests that the more the educator understands learners' behaviour and needs through an involved, empathetic and trusting relationship, the more

the educator is likely to become committed to assisting the orphan. The implication of such relationship is that the educators would respond to the individual needs of the learners rather than a collective response. A positive and involved relationship appears to be a critical factor in determining how the educators perceive their role and the action they take in responding to the orphans' needs. Factors such as the educators' personal experiences and religious beliefs among other factors determine the way the educators identify and respond to the learners' needs.

### **7.3 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study concentrated on the experiences of twelve orphaned learners and eight educators, who were identified as being involved with the needs of orphaned learners. The experiences of the non-orphans and the caregivers, in relation to the narrations of the orphans, were not part of this study although their knowledge could have enhanced the findings and contributed to a more holistic picture, adding to the self-reported experiences of the chosen orphans; for example, while the learners talked of their experiences with other children, other children were not included in the sample. Had certain of the non-orphans been interviewed, their inclusion would have added another perspective to the orphans' narrations, although the educators did confirm that the other learners isolated some of the orphans.

The general behaviour and discipline problems educators experienced with orphaned learners in these schools were not explored to rule out the possibility that truancy and disruptive behaviour is a common problem in the school and not just with these learners specifically. There is the possibility that there are other factors that contribute to the poor behaviour of some of these learners, given the context of the two schools (see Chapter 1).

I acknowledge that the experiences and views of educators who were not involved with the orphans were not addressed in this study, which could have provided deeper insight into the relationship between the educators and the orphans to affirm the findings.

Another limitation is that there might have been other contextual factors influencing educator response or lack of response to the needs of the orphans, which were not explored in this study.

## 7.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to an understanding of the educators' responses to the needs of orphaned learners by presenting an emerging theory of relationship between the educators and the learners as a determining factor in how the educators identify and respond to the learners' needs. It became evident that some orphans were more concerned about their relationships with others than the fulfilment of their material needs; a situation that also appears prominently in other studies.

In addition, this study adds to the knowledge base of how educators understand their role as educators. It appears that the way educators conceptualise their role is influenced by the experiences of their relationship with orphans and their background experiences. Two educator identities emerged from the way in which different educators responded to the needs of the orphaned learners. Some teachers supported the orphaned learners directly while other educators responded to the learners' needs by referring them to other educators for assistance. These different educator responses may need to be taken into account when developing policies that address learners' needs.

There is need for the Department of Education to revisit the seven roles of the educator, in particular the pastoral role. Based on the findings of this study, which indicated the different conceptions of the role of educators, the question that arises is the following: Is it reasonable to expect people who choose a teaching career to spend time acting as social workers, counsellors and pastoral workers? To address the current situation in schools given the rise in numbers of orphaned learners it may be prudent for the state to consider the **appointment of counsellors** to provide pastoral support to learners in schools. Even if counsellors were appointed educators would still be faced with orphans in their classes and the need to address their needs. This study therefore strongly suggests that educators

need to be **trained in bereavement counselling** as part of their initial training. Helping orphans to fulfil their psychosocial needs is likely to have long-term benefits, compared with providing assistance in terms of immediate and short-term material needs.

## 7.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

This study proposes that relationships between educators and learners in school may influence the way in which the educators identify orphaned learners' needs and conceptualise their role in responding to them. What is not well understood are the factors in social relationships that promote or hinder the development of supportive relationships for the orphans.

In addition, future research could focus on exploring the nature of the relationship between educators and orphaned learners, educators and educators, as well as orphans and their peers in schools that cater for many orphaned learners, and the consequences of these different relationships.

Research could also explore other factors that may limit or extend the educators' response to the needs of the orphaned learners. The concept of different educator identities in schools with regard to helping orphaned learners can be further explored. The different role perceptions and educator identities with regard to responding to the needs of orphaned learners seems to have implications for educator workload and the working relationships between educators, as there seems to be a power disequilibrium in both schools because some educators took on most of the pastoral role in providing for the needs of the orphans. Future research could explore the practicality for a social worker to support the efforts of the educators in providing pastoral care to learners in the classroom and in the school as a whole.

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

This study found that educators understood and distinguished their roles in supporting orphaned learners in different ways. There were educators who identified orphaned learners and provided for their needs or sought assistance from other sources; while other educators, after identifying the orphans, responded by referring the orphans who were in need to the *educators who help the orphans*. The differential role perception seemed to be influenced by the relationships between the educators and the learners and among the educators.

Despite the inherent difficulties in dealing with orphans and their unique needs within the school situation identified in this study, there is evidence that suggests that educators can make a difference in orphaned learners' lives. And this difference would be even further enhanced if educators were to receive the support and assistance of specialist intervention within the situation of the orphaned learners in the school context. The knowledge and skills needed to care for grieving orphans, if included in pre-service and in-service training, may help to sensitise educators in considering providing care as part of their educational responsibility.

I conclude this study by reflecting on my original idea of redefining the role of educators who manage the needs of orphaned learners. In the current situation in some school where there are large and increasing number of orphans, it is likely that educators will continue to perform the multiple roles of teaching, and providing guidance and care – in the absence of counsellors and social workers. There is need to redefine the roles of educators, to include pastoral and counselling role to be able to help learners meet their educational aspirations, which may be affected by emotional and social needs. What could also be helpful based on the findings of this study is the suggestion that educators focus on establishing relationships that are conducive to eliciting a positive response to orphaned learners as well as reshaping the way in which educators conceptualise their role. This role should be refocused from the provision of material needs to the

establishment of a supportive relationship. One way in which educators could expand their role and be motivated to support orphans could be through training.

In my closing reflection, I echo the opening anecdote in Chapter 1, by quoting the words of one of the educators interviewed in this study,

*I believe if all educators in all schools can do it, it can be better because they spend most of their time with us. They are mostly with us so we should do that. The extended family should also play a role, I believe (Mabena).*