

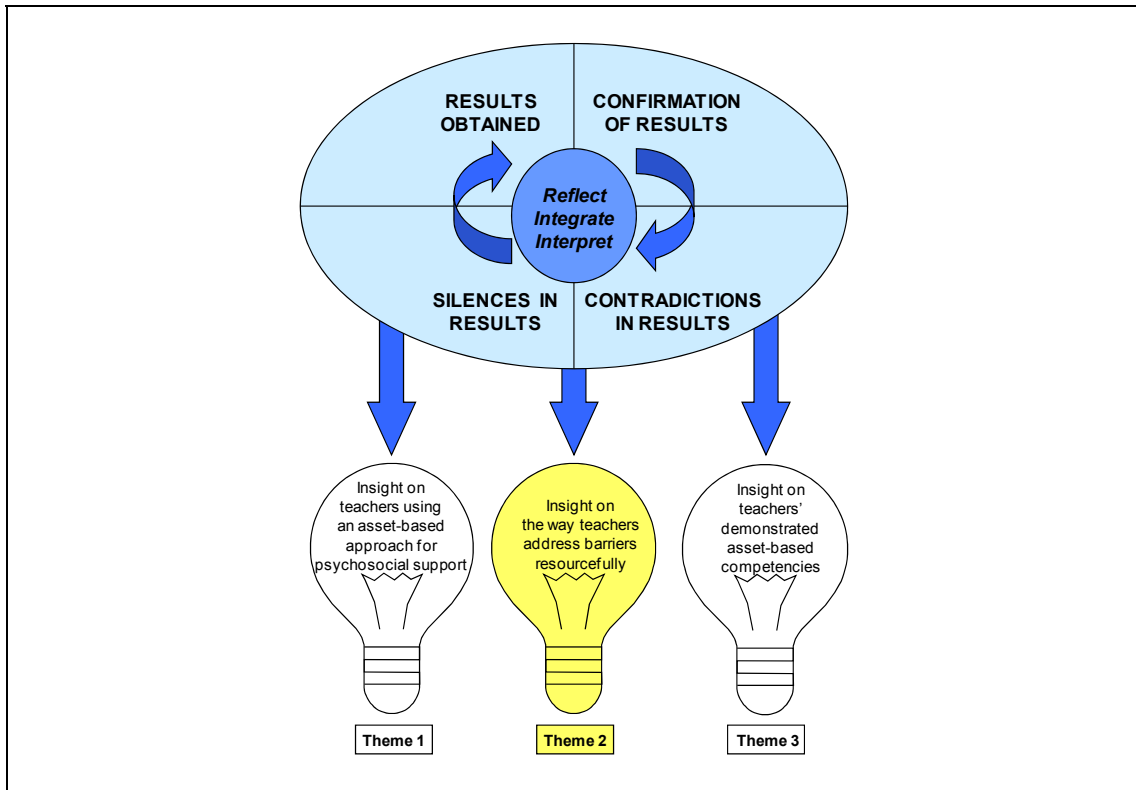
## CHAPTER 5: THEME 2: TEACHERS ADDRESSING BARRIERS RESOURCEFULLY

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous chapter, I focused on the first emerged theme, namely *teachers implementing the asset-based approach for psychosocial support*. In this chapter, I present the second theme that resulted from the data analysis, namely *teachers addressing barriers resourcefully*. This theme addresses the following two secondary research questions: *What barriers are evident in school-community contexts?* and *In which ways could barriers in school-community contexts be addressed?*

In the first section of Chapter 5, I present the results of the current study by making use of inclusion and exclusion indicators for subthemes and categories that emerged during the thematic analysis and interpretation phase of the study. I authenticate and enrich the results through participating teachers' verbatim quotations, visual data and extracts from my research journal. In the second section of this chapter, I reflect on the emerged themes in terms of existing literature in order to present the findings of the current study in line with the study's research purpose. This second part of the chapter is also structured according to congruent and conflicting findings and silences between the current study and existing literature. In the last section of this chapter, I present insight gained in the way teachers addressed barriers resourcefully in relation to the theory of sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993) and eustress (Nelson & Simmons, 2001). Figure 5.1 presents a schematic presentation of the process that was followed in order to generate insight in the way teachers address barriers resourcefully.



*Figure 5.1:* A schematic presentation of the process that was followed in order to generate insight in the way teachers address barriers resourcefully.

## 5.2 TEACHERS ACKNOWLEDGING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS

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This theme relates to participating teachers' ability to a) acknowledge and b) address barriers by utilising individual assets and resources within schools and the wider community. This theme is based on one of the fundamental principles underlying the asset-based approach, namely that barriers can best be addressed by focusing on assets (Bouwer, 2005; Eloff, 2006a). Although teachers in all four schools experienced and reported unique barriers encountered in their school-community contexts, they appeared to be able to address these barriers through a strong focus on available assets and resources.

During the third session of the intervention phase (see 3.3.3), teachers seemed able to identify ways in which identified assets and resources could be utilised in order to address barriers within their school-community contexts. They identified and listed unique barriers their communities were faced with (presented on a poster of a *snake*); and identified ways of addressing these barriers, by focusing on assets and resources available in their communities (presented on a poster with a *knobkerrie*, symbolising potential ways to “kill the snakes”).

The following visual data (photographs 5.1-5.4) documents teachers’ observed ability to generate possible solutions and strategies to address barriers with assets and resources. This visual data shows teachers’ posters, which were created in the third intervention session. Each group identified potential solutions (symbolised as *knobkerrie*) to address barriers (symbolised as *snakes*) in their community. Teachers in School 4 made use of a gun, as symbol of potential solutions.



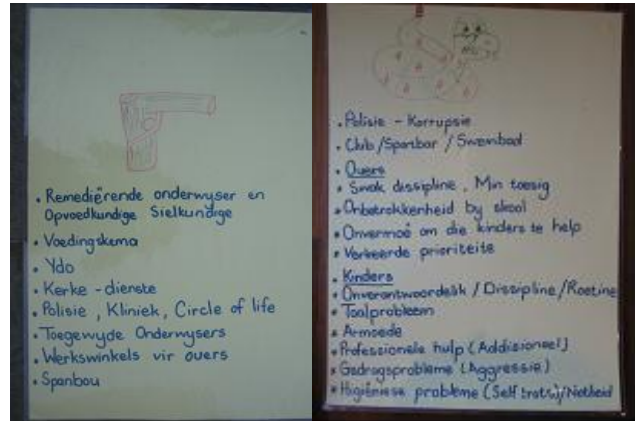
Photograph 5.1: School 1



Photograph 5.2: School 2



Photograph 5.3: School 3



Photograph 5.4: School 4

This process of teachers identifying assets and resources to address barriers in their communities (as described in Chapter 4) is supported by observations in my research journal:

*I could see they put a lot of thought in their thinking ... they came up with workable solutions to “kill the snakes in their community” (Research journal, 1 June 2005).*

*They [School 4] made use of a gun to shoot the snakes ... (Research journal, 14 June 2005).*

*... for the purpose of this exercise, we made use of two metaphors: a “knopkierie” and a snake. It was nice to see how the teachers (School 2) personalised these concepts. They rather made use of a “sagila”, the Swazi word for a knopkierie (Research journal, 15 June 2005).*

This subtheme is further supported by verbatim transcripts of focus group discussions with teachers in all four schools. The following quotations reflect teachers' ability to acknowledge barriers in general as well as to address barriers in a positive manner:

*As you can see that we are moving, but we are not yet to the fat cow, but we are going to the fat cow (School 1, Participant 7, Line 836-837).*

*Now I'm coming to the challenges that we were faced with. We have them and we're trying to have solutions (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 849-850).*



*... each and every home in our culture must have a knopkierie ... we then said what is it then that we can do to address the challenges we are facing* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 674-676).

*We find ways of getting through the hurdles ...* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 285-286).

*After having shared all the problems that we are encountering in this area here – nothing will be impossible for us to achieve* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 610-612).

*Also we had snakes in our area, so we did kill some of the snakes* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 21, Line 310-311).

*We just focused more on what we have and what we can use ...* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 218-219).

The verbatim quotations included above refer to teachers' ability to acknowledge and address barriers in general. In the next section, I present subthemes that refer to specific barriers that teachers reportedly encountered within their unique school-community contexts: 2.1) stressors of teaching and 2.2) barriers related to social and/or economic factors. Table 5.1 summarises theme 2, the related subthemes, categories, and the inclusion and exclusion indicators.

Table 5.1: Summary of Theme 2's subthemes, categories, inclusion indicators and exclusion indicators.

<b>Theme 2:</b> <b>Teachers addressing barriers resourcefully</b> <i>We find ways of getting through the hurdles</i> (School 2, Participant 4, Line 283).		
Subthemes and categories	Inclusion indicators	Exclusion indicators
<b>Subtheme 2.1:</b> Stressors of teaching	This subtheme includes stressors and burdens that participating teachers encountered in everyday teaching. These stressors include their workload and related time constraints of teaching; attrition of group members; low levels of parent involvement and communication, as well as context-specific factors.	
<b>Category 1:</b> Workload and related time constraints of teaching	This category includes data related to additional responsibilities, workload and related time constraints, as additional barriers to everyday teaching.	This category excludes references to additional workload and limited time, where the latter were not indicated as barriers.
<b>Category 2:</b> Attrition of group members	This category includes data related to the attrition of group members. Group members include participating teachers, parents and community members who took part in any of the asset-based initiatives at any stage, who subsequently left the group. The reason for attrition of a group member might vary.	This category excludes references that do not refer to attrition of group members as a barrier.
<b>Category 3:</b> Low levels of parental involvement and communication	This category includes data related to a low level of parent involvement and communication as a barrier to teachers' everyday teaching and asset-based implementation.	This category excludes references that do not refer to low levels of parent involvement and communication as barriers.
<b>Category 4:</b> Context-specific factors	This category includes data related to unique barriers experienced in teachers' specific school-community contexts.	This category excludes barriers experienced outside of teachers' immediate school-community contexts.
	a) <i>Teachers' homes are not in communities where they work:</i> This subcategory includes data related to barriers that participating teachers experienced because they do not live in the same geographic area as the school-community context in which they teach.	This subcategory excludes data of participating teachers who live in the same geographic area as the school-community context in which they teach.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 2:</b>  <b>Teachers addressing barriers resourcefully</b>  <i>We find ways of getting through the hurdles</i>            (School 2, Participant 4, Line 283).</p>		
Subthemes and categories	Inclusion indicators	Exclusion indicators
	<p>b) <i>Pressure from external bodies:</i>            This subcategory includes references to barriers related to pressure from external bodies at the school and local department of education with regard to curriculum implementation and learners' academic results.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes references that are not related to pressure from external bodies at the school or the local department of education. It also excludes references that are not related to academic or curriculum issues.</p>
	<p>c) <i>Shortage of classrooms, high teacher-to-child ratios and absence of teachers.</i>            This subcategory includes references to barriers related to shortage of classrooms, high teacher-to-child ratios and absence of teachers.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes references that are not related to shortage of classrooms, high teacher-to-child ratios and teachers' absenteeism. .</p>
<b>Subtheme 2.2</b> <b>Barriers related to social and/or economic factors</b>	<p>This subtheme includes barriers associated with social and/or economic factors. The <i>presence of HIV/AIDS; financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment</i> as well as <i>child abuse</i> are some of the barriers that the participating teachers were faced with on a daily basis.</p>	
<b>Category 1:</b> HIV/AIDS-related barriers	<p>This category includes data related to barriers that participating teachers experienced regarding HIV/AIDS adversities within their school-community contexts. The following subcategories underpin HIV/AIDS adversities faced by participating teachers: a) growing presence of HIV/AIDS; b) HIV/AIDS as barrier to learning; c) changing roles of individuals; d) beliefs and traditions with regard to HIV/AIDS; and e) discrimination and stigmatisation.</p>	<p>This category excludes data related to barriers that are not associated with HIV/AIDS.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 2:</b>  <b>Teachers addressing barriers resourcefully</b>  <i>We find ways of getting through the hurdles</i>            (School 2, Participant 4, Line 283).</p>		
Subthemes and categories	Inclusion indicators	Exclusion indicators
	<p>a) <i>Growing presence of HIV/AIDS:</i>            This subcategory includes data related to the increased numbers of HIV/AIDS cases and orphans in the participating teachers' school-community contexts.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes references to growing numbers of HIV/AIDS cases and orphans outside of the participating teachers' school-community contexts.</p>
	<p>b) <i>Changing roles of individuals:</i>            This subcategory includes data related to individuals who need to adapt to different roles and/or take on additional responsibilities as a result of HIV/AIDS.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes references to individuals who need to adapt to changing roles, not related to HIV/AIDS.</p>
	<p>c) <i>HIV/AIDS as barrier to learning:</i>            This subcategory includes data related to HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning to both HIV infected and affected children.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes references to barriers to learning, without referring to HIV/AIDS as a possible influence.</p>
	<p>d) <i>Beliefs and traditions with regard to HIV/AIDS:</i>            This subcategory includes data related to beliefs, customs and traditions with regard to HIV/AIDS, which act as a challenge in accepting the scientific facts of HIV/AIDS.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes references to traditions, beliefs and customs that do not have an influence on a person's acceptance and understanding of the scientific existence of HIV/AIDS.</p>
	<p>e) <i>Discrimination and stigmatisation:</i>            This subcategory includes data related to discrimination and stigmatisation against HIV-positive individuals and/or their relative(s)/loved one(s).</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes references to discrimination and stigmatisation that does not result because of an individual and/or their relative(s)/loved one(s)' HIV-positive status.</p>



<b>Theme 2:</b> <b>Teachers addressing barriers resourcefully</b> <i>We find ways of getting through the hurdles</i> (School 2, Participant 4, Line 283).		
<b>Subthemes and categories</b>	<b>Inclusion indicators</b>	<b>Exclusion indicators</b>
<b>Category 2:</b> Financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment	This category includes data related to financial constraints and lack of funds due to poverty and unemployment, as socio-economic barrier, within participating teachers' school-community contexts.	This category excludes references to financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment, outside of the school-community contexts.
<b>Category 3:</b> Child abuse	This category includes data related to child abuse, as social barrier, within the school-community contexts.	This category excludes references to child abuse, outside of the school-community contexts.

### 5.3 SUBTHEME 2.1: STRESSORS OF TEACHING

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This subtheme indicates stressors and burdens that teachers reportedly experienced because of everyday teaching. These stressors include four categories: 5.3.1) workload and related time constraints of teaching; 5.3.2) attrition of group members; 5.3.3) low levels of parental involvement and communication; and 5.3.4) context-specific factors. Additional to each of these stressors of teaching, I also present teachers' strategies to address such stressors of everyday teaching.

#### 5.3.1 Category 1: Workload and related time constraints of teaching

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Teachers in all four schools reported on time constraints and busy schedules due to added demands and responsibilities regarding their profession as a teacher:

*There are a lot of things that's happening, as I told you that we've got a hectic schedule here in school because we are preparing for the banquet* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 480-482).

*Now you know we are overwhelmed at the school because maybe on daily basis ... so it will maybe be a burden to an educator to look at the two books, I want to see my learners, and at the same time I want to change the way they are living in the community ... maybe the problem lies with not having enough time* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 296-301).

*One of the challenges that we are facing as educators, you know we are running around with the curriculum there, maybe some of us they know our high school colleagues around them, how much stressed they are in the process. Now as we are running around with the curriculum, we are now ... our attention normally deviates from caring for the learners because when you care for the learners, you have to care for the learner holistically ...* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 599-605).

*We don't have enough time ...* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 487).

*We're busy, I don't know how we're coping* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 269).

However, teachers in Schools 2 and 3 seemed to experience their workload and related time constraints as barriers to the implementation of asset-based initiatives. They reported difficulties in taking on added responsibilities to everyday teaching due to a lack of time. The following verbatim quotations of teachers in Schools 2 and 3 provide support in this regard:

*You see when I was working with X with that group, sometimes it calls for you as a teacher, at the same time you have to be with the learners and at the same time you have to look at the group there because they used to come here during the day when we are teaching – so having two different groups at the same time is a problem, I learned that as an educator it is demanding of one* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 268-273).

*We wish to continue it's only time, sometimes we ask each other, "what is going on", people tell me "there's no time" we are then under a lot of pressure, but actually we would wish to take it further and almost the three of us we still have that vision* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 352-355).

*It's a matter of maybe ... that we don't have too much time really, to sustain even the group ...* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 381-382).

*I think we could have ..., we don't have enough time, I think some of these learners, the affected children, we don't give ourselves time to visit them at their homes frequently enough and I think that we need to nourish that bond – sometimes we need to visit them with their families, an hour or two* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 487-491).

The following extract from my research journal supports teachers' perceived high workload and related time constraints of teaching:

*It was very frustrating ... we waited almost an hour for all teachers to attend the session. They (School 4) were all in meetings or busy with additional responsibilities* (Research journal, 5 September 2005).

Likewise, the following reflection from the co-researcher's journal acts as supportive evidence of the barrier with regard to participating teachers' time constraints:

*One of our schools is far behind the others with their individual school projects. Each time I phone my contact person at X school (School 4), she has a new excuse why we can not set a date for our follow up meeting. Excuses are usually that they are too busy with other obligations like Departmental meetings or extra curricular activities (Co-researcher's journal, 27 February 2007).*

It seems as if teachers in all four schools experienced their workload and related teaching responsibilities as demanding. However, teachers in Schools 2 and 3 reported that their existing workload in the teaching profession made it difficult for them to find sufficient time to spend on implementing and sustaining asset-based initiatives.

Although teachers experienced their workload, additional responsibilities and limited time as demanding, they demonstrated the ability to address barriers in various ways. For example, teachers were seemingly able to plan and manage their time effectively and generate future strategies and goals, as signified by the following extracts:

*Our plan of action from now onwards, as you can see that we are moving, but we are not yet to the fat cow, but we are going to the fat cow (School 1, Participant 7, Line 836-837).*

*That is possible, but before it becomes possible we first of all have to make sure that we focus our attention (School 2, Participant 11, Line 388-389).*

*As a group we are going to step back, we are going to sit down and discuss and strategise ... (School 2, Participant 9, Line 520-521).*

*We were able to meet under those circumstances to say "hey guys we seem to be stationary, let's get ourselves moving". We sat in meetings trying to get things together (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 868-870).*

*Yes, so they try and solve our problems so much that we no longer have serious problems occurring during school hours after school (School 3, Participant 13, Line 162-164).*

*We had meetings, we have regular meetings, and we told the staff this is what we want to do and this is what we want to do and we need to co-opt members and people availed themselves and that's how we went about doing it. We get co-ordinators,*

*subcoordinators, scribes, we have minutes for the meeting, so it's not a loose thing, it's a structured thing* (School 4, Participant 19, Line 333-338).

Teachers in all four schools also seemed to rely on teamwork as a strategy to address the challenge of workload. In this regard, teachers reported actions such as supporting and motivating each other, communicating regularly, consulting one another on difficult issues and providing care and support to each other. The following verbatim quotations provide supportive evidence:

*Well we now decided that we must give our project a name, we can't just drop, let's call it Masizakheni, that name also came from the staff, from all of us because I said we are working as a team. Then we named our project Masizakheni* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 112-115).

*It's nice to work with people who are self motivated, as a co-ordinator they will always pinch me, "when do we meet, when do we meet, time is moving" it's worse with X because she will just move up from her office down, "when do we meet" I will then say we meet tomorrow, she will ask what time. It is nice working with such people, people who will push you and in the process, I must indicate that it is very nice ...* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 894-900).

*... work together. You know in a group, the way we were we were sharing ideas, we used to meet time and again, and share how far have we gone and what is it that we can do because really if you are not alone you cannot do it alone. So we were dividing ourselves amongst the different groups, that is what I learnt, the importance of working as a group* (School 2, Participant 10, Line 187-192).

*I think we are working as a team and that is the one thing that helps us a lot – we find ways of getting through the hurdles* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 284-286).

*Working as a team makes the outcomes achievable* (School 3, Participant 14, Line 335).

*Our school, it's a committee, we all part of the committee, where you sit and brainstorm problems* (School 4, Participant 17, Line 75-76).

*Sometimes you don't really feel up to it but once you're with the team they encourage you and you understand, it is better to work as a team than as an individual* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 314-316).

*Ja, when you're working alone you will probably say "I will do it later or whatever" but when you're in a team they encourage you and then motivates you (School 4, Participant 17, Line 318-320).*

*And you learn from each other (School 4, Participant 18, Line 322).*

Teachers in all four schools seemed to share responsibilities within their asset-based groups in order to reduce their workload:

*Let me start then to say every individual in our school has a role to play ... (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 48).*

*The community members were just going to be brought on board in the process, seeing that the garden was prospering (School 2, Participant 11, Line 104-106).*

*You know I will start with myself as a link, as a coordinator of the whole project here at school (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 481-483).*

*I should think we gained a lot and then one thing again, teamwork, teamwork, it does play a role because even when we were just brain storming if I was alone maybe the points that we shared as a group I would not have been in a position to think about them. But because we were a group and then some other things just came up and then you become aware of it and how to make our calf to become bigger and bigger (School 3, Participant 15, Line 387-394).*

*We are divided into groups to look after the learners for the afternoon (School 4, Participant 16, Line 169-170).*

In addition, teachers in all four schools seemed to delegate responsibilities to participating community members and parents to reduce their workload:

*Because there were people during the launch who volunteered themselves to come and assist, like Dr. X and X and then when we were I think two months later we found that they don't come, you know if Mohamed does not come from the mountain, you must go to Mohamed. So we decided to go to him (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 152-157).*

*... because as teachers we don't have the time to do everything, therefore we said that*



*these parents are going to stand to look at the parents who are there because now we are dealing with whole community ... they go there for home visits, they are allocated days for the home visits, in fact Tuesdays they go for home visits, they come to us every week and a report is submitted to us to attend to* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 233-239).

*Involving other ... makes a lot of people to get involved* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 142-146).

*... maybe let's involve our learners more, even though it would be subject ...* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 94-95).

*Exactly because we networked with the pastor and place of safety, who took over some of the responsibilities and tasks it helps a lot. We gave it to the pastor and he went overseas to look for sponsors and then he came back, they built a church for them* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 61-64).

*We had meetings, we have regular meetings, and we told the staff this is what we want to do and this is what we want to do and we need to co-opt members and people availed themselves and that's how we went about doing it* (School 4, Participant 19, Line 333-336).

It seems as if the potential future value of the teachers' efforts and input encouraged and inspired them to continue with asset-based initiatives. They appeared motivated to make a difference in their schools and communities. The following verbatim quotations serve as supportive evidence of teachers' motivation and commitment in persevering with their asset-based initiatives despite the workload and time constraints experienced:

*Ja, to give them hope, to give them courage, pray for them, they mustn't lose hope ... but if they can see that people around me care for me then she will be able to have hope* (School 1, Participant 7, Line 578-583).

*We know as teachers that what we are doing, we are achieving* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 767-769).

*It's the drive inside – most of the time I would like to see people better than what they were yesterday and better than what I am – that is what was driving me* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 286- 288).



*I think it's a question of ..., it made us to persevere in whatever we are doing, it also made us have the passion of helping especially the poverty stricken families that we are working with here in this community. So it is really paining to see a child not wearing shoes in winter and so on – some coming here you can see they are from poverty, you can see that they are not properly fed because of their physique, their uniform is in tatters and that pains you and gives you the motivation to help (School 3, Participant 12, Line 343-350).*

*About the projects that we've been doing I feel very proud of realising that the potential that was unleashed within the kids themselves even though they may be suffering from HIV/AIDS, even though they may be affected by HIV/AIDS, but there is something else that is within them, that they can do better than others ... (School 3, Participant 13, Line 428-433).*

*All you have to do is look at their faces when they've achieved something, it's so amazing just to look at them, the twinkle in their eyes, at first they were dull and despondent (School 4, Participant 8, Line 281-283).*

*I'm proud of the growth and everything that is happening here, especially the fact that it is learner based, the learners are benefiting from everything that is happening (School 4, Participant 18, Line 295-297).*

In summary, the teachers in the current study reportedly experienced the teaching profession as taxing in terms of time and workload. Some teachers seemed to experience their workload and busy schedules as a barrier to the implementation and sustainability of asset-based initiatives. However, teachers in all four schools seemed able to address the high levels of workload and limited time. In order to address additional workload requirements, teachers seemingly planned their time effectively; relied on teamwork; shared responsibilities; involved community members and focused on their goals and potential value of asset-based projects.



### 5.3.2 Category 2: Attrition of group members

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In each of the four schools, it happened that at one time or another, some teachers left the asset-based groups. The reasons for the attrition of teachers varied, and included: lack of motivation and dedication; contradictory expectations regarding expected outcomes of asset-based initiatives; too many additional responsibilities; accepting a position at another school; as well as sickness and death (see Addendum A5 for specific reasons in each of the participating schools).

Although attrition occurred in all four schools, teachers in Schools 1, 3 and 4 did not report the attrition of group members as a challenge that had a negative effect on the asset-based initiatives. In this regard, teachers in School 1 seemed to overcome the fact that some of their initial group members left, by recruiting new group members, as reflected in the following extract:

*Then after that we started to work. There was a gentleman by the name of Mr X, he is unfortunately sick, he is off sick for some time but we managed to fill in his place because he is sick ... because we didn't want to be less than the required number as well as there were some drop outs, other people dropped out of the project. You know sometimes people have problems* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 81-87).

At that time, one of the newly recruited group members in School 1 explained the reason for joining the team as follows:

*... because I want to know more and be part of it all, that is why I joined* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 896-897).

On the other hand, teachers in School 2 viewed the attrition of group members as a barrier, which (to their minds) ultimately had a negative effect on sustaining asset-based initiatives. The following verbatim quotations of teachers in School 2 act as support in this regard:

*That one the beading project, I think what I can say is that the group is no longer effective now ... the others are no longer here ...* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 10-15).

*... difficult to move on with some of them having left ... Yes ... I don't know whether to convince our colleagues* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 378-384).

*We were ten and some of the leaders, some of the lady colleagues also left the school and others decided not to go on ... So again that group faded away* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 553-555).

My observation in my research journal supports School 2's experience of attrition as a barrier:

*I can see that they (School 2) feel a bit de-motivated with the fact that they are only a few group members left ...* (Research journal, 28 August 2008).

Furthermore, teachers in School 2 also reported on parents and community members who left groups as a barrier:

*... the number started to decrease* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 722-723).

The attrition of group members could be ascribed to various unforeseen and unique circumstances. However, one of the main reasons for attrition of group members in School 2 was that teachers seemed to have diverse and sometimes contradictory expectations regarding the purpose and expected outcomes of asset-based initiatives. The following verbatim quotations illustrate some of the contradictory expectations of group members:

*I think they thought maybe somewhere somehow they were going to get direct cash from the project, so now when they realised that there's no money coming to their pockets, because these people are not working, there's no work around here, so immediately when you call them for a project, they think that maybe they are going to give us cash. So for them to persevere becomes difficult* (School 2, Participant 10, Line 26-30).

*As indicated, most people are unemployed in this area, we were saying that with the gardening project it will be easier for these people to get something into their pockets in a long run because they will be selling the vegetables to the outside world, especially in developed areas – that at the end of the day those people would come down here to get vegetables and in that way it was going to put little cash into their pockets* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 68-74).



*Ja, as my colleagues have indicated, people thought that by coming here something will immediately get into their pockets, that was maybe what was at the back of their minds, but then seeing that nothing is getting into their pockets, they lost interest and became demotivated (School 2, Participant 11, Line 84-89).*

*Ja, they were expecting that maybe some way some how they will benefit there and there from the project, so the money didn't go straight to their pockets as they expected, so I think somewhere somehow they were discouraged (School 2, Participant 9, Line 234-237).*

*We are teachers and we live in a situation where whenever we do something we expect to get something in return, perhaps those are some of the cases and maybe the reason why some have left (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 554-557).*

*... the parents ... they thought that when they put in work something will come out of it immediately, but nothing came out because it was not immediate that you will get something out of the whole thing, we were still building up. So now the number started to decrease (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 719-723).*

In addition, it seems that group members in School 2 left as they expected to benefit on a financial level, yet the initial expectation did not materialise. As a result, some group members terminated their participation. Remaining teachers in School 2 expressed their frustration regarding the challenge of group members' attrition as follows:

*... but the only problem is she is now left alone, the others are no longer here ... (School 2, Participant 9, Line 15-16).*

*I don't know whether to convince our colleagues (School 2, Participant 11, Line 383-384).*

*And finally as a group, maybe most of us will be worried to say that when we looked at the buildings, that school seems to be a big school but how come we have only four out of that big school, when in other big schools we have the ten and more are still partaking even if they are not here (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 947-951).*

In this regard, remaining teachers in School 2 reflected on benefits beyond financial gain, namely personal benefits as well as support provided to their school-community. One of the teachers explained this perception as follows:

*So that is what we are trying, we are trying to say to our educators, let it not be for us, let it be for all of us because we all benefit at the end of the day ... you know you learn from people, you learn some strategies ... but in the process you learn a lot of strategies that you can use if you were to be given a certain platform* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 956-963).

Despite the challenge that the remaining group members in School 2 experienced, they seemed able to address this challenge resourcefully. They reflected on the process, identified what had worked and what not, and revised their strategies accordingly. The following verbatim quotations illustrate teachers' reflection on this process:

*... and I think what X has said that we initially had more constant meetings ..., it changed much if we sat down and focused again ...* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 92-93).

*... as long as we have ideas and as long as we communicate and as long as we form groups ...* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 125-126).

*We were able to meet under those circumstances to say “hey guys we seem to be stationary, let’s get ourselves moving”. We sat in meetings trying to get things together* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 868-870).

*... we tried our level best to meet ..., to have meetings, to have records of meetings* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 881-882).

*So we have put our heads together and we have said in 2009 we need to bring more of our colleagues in, we have been trying, in the meetings ... they must have seen some improvement ... it seems that the educators are getting more in, more interested in the whole process* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 951-955).

From the extracts above, it seems that the remaining group members in School 2 managed to revise their strategies by recruiting more group members, learning from previous failures and successes, and communicating more openly and focusing on the potential benefits of their asset-based initiatives. Similarly, teachers in Schools 1, 3 and 4

reported on the importance of open communication within their groups in order to maintain successful group initiatives. The following verbatim quotations serve as supportive evidence of communicating and consulting within their group:

*We sat down with the principal, I said the whole management should go there, management as a whole, teachers, learners also. So we said let's sit down, let's strategise, how are we going to take this to point B* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 157-160).

*We shared information about ... we worked together, involving others* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 118-123).

*... it has made us to be outspoken to one another, we no longer keep things to ourselves ...* (School 3, Participant 14, Line 454-455).

*I think one of the things is coming together, sharing ideas, I think team work, really and you see sometimes ... we are able to meet time and again and reviewing our strategies, where we are lacking and how can we move forward ... meeting frequently, strategising again and again, checking wherever we are lacking, whether we need to change our strategies and things like that and so on ...* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 560-567).

*We had meetings, we have regular meetings, and we told the staff this is what we want to do and this is what we want to do and we need to co-opt members and people availed themselves and that's how we went about doing it. We get coordinators, subcoordinators, scribes, we have minutes for the meeting, so it's not a loose thing, it's a structured thing* (School 4, Participant 19, Line 333-338).

In summary, the occurrence of group members leaving groups was evident in all four school-communities. However, only teachers in School 2 reported this occurrence as being a barrier to the successful implementation and maintenance of their asset-based initiatives. Many reasons were identified. One possible reason could be that teachers in School 2 started their group with nine participating teachers at the beginning of 2005 and ended up with only four teachers at the end of 2008. In comparison, the other three schools each ended with eight participating teachers at the end of 2008 (see Table 3.5 to view a summary of the initial number of participants and the number of participants in the group at the end of 2008, and see Addendum A5 to view reasons of termination of

participation). Therefore, attrition of group members was more evident in School 2 than in the other three participating schools, and the four remaining teachers in School 2 accordingly had to take on more responsibility. However, as reported, the teachers seemed able to generate different strategies for addressing this barrier.

### 5.3.3 Category 3: Low levels of parental involvement and communication

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This category includes data related to teachers' experience of low levels of parental involvement and communication as a barrier to teaching. Teachers in Schools 2, 3 and 4 indicated that parents tended to be uninvolved. The following verbatim quotations indicate the perceived absence of parental involvement:

*Most of the parents here were saying that they are busy at their fields so they won't be able to come to the school afterwards* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 260-263).

*Exactly, parents lack communication, they don't communicate with us. The only time they come to school is when maybe there is a serious problem, another child has beaten another and the problem was not solved, this is the only time we see the parents getting closer to us* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 240-243).

*We are also unable to involve parents financially – the government says you don't have to go to the parents for funding* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 213-215).

*And even with Circle of Life, you identify learners, all the parents are very eager because the learners have problems, their children have problems and then after a month or so they don't go anymore* (School 4, Participant 17, Line 370-372).

Although teachers in Schools 2, 3 and 4 experienced low levels of parental involvement and insufficient communication, the teachers seemed able to address this challenge in different ways. Teachers met with parents in an attempt to build supportive parent relations, increase parents' participation and involve parents in asset-based initiatives. The following verbatim quotations serve as supportive evidence of teachers' strategies to address low levels of parental involvement:



*We requested our learners to tell their parents that we've got this project that they should come so that they get more information* (School 2, Participant 10, Line 1-3).

*Parent involvement happens normally when there are like the one that we have organised already, the one whereby the police coming over. We invite them to the school to come and listen* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 189-191).

*He attends meetings I think once a month where they discuss, concerned parents, they meet once a month ...* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 437-439).

As a result of the teachers' response to address low levels of parental involvement, teachers in Schools 2 and 3 reported enhanced levels of parental involvement:

*... also this project brought the parents together* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 133).

*... as much as we need the parents to can come together, as long as they support each other, they support the learners, they support us and we also give support to one another ...* (School 3, Participant 15, Line 586-589).

On the other hand, teachers in School 4 did not report any significant change in terms of parental involvement subsequent to parent meetings. Teachers in School 4 continuously referred to parents as a "barrier":

*This is also a frustrating process, if the learners don't go then new learners must be appointed again, I mean you can do something else in that time. How again you must go around the classes and complain to the children again, who do you think we can appoint of the learners to go there, because really the parents are a barrier to us* (School 4, Participant 18, 381-385).

Although teachers in School 1 did not indicate lack of parental involvement as a barrier, they did reflect on parental involvement and participation within the school. The following verbatim quotations illustrate teachers in School 1's views on parental involvement:

*... to meet the parents because we need to have a meeting with the parents where we have to identify those that are going to volunteer, so we have to have a meeting with the parents* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 1-3).

*What is happening with the vegetable garden ... the parents are taking care of the school* (School 1, Participant 2, Line 712-719).

*... there are lots of parents and we find out that they are so interested in working here and because of the high rate of unemployment, at least for a day they are having something to do, because each and everyday they must come and have a look at their garden. A person comes with a spade, a fork and rake of their own and cut whatever site of land he wants* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 733-738).

*... because the parents are involved, before they go there they start at the classroom and then go to the garden* (School 1, Participant 5, Line 817-818).

*... develop supportive relations with parents ...* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 44-45).

*Now we invited some people, some parents, 22 parents were called. These parents, we were now trying to bring this to the broader community* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 180-182).

In summary, teachers in Schools 2, 3 and 4 acknowledged that insufficient parental involvement and lack of parent-school communication is a challenge within school-community contexts. It seems as if teachers in Schools 2 and 3 addressed the challenge of parental involvement and communication by meeting with parents in an attempt to build supportive parent relations, increase parents' participation and involve parents in asset-based initiatives. On the other hand, teachers in School 4 did not report any significant change in this regard. Although teachers in School 1 did not indicate parental involvement as a barrier, they organised meetings with parents and involved parents in asset-based initiatives.

#### **5.3.4 Category 4: Context-specific factors**

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This category includes data related to unique barriers experienced in teachers' specific school-community contexts. I present this category according to the following subcategories: a) teachers' homes are not in communities where they work; b) pressure



from external bodies; c) shortage of classrooms, high teacher-to-child ratios and absence of teachers.

**a) Subcategory 4.1: Teachers' homes are not in communities where they work**

Teachers in Schools 1 and 2 reported that they live in other areas than those where they taught and seemed to experience this as a barrier. In this regard, they for example found it difficult to be available after school hours, as they needed to travel relatively far from their homes to the schools. The following verbatim quotations support the barrier of teachers' homes not being situated in the communities where they work:

*... it would be a problem ... who's going to look after that after hours because we don't stay here ...* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 64-67).

*Our main challenge as you see us here, we work here but we don't stay here we stay there, that is a challenge but I will talk about the challenges later* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 787-789).

*We are hoping to get through the challenges that we are facing, that we work here, we live there, we just come here at 7:30, we leave at 14:30 or 14:40 we're gone* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 928-931).

Teachers in School 1 seemed to address this challenge by deploying parents and community members to assist them in some of the responsibilities related to asset-based initiatives:

*And also we need to have one parent who's going to be taken as a caretaker or whoever, who's going to look after that after hours because we don't stay here. There should be somebody who's going to be looking as a security for security purpose* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 64-68).

*What is happening with the vegetable garden, what I've seen so far, it helps a lot with the community because what is happening now, the parents are taking care of the school, they don't want the gate to remain open, they don't want any animals to come in because they are keen, they are looking out for the vegetable garden* (School 1, Participant 2, Line 712-716).

*... there are lots of parents and we find out that they are so interested in working here* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 733-734).

In the same way, teachers in School 2 seemed to involve parents, learners and community members in asset-based initiatives:

*Involving other ... makes a lot of people to get involved* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 142-146).

*... maybe let's involve our learners more, even though it would be subject ...* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 94-95).

However, teachers in School 2 reported that parents and community members' involvement was not sustained. They reflected on possible ways in which they could have addressed this challenge by indicating that they could have delegated responsibilities to community members:

*So I think that maybe the mistake that we did, we took everything on our shoulders, we were supposed maybe to delegate even amongst those people that belonged to the members* (School 2, Participant 10, Line 314-317).

To conclude, it seems as if teachers in Schools 1 and 2 experienced the fact that they did not live in the same community in which they taught as a challenge. Teachers reported that they travelled far to get to work, therefore they could not easily stay at school after work hours to take on additional responsibilities related to the asset-based projects. However, they reportedly addressed this challenge by delegating certain responsibilities to parents, community members and learners who lived within the community; for example, parents and community members looked after the vegetable garden after school hours.

#### **b) Subcategory 4.2: Pressure from external bodies**

Teachers in School 2 (the only rural and secondary school participating in the study) reported that the majority of their group members taught Grade 12 learners, who underperformed academically. Consequently, teachers experienced pressure from the Department of Education and other role-players to improve Grade 12 results, taking up

much of their time and attention, and contributing additional stress. Furthermore, teachers in School 2 also experienced challenges regarding implementing a changing curriculum<sup>10</sup>. A possible reason for this context-specific barrier being limited to one school could be that School 2 was the only secondary school that participated in the current study and that academic pressure was therefore possibly higher in this school than in the other three participating primary schools. The following verbatim quotations serve as support of pressure from external parties with regard to learners' performance and curriculum implementation:

*We are jumping around with the curriculum and you know if you check on the government, it is pressing buttons on the high school and it's worse because when you check all of us, the group that started the whole thing were in grade 12 and the government was expecting results. And now you touch the buttons, to the educators you will find them saying "don't touch us, they want results" (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 608-614).*

*... we now had to deal with RNCS was coming this way, on the other side FET, we were now getting NCS in, on the other side we were dealing with 550 (the old one). So we were dealing with all these curriculum and I must indicate you know a disaster happened, while we were having all the other challenges as a group, a disaster fell, a bigger one fell on the school, we underperformed. You know what goes with underperformance. Now when these clouded our minds, we were so crowded that the focus changed ..., we have our project, we want to run it but the focus changed, we are scrambling with the curriculum, we are scrambling with underperformance, all the time we must know where we are in terms of the results, where are we, are we getting them. Nobody was talking to one another, it was pushing and shoving, we wanted the results there (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 852-866).*

*We were still having one stumbling block, the curriculum again because NCS was new in grade 12, and unfortunately as you see us here, we are all in grade 12. So with this pressure we tried our level best to meet ... to have meetings, to have records of meetings that we normally hold, but if you would look for X you will find X jumping with papers saying "nkosiyami", you will find X there, you know all these stories (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 878-885).*

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<sup>10</sup> The Revised National Curriculum forms part of the process of transforming education and builds on the vision of the South African Constitution and Curriculum 2005.

The following extract from the co-researcher's journal refers to the context-specific barrier experienced in School 2:

*Today we visited school X. The school's matric results from last year was low and now the Department of Education is putting a lot of pressure on the school to obtain better results this year. The teachers are very busy with extra classes and are experiencing a lot of stress. Because the priority at the school is to improve marks, their project gets neglected. Teachers involved in our project are complaining that they don't have time to do the tasks that we discuss during our visits. We shall have to work hard to motivate the teachers to continue with the asset-based projects ... (Co-researcher's journal, 27 February 2007).*

However, teachers in School 2 seemed to stay resourceful despite the context-specific barriers they faced. They seemed able to utilise barriers by planning ways in which to address these challenges. These teachers reportedly realised the importance of understanding children and their world, and building close and supportive relationships with children. The following verbatim quotations reflect teachers in School 2's resourcefulness in addressing barriers regarding curriculum and the under-performance of children:

*What I want to say is it opened our eyes that at the end of the day, as educators at high school, we need to get closer to our learners, that is one thing they taught us when they came to us, with a knopkierie – sagila in our our language. I hope you know it and also with the snakes around, those things that are not good for the community. So it opened our eyes that one thing that we have to do is, high school as we are, we need to get to know our learners, not learners that you are teaching, because the tendency is if you are on the FET grade 20 you will concentrate more on the grade 20 learners, so it told us that it must cut across so that you understand these learners, you know what they need so that you are able to execute your roles correctly as expected, as the seven roles you are expected to carry out as educators (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 614-626).*

*So what happened then, as we were scrambling with the curriculum, you know, things got to a halt but not dead stop, because we were able to meet under those circumstances to say “hey guys we seem to be stationary, let's get ourselves moving”. We sat in meetings trying to get things together (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 866-626).*

*So we sat down ... we elaborated, when we talk with them we said “we are hoping for the*



*best in 2009” and saying we are hoping for the best in 2009 we indicated that we will try our level best to ensure that our projects kick off, they take off the ground again. We are hoping because it is nice to work with people who are automatic, you know an automatic car can just move. It’s nice to work with people who are self motivated, as a co-ordinator they will always pinch me, “when do we meet, when do we meet, time is moving” it’s worse with X because she will just move up from her office down, “when do we meet” ... So it will be easy now for us to club and work together and with what has now happened in our school, we hope that the idea will grow and become bigger and bigger amongst our learners and we hope that with the idea that we have and the vision we are having in our group we think that it will grow into the community ... (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 885-910).*

**c) Subcategory 4.3: Shortage of classrooms, high teacher-to-child ratios and absence of teachers**

Teachers in School 3 reported barriers unique to their school-community context. Firstly, they experienced a shortage of classrooms for Grade 7 children. As a result, Grade 7 children attended class in the assembly hall, hindering teaching. Secondly, teacher absenteeism seemed problematic. These context-specific barriers resulted in feelings of frustration and de-motivation. The following verbatim quotations serve as support of these context-specific barriers experienced in School 3:

*Especially the Grade 7’s, most of them they are not teaching Grade 7 it is only me – the building itself where the Grade 7’s are attending is so small and the partitioning thereof, you cannot teach if one teacher is not present in one class, so there were three Grade 7s in a hall, so and they were divided in such a way that when another teacher is speaking in one class, he disturbs the other teachers in other classes. If one teacher is not present, say 7BB, then it is chaos you won’t be able to teach (School 3, Participant 13, Line 255-262).*

*You come to school when you come through the gate you are demoralised, you feel “ag”, I’m going to the class then you start trying to fiddle around with things before you go to class and then you end up bunking the class, truly speaking you end up bunking the class, it is tiring, every time when you get to those classes, it’s either one teacher is absent or there is no teacher is there and they make noise, all of them, the learners are about 200 and something in the three classes, so it’s a lot, so it gives one a pain before you start working with them (School 3, Participant 13, Line 266-273).*

The following visual data (photographs 5.5) illustrates the shortage of classrooms and overcrowded classes experienced in School 3:



Photograph 5.5: School 3

Overcrowded assembly hall where Grade 7 children attended class.

Furthermore, the following extract from my research journal acts as support in this regard:

*I could see X was really de-motivated. We stood in front of this large, noisy class ... I was just wondering how is she coping ... ?* (Research journal, 22 April 2008).

The following extract from the co-researcher's journal provides supportive evidence of School 3's context-specific barriers experienced at that stage:

*We visited one of our schools today. It is a new year; we have not seen the group of teachers for a while and thought that we would just continue where we left things last year. When it was time for us to start our session after school only a few teachers arrived. We were quite surprised to see how demotivated the teachers were. We abandoned all our ideas of what should happen and just had an informal discussion of what is happening at school. We realised that the teachers were so overwhelmed with the teaching conditions at school that they could not focus on our project at all. Some of the issues were: Enrolment numbers was much higher than they expected, the school did not have the infrastructure and human resources to cope with this and for example ended up with 3 classes of 70 learners each in the hall - without any partitioning. There was also conflict in the school between the principal and some teachers. One of the results of all the "problems" at the schools was that the teachers experienced a lot of stress and were absent from school often, creating more problems for other teachers ... I view today's*

*visit as a debriefing session for the teachers to vent their emotions, we didn't get to any of the (research) goals that we set for ourselves today ... (Co-researcher's journal, 22 April 2008).*

Teachers in School 3 seemed continuously to attempt to address the context-specific barriers that they faced. They reported that teamwork, consultation, perseverance and their passion to help others assisted them to work through barriers. The following verbatim quotations support teachers' motivation to address context-specific barriers:

*I think through perseverance with the grace of God. I think we are working as a team and that is the one thing that helps us a lot – we find ways of getting through the hurdles and also the School Governing Body is also assisting and other people of goodwill are also helping in the form of sponsors from various donors sometimes (School 3, Participant 12, Line 284-288).*

*Working as a team makes the outcomes achievable (School 3, Participant 14, Line 334-335).*

*... it made us to persevere in whatever we are doing, it also made us have the passion of helping ... and gives you the motivation to help. And also, the workshops, the way we were doing these things in the workshops also helped us to get the necessary strength to carry on (School 3, Participant 12, Line 343-352).*

*The thing that I can say is that I can be able to support another person or maybe put myself in another person's shoes, that is what I can say (School 3, Participant 13, Line 448-450).*

*The thing that is assisting us is consultation, if I have something that I don't know, I know who to go to, I know where to get assistance – it has made us to be outspoken to one another, we no longer keep things to ourselves ... when I come to school, at the end of the day when I leave school I have an answer to the problem I experienced (School 3, Participant 14, Line 452-457).*

In summary, teachers in two of the schools experienced context-specific barriers (underperformance of children and the changing curriculum in School 2; and shortage of classes and absenteeism of teachers in School 3). However, teachers seemingly addressed

barriers by planning strategies; building close and supportive relationships; consulting as a team; persevering and focusing on supporting others.

## **5.4 SUBTHEME 2.2: BARRIERS RELATED TO SOCIAL AND/OR ECONOMIC FACTORS**

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This subtheme includes data related to barriers that teachers experienced on a social and/or economic level, which include: 5.4.1) HIV/AIDS-related challenges; 5.4.2) financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment; and 5.4.3) child abuse. I subsequently discuss each of these categories and present data relating to teachers' response to address socio-economic barriers.

### **5.4.1 Category 1: HIV/AIDS-related barriers**

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Teachers in all four schools seemed to experience barriers related to HIV/AIDS as a socio-economic challenge within their school-community contexts. The following subcategories were identified as underpinning HIV/AIDS-related barriers faced by teachers: a) the growing presence of HIV/AIDS; b) HIV/AIDS as barrier to learning; c) changing roles of individuals; d) beliefs and traditions with regard to HIV/AIDS; and e) HIV/AIDS discrimination and stigmatisation. I will now discuss each of these subcategories by providing supporting data. Thereafter I present a summary of f) teachers' way of addressing HIV/AIDS-related challenges.

#### **a) Growing presence of HIV/AIDS**

This subcategory includes data related to the increased numbers of HIV/AIDS cases and orphans in the teachers' school-community contexts. Teachers seemed to experience the growing presence of HIV/AIDS and the increased number of HIV/AIDS orphans in their school-community contexts as a challenge they needed to deal with on a daily basis. The





following quotations of teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 provide a verbatim account of the growing presence of in the various school-community contexts:

*... because their parents are sick* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 947).

*... we identified kids, we all know those kids that are affected* (School 1, Participant 7, Line 425-426).

*... this learner was HIV-positive ...* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 126).

*... some of them they are being affected or infected by HIV/AIDS* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 43-44 ).

*We have got people who are infected and affected by the epidemic virus* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 58).

*HIV is escalating each time ... there are more orphans, especially in our school* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 649-651).

*... there are more orphans and as there are more orphans ...* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 668-669).

*We have a number of orphans ... we have so many, more than a 100* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 28-30).

*So in those kids who are orphans, we do have the HIV affected children and the infected children* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 82-83).

*Okay we also have 11 learners and then we have 7 parents who disclosed their HIV status* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 21, Line 312-319).

*So the community ends up being affected and infected by the disease HIV and AIDS* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 22, Line 342-347).

*In our school we have 220 orphans in the school ... 70% of the parents died because of HIV/AIDS as I have mentioned before, the number is increasing yearly* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 21, Line 365-367).

**b) HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning**

This subcategory includes data related to HIV/AIDS as barrier to learning to both HIV infected and affected children. Teachers in School 3 reported on the potential influence of HIV/AIDS on children's academic performance. Teachers in School 1 referred to the negative impact of children's absence (because of HIV/AIDS) on their learning. The following verbatim quotations provide examples of the view of HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning:

*... she is having a child in her classroom who is infected. This child has been in and out of hospital. One time this child was absent for quite a long time ...* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 606-608).

*So they even send kids who are HIV-positive and normally you get them being too sick here at school and we don't even know what to do with them, because even this year we had a case of a child who was HIV-positive* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 231-234).

*... and as the AIDS educator, the remedial educator, I normally deal with these kind of learners who are affected by the situation and you will find that the learners are not performing well because they are so affected because we're not sure but affected by the situation, consequently you will find that the learners are developing some kind of barriers* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 23, Line 342-347).

**c) Changing roles of individuals**

This subcategory includes data related to individuals who needed to adopt different roles and/or take on additional responsibilities, because of HIV/AIDS. The following verbatim quotations of teachers in Schools 1 and 3 refer to grandparents that needed to adopt the role of parents:

*... they have adopted this child after she lost her parents. She is also infected. After speaking to this lady, I went inside and spoke to the grandmother* (School 1, Participant 23, Line 617-619).

*Grannies and grandfathers are left with the burden of raising the kids because the parents died of the AIDS pandemic that is prevailing within our society* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 21, Line 363-365).

Furthermore, many children reportedly needed to adopt the role of caregivers after their parents had passed away to look after younger siblings. According to informal surveys amongst participating teachers in 2005 and 2009, they reported approximate numbers of orphans in relation with the approximate number of children in their schools, as presented in table 5.2.

*Table 5.2:* Summarised table of informal surveys conducted amongst participating teachers on the approximate numbers of orphans in 2005 and 2009 in relation with the approximate number of children in their schools.

School	Number of orphans at the beginning of 2005	Number of orphans at the end of 2009	Number of children in the school
School 1	80	200	1000
School 2	30	50	700
School 3	100	150	1500
School 4	Not available	Not available	

According to the table above, it seems as if the number of orphans and therefore possibly the number of child-headed households in three of the four participating school-community contexts increased.

**d) Beliefs and traditions with regard to HIV/AIDS**

This subcategory includes data related to beliefs, customs and traditions with regard to HIV/AIDS that constitute challenges in accepting HIV/AIDS information. In this regard, teachers in Schools 1 and 2 reported on the challenge of traditional beliefs and customs with regard to HIV/AIDS in their community contexts. Teachers in School 1 indicated that parents in their community did not speak to their children about HIV/AIDS:

*You know what, our parents are very much traditional, they are backwards, they don't talk about these things* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 257-259).

Teachers in School 2 reported that many of their community members still believed in witchcraft and did not believe in the scientific existence of HIV/AIDS:

*HIV is escalating each time and I must indicate that in our area you know, we are not*



*going to give statistics of people who are HIV-positive because of the fact that most of our people still believe in witchcraft. So if somebody is sick there, it is never reported, even if you would be checking around you won't find the exact cases in our area. We have a clinic but you find the exact cases because it ends up viewed as being natural death in the process, because the people do not consult more in the clinic. They go to inyangas and all the stuff. So I won't be able to give the statistics right now, but from the point of view, we are aware that as deaths are increasing, there is relatedness to HIV. Looking at the symptoms, we know when you're sick you will become thinner, but there are other changes that are there, which you can associate with HIV and AIDS but because they not reported you cannot put that include them in your statistics (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 652-666).*

**e) HIV/AIDS discrimination and stigmatisation**

This subcategory includes data related to discrimination and stigmatisation against HIV-positive individuals and/or their relatives and/or loved ones. Teachers in Schools 1 and 3 reported on the high incidence of stigmatisation and discrimination against HIV/AIDS-infected people who disclosed their status. Teachers experienced HIV/AIDS discrimination and stigmatisation as a challenge, as stigmatisation often prevents people from disclosing their status and accessing support and medical care. The following verbatim quotations of teachers explain perceived HIV/AIDS discrimination and stigmatisation:

*... that if you've got this and this, you can get help at school, go to the principal, that is confidentiality, that's where it starts. Because they won't tell you, they won't disclose on you, but when they went to the principal alone as individuals, it's when they are going to disclose themselves, it's when they are going to talk, that's where we are going to get them, but not when they are in groups (School 1, Participant 3, Line 159-164).*

*If you still remember Mr X came to our school to talk about HIV, you know, the teachers didn't want to go there as if they are there we will think they are HIV-positive. It is like that in our school (School 1, Participant 6, Line 274-276).*

*What is happening is that as we all know that it's difficult to disclose (School 1, Participant 7, Line 423).*

*Oh he was so excited, even ..., you know what we told her, because you know there was*

*that label.., “are they going to know about me?”, no it is only the support group, nobody is going to know, there’s no label that we are doing this in order to label everybody – it’s only us that know that we are doing this for this benefit (School 1, Participant 7, Line 468-472).*

*The other lady from my group, my group also came to me this morning, telling me that there is a parent who came this morning and disclosed about her grandchild but she said she wants this to be kept secret, not tell everybody (School 1, Participant 4, Line 646-648).*

*Like the people with HIV and AIDS, normally they don’t want to disclose or be outspoken about it, they don’t discuss or disclose with people (School 3, Participant 13, Line 226-236).*

It is important to note that teachers in Schools 2 and 4 did not report stigmatisation and discrimination as an HIV/AIDS-related barrier experienced in their community. One possible explanation for school 2’s silence in this regard could be that the community is traditional in the sense that the majority of community members do not believe in the presence of HIV/AIDS, and do not regard this barrier as relevant to their context. However, an HIV/AIDS-related challenge that was prevalent in School 2’s community, pertains to the myths and traditional beliefs about HIV/AIDS. Only teachers in School 2 reported that many of their community members believed in witchcraft and did not believe in the scientific existence of HIV/AIDS. A possible explanation could be that School 2 is situated in a rural community, where community members are less urbanised and do not have the same level of exposure to western scientific approaches to HIV/AIDS as with Schools 1, 3 and 4. Finally, I discuss teachers’ way of addressing HIV/AIDS-related challenges.

**f) Teachers’ way of addressing HIV/AIDS-related challenges**

Despite these HIV/AIDS-related barriers experienced by the teachers, they seemed to address these barriers as evident by the following subcategories: i) HIV/AIDS education awareness; ii) HIV/AIDS support on a material level; and iii) HIV/AIDS support on an emotional level.

**i) HIV/AIDS education and awareness**

Teachers reportedly addressed HIV/AIDS-related challenges by raising HIV/AIDS awareness in their school-community contexts. They seemingly focused on HIV/AIDS education and training for children and teachers, as well as parents and community members. Firstly, teachers in all four schools seemed to actively attempt to enhance children's knowledge and skills regarding HIV/AIDS. The following verbatim quotations serve as evidence in this regard:

*... it's not a once off you see, it must be ongoing ... this is in a curriculum, for instance there is an LO, it's a learning area recently, a life skill... teach the children in their classroom everyday, everyday they will be motivated to teach it you see. To teach this life skill, HIV/AIDS in their classroom it's whereby most of the teachers would be involved in this group (School 1, Participant 2, Line 200-208).*

*Take the kids according to their levels, you see and talk about abuse because at the end the HIV and AIDS is the result of that. So prevention is better cure you understand. So that when they grew up they must know these things, what they must look out for, and to take care of themselves, how to behave and all those things according to their ages (School 1, Participant 3, Line 253-257).*

*A drama is good, even if you can watch TV, they are using a lot of drama because this is where they learn easier. And secondly when they are doing that they must make use of practicals, they mustn't just talk about condoms, just condoms, they must show them, they must ask from them the way we are doing in our classes, what is this, what are we using this for, to get information from them so that we can correct them if possible, because if you can get to know, these kids know more than we know, sometimes they know wrong things, they've got wrong perceptions, then it's where they are going to correct them and put them on the right track (School 1, Participant 2, Line 913-921).*

*The one critical dimension of this role is HIV and AIDS education (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 47).*

*These teachers are trained ... they give lectures to our learners, they are trained in various aspects ... HIV/AIDS – those are the aspects that they are trained in. We're trying to engage our learners ... (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 265-268).*

*We are also trying to get to a few learners ... . a role models to these learners ... to give*

*them an idea of how to protect themselves in things that are related to HIV and AIDS* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 278-283).

*Every time I go to the classroom I speak the language of HIV and AIDS* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 490).

*... calling people in to come and highlight or give us more knowledge about HIV and AIDS ... been invited to the school to come and address the learners* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 172-174).

*And then this year also we had certain weeks, like a few weeks ago we had a woman's week, where we invited different people from the communities, guest speakers to inform the children again about HIV/AIDS and stuff, it was very good because it was people from the community that the children could relate to ...* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 186-191).

*We do it like in our orientation as a school as well, from grade 1 up to grade 7, we do healthy living ... we covered everything and your AIDS ...* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 412-415).

Secondly, teachers in all four schools apparently enhanced their own and their colleagues' competencies and knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Teachers reportedly invited experts to present training sessions and transfer HIV/AIDS-related knowledge amongst each other on an informal level. The following verbatim quotations support teachers' active attempt to enhance their own and their colleagues' knowledge and skills with regard to HIV/AIDS:

*These teachers are trained ... in various aspects ... HIV/AIDS* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 264-267).

*HIV and AIDS .... Then we talked and talked, I then asked "at the university here which section can I approach to get help so that they come down and help us"* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 517-522).

*... calling people in to come and highlight or give us more knowledge about HIV and AIDS* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 171-172).

*And then also the teachers ... also organised a workshop where the teachers went and*

*they received certificates also about HIV/AIDS* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 191-193).

Lastly, teachers seemingly enhanced parents' and community members' knowledge and skills regarding HIV/AIDS. They invited experts to raise community awareness of HIV/AIDS and shared their acquired knowledge. The following verbatim quotations support teachers' attempt to enhance parents' and community members' knowledge and skills regarding HIV/AIDS:

*... they (parents) were trained in various aspects, to put a few, they were trained on HIV/AIDS and counselling* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 187-188).

*You know, we had a lesson that is preparing them for the 1<sup>st</sup> of December of which they acknowledge that day as the day of, an AIDS day, so when we are preparing them for the lesson, you find that some of them they do know, some of them don't and some of them they do have booklets in their bags, whereby they, during break times they read the stories and empowering one another with HIV because their parents are sick. When somebody comes from outside and gathers their family and tell them, immediately that information does not stay in that house, they take it out earlier* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 942-949).

*... address HIV and AIDS, create more awareness* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 685).

*So we were hoping that if we started that centre we were going to concentrate more on HIV basically so that it sinks in the minds of people that HIV is a killer, let's take care of ourselves* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 789-792).

*Yes we do have the awareness and the HIV and AIDS awareness Day ... calling people in to come and highlight or give us more knowledge about HIV and AIDS* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 169-172).

*Like during the HIV and AIDS thing, the specialists who are invited to the school, we invite even the parents to come and listen* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 194-195).





As part of teachers' active response to make individuals aware of HIV/AIDS, they also focused on addressing the barrier of HIV/AIDS stigmatisation and discrimination. The following verbatim quotations of teachers in Schools 1 and 3 provide supportive evidence in this regard:

*What I want to say is what I like most about the vegetable garden, what we did, we didn't stigmatise the garden, we didn't paint them dark by saying we are doing it for HIV and AIDS (School 1, Participant 1, Line 761-763).*

*We had a learner, she came over being very ill, she is HIV-positive, but if I can show you the child today you won't believe it because the granny to the child kept this thing to herself and she was struggling alone, she never wanted to tell teachers at the school that the kid needs care and all that. But she talked to me, she is working at the doctor's surgery, I had taken my kid to the doctor. She then ended up disclosing the child's status and I made other teachers aware of the situation. And then everybody supported the child. So she is like well now (School 3, Participant 13, Line 461-469).*

The following photographs (5.6-5.9) illustrate teachers' active attempts to raise HIV/AIDS in their school-community contexts:



*Photograph 5.6: School 1*

The Information Centre at School 1, as a resource of HIV/AIDS information to children, parents and community members.



*Photograph 5.7: School 2*

One of the participating teachers and I next to a table with some booklets and brochures on HIV/AIDS related information as resource to teachers, children, parents and community members.



*Photograph 5.8: School 3*

Two participating teachers show their newly established library with HIV/AIDS information for children, parents and community members.



*Photograph 5.9: School 4*

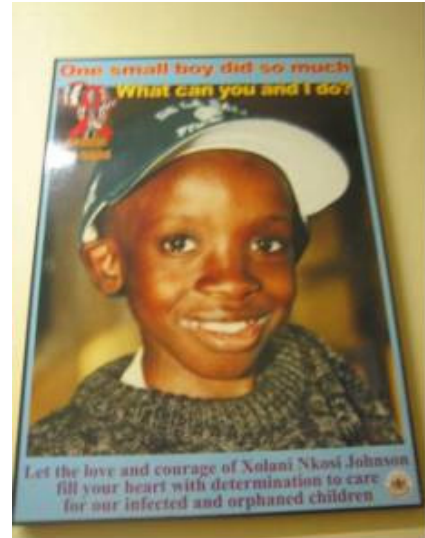
School 4's book store, with some Life skills booklets to inform children on HIV/AIDS-related matters.

Although teachers did not specifically report on billboards and posters as a possible source of information, I observed the following billboard (photograph 5.10) and poster (photograph 5.11) as additional information sources in school-community contexts:



*Photograph 5.10: School 2*

A billboard within School 2's community context as a possible way of making community members aware of HIV/AIDS.



*Photograph 5.11: School 3*

A poster in School 3, that acts as possible information resource in their school.

## ii) HIV/AIDS support on a material level

Teachers appeared to support children, parents and community members infected and affected by HIV/AIDS on a material level. This included provision of food, medicine and other material needs. Verbatim quotations by teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 illustrate HIV/AIDS support on a material level:

*You will see more people they will come to school and disclose their status so that they can get food, help you see, from the school is whereby the support group, support will get people from them* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 132-134).

*We want this garden to help HIV AIDS learners ... that is the aim* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 74).

*Today there was a parent who came to me because we talked about the grant they qualified for, that can give her support so that she can buy medicine and all those things.*



*It's moving, it's coming okay, that's what we are doing to them you see, so that they must know we are of help to them* (School 1, Participant 7, Line 438-442).

*We had three parents who disclosed... just parents that have HIV/AIDS... we had seven learners then and then now we have got 23, they are all receiving ARV's through our school* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 291-295).

*We have got people who are infected and affected by the epidemic virus, we thought that maybe if we could just have a small garden where we could just plant vegetables so that the people around the community will not go and buy the green stuff from the market, they can just plant and come and have the vegetables in the garden* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 58-63).

*When we harvest we will give the vegetables to the orphans* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 29).

*So in those kids who are orphans, we do have the HIV affected children and the infected children – so they take care of them* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 82-84).

*Make it possible for the orphans and then the parents and the learners who's parents are not working to can be fed for the day, to can give them some food, parcels to take home with so that they can be fed when they are at home* (School 3, Participant 14, Line 328-331).

### iii) HIV/AIDS support on an emotional and spiritual level

Teachers seemed to also support children, parents and community members infected and affected by HIV/AIDS on an emotional and spiritual level. This subcategory includes home visits; emotional care; and existential/spiritual care. Teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 explained this kind of support as follows:

*Ja, to give them hope, to give them courage, pray for them, they mustn't lose hope because some of them they are not sick you see, when you pray and give courage and you give them hope, then they know that I've got somebody to help – sometimes it's because of the stigma, sometimes is because of denial, but if they can see that people around me care for me then she will be able to have hope* (School 1, Participant 7, Line 577-582).

*Why are we going to visit them, to give support as you have seen we are a support group,*



*to pray, to give them hope, to give them courage so that they must know that there are some people who care for them* (School 1, Participant 7, Line 840-845).

*We don't want them to think they are going to die, we want them to think that there's a future for them. Then to form support groups for parents that are affected. The parents who are sick, the parents who are taking care of the people who are HIV and positive, then for the infected parents. We are dealing specifically with parents because we know if parents, if you can support the parents, it is easy for the parent to take it over to the young ones* (School 1, Participant 7, Line 859-864).

*We managed to support families, socially, emotionally and as well as the support group. All of them they used to go to visit homes, to give a prayer, to give emotional support* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 119-122).

*The vision that we have actually when we started the whole project was basically based on the escalating HIV and unemployment that is affecting South Africa and basically also where we are, we are affected. So basically when we started the project, we had this in mind that with the project we will address unemployment* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 450-454).

*When we harvest we will give the vegetables to the orphans* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 29).

*Ja, they take the vegetables home, we share it amongst them and the people who are helping* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 38-39).

*On the side of HIV support group, we managed to organise a pastor for us who can assist us with a group of people. There are kids who ... after school everyday, they go to a place of safety where they get food, they get ... they worship, they pray and they play some games thereafter, they also assist them with their homework. So we no longer have that much of a burden of trying to help the kids after school, we can now afford to relax* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 51-57).

*I think some of these learners, the affected children ... visit them at their homes frequently enough and I think that we need to nourish that bond – sometimes we need to visit them with their families, an hour or two* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 490-494).

*After that they get into church, they pray and then leave for their different homes* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 22, Line 383-386).

In short, teachers were seemingly able to acknowledge barriers (see 5.5.1) relating to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in their school-community contexts. In addition, teachers also seemed able to address these HIV/AIDS-related barriers in a resourceful way.

It seems evident that teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 reported a higher awareness of HIV/AIDS barriers in their schools and communities than the teachers in School 4. Teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 reported on the HIV/AIDS prevalence in their communities (although School 2 did not identify stigmatisation and discrimination as a barrier) and also agreed on the barriers associated with this pandemic. On the other hand, teachers in School 4 did not report HIV/AIDS as a challenge in their community and as a result, they also did not implement strategies to address HIV/AIDS in their school-community context. Teachers in School 4 only reported on HIV/AIDS education and awareness to learners and teachers. A possible explanation in this regard could be that HIV/AIDS education is part of the curriculum and therefore compulsory for teachers in School 4 to provide HIV/AIDS awareness to learners.

#### **5.4.2 Category 2: Financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment**

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This category includes data related to financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment as socio-economic barrier within the relevant school-communities. Teachers in all four schools reported on the prevalence of poverty and unemployment in their school communities:

*There are lots of parents and we find out that they are so interested in working here and because of the high rate of unemployment, at least for a day they are having something to do, because each and everyday they must come and have a look at their garden* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 733-736).

*... parents are unemployed ... place like that is associated with poverty* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 31-32).

*We are from a poor community* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 372).



*... around here where we are situated a lot of parents are not working* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 42-43).

*... these kids are left with their grandparents and they are unemployed so they live on pension or grants etc. And then some of the grants that they get, some tend to misuse the grants, they gamble with the money so the children are left without food. To an extent that our kids don't get absent, they come to school everyday because they know that there is food at the school* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 509-515).

*Most of these learners, when we visit them, their homes they are just sleeping on the ground, no bed, nothing, blankets are torn, I wonder – we will take you around sometimes so you can see what is really happening, you will really cry tears, there's a big problem* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 548-551).

*Our school is situated in the informal settlement, whereby most of the families are so disadvantaged, most parents are not working, there is a lot of poverty and crime* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 22, Line 337-340).

*... many needy families* (School 4, Participant 22, Line 18).

The following visual data (photographs 5.12-5.15) of community settings, with typical houses in each of the communities, also illustrates my documentation of observable instances of poverty (resource scarcity) within the community contexts of all four schools:



*Photograph 5.12: School 1*



*Photograph 5.13: School 2*



*Photograph 5.14: School 3*



*Photograph 5.15: School 4*

The following verbatim quotations of teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 specifically refer to reported financial constraints within their school-community contexts:

*You know when you are doing something, there are challenges, there are problems, you have no funds* (School 1, Participant 20, Line 103-104).

*... to get funding, as you say we are from a poor community which means that what we do we should get something now* (School 2, Participant 11, Line 369-373).





*We will need to obtain funds for such a project* (School 2, Participant 10, Line 446).

*Now that classroom we were provided which needed some touch ups and touch ups will need money and the school in its budget, you know we're living on a very stringent budget, so wouldn't provide some few cents for us to work with the centre* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 803-806).

*... such that we also go and work on overdraft, we borrow money from these other departments to say we can't cope. So that is how we got stuck with the whole idea of the human resource centre* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 815-817).

*I just wanted to say that the problematic thing that we are having now is finances, you know now, especially the schools in the settlement they are no longer paying school funds ...* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 203-208).

*We don't have funds* (School 3, Participant 14, Line 531-532).

*The other thing is the financial part of it* (School 3, Participant 14, Line 498).

*Yes, we need to improve their skills but the funding part of it is a problem* (School 3, Participant 14, Line 538-539).

Teachers reportedly aimed to address the high incidences of financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment in each of the four communities, by providing assistance. Amongst others, teachers supplied vulnerable children and households in the community with food parcels, mainly obtained from vegetable garden initiatives and supplemented from other sources such as sponsors and donations. The following verbatim quotations of teachers in all four schools serve as evidence of teachers' support to vulnerable children and households:

*Our learners were getting food parcels, they were receiving clothes, school shoes and uniform from other people* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 145-146).

*We received some food parcels, you cannot imagine the food parcels, it was a hoop sack, 85 kids were given those hoop sacks. The group was asked to identify families in need of the food parcels – 100 and something kids were identified, and then Social Development gave us 35 food parcels* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 216-220).

*... plant vegetables so that the people around the community will not go and buy the green stuff from the market, they can just plant and come and have the vegetables in the garden* (School 2, Participant 9, Line 60-63).

*Ja, they take the vegetables home, we share it amongst them and the people who are helping* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 38-39).

*... the greens from the garden, we use to prepare food for our needy learners, we've got a feeding scheme at school, the spinach, the cabbage and tomatoes we get from the garden and we cook it for them* (School 4, Participant 18, Line 96-98).

*And anyone from the community can feel free if they need any vegetables. That was our goal to support the many needy families* (School 4, Participant 18, Line 104-105).

*... the needy children don't get food at home and each day we can give them a meal* (School 4, Participant 19, Line 287-288).

The following visual data (photographs 5.16-5.19) illustrates how teachers established food schemes for vulnerable children at the various schools:



*Photograph 5.16: School 1*

Harvest from School 1's vegetable garden and donations from sponsors that are used in their food parcels for vulnerable children and households.



*Photograph 5.17: School 4*

School 4's teachers in front of their newly built kitchen that are used for their feeding scheme.



*Photograph 5.18: School 2*

Parents who assist with preparing food for vulnerable children in School 2.



*Photograph 5.19: School 2*

Vulnerable children receive food during break-time.

The following verbatim transcripts refer to teachers' ability to establish networks and partnerships with external parties to obtain financial sponsors and donations for needy children and households. This category relates to teachers' ability to mobilise assets and resources by building networks and partnerships as discussed in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.4).

*Fortunately Absa helped us ... I want to give you ... I want to sponsor you with R50 000 (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 160-163).*

*... because we had our team here which was helping us, so they took them to the University and on that year it was sold out. Then it was being sold at around R50. So it came back, we got the money, it was a R1000 so at least now the group has money to kick off other things (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 10, Line 712-716).*

*... maybe as a group we had tried to can network hard enough and then maybe raise some funds so that the vegetable garden can be off the ground (School 3, Participant 14, Line 498-500).*

*But there's also a lady from Sweden, she comes here once a month and she brings seeds for us, actually young plants, like cabbage, and spinach and so on, and she gives advice on the insects, what we must do and whatever (School 4, Participant 18, Line 153-156).*

Furthermore, teachers in all four schools seemed able to initiate their own school-related fund-raising projects to generate additional funds for their schools:

*... when we have a big field, ... not for feeding people only, but money in their pocket* (School 1, Participant 6, Line 979-980).

*... so I think maybe if you can go on encourage the people who are still remaining to continue with this so that we can go and look for the market in different places, I think maybe that one can also bring money in* (School 2, Participant 10, Line 205-208).

*Except that sometimes maybe you can ask learners to contribute R1-00 or so just for a particular day, organise a day like a Sunday lunch ...* (School 3, Participant 12, Line 215-217).

*There I come in with the recycling. I am not part of the green team actually, but we do recycling at school and then we use the money of the recycling to buy seeds for the vegetable garden* (School 4, Participant 18, Line 146-148).

Teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 also seemed to address poverty and unemployment by providing unemployed parents and community members with part-time involvement in asset-based initiatives. The following verbatim quotations act as support in this regard:

*... there are lots of parents and we find out that they are so interested in working here and because of the high rate of unemployment, at least for a day they are having something to do, because each and everyday they must come and have a look at their garden. A person comes with a spade, a fork and rake of their own and cut whatever site of land he wants* (School 1, Participant 1, Line 733-738).

*... introducing the projects we were saying that we were going to address also the rate of unemployment – because we know poverty* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 687-689).

*... one other thing, as indicated, most people are unemployed in this area, we were saying that with the gardening project it will be easier for these people to get something into their pockets in a long run because they will be selling the vegetables to the outside world, especially in developed areas – that at the end of the day those people would come down here to get vegetables and in that way it was going to put little cash into their pockets* (School 2, Participant 10, Line 66-73).

*We managed to go to some houses and then took some parents, I think we've got three parents per week that are coming to our school to clean our classes and then each teacher every day must give R5-00 on top of his/her table if he/she wants her class to be swept by the parents. We take that money and then at the end of the week we buy food, we're not giving them the money, we are buying food for them so that they can put on the table for their kids* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 22, Line 324-330).

Because the unemployed parents and community members became involved in the asset-based initiatives, teachers in Schools 1 and 2 reported that parents' and community members' skills seemed to develop, as is evident in the following verbatim extracts:

*We as the vegetable garden group, we asked the community to help us and we gave them they learnt to peel ...* (School 1, Participant 2, Line 703-704).

*So the lady came and she offered to help the group on how to do more with the beads and stuff* (School 2 – PE Seminar, Participant 24, Line 738-739).

Teachers in School 1 attempted to address poverty on a spiritual level:

*Even when we are going to pray, say we are going to pray for poverty today, because there are some kids who are suffering* (School 1, Participant 6, Line 956-958).

To summarise, teachers in all four schools seemed to experience financial constraints because of poverty and unemployment as a socio-economic barrier in their school-community contexts. In addition, teachers in all four schools seemed to address this challenge by means of material support (food, medicine and other material needs), obtained from asset-based initiatives and by establishing networks with external parties. Teachers also initiated fund-raising projects at their schools to obtain additional funding. Teachers in Schools 1, 2 and 3 reportedly addressed poverty and unemployment by involving unemployed parents and community members in asset-based initiatives, possibly helping to develop their skills. Moreover, teachers in School 1 also attempted to address poverty by means of spiritual support.

### 5.4.3 Category 3: Child abuse

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This category includes data related to child abuse, as social barrier, within participating school-community contexts. Teachers in Schools 1, 3 and 4 reported abuse of children as a social challenge evident within their school-community contexts. They referred to both physical and sexual abuse. The following verbatim quotations act as support in this regard:

*... they are living with uncles or fathers, their mothers are late so they tend to abuse them* (School 3, Participant 14, Line 537-541).

*Yes, child abuse is a “snake”* (School 4, Participant 16, Line 176).

Teachers seemed to display the necessary competencies to implement strategies to address child abuse in their school-community contexts. The following verbatim transcripts refer to a pro-active approach of teachers in Schools 1, 3 and 4 to address child abuse by empowering children with the knowledge and skills needed for resisting such abuse:

*... prevention is better than cure. You see what they can do, even us we are going to assist them, like to take the kids according to their levels, you see and talk about abuse because at the end the HIV and AIDS is the result of that. So prevention is better than cure you understand. So that when they grew up they must know these things, what they must look out for, and to take care of themselves, how to behave and all those things according to their ages* (School 1, Participant 3, Line 251-257).

*... and the police will be coming soon, they’ve been invited to the school to come and address the learners about safety, how to take care of themselves during school hours and after schools* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 173-175).

*We are also fortunate that we have social workers, with Mrs X who is one of the parents in the local community, every Friday those social workers take the Grade 5 and 7 to the orphans list and then they give them guidance in the different aspects ...* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 21, Line 394-398).

*The child abuse ... we do it like in our orientation as a school as well, from grade 1 up to grade 7 ... it’s very important and there we covered everything ... your child abuse*

(School 4, Participant 16, Line 412-415).

Another attempt to address child abuse was to react to child-abuse cases that occurred in schools and communities by mobilising resources in communities, for example the police and social workers. The following verbatim quotations of teachers in Schools 1, 3 and 4 illustrate the teachers' ability to network with social support services to address cases of child abuse:

*... to call the social worker because some of the things we cannot help, social workers know more about those things* (School 1, Participant 7, Line 847-849).

*... next year we shall be having a social worker who is going to be based on our school premises, she is going to stay here for us, we are given that social worker who is going to be with us full time* (School 1 – PE Seminar, Participant 20, Line 296-299).

*So whenever we have maybe let's say a sexual problem, maybe sexual abuse of some sort, the policeman is then called in to come and solve the problem* (School 3, Participant 13, Line 156-158).

*... whenever kids are encountering problems maybe at home they report to us then we write a letter. We have a standard letter which we send to her. We have different types of standard letters, for the clinic, for the psychologist and the social worker letter. We just complete the names and sign the date and forward to the relevant person with the school stamp. There's a school van which transports the learners to the relevant places* (School 3 – PE Seminar, Participant 21, Line 415-421).

*Yes, can you see the Circle of Life also, the centre was available but now we're utilising the centre* (School 4, Participant 19, Line 178-179).

*We had this specific case about X, she was like abused, and she is in foster care now. So we all the time busy doing all these things, like we have children that we put in foster care, we give support* (School 4, Participant 19, Line 417-419).

*It may seem cruel but the principal with somebody goes to the houses if they feel that the child needs to be removed and taken in the hands of the police and the social workers* (School 4, Participant 18, Line 421-423).

It seems as if the teachers experienced child abuse as a social barrier. Teachers seemed to address child abuse by empowering children with the knowledge for dealing with potential abuse and by mobilising networks of human resources and organisations to assist with cases of abuse in schools and communities.

## **5.5 LITERATURE CONTROL: POSITIONING THE FINDINGS WITHIN EXISTING LITERATURE**

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In the previous section of this chapter, I presented results in terms of themes, subthemes and categories. In this section of the chapter, I formulate arguments for each theme by positioning these arguments within existing and relevant literature in order to generate findings and make possible predictions in relation to the findings of the current study. I firstly discuss the results of the current study with regard to confirming literature; secondly, I discuss and reflect on contradictory literature and lastly I search for silences in relation to existing literature.

### **5.5.1 Confirmation of existing knowledge with regard to barriers acknowledged and addressed by teachers**

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I divide the confirmation of existing knowledge on barriers in two subsections, namely 5.5.1.1 confirmation of existing knowledge on barriers acknowledged by teachers and 5.5.1.2 confirmation of existing knowledge on the way teachers addressed barriers.

#### **5.5.1.1 Confirmation of existing knowledge on barriers acknowledged by teachers**

I present the confirmation of existing knowledge on barriers acknowledged by teachers according to the subthemes identified in the current study: a) stressors of teaching and b) social and/or economic barriers.



### **a) Stressors of teaching acknowledged by teachers**

In correlation with the current study's results, various studies in different countries agree on the high level of stressors within the teaching profession, which often goes hand in hand with a low morale of teachers (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Griffith *et al.*, 1999; Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Saptoe, 2000; Travers & Cooper, 1996; Van Wyk, 1998). Travers and Cooper (1996) found that teachers are often reluctant to acknowledge the degree to which they experience stress, as it could be viewed as a weakness. Teachers in the current study openly acknowledged stressors of teaching and found ways of addressing these barriers. I next discuss the specific stressors of teaching that were acknowledged by teachers in the current study, aligning them with corresponding literature. I present this section according to the four categories identified in the preceding section: i) workload and related time constraints of teaching; ii) attrition of group members; iii) low level of parental involvement and communication; and iv) context-specific factors.

#### **i) Workload and related time constraints of teaching**

In my review of existing literature, I found that workload and related time constraints was a recurring theme in the context of participatory research partnerships and within the teaching profession. Firstly, within the context of participatory research partnerships, existing literature support my result that research partners' lack of time and the burden of additional responsibilities is often experienced as a potential barrier in research partnerships (Bennell, 2004; Israel *et al.*, 1998, 2006; Kegeles, Rebchook & Tebbetts, 2005; Lantz, Viruell-Fuentes, Israel, Softley, & Guzman, 2001; Swanepoel, 2005; Yoo *et al.*, 2009). Likewise, the results of the current study are consistent with recent studies that focused specifically on teachers and schools as research participants. In this regard, Bennell (2004) as well as Griffith *et al.* (1999) found that teaching is a stressful occupation and that additional workload and related time constraints often contribute additional stress for teachers, also influencing their level of job satisfaction and motivation.

Existing literature further agrees on teachers' lack of sufficient time to take on additional responsibilities (Hayward, 2002; Kinsman, *et al.*, 2001; Loots & Mnguni, 2008; O'Donoghue, 1995; Theron, 2007; Wood, 2007). Furthermore, many studies found workload to be a stressor for teachers (Nagel & Brown, 2003; Travers & Cooper, 1996). In this regard, Olivier and Venter (2003) found that teachers felt they were not remunerated sufficiently for after-hours input, for example extramural activities, meetings, preparation and marking at home. Teachers in their study reported that they do not get sufficient time for their own recreational activities and family life, leading to a potential cause of stress for teachers (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

On the other hand, Kretzmann (1992) notes that the idea of school-community partnerships is not to burden teachers with additional tasks and workloads that disrupt their ability to fulfil their fundamental teaching objectives. In support of the results obtained in the current study, Kretzmann (1992) indeed advocates school-based community partnerships and suggests that connecting schools and their local communities in a dynamic and effective manner can provide schools with an opportunity to equip children with real-life experiences in their community and therefore enhance the value of the learning process in schools. Therefore, school-community partnerships should be mutually beneficial to both the school and the community.

## **ii) Attrition of group members**

In line with the results of the current study, existing literature generally highlights attrition of group members as a barrier within the context of participatory research initiatives (Harper, Bangi, Contreras, Pedraza, Tolliver & Vess, 2004; Israel *et al.*, 2006; Thomas, 2002). More specifically, literature also refers to attrition of teachers out of the teaching profession as a growing concern (Bennell, 2004; Coombe, 2000; MacDonald, 1999; Thomas, 2002).

Studies support the reasons for attrition of group members that were evident in the current study, for example transfers to other schools for career development, long-term illnesses and death of teachers (Bennell, 2004; Coombe, 2000). In addition, Thomas'

(2002) findings with regard to the reasons for attrition of group members and high teacher turnover further support the results of the current study, which include the high levels of stress in the teaching profession.

In line with the current study's results, existing literature indicates that contradicting expectations of group members can be a barrier in groups and research partnerships. In this regard, Kretzmann (1992) indicates that role-players in school-community partnerships are often on different tracks with regard to their goals and expectations. Eisinger and Senturia (2001) found that role-players in their research community partnership had different expectations with regard to project selection and board composition.

In line with the results obtained in the current study, many studies found conflicting expectations, specifically with regard to financial benefits as a barrier within research partnerships (Israel *et al.*, 1998, 2006; Koné *et al.*, 2000; Sullivan *et al.*, 2005). Koné *et al.* (2000) and Sullivan *et al.* (2005) found that participants in their studies expected to receive tangible benefits in return for their research involvement, otherwise they did not consider the participation in research as beneficial to them. In the Koné *et al.* (2000) study, concrete benefits included delivery of health and social services, sharing research results with participants, and sustainable and valuable community-initiated programmes. These concrete benefits differ slightly from those found in the current study, as group members primarily expected financial benefits. The Israel *et al.* (2006) study on community-based participatory research partnerships refers to the challenge of maintaining group morale and participation when core funding became uncertain. They highlight how important it is for group members to experience some benefit from interventions in order to stay engaged, which do not necessarily include financial benefits, but could also be on a personal, organisational or community level. Sullivan *et al.* (2005) also refer to possible ways of addressing this challenge, which include follow-up studies and long-term relationships with participants in the community. In a similar way, the current study formed part of a longitudinal STAR study (initially started in 2003 at School 1; and in 2005 at Schools 2, 3 and 4) and focused on building long-term

relationships with participating teachers and communities (see 3.3.1 for a detailed account of the study within the longitudinal STAR study), which resulted in several follow-up studies (see Addendum A1 to view concluded research in the longitudinal STAR study).

### **iii) Low level of parental involvement and communication**

In support of the results of the current study, existing literature indicates the lack of parental connectivity with teachers and lack of parent involvement in school-related activities as a typical challenge in parent-school and community partnerships (Oullette *et al.*, 2004; Smit & Fritz, 2008). In this regard, Goddard *et al.* (2001) agree that positive relationships between schools and families in many urban schools are rare because parents often distrust schools and school professionals.

Likewise, Kretzmann (1992) indicates that throughout the United States of America school-community partnerships are deteriorating. He is of the opinion that schools increasingly become more professionalised and therefore inclined to distance themselves from their local communities. As a result, many public and private schools in both urban and rural areas in the United States of America have lost their powerful position as an important resource in the community (Kretzmann, 1992). Although Kretzmann (1992) highlights some significant findings, it is difficult to compare communities in the United States of America with South Africa's diverse communities, who often face various socio-economic challenges. Although Howard and Johnson (2004) do not report a low level of parent involvement per se, they found that the Australian teachers in their study highlighted dealing with aggressive, abusive parents as a major teaching stressor.

### **iv) Context-specific factors**

In support of the results of the current study, Lubbe and Mampane (2008) identified absence of teachers as a potential barrier to supportive school environments. Furthermore, Bennell (2004) refers to half-day absences and poor timekeeping among teachers as a major concern in many countries. Bennell (2004) argue that teachers in his

study often arrived late and left early, which influenced instructional time in the class. Existing literature often investigates possible reasons for high levels of teacher absenteeism. Bennell (2004) found that poor motivation and lack of accountability are often reasons for high levels of teacher absenteeism. Several authors (Bennell, 2005a, 2005b; Coombe, 2000; Machawira, 2008) refer to HIV/AIDS as another possible reason for high absenteeism amongst teachers. These authors found that absenteeism of HIV-infected teachers is on the rise, which has a negative impact on teaching time and pupil engagement. In this regard, Abt Associates (2000) found that at least 12 per cent of South African teachers are reported to be HIV-positive. It follows that teacher absenteeism seems to be a growing challenge in many schools. Climate factors are another possible reason for teachers' absenteeism, for example, during rainy seasons when both teachers and children experience problems with travelling to school (Bennell, 2004).

Similar to the current study's results, existing literature indicates several contextual barriers, namely pressure from school bodies, implementation of the new curriculum and underperformance of children that are stressors in the teaching profession. Bennell (2004) found that pressure from external bodies is a potential stressor of teaching. Literature agrees on the introduction of new and more demanding curricula as another major source of stress and de-motivation amongst teachers (Bennell, 2004; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Within the South African context, Marais (1992) and Saptoe (2000) specifically refer to the stressors related to the new curriculum approach and the implementation of outcomes-based education as possible stressors of teaching. Similarly, Smit and Fritz (2008) found continual policy adjustments and ongoing administrative duties to be factors that could challenge teachers' identity. Existing literature further agrees that the underperformance of children is a stressor of teaching (Olivier & Venter, 2003). In this regard, Bush *et al.*'s (2010) findings in a study on managing teaching and learning in South African schools suggest low or moderate matric results at seven of the eight participating schools. This barrier is addressed by Naledi Pandor, former Minister of Education, in her recent speech at the South African Principals Association conference: "The first aspect of underperformance is that learners are not acquiring key skills for

learning in our schools ... we would have to conclude that 80% of our secondary schools are underperforming” (Department of Education, 2008:2).

Literature supports the results of the current study by referring to shortage of classrooms, overcrowded classes and high levels of teacher-to-child ratios as stressors and demotivational factors for teachers (Bennell, 2004; De Lannoy, 2009a; Hayward, 2002; Mwanwenda, 1996; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Saptoe, 2000; Trendall, cited in Nagel & Brown, 2003). Within the context of the need for pastoral care and support in schools, Bhana *et al.* (2006) refer to the lack of space and classrooms in many schools. The current study’s results also correlate with De Lannoy’s (2009a) findings on teacher-to-child ratios. She found that teacher-to-child ratios may have a direct influence on quality of education. The more crowded the classrooms are, the less teachers are able to provide individual attention to children. Children in overcrowded classes often have trouble following the lesson, or asking for assistance when they do not understand the content of a lesson. Furthermore, in the context of HIV/AIDS and the increased number of infected and affected children in classrooms, teachers could play a valuable role in HIV/AIDS support and care. However, the larger the class, the more difficult it is for teachers to know individual children’s circumstances and background (De Lannoy, 2009a). Big classes do not seem to be uniquely part of a South African context, as Howard and Johnson (2004) report that Australian teachers also experience that class sizes are often too big and levels of noise in their classrooms too high.

Distance between schools and homes as a potential contextual barrier within the education sector is also confirmed by existing literature. In this regard, Balfour *et al.*, (2008) refer to such difficulties of access in specifically rural communities, owing to the long distances and time of travelling as well as transport problems. Sherman (2000) conducted a similar study on barriers related to female advancement in the education field. She found that females in leadership positions in the teaching profession often need to travel long distances in order to fulfil their duties, taking them away from their families. De Lannoy (2009b) also refers to the distance between the school and home as a possible barrier to education. Although she specifically refers to the difficulty of distance

travelling for children, this could also apply to teachers who need to travel long distances to get to their work. According to De Lannoy (2009b), the difficulty of distance is further increased by the poor condition of roads, expensive or unavailable transport and potentially unsafe situations on the roads. Howard and Johnson (2004), in their review of literature, found that Australian teachers experienced poor working conditions because many schools in disadvantaged areas are geographically isolated.

On the other hand, this identified barrier of teachers not living in the same community in which they work can also be viewed in a positive light. Teachers participating in the study by Balfour *et al.* (2008) reported that although they were not members of the community in which they worked, they did not feel that they were outsiders and that some families invited them to their homes; and parents commented on the importance of seeing teachers from the city and urban areas choosing to come to their rural community. It was also evident in the current study that although the participating teachers in Schools 1 and 2 did not live in the communities where they worked, they never reported that they felt “out”; on the contrary, they managed to establish and maintain valuable and supportive relations within their school-community contexts.

#### **b) Social and/or economic barriers acknowledged by teachers**

I next discuss existing literature that supports the results of the current study with regard to social and/or economic barriers as examples of cumulative risk. I present this section according to the three categories identified in the current study: i) HIV/AIDS as socio-economic barrier; ii) financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment as socio-economic barrier and iii) child abuse as social barrier.

##### **i) HIV/AIDS as socio-economic barrier**

In support of the current study’s results, statistics confirm the reality of the growing prevalence of HIV/AIDS in many South African communities (Meintjies, 2009; Meintjes *et al.*, 2009). Existing literature agree on the potentially devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on family systems in South Africa, specifically the increasing numbers of orphans

(Bennell, 2005a, 2005b; Bicego, Rutstein, & Johnson, 2003; Coombe, 2000; Department of Health, 2002; Giese *et al.*, 2003a; Kekae-Moletsane, 2008; Mbugua, 2004; Monasch & Boerma, 2004; Nyambedha *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b; Ogina, 2007; Safman, 2004; Van der Walt, Bowman, Frank, & Langa, 2007; Van Dyk, 2001a; WHO, 2002). In further support of the results of the current study, Smit and Fritz (2008) found that teachers often experience HIV/AIDS to be a challenging factor in the education system. Taggart (2008) also reports on teachers' emotional distress and frustration with regard to the various challenges associated with HIV/AIDS orphans in their classrooms.

Similar to the results obtained in the current study, literature confirms that many individuals need to adapt to changing roles because of HIV/AIDS. For instance, Giese *et al.* (2003a) found that children increasingly experience the loss of multiple caregivers and that the capacity of relatives to support orphaned children is often reduced. Furthermore, many studies agree that increasing numbers of HIV/AIDS orphans drop out of school, as they are compelled to look after their siblings and take on the role of breadwinners (Bennell *et al.*, 2002; Coombe, 2002a; Foster & Williamson, 2001; Giese, 2001; Kekae-Moletsane, 2008; Mohangi, 2008a, 2008b; Mvulane, 2003; Taggart, 2008; Van Dyk, 2001a). In confirmation of HIV/AIDS as a potential barrier to learning, literature agrees that the emotional and physical status of learners infected and affected by HIV/AIDS influences many skills and capacities that are needed in order for learning to be productive and successful (Coombe, 2002b; Giese, 2001; Kekae-Moletsane, 2008; Mohangi, 2008a, 2008b; Mvulane, 2003; Ogina, 2007).

Existing literature also refers to possible reasons for HIV/AIDS being viewed as a barrier to learning. Although the aim of the current study was not to identify reasons for HIV/AIDS-related barriers, many of the possible reasons for HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning raised by literature are also relevant to the current study and contribute to a better understanding of this barrier identified by teachers in this study. However, these possible reasons deem further investigation in future studies. One reason highlighted by research is the emotional factor related to HIV/AIDS. In this regard, existing literature found that AIDS orphans often suffer from emotional and psychological problems



(Atwine, Cantor-Graae & Bajunirwe, 2005; Cluver & Gardner, 2006; Makame, Ani & Grantham-McGregor, 2002; Pelton & Forehand, 2005). Furthermore, orphans often need to relocate after their parents have passed away, which also affects their emotional well-being and subsequently their learning experiences (Bennell *et al.*, 2002). Foster and Williamson (2001) found that children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS often grieve in silence and do not have sufficient time to come to terms with their loss, leading to problems with resolution of grief, learning difficulties at school, problems with confiding in people, behavioural changes, loneliness and isolation.

Another reason for HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning is highlighted by research as difficulties of extended families to take care of children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. Research shows that although extended families often take care of orphans, these households are frequently characterised by financial hardship (Bennell *et al.*, 2002; Monasch & Boerma, 2004; Nyambedha *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b; Safman, 2004) and that extended families often do not have the resources for supporting orphans or are unwilling to do so (Bennell *et al.*, 2002). This potential reason for HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning can possibly explain the increase in numbers of child-headed homes in the participating communities in the current study.

Another potential reason for HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning is that school absenteeism may have a negative effect on school performance. Research has shown that HIV/AIDS orphans have lower school attendance and lower school completion rates, and are more likely to be in lower grades than appropriate for their age (Bennell *et al.*, 2002; Bicego *et al.*, 2003; Coombe, 2000; Makame *et al.*, 2002; Monasch & Boerma, 2004; Nyambedha *et al.*, 2003b; Taggart, 2008; UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004). In this regard, Kekae-Moletsane (2008) and Bennell *et al.* (2002) found that AIDS-affected children are often absent from school in order to care for their sick parents; while AIDS-infected children can also be absent from school as a result of health conditions, poor access to medicine and stigmatisation (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2002; UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004). Additionally, Bennell *et al.* (2002) found that orphans in their study indicated that the main reasons for their absence from

school were lack of clothes, insufficient money to buy detergent to wash their clothes, and a lack of food, detracting from their ability to concentrate in class. This finding is supported by statistics that indicate that children in child-headed households usually live in worse conditions than those in mixed-generation households. They usually do not live in formal houses and seldom have access to sufficient on-site sanitation and water (Meintjes *et al.*, 2009). Again, this could be possible causes for teachers experiencing HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning for HIV/AIDS-affected learners in their classrooms in the current study.

Furthermore, parents usually play an important role in creating and supporting children's learning experiences. Because of increased number of orphans and child-headed homes, children are often deprived of these important experiences, which in turn may negatively affect their school performance (Epstein, 2001; Townsend & Dawes, 2004). In addition, financial resources available for educational purposes often depreciate after parents had passed away, resulting in orphans dropping out of school because they cannot pay school fees (Boler & Carroll, 2003). This phenomenon could be linked to the low level of parent involvement as a reported barrier in the current study.

Similar to the results of the current study, literature agrees on the challenge related to HIV/AIDS stigmatisation and labelling, as people often find it difficult to disclose their HIV-positive status, fearing rejection and discrimination by their family, friends and community (Airhihenbuwa & Webster, 2004; Campbell, Foulis, Maimane & Sibiya, 2005; Coombe, 2000, 2002b; Hunter & Williamson, 2000; Kekae-Moletsane, 2008; Loots & Mnguni, 2008; Lubbe & Mampane, 2008; Morrell, 2003; Subbarao *et al.*, 2001; Van Dyk, 2001a; Visser, Mundell, De Villiers, Sikkema & Jeffery, 2005). Freeman (2004) refers to the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS as one of the principal causes of stress in HIV/AIDS-affected communities. Likewise, Cook (1998) is of the opinion that the psychosocial impact of stigmatisation and discrimination is a potential area of stress to HIV/AIDS-affected families and communities.

Another barrier identified in the current study that is supported by existing literature, is challenges with regard to cultural and traditional practices and beliefs associated with HIV/AIDS (Airhihenbuwa & Webster, 2004; Bennell *et al.*, 2002; Campbell *et al.*, 2005; Freeman, 2004; Hoosan & Collins, 2004; Kondrat & Juliá, 2005; Leclerc-Madlala, 2002; Moll, 2002; Schensul, 1999; Shisana & Simbayi, 2002; Van Dyk, 2001b). In agreement with the results of the current study, other studies found that many parents and caregivers are reluctant to speak to children about sexual and related HIV/AIDS issues or often provide incorrect information to their children (Campbell *et al.*, 2005; Giese *et al.*, 2003a). Giese *et al.* (2003a) found that when parents or caregivers die because of HIV/AIDS, children are often confused, which will increase the psychosocial effect on children. Campbell *et al.* (2005) found that stigmatisation is one of the main reasons for parents' and caregivers' reluctance to disclose HIV/AIDS information to their children. Participants in their 2005 study reported that youth are often scared to attend HIV/AIDS prevention meetings, for fear of parents punishing them. Furthermore, participants in their study indicated that churches and schools might undermine efforts to put HIV prevention strategies in place (Campbell *et al.*, 2005). Similar results were found by Zhao, Li, Fang, Zhao, Yang and Stanton (2007), who conducted a study on care arrangement, grief, and psychological problems among children orphaned by AIDS in China. In support of the results of the current study, these authors (Zhao *et al.*, 2007) found that HIV-positive parents are unwilling and hesitant to inform their children on the cause of their illness. In this regard, Wazakili, Mpogu and Devlieger (2006) found that young people who were physically disabled possessed limited factual knowledge with regard to sexuality and HIV/AIDS and that their parents were even more reluctant to speak to these young people about HIV/AIDS and sexuality. It therefore seems that the reluctance of parents and caregivers to speak to their children about HIV/AIDS-related matters is a recurring theme in literature that could enhance risk behaviour amongst young people.

In addition, Morrell (2003) found that young people are also often unwilling to talk about the possibility of being HIV-positive or acquiring HIV/AIDS. The young people who participated in Morrell's (2003) study were reluctant to test themselves and to determine

their HIV/AIDS status. This could possibly be linked with the example that children and young people get from their parents and caregivers, in not talking about HIV/AIDS. In a similar sense, Bennell *et al.* (2002) conducted a study on the influence of HIV/AIDS on the education sector in sub-Saharan Africa. They found that although children and young people are increasingly knowledgeable regarding HIV/AIDS, there are still limitations in their understanding, which could influence their risk behaviour regarding HIV/AIDS. Similar to the results obtained in the current study, some of the participants in the Bennell *et al.* (2002) study believed that traditional healers could cure HIV/AIDS.

**ii) Financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment as socio-economic barrier**

Statistical research confirms the high rates of poverty and unemployment in South Africa (Hall, 2009a, 2009b). In support of the results obtained in the current study, Smit and Fritz (2008) found that teachers may experience poverty as a challenging factor that is out of their control, which could influence teachers and the education system. Studies highlight the relationship between socio-economic barriers identified in the current study, namely poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Whiteside, 2002; Frohlich, 2005; Lubbe & Mampane, 2008; Van der Walt, Bowman, Frank & Langa, 2007; Whiteside, 2002). In correlation with the identified socio-economic results, literature agrees that the spread of HIV/AIDS can be linked to unemployment, a lack of education, violence, abuse and crime (Kalichman *et al.*, 2006; May, 2000). Furthermore, poverty stricken communities are often typified by high levels of malnutrition, which makes the body more prone to infections, like the HI-virus (Anabwani & Navario, 2005). In this regard, Mayekiso and Tshemese's (2007) conceptualisation of poverty supports the results of the current study in the sense that poverty does not only include the lack of necessary material goods and income, but may also include human capital factors such as deprivation of resources, opportunities and choices.

In correlation with the results of the current study, existing literature reports on financial constraints and reduced resources as a challenge often experienced when conducting

community-based interventions (Holmer & Drescher, 2005; Israel *et al.*, 1998, 2006; Kegeles *et al.*, 2005; Lantz *et al.*, 2001; Sanstad, Stall, Goldstein, Everett & Brousseau, 1999; Yoo *et al.*, 2009). In this regard, Holmer and Drescher (2005) report on constraints with regard to lack of resources and initial capital requirements for their asset-based vegetable garden initiative. Bennell (2004) adds that increased financial pressure on schools is a growing concern and de-motivator for many teachers, especially in schools that are not fully compensated by the government and where the income of school fees is low.

### **iii) Child abuse as social barrier**

Similar to the results obtained in the current study, existing literature agrees that child abuse is on the rise and a great concern and risk factor in various South African communities (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Coombe, 2002c; Richter *et al.*, 2004a; Swart, 2007). In line with the current study, child abuse as social barrier can be linked with HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004; Smart, 2001) that was identified as a socio-economic barrier in the current study. In this regard, UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID (2004) confirms that orphans and vulnerable children are at greater risk of abuse because of their vulnerable status in society.

#### **5.5.1.2 Confirmation of existing knowledge on the way teachers addressed barriers**

In my review of the literature, I found various similarities with regard to the way in which teachers in the current study addressed barriers. I present the confirmation of existing knowledge on the ways in which teachers addressed barriers according to the subthemes identified in the current study: a) stressors of teaching and b) social and/or economic barriers.

##### **a) Stressors of teaching addressed by teachers**

Within the context of teaching, many studies have been conducted on finding ways in which to deal with stressors of teaching (Abel & Sewell, 1999; De Jesus & Conboy,

2001; Griffith *et al.*, 1999; Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003). Although studies generally agree that people's reaction to stress is unique and is largely determined by individual constructs of each person (Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991; Nagel & Brown, 2003), I found many similarities between existing literature and the results obtained in the current study on teachers' way of dealing with stressors of teaching. In correlation with the results of the current study, Nagel and Brown (2003) present the ABC of managing stress. According to these authors, it is firstly important to acknowledge stress, secondly to engage in behaviour modification strategies and thirdly to engage in active communication.

In further correlation with the results of the current study, literature agrees that internal stress management techniques such as positive self-talk, positive perception, positive attitudes and stress-relief thinking are useful skills for teachers to apply when dealing with stressors of teaching (Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003). Similarly, Fritz and Smit (2008) explored teachers' perseverance and factors that could enable them to teach with enthusiasm and passion despite the daily barriers they may face in education. These authors found that teachers showed optimism about the future and were able to cope with educational adversities encountered (Fritz & Smit, 2008). In a similar way, Nagel and Brown (2003) as well as De Jesus and Conboy (2001) refer to cognitive restructuring in replacing irrational or negative beliefs with more appropriate and positive beliefs as a useful way of addressing stressors of teaching. Literature confirms the importance of teachers to take ownership and responsibility as well as commitment to deal with daily stressors of teaching (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

Similar to the way in which participating teachers in the current study dealt with stressors of teaching in a group context, De Jesus and Conboy (2001) introduced a relational-training stress-management course that was developed and implemented in an attempt to decrease teacher stress. In the same way in which participating teachers in the current study built supportive relationships as one way of addressing stressors to teaching, the growing body of literature highlights the importance for teachers to belong to a support group and to build supportive relations as buffer against stressors of teaching (Howard &

Johnson, 2004; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Van Wyk, 1998). Likewise, Giese *et al.* (2003a) report on the important role that support and partnerships can play when teachers need to deal with barriers and additional responsibilities.

In further support of the results of the current study, existing literature agrees that open and healthy communication with relevant role-players is fundamental when dealing with stressors of teaching. In this regard, Nagel and Brown (2003) view communication as a preventative measure to stress. Studies highlight the importance of open communication structures with different role players, including school management and the Department of Education (Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003); colleagues (De Jesus & Conboy, 2001; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003) as well as parents (Comer & Haynes, 1991; López, Scribner & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Van Wyk, 1998).

In line with the results of the current study, existing literature found that teachers and schools could play an active role in enhancing parent involvement. In this regard, López *et al.* (2001) found that schools could be successful in enhancing parent involvement and suggest that schools need to hold themselves accountable to meet the multiple needs of parents on an ongoing basis. Similarly, Comer and Haynes (1991) developed and implemented an ecological approach, where they involved parents in decision-making on various levels. These authors found that their approach had a positive effect on parent involvement (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Davies (1996) report on parents' increased empowerment as outcome of initiatives that established parent-school partnerships. Similarly, many studies emphasise the importance of activating parents as active partners in their children's school environment and involving parents in decision-making (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Lambert, 1991; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Van Wyk, 1998).

The results of the current study further correlate with Oullette *et al.*'s (2004) recommendations to improve school-parent networking and communication. These authors found that face-to-face meetings are preferable to written communication. Furthermore, participating parents in the study of Oullette *et al.* (2004) requested more

flexible meeting times to accommodate working parents. These authors' findings relates to the results of the current study when they conclude that community-based initiatives should continue to explore alternative strategies to enhance communication and networking strategies between schools and parents in order to address the barriers of time and distance of travelling for children and parents (Oullette *et al.*, 2004).

Literature within the context of participatory research partnerships also support the importance of open communication and regular consultation between various role-players for successful group work and partnerships in research initiatives (Harper *et al.*, 2004; Israel *et al.*; 2006; Mickan & Rodger, 2000; Sullivan, Koné, Senturia, Chrisman, Ciske & Kriegler, 2001; Thomas, 2002; Wood, 2007). Likewise, Yoo *et al.* (2009) emphasise feedback from participants as an effective manner in establishing reasons for non-participation in initiatives. This relates to open communication and could act as a pro-active way in addressing attrition of group members. Thomas (2002) further recommends that research participants receive the necessary support in dealing with stress and keeping them motivated.

In further confirmation of the results of the current study, literature agrees on teamwork as one important strategy to deal with stressors to teaching (Olivier & Venter, 2003; Travers & Cooper, 1996). As part of teamwork, literature refers to sharing responsibilities with colleagues and parents (Olivier & Venter, 2003) as well as children (Travers & Cooper, 1996). Similarly, existing literature indicate that shared responsibility is an important construct for successful and effective group work and successful community-based participatory research partnerships (Ferreira, 2008; Israel *et al.*, 2006; Koné *et al.*, 2000; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Richter *et al.*, 2004b; Sanstad *et al.*, 1999; Wood, 2007). Active involvement of the school's well-being and being part of the decision-making processes reduces and prevent stress (Travers & Cooper, 1996). Within the context of teamwork, De Jesus and Conboy (2001) refer to the importance of sharing professional experiences with colleagues as another potential way of dealing with stressors to teaching.



Similar to the results obtained in the current study, several existing studies also recruited new group members as a manner of addressing attrition of group members. In this regard, Harper *et al.* (2004) and Israel *et al.* (2006) attempted to overcome this challenge by building relationships with new members and by providing them with an in-depth orientation, thereby making new members part of the process. These authors (Harper *et al.*, 2004; Israel *et al.*, 2006) found that the input and shared ownership of all team members are vital for successful group interventions. This finding correlates with the results of the current study, indicating the importance of all group members being involved and acting as participating role-players in sharing their expectations at the outset of the process. This result is further confirmed by Austin's (2003) finding that clear expectations and boundaries are a necessary element for successful collaborative research projects and interventions.

The results of the current study are further confirmed by existing literature to deploy an active orientation of implementing various management skills in addressing stressors of teaching. Studies agree that creative problem-solving skills are fundamental in addressing stressors of teaching (De Jesus & Conboy, 2001; Nagel & Brown, 2003). In this regard, Saptoe (2000) engaged in active problem-solving strategies to address shortage of classrooms and overcrowded classes (Saptoe, 2000). In further correlation of the results obtained in the current study, existing literature refers to the importance of the implementation of goal-setting and monitoring skills in dealing with stressors to teaching. In this respect, Olivier and Venter (2003) found that the development of a personal plan of setting realistic goals and assessing individual efficiency is vital to combat stress for teachers. Time management skills are considered to be another important skill for teachers in dealing with stress (Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003). Furthermore, existing literature agrees on the importance of continuous planning and revising of goals for effective partnerships and collaborations (Israel *et al.*, 2006; Sanstad *et al.*, 1999; Visser, 2007).

## **b) Social and/or economic barriers addressed by teachers**

The results of the current study on participating teachers and community members who were actively involved on ground level to address socio-economic barriers relate to existing literature indicating that communities in South Africa are often characterised by limited resources, which oblige them to deal with challenges and adversities on ground level (Ferreira, 2006, 2008; Gow & Desmond, 2002; Hunter & Williamson, 2000). Individual community members therefore often rely on their own skills as primary resources in dealing with socio-economic barriers. I next discuss similarities between the results of the current study and existing literature on ways of addressing social and/or economic barriers, which I divide in the three subcategories, namely: i) HIV/AIDS as socio-economic barrier; ii) financial constraints due to poverty and unemployment as socio-economic barrier; and iii) child abuse as social barrier.

### **i) HIV/AIDS as socio-economic barrier**

Existing literature agrees on the fact that barriers associated with HIV/AIDS often place a huge strain on community relationships (Ferreira, 2006; Freeman, 2004; Loots, 2005, 2008; Smart, 2001, 2003; Van Dyk, 2001a). As a result, many research studies have focused on the question of how communities might deal with these barriers and subsequently find ways to support HIV/AIDS-affected communities to better deal with challenges (Ferreira, 2006; Foster & Williamson, 2001; Kilmer, Cowen & Wyman, 2001; Smart, 2003; *Child Protection Society of Zimbabwe*, 1999). In support of the results of the current study, studies emphasise the important role that schools could play in caring for and supporting orphaned children and HIV/AIDS-affected households, but also in introducing support initiatives (Giese *et al.*, 2003b; Loots & Mnguni, 2008; Richter, 2003a).

Just as the teachers in the current study reportedly implemented HIV/AIDS awareness and education as one way of addressing HIV/AIDS-related challenges in their school-community contexts, existing literature agrees on the importance of HIV education and lifestyle training and awareness programmes as a strategy to prevent the spreading of

HIV/AIDS, promoting HIV/AIDS safe behaviour (Bennell *et al.*, 2002; Coombe, 2002c; Schensul, 1999; UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004; Van Dyk, 2001a), and reducing the ignorance and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS (Campbell *et al.*, 2005). In the same way in which teachers in the current study reportedly invited experts in the field of HIV/AIDS to their schools in an attempt to raise HIV/AIDS awareness amongst children, parents and community members, Bennell *et al.* (2002) refer to *AIDS clubs* that were found to exist to a greater or lesser extent in each of the three countries (Uganda, Malawi and Botswana) that participated in their study. The goal of these clubs is to invite health personnel to enable young people to make informed decisions on HIV/AIDS. Young people in this study (Bennell *et al.*, 2002) expressed their need to participate in their own HIV/AIDS education, to be given the opportunity to debate issues, and not only be lectured. This finding relates to participating teachers in School 1, who attempted to address young people's needs as expressed in Bennell *et al.*'s (2002) study, by mobilising children as potential peer educators (see 4.3.1). Further research on the potential effect of HIV/AIDS peer educators is, however, required.

In correlation with the results obtained in the current study, teachers in Taggart's study (2008) provided material support in the form of clothes and food to HIV/AIDS orphans in their classes. Bennell *et al.* (2002) confirm the importance of material support based on the finding that the Botswana government introduced a comprehensive programme of material support for disadvantaged orphans. In a similar way, Airhihenbuwa and Webster (2004) found that financial and material support is often provided in communities. These authors refer to burial societies that often provide financial support for families who cannot afford to bury their loved ones who had passed away because of HIV/AIDS. Zhao *et al.* (2007) indicate similar results in a study conducted in China, finding that HIV/AIDS orphans in China, generally struggle with basic material needs (such as food, shelter, education, and medical care) that are not being met. However, these authors also refer to the psychological problems of HIV/AIDS-affected individuals and recommend that future studies focus on orphans' psychosocial needs and reducing the negative effects of parental death on both physical and psychosocial levels to enhance the well-being of

HIV/AIDS orphans. This brings me to the third manner in which teachers in the current study addressed HIV/AIDS-related barriers, namely emotional and spiritual support.

Lubbe and Mampane (2008) support the results obtained in the current study, emphasising that compassionate and caring teachers who are involved on an emotional level could fulfil an important role in contributing towards children feeling more positive about the future and enhancing their self-worth. Just as the teachers in the current study provided support on an emotional level, teachers in Taggart's (2008) study encouraged and motivated HIV/AIDS orphans and acted as socialisation agents in guiding orphans towards social, moral and emotional adjustment. A growing body of literature emphasises the importance of psychosocial support, as many HIV/AIDS support programmes tend to pay less attention to the psychosocial effects of HIV/AIDS-affected individuals and children than to the noticeable and observable problems faced by them (Coombe, 2002c; Giese *et al.*, 2003a; Grainger *et al.*, 2001; Hunter & Williamson, 2000; Kekae-Moletsane, 2008; Swanepoel, 2008; UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004; Wakhweya, Kateregga, Konde-Lule, Mukyala, Sabin, Williams & Heggenhougen, 2002). In a similar way, Airhihenbuwa and Webster (2004) found that emotional and spiritual support is an important aspect of HIV/AIDS support and is often evident in community contexts.

The barriers associated with HIV/AIDS as well as the manner in which teachers in the current study reportedly dealt with this pandemic shows similarities with a study conducted by *The Farm Orphan Support Trust of Zimbabwe* (Walker, 2002). The Walker (2002) study investigated child-headed homes, managed by AIDS orphans, in farm communities in Zimbabwe. The focus of the study was to identify needs in these households and to plan intervention strategies for meeting the needs. The following needs were identified: uncertainty regarding food; problems relating to admission to education; material needs; lack of psychosocial support; lack of life skills and knowledge; abuse; lack of family support structures; lack of safety and security; as well as limited access to health services. In line with the manner in which the teachers in the current study addressed the HIV/AIDS barriers in their communities, Walker (2002) recommends that psychosocial support be integrated with material support. He suggests that community

members should become involved in providing psychosocial support and that material needs be addressed by external funding. Walker's (2002) study support the current study, emphasising the importance of building and supporting community-based capacities. Results of the current study also show striking similarities with Bhana *et al.*'s (2006) study on teachers' pastoral care in support in the context of HIV/AIDS. Participating teachers in this study started feeding schemes out of their own pockets and collected clothing for needy children.

In addition, I place the results of participating teachers' ability to address HIV/AIDS-related barriers within their school-community contexts in the context of the *Framework for the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV/AIDS* (UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004). This framework considers families, communities and children as potential change agents in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The framework consists of five key strategies, which are adopted on an international, national and local level (Ferreira, 2006). The first key strategy is to mobilise families' capacity to provide care and support for orphans and vulnerable children by extending the lives of parents and providing economic, psychosocial and other support. This strategy correlates with the seemed ability of teachers in the current study to mobilise family members to assist in HIV/AIDS care and support. The second strategy is also in line with the results of the current study, namely to mobilise and support community-based responses. This strategy further relates to Coombe's (2000) statement that HIV/AIDS not only attacks and influences individuals, but also systems and communities. The third strategy of providing orphans and vulnerable children with access to basic services further relates with the results of teachers who mobilised assets and resources by building networks with various organisations, which resulted in material, emotional, spiritual, social, health and safety support to vulnerable children. The fourth strategy focuses on governments to protect vulnerable children through improved policy and legislation by channelling resources to vulnerable families and communities. This strategy relates to the results of teachers assisting vulnerable community members to obtain government grants. Teachers in the current study seemed to demonstrate the ability to create HIV/AIDS awareness in their school-community contexts as well as

providing material, emotional and spiritual care and support to HIV/AIDS-affected individuals, relating to the fifth strategy of building a supportive environment for HIV/AIDS infected and affected children and families.

## **ii) Poverty and unemployment as socio-economic barrier**

In correlation with the study's results, Dubb (2005) explored the role that the asset-based approach may play in addressing social and economic problems in the United States of America. Their team at the University of Maryland found that the utilisation of a large range of innovative asset-based strategies could result in increased economic and social stability and development. The way in which the teachers in the current study actively tackled financial barriers and assumed ownership of their own initiatives correlates with many studies that focused on asset-based community development (Beaulieu, 2002; Cordes, 2002; Gebre-Egziabher, s.a; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Richter *et al.*, 2004b; Mathie & Cunningham, 2002, 2003; McNulty, 2005; Nares *et al.*, 2001; Odell, 2002; Pinkett, 2000; Tibajuka, 2003; Siegel, 2005; Thompson, 2005).

The results of the current study also relate to Mayekiso and Tshemese's (2007) three proposed strategies to reduce poverty. The first strategy is *poverty alleviation*, which is similar to the way in which teachers in the current study provided material support to children and community members. The second strategy is *poverty reduction*, which correlates with the teachers' active attempt to enhance unemployed parents' and community members' skills, provide employment to a limited extent and encourage potential business opportunities. The third strategy of *poverty eradication* relates to the results of the current study of teachers who attempted to enable individuals to take ownership for development and growth. This strategy further correlates with one of Pieterse's (1999) guidelines for addressing poverty by enabling communities to take ownership for their own initiatives, build community capacity and develop leadership.

### **iii) Child abuse as social barrier**

The existing literature agrees on the importance of life skills training and awareness programmes as a possible preventative intervention strategy to child abuse (Coombe, 2002c; Dalton *et al.*, 2007; Swart, 2007). In this regard, Dalton *et al.* (2007) refer to the mobilisation of power to generate social change by establishing community coalitions and alternative settings in the form of shelters and places of safety. In a similar way, results of the current study indicate that teachers reportedly addressed child abuse by empowering children with life skills training and by building networks with potential community resources to provide support in this regard.

### **5.5.2 Contradictions in existing knowledge with regard to the way teachers acknowledged and addressed barriers**

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In my review of the literature, I found some contradictions with regard to the way in which teachers in the current study acknowledged and addressed barriers. I subsequently discuss these contradictions, presented in two subsections: 5.6.2.1 contradictions of existing knowledge on barriers acknowledged by teachers and 5.6.2.2 contradictions of existing knowledge on barriers addressed by teachers.

#### **5.5.2.1 Contradictions of existing knowledge on barriers acknowledged by teachers**

With regard to teachers' absenteeism as context-related barrier, I found some discrepancies between the results of the current study and existing literature. Bennell (2004) found that the absence of teachers is often reported to be higher in rural schools because teachers often go home at weekends and then take a day off to travel. However, this finding contradicts the results of the current study, as School 2 was the only participating rural school in the current study and did not report the absence of teachers to be a stressor of teaching. Only participating teachers in School 3 (urban school) reported teacher absenteeism to be a barrier. Yet, according to Bennell *et al.*, (2002), teachers'

absenteeism is usually for valid reasons, including personal illness, official duty, and official leave.

Furthermore, Thomas (2002) highlights a lack of support as a potential reason for attrition of teachers. To the contrary, teachers in the current study rather supported each other in order to overcome barriers and challenges encountered. MacDonald (1999) adds teachers' low social status as another reason for teacher attrition. Conversely to MacDonald's (1999) finding, teachers in the current study took pride in their work and their accomplishments. There are a variety of possible explanations, including personality differences, internal versus external level of motivation and the specific perception or view of teachers and the teaching profession within each unique community context. In the current study, participating teachers were generally viewed as valuable and respected role-players in their communities.

Although participating teachers in the current study only highlighted the attrition of group members as a barrier, other studies found newly recruited group members to be a potential barrier. In this regard, Harper *et al.* (2004) conducted a collaborative research study on improving community-based HIV interventions for adolescents. One of the barriers they encountered was new members joining their team. Similarly, in Israel *et al.*'s (2006) study on community-based participatory research partnerships, the researchers found it difficult to maintain group cohesiveness and commitment of group members over time. They found that participation was inconsistent and changing, in the sense that group members sometimes missed meetings or that the group identity and focus were affected when new group members joined. Although participating teachers in the current study sometimes missed workshops due to other responsibilities, group members generally stayed committed to their groups. Contrary to the literature above, new group members in the study generally took the initiative of nominating themselves to the group. Group members reported that the new members easily became part of the group and contributed to group cohesion. New group members in the current study showed an inherent commitment in taking initiative of becoming part of the group.



A few studies are inconsistent with the results of the current study in terms of the barriers acknowledged and reported by teachers. For example, existing literature indicates that teachers often experience lack of support structures as a barrier to teaching. This includes lack of support networks at their work (Gold & Roth, 2003; Griffith *et al.*, 1999; Olivier & Venter, 2003) and a lack of community and personal support (Gold & Roth, 2003). This correlates with literature that indicates that teachers often experience unfulfilled relationships with colleagues, principals and school management as a stressor of teaching (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Howard and Johnson (2004) argue that teachers often feel that there is a lack of trust and cooperation between colleagues. The teachers in the current study conversely built and maintained supportive relationships with each other and relevant role-players as one way of addressing barriers to teaching.

In another contradiction, literature indicates that the public's perceived image and related expectations of teachers can be a stressor of teaching. Gold and Roth (2003) found that the public often holds a negative image of the teaching profession and high expectations of teachers that are often difficult to meet (Gold & Roth, 2003). Teachers also experience conflict regarding the different roles that they need to fulfil (Gold & Roth, 2003). Moreover, existing studies indicate that teachers often do not receive recognition for their contributions (Gold & Roth, 2003; Howard & Johnson, 2004) and may receive negative feedback (Jacobsson *et al.*, 2001). Teachers in the current study did not report such stressors to teaching, but rather reported that they believed in their own skills and competencies for successfully addressing barriers in their school-community contexts. They also reported on positive feedback from colleagues, parents and community members. This contradiction could possibly be because of the asset-based intervention in which the participating teachers took part.

#### **5.5.2.2 Contradictions of existing knowledge on barriers addressed by teachers**

I found contradictions in existing literature about the manner in which participating teachers dealt with barriers encountered. Whereas the teachers in the current study

adopted an open approach in transferring their HIV/AIDS-related knowledge to children, parents and community members, Bennell *et al.* (2002) found that teachers in their study, particularly in Botswana, were reluctant to speak to children about HIV/AIDS-related topics. Participants in their study reported that they were embarrassed and anxious about discussing sexual topics with children. Furthermore, where the teachers in the current study reported the ability to engage in open communication as one way of addressing barriers, Harper *et al.* (2004) refer to one of the barriers experienced in their collaborative research as being a lack of communication between various participating role-players, especially between members in supervisory positions and those in more “frontline” intervention activities. A possible explanation for this contradiction could be that relationships between teachers and between teachers and researchers were built on openness, trust and honesty. Results showed that all research partners were generally comfortable in sharing both their positive and negative experiences openly. This potential working assumption could be explored further in a future study.

In disagreement with the results of the current study that communities are able to deal with daily psychosocial barriers by relying on available local resources and assets (see also Ferreira, 2008), several authors indicate the converse. Smart (2003) is of the opinion that communities’ mechanisms for dealing with barriers such as HIV/AIDS are already optimally used and cannot be stretched further. Similarly, Subbarao *et al.*, (2001) found that communities at ground level are not able to deal efficiently with the challenge of looking after the increased number of HIV/AIDS orphans.

Furthermore, many potential challenges with regard to teachers’ roles in providing psychosocial support within the context of HIV/AIDS can be identified in existing literature. Bennell *et al.* (2002) found poor delivery of the HIV/AIDS curriculum and pre-service teacher training in Botswana, Uganda and Malawi. Additionally, existing literature generally points out that teachers are not always sufficiently trained with the necessary competencies and skills to provide successful HIV/AIDS education and support (Bhana *et al.*, 2006; Hall, 2004; Jansen & Christie, 1999, Ogina, 2007). In this regard, I agree with Ogina (2007), who refers to the gap before teachers that received

training to teach in a world that was not affected by AIDS and now need to teach in a world that is daily confronted with HIV/AIDS-related challenges.

According to the *Norms and Standards for Educators* (Department of Education, 2000a), teachers in South Africa are expected to be flexible in adopting different roles, with one of them being a pastoral role. The pastoral role requires of a teacher to demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the child and to respond to the educational and other needs of children and fellow teachers. The practical competencies related to the pastoral role comprise developing supportive relationships with parents and other organisations; attending to HIV/AIDS education, demonstrating care and support, and providing protection to children (Department of Education, 2000a). Literature argues that although a policy framework in South Africa is in place for teacher education, its successful practical implementation remains a challenge (Jansen, 2001; Mattson & Harley, 2003; Parker, 2003). Other researchers (Loots & Mnguni, 2008; Smit & Fritz, 2008) are of the opinion that teachers are not always fully equipped for a pastoral role. In this regard, Smit and Fritz (2008) found that teachers are daily faced with trauma and do not possess the necessary counselling skills to support children or to debrief their own emotional response to trauma in their school contexts.

Yet, in correlation with the current study's results, Visser (2004) argues that teachers possess the potential of providing the necessary education and support, as long as they receive the necessary training. Ogina (2007) emphasises that teachers have to be empowered with the necessary competencies and knowledge to successfully play a supportive role in terms of HIV/AIDS-related challenges in their school-community contexts. During the intervention stage of the current study, participating teachers were equipped with skills and competencies to deal more effectively with these barriers, which could be a possible reason for the discrepancy between the results of the current study and the findings from existing literature. It therefore seems important that teachers are equipped with the necessary competencies to effectively deal with various psychosocial matters on a daily basis. According to Parker (2003), many tertiary institutions have

already developed and submitted revised programmes and qualifications in line with the norms and standards for teachers.

### **5.5.3 Silences in existing knowledge with regard to the way teachers acknowledged and addressed barriers**

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Lastly, I refer to the silences that I have encountered during my search of existing literature. In this section, I refer to findings from studies that were not reported in the current study and that therefore neither contradict nor confirm the results of the current study. I use the same headings that I used in the previous sections. I firstly discuss 5.6.3.1 silences on the way teachers acknowledged barriers and thereafter I discuss 5.6.3.2 silences on the way teachers addressed barriers.

#### **5.5.3.1 Silences on the way teachers acknowledged barriers**

With regard to the attrition of group members, existing literature highlighted additional reasons for attrition of teachers and high teacher turnover, which were not evident in the current study. These reasons include occupational attrition (teacher leaving the profession for other careers) and international migration (Bennell, 2004; Coombe, 2000). In this regard, Olivier and Venter (2003) found that teachers mainly leave the teaching profession for higher remuneration packages. It could be that the teachers in the current study did not report occupational attrition and international migration because most of the participating teachers do not currently have the necessary exposure or opportunities for exploring alternative career paths nationally or internationally. The high level of unemployment in South Africa could also be a contributing factor that persuades the participating teachers to stay in the teaching profession. These are, however, mereworking assumptions, which require further exploration.

Another additional stressor of teaching that was not reported in the current study relates to teachers' dissatisfaction with school management. In this regard, Marais (1992) found

that teachers were dissatisfied with school management styles and Olivier and Venter (2003) found that teachers felt left out in decision-making processes and that school-management does not allow their voices to be heard. Although participating teachers in the current study referred to the hierarchy in their schools and the importance of keeping school management informed about the goals and progress of their asset-based initiatives, they did not report any dissatisfaction with school management as a stressor to teaching. On a national level, teachers as participants in Taggart's (2008) study indicated that the government should be more involved in assisting teachers to deal with challenges associated with teaching.

Another prominent stressor of teaching highlighted by existing literature is classroom management, including misbehaviour of children and lack of discipline in classrooms (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Friedman, 1995; Gold & Roth, 2003; Hayward, 2002; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Jacobsson *et al.*, 2001; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Saptoe, 2000; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Nagel and Brown (2003) refer to the handling of children with special education needs as a further potential stressor of teaching. Although teachers (School 3) in the current study reported overcrowded classrooms as a context-specific barrier, which included difficulties with regard to classroom management, they did not report lack of discipline and misbehaviour of children as a stressor of teaching.

Work security is another potential stressor of teaching found in existing literature, but not reported in the current study. Work security issues include retrenchments (Marais, 1992), low salaries (Hayward, 2002; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Taggart, 2008; Thomas, 2002), lack of promotional prospects (Travers & Cooper, 1996) and lack of financial support (Gold & Roth, 2003). Although retrenchments and lack of work and financial security are realities within the South African context, participating teachers in the current study did not report work security as a stressor to teaching. A possible explanation could be that teachers rather focused on the personal rewards beyond financial gain that they received from teaching and being part of asset-based school-based community projects.

Existing literature further indicates that societal changes can be barriers of teaching. Kyriacou (2001) refer to general changes within society that might affect the teaching profession. More specifically within the South African context, Marais (1992) identified political change and corruption in state departments as challenges and stressors often experienced by teachers in South African schools. However, the teachers in the current study did not report similar concerns. Hayward (2002) and Taggart (2008) refer to poorly resourced schools as another potential barrier in teaching. Although participating schools in the current study were also regarded as under-resourced, teachers seemingly mobilised existing assets and resources in order to work with what they had and what was available in their school-community contexts.

Finally, I also came across socio-economic barriers as recurring themes in many South African studies that were not reported in the current study. These barriers include crime in South Africa (Demombynes & Özler, 2005; Powdthavee, 2003; Shaw, 1996); substance abuse (Madu & Matla, 2003; Parry, Bhana, Myers, Plüddemann, Flisher, Peden & Morojele, 2002) and rape of women and children (Petersen, Bhana & McKay, 2005; Richter, 2003b; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

#### **5.5.3.2 Silences on the way teachers addressed barriers**

I next refer to the silences that I found on the way in which teachers in the current study addressed barriers. I present this section according to the subthemes identified in the current study: a) stressors of teaching and b) social and/or economic barriers.

##### **a) Stressors to teaching**

I came across findings within existing literature on additional ways of addressing stressors to teaching that were not reported in the current study. Many studies found that a healthy lifestyle and recreational activities is a buffer to stressors in teaching (Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003). Studies also recommend in-service training for teachers on various topics that cause daily stress as another way to help teachers deal

with stressors to teaching. Topics include stress-management techniques, dealing with discipline, and time-management skills (Olivier & Venter, 2003; Saptoe, 2000). In this regard, Jenkins and Calhoun (1991) found an individualised training method to be successful in addressing stressors to teaching. In their study, teachers identified unique individual stressors and then received specific training on an identified stressor. Co-operative teaching is another way to deal with stressors to teaching that was not reported in the current study (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

#### **b) Social and/or economic barriers**

Literature refers to additional strategies with regard to HIV/AIDS awareness and education that were not reported in the current study. Parker *et al.* (2000) refer to television, radio and the printed media as alternative ways of communicating about HIV/AIDS within communities. Similarly, Panford, Nyaney, Amoah and Aidoo (2001) found that radio is a valuable and credible source of information in most developing countries. These authors found that portable battery-operated radios are often brought to remote and rural locations in Ghana, as they are relatively affordable and accessible. Likewise, Bennell *et al.* (2002) found that radio, newspapers, magazines and television are important sources of HIV/AIDS information for children and young people in sub-Saharan Africa. However, teachers in the current study did not report on television, radio and printed media as potential ways on communicating HIV/AIDS information. In this regard, Ferreira (2006) indicates that it is important to keep in mind that not all South African communities have access to audiovisual communication structures. The communities participating in the current study are characterised by poverty and unemployment, with very few community members having access to television. Yet, another source of information could be billboards in communities (Ferreira, 2008). Although participating teachers in the current study did not report billboards and posters as a potential source of HIV/AIDS information, I observed billboards in these communities and regard them as an effective manner of presenting core facts about HIV/AIDS (see photograph 5.10 to view one of these billboards in participating communities).

Keeping the important role that cultural contexts and underlying traditions may play in people's perceptions, Panford *et al.* (2001) propose another source of information. They found that folk media could act as a traditional way of communicating messages that integrate the values and symbols of a specific culture. Examples of folk media include storytelling, proverbs, visual art, drama, role-play, singing, drumming and dancing. These authors found that folk media are an effective means for changing destructive social and health behaviours in rural communities in Africa. Although teachers in the current study did not report on or make use of folk media as source of transferring HIV/AIDS information, I agree that folk media can act as a valuable strategy in HIV/AIDS education, support and care. Folk media can be effectively applied in a community context such as that of School 2, where community members highly value traditional and cultural beliefs and practices.

Other intervention approaches to child abuse that were not found in the current study although highlighted by other studies, include policy research and advocacy, where findings from research are used to influence policy makers (Dalton *et al.*, 2007). Finally, although teachers in the current study initiated various initiatives in their attempt to address poverty as socio-economic factor in their communities, they did not address poverty by providing shelter and access to safe, potable water. Furthermore, they did not address poverty on a political and policy level (Mayekiso & Tshemese, 2007).

## **5.6 INSIGHT IN THE WAY TEACHERS ADDRESS BARRIERS RESOURCEFULLY**

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I engaged in a process of meaning making in order to present insight in the way teachers addressed barriers resourcefully that they encountered in their school-community contexts. Addendum B4 presents the meaning-making process that I followed. Teachers firstly acknowledged barriers (indicated in different categories), and then generated potential ways in which to address these barriers resourcefully. The teachers' manner of addressing barriers can be grouped in three different levels (indicated in three different



colours), namely an intrapersonal and interpersonal level and the employment of management skills. On an intrapersonal level, teachers showed optimism, positive thinking and solution-oriented beliefs. They seemingly believed in their own skills and competencies and displayed personal commitment in mobilising their assets to the benefit of themselves and others. Teachers reportedly focused on the value of their asset-based initiatives and looked beyond financial gain. On an interpersonal level, teachers seemingly built supportive relationships, characterised by group cohesion together with emotional and spiritual support. They focused on open communication structures with the various role-players, shared experiences and expectations. They engaged in teamwork, by sharing responsibilities, involving role-players, recruiting new members and mobilising the assets of the team. Lastly, teachers deployed management skills. They demonstrated problem-solving, goal-setting, time management and networking skills.

Many studies (see Abel & Sewell, 1999; De Jesus & Conboy, 2001; Griffith *et al.*, 1999; Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991; Nagel and Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003) have found that teachers address barriers successfully at different levels and by employing various strategies. The teachers in the current study addressed barriers on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level and by deploying management skills. I subsequently make use of the concept of eustress (Simmons & Nelson, 2005) and Antonovsky's (1987, 1993) theory of sense of coherence to explain this insight.

Lazarus (1996) propounds the cognitive appraisal approach, in which individuals respond differently to the stressors they encounter in life, depending on whether they regard a stressor as positive or negative. The concept of eustress can be defined as a positive psychological reaction to a stressor, which is evident by the presence of positive psychological states (Muller & Rothmann, 2009; Simmons & Nelson, 2005). Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) describe eustress as a type of stress that provides challenges which motivate individuals to work hard to meet their goals. Teachers in the current study responded positively to barriers or stressors encountered in their school-community contexts and therefore regarded barriers as challenges that could be addressed in a resourceful manner. On the other hand, distress can be defined as a negative

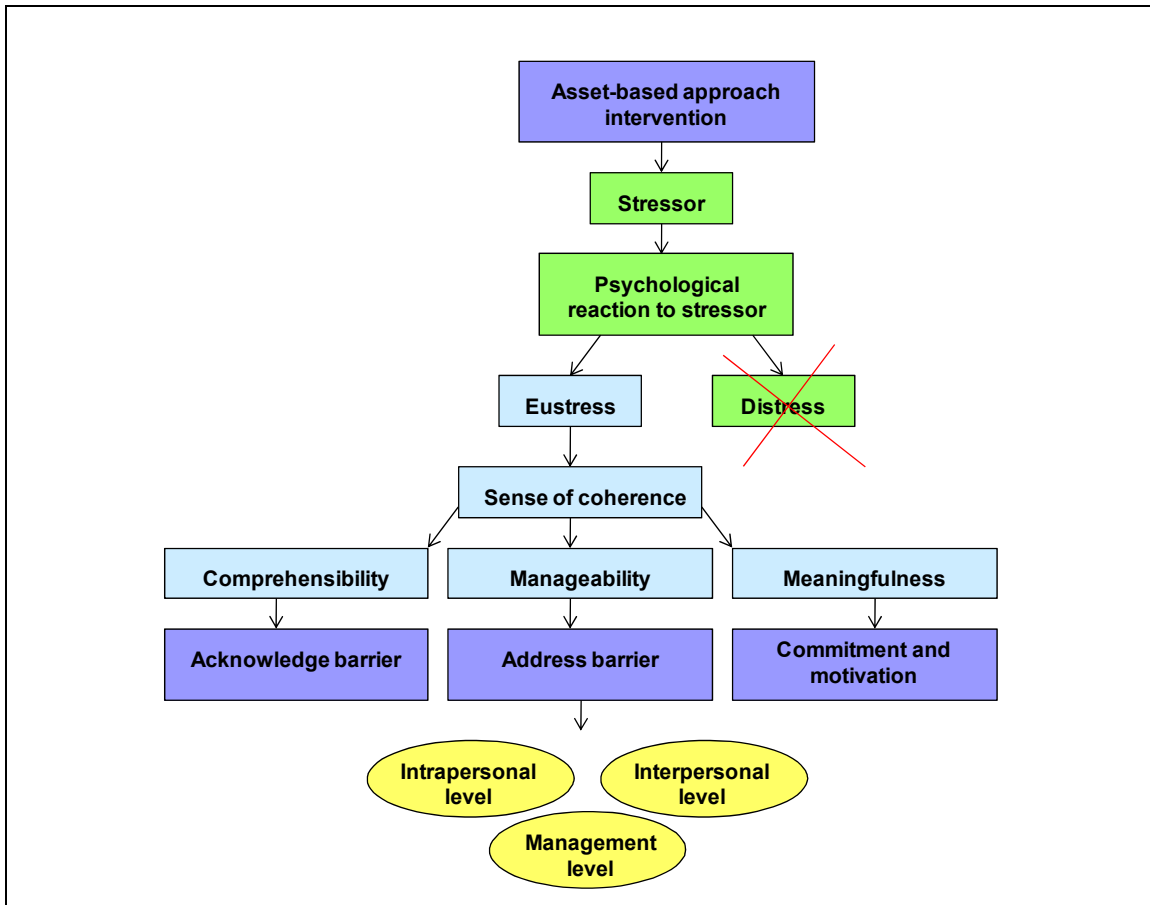
psychological reaction to a stressor, which is evident by the presence of negative psychological states (Muller & Rothmann, 2009; Simmons & Nelson, 2005). An individual's characteristics strongly influence whether life stressors and circumstances will result in eustress or distress (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001; Semmer, 2003). These characteristics are not specifically coping styles, but rather characteristics that may affect how individuals view life situations; they therefore act as co-determinants of coping behaviour (Semmer, 2003). Sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993) is seen as a broad characteristic that influences an individual's perception and ability to cope (Muller & Rothmann, 2009; Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Semmer, 2003).

Antonovsky (cited in Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006:297) defines the concept of sense of coherence as "a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that the stimuli deriving from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable; the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by the stimuli and these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement". Sense of coherence is a relatively stable dispositional orientation (Antonovsky, 1987) and a dynamic aspect of a person's personality and comprises three interconnected components (Antonovsky, 1993), which correlate with theme 2 of the current study.

The first component of sense of coherence is *comprehensibility*, which includes the extent to which a person perceives internal and external stimuli as information that is structured and constant. The stimuli are regarded as understandable and they make sense to a person on a cognitive level. Life events are therefore viewed as less stressful (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993; Muller & Rothmann, 2009; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006; Wolff & Ratner, 1999). This component of comprehensibility relates to teachers' comprehension of barriers, by acknowledging barriers in their school-community contexts. The second component is *manageability*, which refers to the degree to which someone experiences occurrences in life as conditions that are controllable and manageable. This component also includes a person's ability to mobilise available resources to meet encountered stressors (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993; Muller & Rothmann,

2009; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006; Wolff & Ratner, 1999). This component links with participating teachers' perception of viewing barriers in their school-community contexts as challenges that are manageable. Teachers identified and mobilised resources for overcoming barriers encountered in their school-community contexts. The third component is *meaningfulness*, which refers to the degree to which a person feels that life makes sense and has meaning not only on a cognitive level, but also on an emotional level. This entails that a person has the motivation and commitment for coping with encountered stressors (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993; Muller & Rothmann, 2009; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006; Wolff & Ratner, 1999). This component of meaningfulness relates to participating teachers' view that barriers are challenges that are worthy of engagement and commitment. It also relates to teachers' sense of motivation for resourcefully addressing stressors of teaching and socio-economic barriers experienced in their school-community contexts.

Within the context of eustress and sense of coherence, the current study may therefore provide insight in the way teachers could react to and address barriers resourcefully. Figure 5.2 illustrates this process. Teachers were firstly introduced to the asset-based approach through an intervention process (see Chapter 3). When teachers were confronted with barriers in their school-community contexts, they seemingly reacted positively to these barriers. They displayed a strong sense of coherence, as they perceived barriers in their school-community contexts as making cognitive sense, as being under control and being meaningful (Antonovsky, 1987). They showed an understanding of the dimensions of the barriers within their environment and regarded it as manageable by making use of effective strategies to address barriers resourcefully and by looking for meaning in their life. They subsequently seemed to address barriers on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level and by deploying management skills.



*Figure 5.2:* Schematic presentation of teachers’ asset-based orientation towards addressing barriers resourcefully.

Although there are many variables and complex factors influencing a person’s reaction to barriers or stressors, Weissbecker, Salmon, Studts, Floyd, Dedert and Sephton (2004) confirm that a sense of coherence could be enhanced through intervention. Teachers in the current study participated in an asset-based intervention. The asset-based approach asserts that needs, difficulties and problems may lose their significance, or be indirectly resolved when activities change and this stimulates people’s interest and attention. In this way, the energy and effort of the teachers in the current study, that were initially focused on barriers and needs, have become refocused on opportunities, assets, strengths and transformed collaborative action. The asset-based approach is therefore likely to enable communities and mobilise community members to generate positive and significant change from within (Ashford & Patkar, 2001; Cordes, 2002; Kretzmann & McKnight,

1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Roos & Temane, 2007; Saylor *et al.*, 2006; Tibaijuka, 2003). I therefore conclude that an asset-based approach orientation could lead to enhanced eustress and sense of coherence when teachers are faced with and address barriers. However, I recommend that more research be conducted on this possibility.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

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In this chapter, I reported the results of the second theme. I made use of participants' verbatim quotations, visual data and extracts from my researcher journal to enrich and authenticate the findings of the current study. Furthermore, I expanded on congruent and contradictory findings as well as silences between the current study and existing literature. Lastly, I presented insight in the way teachers addressed barriers resourcefully. In Chapter 6, I present the next theme of the current study, namely *teachers' demonstrated asset-based competencies*.

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