



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF
AN ASSET-BASED INTERVENTION FOR
SCHOOL-BASED PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT**

Mathilda Christina Loots

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

2011



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AN ASSET-BASED INTERVENTION FOR
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by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIA DOCTOR

in

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

South Africa

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PRETORIA

2011

Acknowledgements

- To the participating teachers in my study, thank you for letting me into your worlds. You have taught me about life's assets, resilience and hope.
- To Liesel, thank you for being my mentor throughout this endeavour. Your creativity, enthusiasm, passion and zest for research (and life) were a great inspiration and will always be.
- To Ronél, thank you for wetting my appetite for research and nurturing me on my PhD journey. You've been blessed with an eye for detail - thank you for opening my eyes as well.
- To Irma, thank you for believing in me, providing me with scholarly guidance and cheering me all the way to the podium.
- To Hermien, my co-researcher, for all the rewarding hours of reflection about life and research while travelling by car. I appreciate your moral support.
- To Cobus, the love in my life and my pillar of strength. Thank you for all your encouragement, motivation and support in pursuit of my dream. You are the best!
- To Meiring and Miemie, my dear parents, thank you for believing in me every step of this long journey. Your unconditional love and prayers provided me with freedom and courage to fly. You mean the world to me.
- To Bertie and Leonie, my parents in law, thank you for embracing me as a daughter and supporting and encouraging me all the way.
- To my brothers, Hennie and Abraham, thank you for always being there when your sister needed you. We make a great trio.
- To all my brothers and sisters in law, thank you for your interest in my studies and your support along the road.
- To all my friends over the past years, thank you for balancing my life with good company, wine and food.
- Above all, I want to thank the Lord for this opportunity and all the amazing people that shared this journey with me.



Declaration of Authorship

I, Mathilda Christina Loots, declare that

*Teachers' implementation of an asset-based intervention
for school-based psychosocial support*

is my own work and that all sources and citations from literature
have been acknowledged in-text and referenced in full.

Signature:

Date:

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ADDENDA

Addenda: see compact disc

Addendum A: Documents related to the research methodology and strategy

- A1 Summary of concluded research within STAR
- A2 Summary of STAR's funded research projects and the duration thereof
- A3 Schedule of workshop / intervention sessions conducted at the four schools
- A4 Summary of the particulars of participating teachers in each case
- A5 Summary of the selection and number of participants in each case
- A6 Focus group
- A7 Video clip showing the context of each of the participating communities

Addendum B Documents related to data analysis and interpretation

- B1 Examples of the researcher's thematic data analysis
- B2 Examples of the co-researcher's thematic data analysis
- B3 Examples of researcher notes during the process of refining broad themes into specific categories
- B4 The meaning making process that was followed in order to present insight in the way teachers reportedly addressed barriers resourcefully, as presented in Theme 2
- B5 Extract from audiovisual data captured at the Hartbeespoort dam seminar.

Addendum C Official documentation

- C1 Ethical clearance certificate
- C2 Example of an informed consent form (participants)
- C3 Example of an informed consent form (principals)
- C4 Consent letter from Eastern Cape Department of Education
- C5 Consent letter from Mpumalanga Department of Education
- C6 Consent letter from Gauteng Department of Education

Addendum D Newspaper articles

- D1 A newspaper article on School 1's vegetable garden, titled " 'Mama Garden' plants a field of hope", published in the *Weekend Post*.
- D2 A newspaper article on School 1's HIV/AIDS Support and Information Centre, titled "Teachers build together against AIDS", published in the *Port Elizabeth Express*.

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ABSTRACT

Against the background of various socio-economic barriers in many South African school-community contexts, I compared how teachers in four schools implemented an asset-based intervention aimed at school-based psychosocial support. The working assumption was that teachers could act as protective resources in implementing the asset-based approach (following their participation in STAR¹) to promote psychosocial support in their school-community contexts.

The four schools were conveniently selected as information-rich cases to participate in the research study. The four cases comprised one informal settlement primary school in the Eastern Cape, two urban primary schools in Gauteng and one rural secondary school in Mpumalanga. Purposeful sampling was used to select ten participating teachers (n=40) in each school. Methodologically, the study followed a qualitative paradigm and a comparative case study design, implementing participatory rural appraisal (PRA) principles. The asset-based approach was used as theoretical framework. Multiple data gathering (focus groups, observation and intervention artefacts) and documentation procedures (verbatim transcripts, field notes, research journal and visual data) were implemented over a period of three years. Following constructivist grounded theory analysis, three main themes emerged: teachers using an asset-based approach for psychosocial support; teachers addressing barriers resourcefully; and teachers' demonstrated asset-based competencies.

The findings of the current study confirm that schools as part of unique systems are interrelated in terms of networks that mobilise assets, irrespective of the context. Teachers experience and prioritise a) socio-economic barriers (HIV/AIDS, financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment, and child abuse) and b) stressors of teaching (workload and related time constraints, attrition of group members, low levels of parent involvement, as well as context-specific factors). Teachers' identification of barriers is determined by school contexts. Across school contexts teachers identified a) internal assets in their classrooms, the school context and in their communities together with b) community resources (physical resources, natural and environmental resources, community organisations and institutions). In psychosocial support, teachers mobilised identified assets and resources to ameliorate the impact of barriers. Teachers therefore promoted resilience by means of psychosocial support.

¹ Supportive Teachers, Assets and Resilience

The characteristics of school-based psychosocial support include identifying assets, prioritising barriers, mobilising assets to ameliorate the presence of barriers and establishing systemic networks and partnerships. When providing psychosocial support, teachers demonstrated asset-based competencies (positive identity formation, group effectiveness skills and management skills) signified as internal protective resources.

By dynamically engaging in the challenges of their school-community contexts, teachers demonstrated self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002) In the process, teachers displayed and actualised asset-based competencies, which in turn fulfilled the underlying psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy. When they implemented the asset-based approach, it seemed to enhance teachers' sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987) as they viewed the existence of barriers as being comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. Teachers were able to address barriers at an intrapersonal and interpersonal level as well as by deploying management skills. The three levels on which teachers addressed barriers correlate with their asset-based competencies. Their asset-based competency of positive identity formation was utilised to address barriers on an intrapersonal level; their group effectiveness skills addressed barriers on an interpersonal level and their management skills were deployed to address barriers on a level of administrating barriers efficiently.

The study provides empirical evidence to broaden the current knowledge bases of the asset-based approach, resilience and school-based psychosocial support. The study contributes to the existing knowledge base of the asset-based approach by firstly highlighting social capital in school-community contexts as potential outcome of the implementation of the asset-based approach. Secondly, the study introduces asset-based competencies, as well as the dynamic relationship between these competencies and fundamental psychological needs (competence, relatedness and autonomy) as signified in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). Lastly, the study conjectures the interconnectedness between the asset-based approach and a sense of coherence, in the sense that implementation of the asset-based approach could result in enhanced eustress (Simmons & Nelson, 2005) and sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993) when faced with and addressing barriers.

Within the context of the existing knowledge base of resilience in schools and school-based psychosocial support, the findings suggest that resilience in schools could be promoted by teacher-driven psychosocial support initiatives. Firstly, the study signifies greater insight in teachers' perspective on the potential assets and resources available in school-community contexts that could be mobilised for psychosocial support and the promotion of resilience. Secondly, the findings suggest empirical evidence that teachers (in a school context) can mobilise resources so that schools may serve as protective resources to promote resilience through school-based psychosocial support. Thirdly, the study contributes to new insight in possible barriers that teachers could encounter on a daily basis as well as the sort of psychosocial support that could be expected from similar school-based interventions. Lastly, the study provides insight into potential ways in which teachers can address barriers on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level and by deploying management skills.

Key concepts:

- Asset-based approach
- Assets and resources
- Barriers
- Community
- Pastoral role of teachers
- Positive psychology
- Protective resources
- Psychosocial support
- Resilience
- School-community context

