

**A teacher's experience of implementing the  
asset-based approach to teach Grade 7  
learners**

**Marie Venter**

A B C

*Asset-based teaching*

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**A teacher's experience of implementing the asset-based  
approach to teach Grade 7 learners**

by

**Marié Venter**

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(EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)**

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**SUPERVISOR:**  
Dr. Tilda Loots

**CO-SUPERVISOR:**  
Prof. Dr. Ronél Ferreira

**PRETORIA**

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This dissertation is dedicated to  
learners in schools  
who are not yet fully aware of their assets,  
strengths and special qualities

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## DECLARATION

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I, Mariè Venter (student number 10015541) hereby declare that all the resources consulted are included in the reference list and that this study titled:

*A teacher's experience of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners*

is my original work. This mini-dissertation has not been previously submitted by me for any degree at another university.

.....  
**Mariè Venter**

.....  
**Date**

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## ABSTRACT

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### **A teacher's experience of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners**

by

Marié Venter

Supervisor : Dr. Tilda Loots  
Co-supervisor : Prof. Dr. Ronél Ferreira  
Institution : University of Pretoria, Department of Educational Psychology  
Degree : M.Ed. (Educational Psychology)

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into a teacher's experience in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class. More specifically I explored expected and unexpected benefits as well as challenges in relation to the implementation of asset-based teaching. My working assumptions were that both teachers and learners possess assets that may support teaching and learning and that the process of asset-based teaching can support teachers to attend to a variety of needs in one classroom.

Nested within the wider positive psychology paradigm I relied on the asset-based approach as theoretical framework. I conducted qualitative research following an instrumental case study research design, applying participatory action research principles. Meta-theoretically I framed the study within Interpretivism in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. One Grade 7 teacher was selected as participant through purposeful sampling. A government primary school in Pretoria was selected conveniently. I used semi-structured interviews, analysis of existing documents and artefacts, and observation to collect data, that were documented in the form of verbatim transcripts, photographs, field notes and a research journal. Following thematic data analysis three main themes emerged related to the process of asset-based teaching, positive changes of asset-based teaching, and challenges associated with asset-based teaching.

In identifying assets within the classroom (Theme 1), the teacher in this study became aware of both the learners' and her own assets that could be mobilised to support teaching and learning. Assets identified within the different systems of the bio-ecological model and own action plan were used to support the mobilisation of assets. Ownership and commitment formed an essential part of the phase of managing assets. Positive changes that were identified subsequent to implementing asset-based teaching (Theme 2) relate to increased

confidence and self-knowledge of learners and the teacher, identification of assets, enablement in the classroom, recognising the value of reflection in teaching, focusing away from learners' needs towards their assets and strengths, increased motivation and trust amongst learners, a decrease in behaviour difficulties, and learners working more independently. Challenges that were identified in implementing asset-based teaching (Theme 3) include an increased workload and responsibility in teaching, difficulty to focus away from needs to strengths, lack of sustainability of positive changes, behaviour challenges, limited understanding of asset-based terminology, difficulty to integrate asset-based teaching into the curriculum of various learning areas, high teacher-learner ratios, socio-economic challenges, the needs-based orientation of society, and limited support to learners from home.

Based on the findings of the study I conclude that asset-based teaching can be viewed as a suitable alternative way of teaching, following the dynamic process of identifying, mobilising and managing assets. In this manner, the diverse needs of learners may be addressed in one classroom. In addition the study indicates that asset-based teaching may support adolescents in dealing with developmental changes.

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## **KEY WORDS**

- **Adolescents**
- **Asset-based approach**
- **Asset-based teaching**
- **Bio-ecological model**
- **Intervention**
- **Teacher**
- **Teaching and learning**
- **Life Orientation**

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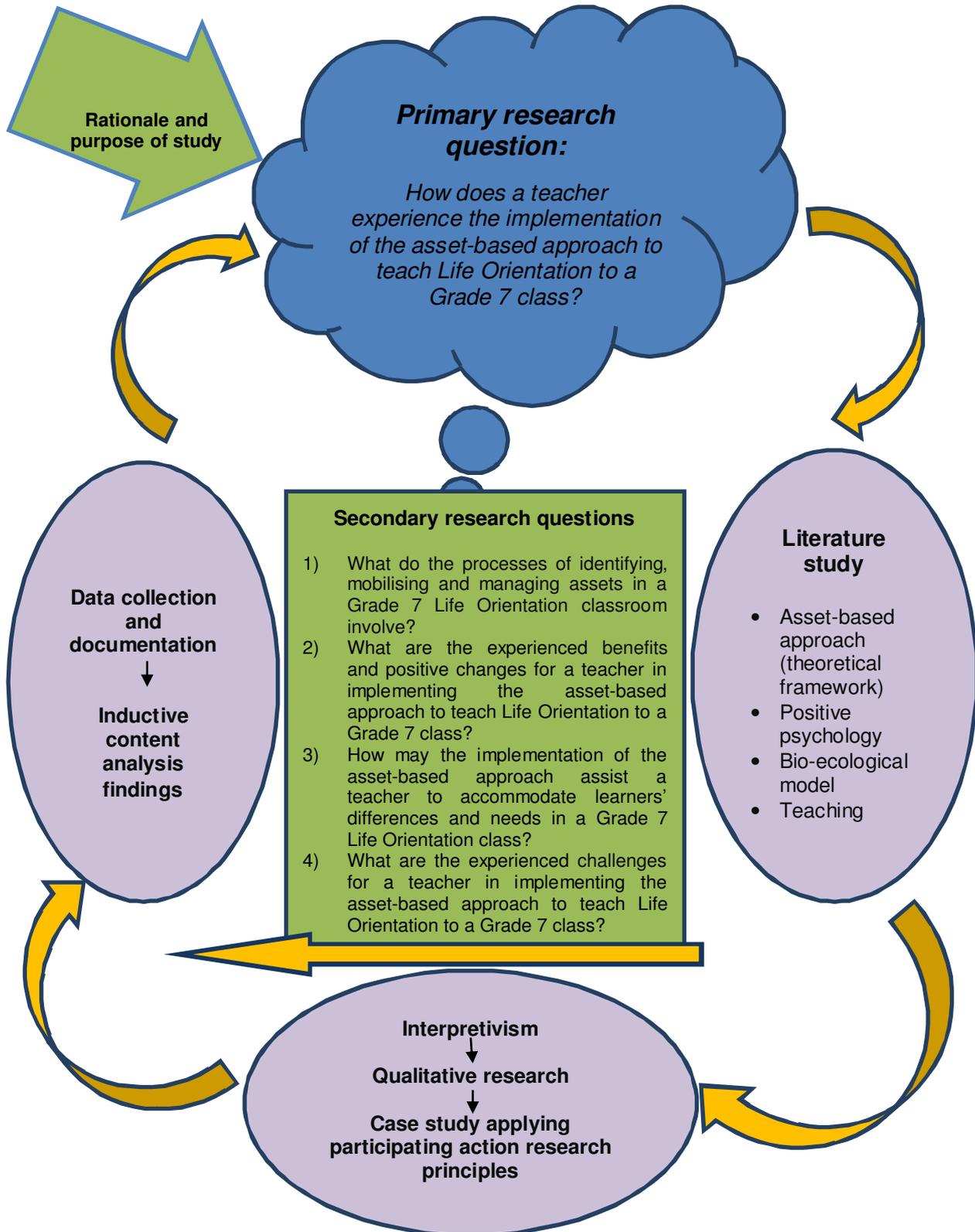
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# Personal Conceptualisation of Chapter 1

*Personal assets used: Planning skills, professionalism, ethical behaviour, respect for others, being a reflective practitioner, creativity, guidance from supervisors*



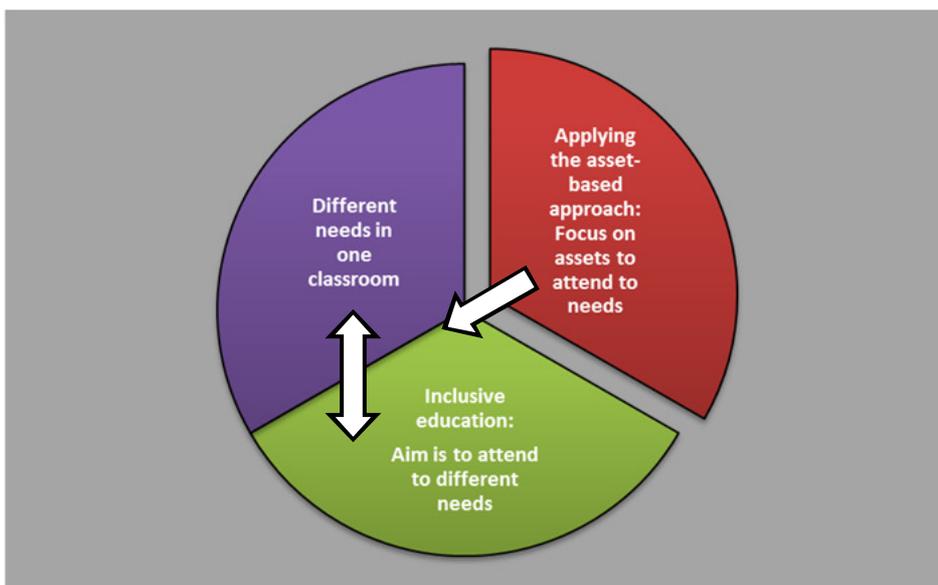
# CHAPTER 1

## OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

South-Africa is signified by people with diverse needs who endeavour to allow every human being to develop his or her full potential (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997). A general need in the South African classroom relates to supporting teachers in their teaching as this constitutes a fundamental part of education. In the light of a variety of differences in each classroom, one could argue that teachers may need to teach children with different needs and different assets.

The diversity in each classroom includes different languages, genders, cultures, race, socio-economical backgrounds, challenges, levels of achievements, cognitive abilities and different developmental backgrounds (Mittler, 2000). Even though it could be challenging for any teacher to attend to all these differences and needs, inclusion is an important aim in education in which teachers need to establish an inclusive environment and attend to everyone's needs. Inclusive education implies a universal transformation in schools that support learners to have access to learning despite their different learning needs. A flexible curriculum is therefore important to attend to the different needs of learners in one classroom (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). One way of adapting the curriculum might be to incorporate the asset-based approach into the curriculum. This could possibly support the teacher in attending to the learners' different needs by focusing on the assets and resources available in the classroom (Coetzee, Ebersöhn & Ferreira 2009; Eloff, 2006). Figure 1.1 shows how the asset-based approach may contribute to inclusive education where the teacher attends to learners' differences and needs in one classroom.



**Figure 1.1: Asset-based teaching in inclusive education**

In providing for the different learners in one classroom, teachers should thus not only focus on children's needs, but also on their assets. This idea is in line with the paradigm shift from needs to assets in positive psychology (Keyes & Haidt, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). Positive psychology as an overarching theory for the asset-based approach suggests that the focus should move away from needs to what is positive and what works, without ignoring existing needs. The needs of learners could be addressed in this manner with available assets, gifts and resources (Forster, 2003; Kowalski, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). One potential way of addressing needs through assets may be to implement the asset-based approach when teaching (Grade 7 in this study) in the form of asset-based teaching<sup>1</sup> (see further clarification of the concept in section 1.6.2). Such implementation of the asset-based approach in class implies a focus on the identification, mobilisation and management of learners' assets (Eloff, 2006).

From previous studies the benefits of implementing the asset-based approach in schools and particular in the classroom include the fostering of relationships (Olivier, 2009), increased learner success, increased academic achievement, positive learner behaviour (Eloff & De Wet, 2009; Starkman, 2006), school psychosocial support (Loots, 2011; Loots, Ebersöhn, Ferreira & Eloff, 2011; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012) and policy implementation (Matentje, 2006). At the onset of my study, I predicted that many of these benefits could perhaps also evolve from this study.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to obtain an understanding of how Grade 7 teachers can implement the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners. In answering this question, I explored the process of implementing the asset-based approach when teaching Life Orientation. The process included the three phases of the asset-based approach namely identifying, mobilising and managing learners' assets (Eloff, 2006). The aim of the study was furthermore to investigate the expected and unexpected benefits as well as any challenges in relation to the implementation of this process.

In this study I involved one Grade 7 teacher as participant, as part of a case study design applying participatory action research principles. The purpose was to obtain an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon. The outcome of the study may contribute to existing literature on teaching and the asset-based approach. One expected contribution of this study is that teachers may be enabled to apply asset-based teaching in their classrooms.

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<sup>1</sup> The process of implementing the asset-based approach when teaching learners.

### 1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In discussing the rationale for this study, I explain my reasons for implementing the asset-based approach as framework for the study and selecting a Grade 7 teacher with Grade 7 learners.

#### 1.3.1 WHY THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH?

The rationale for this study is firstly based on my experience as teacher during the period 2006 to 2010. At the time I had several conversations with teachers who were unaware of their own assets that could be used in their teaching. Following my conversation with different teachers they also often seemed unaware of their learners' assets that could help them with their learning, and how identifying and acknowledging learners' assets could possibly affect their teaching. Yet, when learners understand their own learning processes and assets available in their learning, it could contribute to effective teaching which could possibly result in improved academic achievement (McLoughlin, 1999; Starkman, 2006; Visser, McChlery & Vreken, 2006). From a teacher's perspective I am thus of the opinion that when teachers guide learners to understand their learning processes in terms of their assets, it could have a positive effect on their learning.

Comprehensive research has been done on the asset-based approach (Bagherpour, 2011; Ebersöhn, 2006a, 2007; Ferreira, 2006, 2008; Ferreira *et al.*, 2009; Loots, 2005, 2011; Loots, *et al.*, 2012; Ferreira & Eloff, 2012; Loots & Mnguni, 2008; Mnguni, 2006; Odendaal, 2006; Olivier, 2009). However, the current limitation in literature relates to the application of the asset-based approach when teaching. Even though some studies have been conducted in relation to the implementation of the asset-based approach in schools (Bagherpour, 2011; Ferreira, 2006; Loots, 2005; 2011; Matentje, 2006; Olivier, 2009) these studies relate to the broad application of the asset-based approach in schools and not particularly to teaching. Other studies have been conducted to contribute to effective teaching (Eccles, 2004; Eccles *et al.*, 1993; Kyriacou, 1997; Lee & Smith, 2001), yet these studies do not focus on the application of the asset-based approach. Subsequently only a few studies have been conducted in relation to teaching or learning and the asset-based approach (Eloff & De Wet, 2009; Starkman, 2006). It follows that the aim of this study is to contribute to existing studies in relation to teaching, learning and the asset-based approach, particularly in implementing the asset-based approach when teaching Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners.

In undertaking this study I realised that it is not always possible for teachers to address all the needs of every learner. However, a teaching style in which the teacher teaches the learners how to identify their own assets to attend to their needs could be beneficial. People are different. Different people feel, think and learn differently and these differences should not be seen as a barrier but rather as strengths from which people can learn from one another. The application of the asset-based approach

in the classroom to teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners could be one way to support teachers to view learners in terms of their assets.

Although many teachers still follow a needs-based approach, the question arises as to what the outcome may be of looking beyond traditional methods and following a more refreshing positive approach in class as this may lead to positive outcomes. By using the asset-based approach, teachers could possibly address learners' needs better by focussing on their assets (Eloff, 2006).

### **1.3.2 WHY A GRADE 7 LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER?**

My rationale for selecting a Life Orientation teacher was based on the fact that the context of the subject Life Orientation provided the opportunity for reflection and the lesson plans could easily be adapted to incorporate the asset-based approach. This particular grade was selected as a Grade 7 teacher starts preparing learners for high school where the learners will gradually learn more independently and need to be aware of the learning assets that could support them. If a teacher is aware of the learners' assets and strengths in Grade 7, it could contribute to more effective teaching and prepare the learners to use these assets when addressing their learning needs.

Another reason why I selected a Grade 7 teacher was that Grade 7 teachers need to support the learners with challenges related to the adolescent phase. Grade 7 learners are entering early adolescence and will soon experience rapid physical, emotional and social development, and associated challenges such as peer pressure and identity formation (Bosco, Renk, Dinger, Epstein & Phares, 2003; Frydenberg, 2008; Rice, 1990; Louw, Gerdes & Meyer, 2002; Roese, Eccles & Sameroff, 2000; Smit, Cowie & Blades, 2003). Teachers could potentially address some of these challenges when implementing the asset-based approach in the classroom and during teaching activities.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study was guided by the following primary research question:

*How does a teacher experience the implementation of the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?*

The following secondary research questions were formulated in order to address the primary research question:

- *What do the processes of identifying, mobilising and managing assets in a Grade 7 Life Orientation classroom involve?*
- *What are the experienced benefits and positive changes for a teacher in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?*

- *How may the implementation of the asset-based approach assist a teacher to accommodate learners' differences and needs in a Grade 7 Life Orientation class?*
- *What are the experienced challenges for a teacher in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?*

## **1.5 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS**

I conducted the study on the basis of the following working assumptions:

- All teachers and learners in classrooms have assets that may support teaching and learning.
- The asset-based approach can be applied to teach Grade 7 learners.
- Teachers' awareness of their own and their learners' assets may support their teaching.
- The application of the asset-based approach to teach learners may positively influence learners' learning and academic achievement.
- The application of the asset-based approach may support Grade 7 learners' transition to the challenging developmental phase of adolescence.

## **1.6 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

In this section I clarify key concepts, namely the asset-based approach, asset-based teaching, bio-ecological model, adolescent, intervention, teaching and learning, and teacher.

### **1.6.1 ASSET-BASED APPROACH**

The asset-based approach is a capacity-focused approach and has been referred to as the “half-full glass” approach (McDonald, 1997:115). This post-modern approach focuses on resources, strengths, assets and capacities, yet also acknowledges existing needs. Intrinsic creativity, control and power form important parts of the asset-based approach (Eloff, 2006:22).

The asset-based approach can provide a teacher with the opportunity to focus on the giftedness of learners (Coetzee *et al.*, 2009). The approach identifies what a learner has available internally and externally in terms of his/her learning (Coetzee, *et al.*, 2009). With this approach the learner is more likely to feel empowered, valued and connected. Within this study the asset-based approach was implemented with the aim of teaching Grade 7 learners and facilitating optimal learning amongst learners with diverse needs.

### **1.6.2 ASSET-BASED TEACHING**

Ferreira (2006:301) combined the concepts “asset-based approach” and “coping” to construct the term “asset-based coping”. In a similar way I combine the terms “asset-based approach” and “teaching” to form the term “asset-based teaching”. Asset-based teaching is thus a concept used in

this study to describe the process of implementing the asset-based approach when teaching learners. Asset-based teaching is a process, where the teacher teaches the learners to identify, mobilise and manage their individual, shared, physical and economical assets as well as resources within the relationships with others (Beaulieu, 2002; Eloff, 2006; Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993).

The concept asset-based teaching can therefore be divided into two main concepts namely asset-based and teaching. Asset-based can be defined as a “support-based and relationship driven” description where the focus falls on “skills, talents, gifts and resources” (Coetzee, 2005:13; Eloff, 2006:27). Teaching can be defined as a planned and intended action to support learners with “knowledge, skills and attitudes” as part of their development (Steyn, Steyn, de Waal & Wolhunter, 2003:2). Asset-based teaching can therefore be defined as an “intentional”, “support-based and relationship driven” process where the teacher supports learners in their development in focusing on their assets such as their “skills, talents, gifts and resources” (Coetzee, 2005:13; Eloff, 2006:27; Steyn, Steyn, de Waal & Wolhunter, 2003:2).

### **1.6.3 GRADE 7 LEARNERS**

Grade 7 learners are children receiving education and engaging in a formal learning process. They are in their final primary school year before entering high school. In terms of Grade 7 learners’ development, they can be described as adolescents as they typically turn 13 in Grade 7 and then enter the adolescent phase. During the adolescent phase they need to deal with rapid physical, cognitive and social changes (Louw & Edwards, 1998:476; Louw & Louw, 2007).

Learners interact with others and live and learn within a specific social context. As the social context of learners plays an essential role in their experiences, ideas, learning and development, it is essential to look at the assets available in each social context. In this study one class of Grade 7 learners was selected to learn more about the process, benefits and challenges of implementing the asset-based approach when teaching them.

### **1.6.4 TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Teaching can be defined as the use of a combination of teaching qualities (knowledge, reflection, empathy and competence), teaching skills (quality, targeting, interacting and feedback), teaching styles (formal, mixed or informal) and teaching tasks (planning, presentation and monitoring) to facilitate learning among pupils (Kyriacou, 1997). Parallel to teaching, learning can be defined as obtaining knowledge and skills when mediated by a teacher (Riding & Rayner, 1998). McLoughlin (1999:223) refers to a learning strategy as “a plan of action in obtaining knowledge and skills”. As teaching and learning are interrelated, changes in teaching will lead to changes in learning (Kyriacou, 1997). Within the context of this study, teaching refers to the actions taken by the participating Grade 7 teacher, and learning refers to the results of these actions.

### **1.6.5 TEACHER**

South African teachers are described in terms of seven roles by the Department of Education (2006:5) which include “a specialist in a particular learning area, subject or phase, a specialist in teaching and learning, a specialist in assessment, a curriculum developer, a leader, administrator and manager, a scholar and lifelong learner and a professional who plays a community, citizenship and pastoral role.” For the purpose of this study I focused on all of these roles.

Firstly, the role of a specialist in teaching and learning includes being sensitive to learners’ diverse needs, to communicate effectively, to have a sound knowledge of subject content and to mediate learning appropriate for the South African context. In this study I guided one Grade 7 teacher in implementing the asset-based approach, to identify and mobilise learners’ assets that could support her in attending to the learners’ needs and finding new ways to mediate learning appropriately. Secondly, a teacher’s role as a curriculum developer refers to the manner in which teachers select suitable resources and learning tasks to promote learning. In selecting these learning tasks, asset-based teaching may support a teacher to plan for learning while using his/her own and the learners’ assets. Thirdly, the role of being a leader, administrator and manager ensures effective decision-making processes to manage learning in changing circumstances and needs. In supporting a teacher in this role, he/she may focus more on the assets and resources in his/her classroom and mobilise his/her own assets in the process of asset-based teaching. Fourthly, a teacher needs to be a scholar and lifelong learner to update skills and knowledge. The application of the asset-based approach as done in this study is one way of using new knowledge in teaching. Fifthly, as a specialist in assessment, a teacher should use assessment processes effectively towards improvement for learning. Another role includes a specialist in a particular learning area, subject or phase in which teachers should have a good understanding of the expected knowledge, skills, values, principles and methods of all the aspects of learning. In this study the teacher was a Grade 7 Life-orientation specialist at the time. Finally, a teacher should be a professional who plays a community, citizenship and pastoral role. To develop a sense of respect and responsibility towards learners, the school, the community and the broader community are thus an essential part of teaching (DoE, 2000,2006). Within this research the teacher’s role was explored against the background of the asset-based approach and the bio-ecological model (Donald et al., 2002; Eloff, 2006; McDonald, 1997; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993).

### **1.6.6 LIFE ORIENTATION**

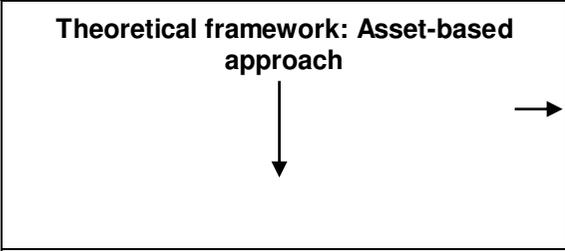
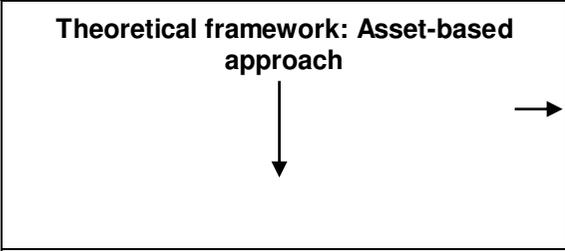
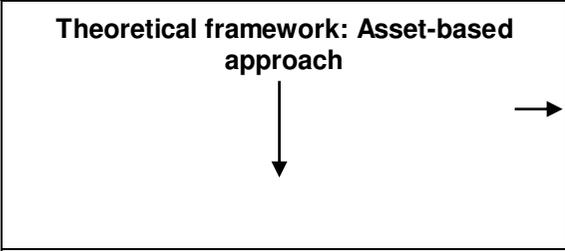
Life Orientation is a subject in South African schools that is implemented throughout learners’ school years. The subject focuses on the development of self-in-society, goal-setting, problem-solving, motivation, developing an individual’s full potential, making informed decisions, positive social interactions and respecting self and others (DoE, 2011). The subject aims to develop learners

emotionally, socially, morally and spiritually in order for them to reach their full potential as individuals and as citizens of South-Africa who respect themselves and others (DoE, 2002).

## **1.7 OUTLINE OF RESEARCH APPROACH, PARADIGM AND PROCESS**

Table 1.1 provides an outline of the selected research approach, paradigm and process for this study. The research methodology and strategies are presented by referring to paradigmatic assumptions, the research design and sampling, data collection techniques, data documentation techniques, data analysis and interpretation, strategies applied to ensure quality criteria, ethical considerations and the role of the researcher. Detailed discussions of the methodological choices I made follow in Chapter 3.

**Table 1.1: Framework of research approach, paradigm and process** (Adapted from Loots, 2011:14)

LITERATURE REVIEW AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY (Chapter 2)							
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;"> <b>Theoretical framework: Asset-based approach</b>   </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <b>Teachers implement the asset-based approach consisting of the following phases:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying assets</li> <li>- Mobilising assets</li> <li>- Managing assets</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">In order to</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Theoretical framework: Asset-based approach</b> 	<b>Teachers implement the asset-based approach consisting of the following phases:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying assets</li> <li>- Mobilising assets</li> <li>- Managing assets</li> </ul>	In order to		Teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners	
<b>Theoretical framework: Asset-based approach</b> 	<b>Teachers implement the asset-based approach consisting of the following phases:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying assets</li> <li>- Mobilising assets</li> <li>- Managing assets</li> </ul>						
In order to							
Teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners							
							
RESEARCH QUESTIONS							
Main research question	Secondary research questions						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How does a teacher experience the implementation of the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What do the processes of identifying, mobilising and managing assets in a Grade 7 Life Orientation classroom involve?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the experienced benefits and positive changes for a teacher in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?</i></li> <li>• <i>How may the implementation of the asset-based approach assist a teacher to accommodate learners' differences and needs in a Grade 7 Life Orientation class?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the experienced challenges for a teacher in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?</i></li> </ul>						



**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES (Chapter 3)**

<b>Paradigmatic assumptions</b>	<b>Research design and sampling</b>	<b>Data collection techniques during three main phases: pre-intervention phase, intervention phase and post-intervention phase</b>	<b>Data documentation techniques</b>	<b>Data analysis and interpretation</b>	<b>Quality criteria</b>	<b>Strategies applied to ensure quality criteria</b>	<b>Ethical considerations</b>	<b>Roles of the researcher</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Qualitative research</li> <li>* Interpretivism (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001; Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 1994; Jansen, 2004; Merriam, 2009)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Instrumental case study research design applying participatory action research principles (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Punch, 2009)</li> <li>* Grade 7 teacher that was selected with purposeful sampling (Cresswell, 2007)</li> <li>* Government primary school in Pretoria that was selected with convenience sampling (Leedy &amp; Ormrod, 2005; Terre Blanche &amp; Durrheim, 2002)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>* Observations</li> <li>* Photographs</li> <li>* Analysis of existing documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Verbatim transcript</li> <li>* Research journal</li> <li>* Field notes</li> <li>* Visual data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Interpreted with inductive content analysis (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001)</li> <li>* Identified main themes, subthemes and in some cases categories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Credibility</li> <li>* Transferability</li> <li>* Dependability</li> <li>* Confirmability</li> <li>* Authenticity (Lincoln &amp; Guba, 1985)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Member checking</li> <li>* Triangulation</li> <li>* Adequate engagement in data collection</li> <li>* Audit trail</li> <li>* Rich descriptions (Koch, 2006; Leedy &amp; Ormrod, 2005; Lincoln &amp; Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Seale, 1999)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Permission by the Ethics Committee</li> <li>* Permission from the Department of Basic Education</li> <li>* Obtained informed consent and informed assent</li> <li>* Safeguarding the privacy of the participants' identity</li> <li>* Protect sensitive information</li> <li>* Discussing potential ethical dilemmas with supervisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ethical, professional and reflective researcher</li> <li>* Non-participating and participating observer</li> <li>* Lesson designer</li> <li>* Supportive colleague in research</li> </ul>

## 1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The following section provides an outline of the chapters in this mini-dissertation.

### **CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE**

The first chapter of this study provides the background, purpose and rationale for the study. In this chapter I state the primary and secondary research questions that guided the study as well as the assumptions associated with the study. I introduce the selected theoretical framework and provide an overview of the paradigmatic perspective, research design and methodology of the study.

### **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In Chapter 2 I discuss existing literature on the asset-based approach, as theoretical framework of the study, within the wider positive psychology paradigm. I explain the relevance of the bio-ecological model in the study and the relationship between the bio-ecological model and the asset-based approach. Furthermore I discuss teaching in terms of effective teaching, different teaching styles, classroom climate and reflective teaching practice. I conclude the chapter by referring to the changes associated with the adolescent phase, the adolescent within systems in the bio-ecological model, and the potential application of the asset-based approach by adolescents.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The third chapter contains an outline of the research methodology, design and strategies of this study. I discuss the selection of the case and the participants, data collection, data documentation, data analysis and data interpretation. Finally I discuss the quality criteria and ethical considerations of the study.

### **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

In the fourth chapter I present the results of the study in terms of the themes, subthemes and categories that emerged during thematic analysis. Three themes were identified that address the research questions.

### **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the fifth and final chapter I present the golden thread that links the different chapters of the study. I answer the research questions by presenting the findings of the study and relating them to the existing literature discussed in Chapter 2. I discuss the contributions and limitations associated with the findings of the study. I conclude the mini-dissertation by making recommendations for practice, training and future research.

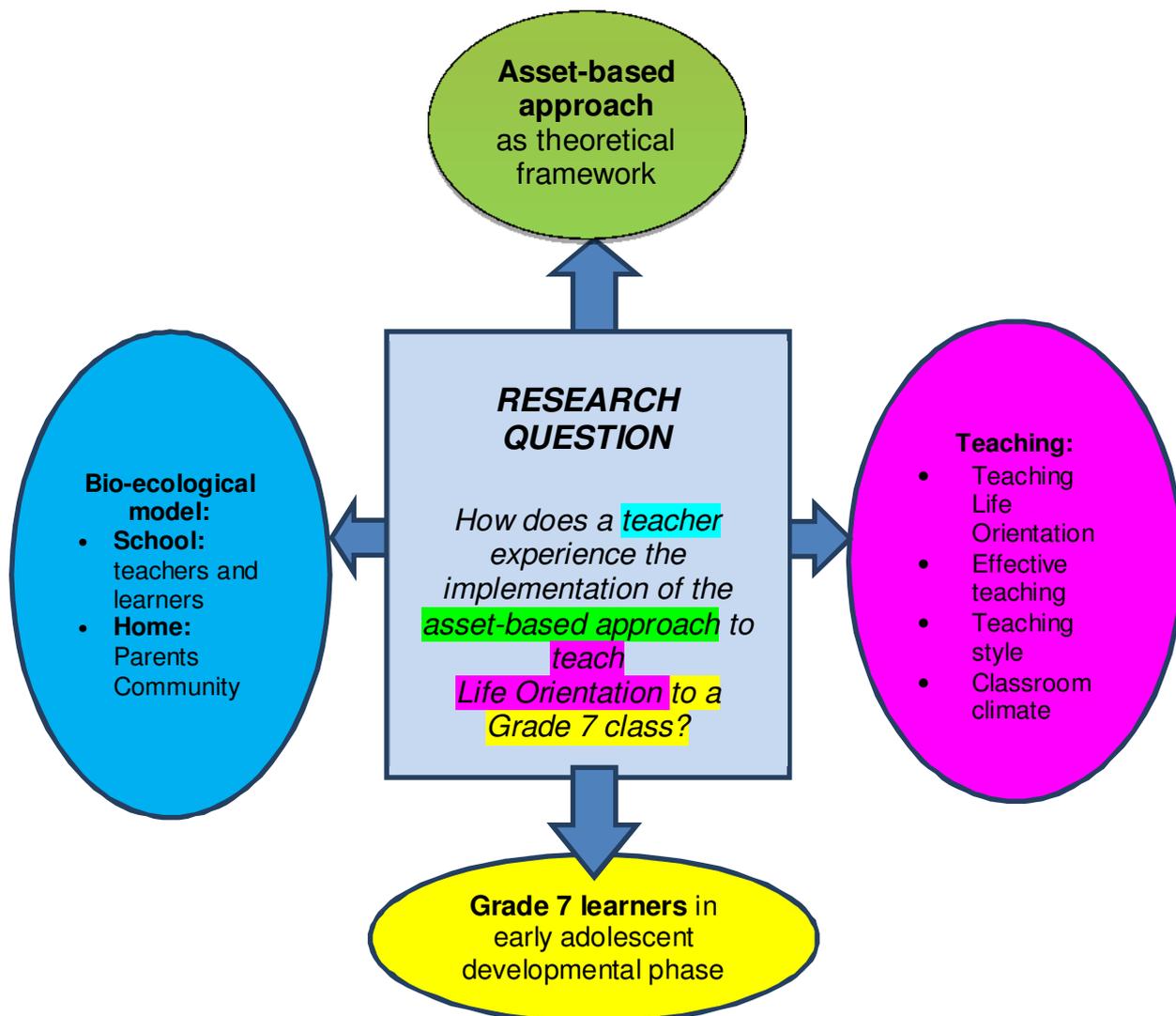
## 1.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I introduced the topic of my study and defined the key concepts within the context of this study. I provided an overview of the research problem, research design and research methodology. I also briefly referred to the strategies that I relied on to ensure ethical and quality research.

In the next chapter I present my literature review. I discuss the asset-based approach, positive psychology, the bio-ecological model, teaching and the adolescence phase. I also explain the theoretical framework I relied on.

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## Personal Conceptualisation of Chapter 2



### Assets used to write Chapter 2:

- Access to meaningful sources of information
- Campus library
- Internet access
- Love for learning
- Reading skills
- Endurance
- Support and guidance from supervisors
- Supporting relationships at home

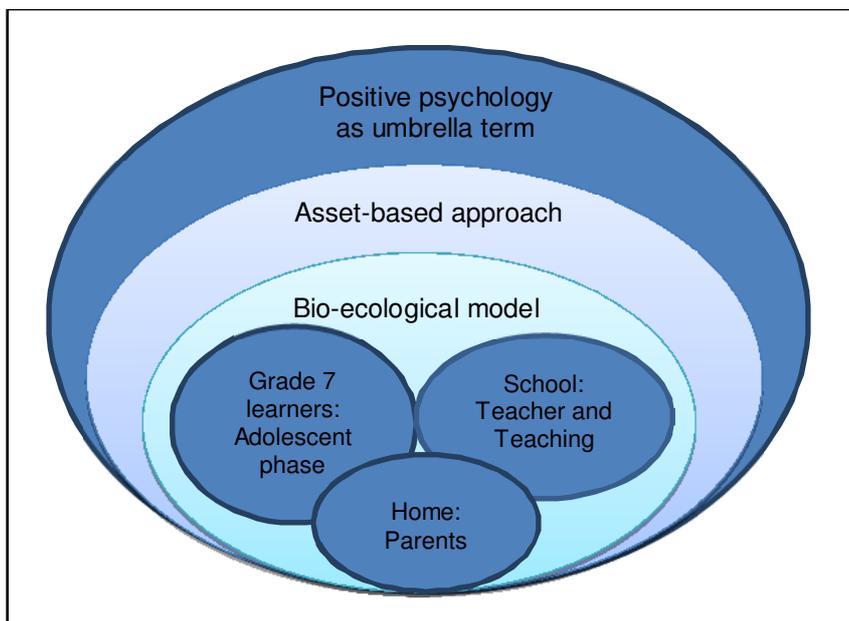
## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss existing literature related to the asset-based approach within the wider positive psychology paradigm, the bio-ecological model, teaching and the adolescent phase. After defining the asset-based approach in relation to this study and discussing the bio-ecological model, I highlight the relationship between the said model and the asset-based approach. Subsequently, I define the term teaching and more specifically teaching Life Orientation. Finally, I discuss the early adolescent phase as backdrop to the learners receiving asset-based teaching during this study.

Figure 2.1 presents an outline for this chapter. I view the different aspects of the literature review as interrelated where a change in one affects the other. In this study, the asset-based approach under the broader term positive psychology was namely implemented within the bio-ecological model, in which one teacher and a class of adolescents were key role-players.



**Figure 2.1:** Outline for Chapter 2

#### 2.2 ASSET-BASED APPROACH AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I refer to similarities between the asset-based approach and positive psychology. I define central aspects of the asset-based approach and discuss its main phases. I specifically refer to the potential application of the approach in the classroom as part of teaching.

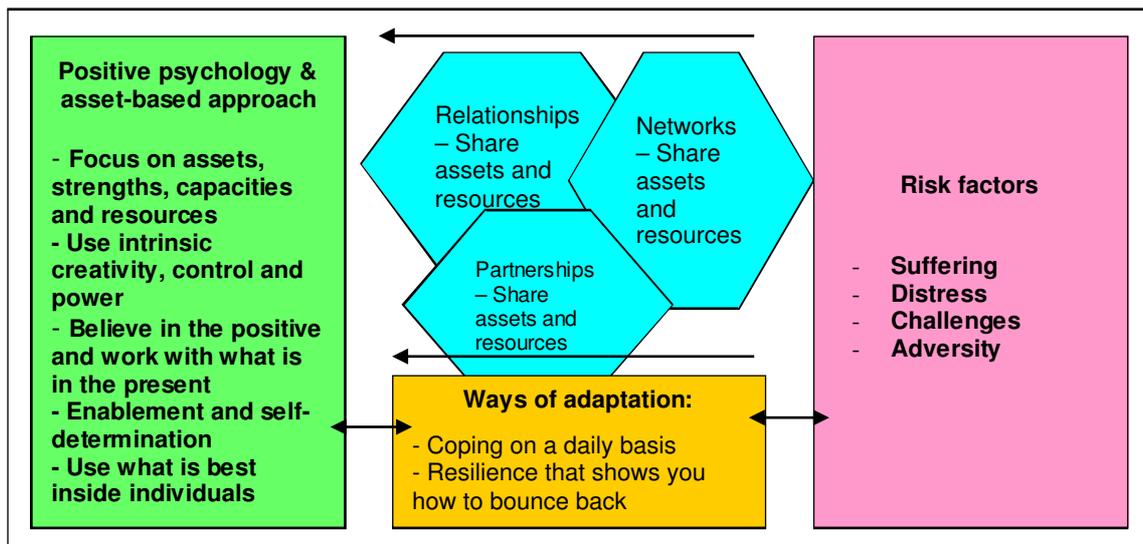
### 2.2.1 THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH WITHIN THE WIDER POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY PARADIGM

Positive psychology can be described as the “umbrella term for positive emotions, positive character traits and enabling institutions” (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005:411). Positive psychology focuses on the individual’s signature strengths “to use what is best inside the individual to meet the highest challenge” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:5). Signature strengths include three steps namely presenting positive emotions, engaging with emotions in the flow of life and bringing meaning to life. Going into flow is an important aspect of positive psychology. When individuals are in flow, they need to engage with the process because it helps them not to focus on pain and create a meaningful experience (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Another important aspect of positive psychology is resilience which is the ability to bounce back after experiencing life and learning challenges as well as to adapt to changing circumstances (Brown, 1996:2).

The asset-based approach falls under the umbrella term of positive psychology. Both the asset-based approach and positive psychology form part of the strength-based approach, therefore focusing on the presence of the positive such as assets, capacities, talents, creativity and available resources. Furthermore, in both of these theories access to assets, capacities and resources could be obtained by forming relationships or partnerships with others (Bower, 2005; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003, 2006; Eloff, 2006; Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

In spite of the enabling nature of positive psychology, this paradigm has been critiqued by researchers. Such critique includes the notion that positive psychology only focuses on the positive and ignores needs (Forster, 2003; Kowalski, 2002). Yet, positive psychology focuses on the positive and on what works inside individuals with the aim of addressing what is not working and in the process obtaining “authentic happiness” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:5). This theory does not ignore needs but acknowledges needs in relying on strengths to address such needs. Within the asset-based approach, identified assets can be used to overcome challenges (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Ferreira, 2013).

Figure 2.2 illustrates how the asset-based approach may be used to address challenges. The column on the right presents risk factors such as suffering, distress, challenges and adversity which are often experienced by learners. These factors are not ignored. However the focus falls on using these assets, strengths, capacities, resources, creativity, control and power to deal with risks. In order to mobilise learners’ assets and resources they share these within relationships, networks and partnerships with others. Using the asset-based approach to deal with challenges may thus support learners to cope and to show resilience (Eloff, 2006; Keyes & Haidt, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman *et al.*, 2005).



**Figure 2.2: Using the asset-based approach to address challenges** (Eloff, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

Both the asset-based approach and positive psychology could therefore be used to overcome challenges and focus on the presence of positive factors such as assets, capacities, talents, creativity and available resources. Furthermore, in both of these theories access to assets, capacities and resources can be obtained by forming relationships or partnerships with others (Bower, 2005; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003, 2006; Eloff, 2006; Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

## 2.2.2 BASIC COMPONENTS OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

The asset-based approach focuses on what is present and available to an individual that may be utilised when addressing challenges. It has a strong internal focus and emphasises enablement and self-determination of individuals (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; Loots, 2011). One aim of the approach is to utilise available assets in empowering relationships with others (Ammermann & Parks, 1998; Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 1997). For example every classroom and learning environment has its own assets that may contribute to an effective learning environment. Using available assets may in turn contribute to the wellness of a school and community as a whole (Ferreira, Ebersöhn & Loots, 2008).

As application of the asset-based approach could possibly contribute to the wellness of a school and community (Ferreira *et al.*, 2008), it is essential to understand the concepts central to the approach. Table 2.1 defines the underlying concepts of the asset-based approach and indicates their relation to this study.

**Table 2.1: Concepts central to the asset-based approach**

Key concepts	Definition	Application to the study
<b>Assets</b>	“Skills, talents, gifts, resources, capacities and strengths that are shared with individuals, families, schools, associations, the community and organisations” (Eloff, 2006:27).	Grade 7 learners’ assets (personal, study, school and assets shared by family and friends) were identified and added to the learners’ asset maps.
<b>Capacity</b>	The possibility of “sharing assets” with others in order to mobilise these assets (Eloff, 2006:28).	The implementation of the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners means that there are many assets in one classroom to share.
<b>Gifts</b>	“Personal characteristics, skills or interests” (Eloff, 2006:28).	The personal characteristics and skills of the Grade 7 learners and teacher were identified.
<b>Resources</b>	“Refer to what has the capacity to support asset mobilisation and relationship building” (Eloff, 2006:29).	In implementing the asset-based approach in a Grade 7 classroom resources refer to anything inside and outside the classroom that supports the process of identifying, mobilising and managing assets to support learners.
<b>Creativity</b>	This involves thinking out of the box and creating something new. It includes new opportunities and a new way of thinking. In order to move away from the deficit model to the strength-based model where the individual focuses on strengths and assets, creativity is needed to identify assets in a world where many people focus on challenges (Coetzee <i>et al.</i> , 2009).	With creativity the teacher could support learners to deal with challenges by using their assets.
<b>Relationships</b>	Refer to the “mutual sharing” of assets (Eloff, 2006:29).	Relationships within this study include relationships between learners, teachers, teacher and learners, parents and teachers, learners and parents and other members of the community.
<b>Partnerships</b>	Two or more individuals share resources and support each other to achieve a specific goal (Eloff, 2006).	Within asset-based teaching teachers, learners, parents and members of the community could form partnerships to support learners to identify, mobilise and manage assets.

### 2.2.3 PHASES OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

The three main stages of the asset-based approach entail identifying assets, mobilising assets and managing assets (Beaulieu, 2002; Eloff, 2006; Eloff, 2006; Kretxmann & McKnight, 1993).

### 2.2.3.1 Identifying assets

The first phase of the asset-based approach involves identifying an individual's assets, strengths and talents (Ammerman & Parks, 1998; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Within the school context, assets can be identified in learners, teachers, parents and other members of the community who can share their assets with the school. In addition to this, available resources in a school community may be identified.

Starkman (2006) explains that the identification of assets could support teachers in several ways. Firstly it may support teachers to trust learners with more responsibility, which in turn may support learners with behaviour challenges and feelings of incompetence and low self-esteem. Secondly, the identification of assets can assist in saving time as teachers may have to deal with behaviour challenges less often. The identifying process begins with a positive awareness and changes in mindset, where an individual starts focusing on undiscovered assets instead of only focusing on challenges and needs (Eloff, 2006). When individuals focus on assets and resources, they will probably start implementing the asset-based approach and become powerful individuals and communities (Kretzmann, 1992). Identifying assets is an on-going process which could be done by asset mapping (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Asset mapping therefore involves the construction of a visual presentation of assets (Eloff, 2006; Eloff, 2006; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). This process will support individuals to become aware of their assets and resources as well as the connections between them. This is a key step to support individuals in planning for the mobilisation of assets as the second phase (Eloff, 2006). Different types of assets may in the process be identified and categorised on a map. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) assets can be divided into five main categories namely individual assets, skills and talents (individual assets of teacher or learner); assets shared in a group of people (group of teachers in school or parent association); relationships and partnerships in the community (school in partnership with the clinic or support of the department of education); economical resources (financial support); and physical resources (classrooms, chairs, tables). In this study the teacher and learners mapped their assets during the phase of identifying assets. The participating teacher categorised her individual assets in terms of personal and teaching assets, and also identified resources, relationships and partnerships in the school and the community. The learners whom she taught categorised their assets in terms of their individual assets (personal and study assets), assets and resources in the school, and relationships, assets and resources in their family and the community. The identification of the different assets in the different categories made many assets known to the learners and supported them to start mobilising their assets.

### 2.2.3.2 Mobilising assets

The aim of mobilising assets is to use the information identified in an asset map to build partnerships and relationships that may support the processes involved in the asset-based approach (Eloff, 2006). This stage increases the efficiency and power of the asset-based approach as individuals share their identified assets and mobilise these in the process (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 1997, 1999). During this phase the individual receives the opportunity to utilise unutilised assets (Eloff, 2006).

In this study the phase of mobilising assets provided the teacher with an opportunity to support the learners in identifying action plans to use their assets. One important aim of such action plans was for the learners to identify relationships and partnerships in school, at home and in the community that could empower them in mobilising their assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Tibaijuka, 2003). This phase seemed to empower the participating teacher to use her assets and to improve her teaching (Eloff, 2006). It is essential to ensure that the mobilisation and empowering in this phase are managed on a regular day-to-day basis, which brings us to the final phase of the asset-based approach, asset management.

### 2.2.3.3 Managing assets

The final stage of the asset-based approach aims to work collaboratively in enabling learners to manage their assets. Revision, reflection, reconsideration, taking ownership and commitment are key elements in this stage (Eloff, 2006; Ferreira, 2006; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1997). The asset-based approach thus provides the opportunity to review the utilisation and mobilisation of assets and to identify newly discovered assets in the process. As such the asset-based approach can be viewed as a flexible and dynamic approach and a positive continuous cycle of identifying, mobilising and managing assets (Eloff, 2006). This dynamic cycle was evident in the process of asset-based teaching during this study.

## 2.2.4 POTENTIAL APPLICATION OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) initially aimed to rebuild and empower communities, in using the asset-based approach, by shifting the focus from challenges and deficiencies to assets and resources within individuals and communities. Research studies have since identified many more applications of the asset-based approach such as school-based psychosocial support as part of the STAR-project (Bagherpour, 2011; Ebersöhn, 2006a, 2007; Ferreira, 2006, 2006a, 2008; Ferreira *et al.*, 2009; Loots, 2005, 2011; Loots *et al.*, 2011; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots & Mnguni, 2008; Mnguni, 2006; Odendaal, 2006; Olivier, 2009); asset-based coping with HIV/AIDS (Ferreira, 2006; Loots, 2005); educational psychological early intervention (Kriek & Eloff, 2004); policy implementation (Matentje, 2006); the application of the asset-based approach to identify assets within people with a disability

(Eloff & Briedenhann, 2005; Eloff & Clarke, 2007); contributions to career theory and models of intervention (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003); investigating relationships within the asset-based approach and forming partnerships between schools and the community (Olivier, 2009); and implementing the asset-based approach to support teaching (Eloff & De Wet, 2009; Starkman, 2006).

This study relates to the application of the asset-based approach within the context of teaching. Similar to the work of Loots (2011), this study aimed to identify assets within a classroom and in the process possibly attend to learners' needs and challenges. Loots' Study (2011) found that teachers of four schools could identify assets in their classrooms, schools and communities. Consequently the teachers' aim was to mobilise these assets which in turn supported them to deal with local challenges. Therefore the application of the asset-based approach in schools promoted resilience. Closely related, Ferreira (2006) and Loots (2005) conducted studies in which the asset-based approach was used to empower teachers to mobilise assets that could support them in coping with HIV/AIDS. In this study the asset-based approach was used by a teacher to guide learners in mobilising their assets and in the process support their learning. In addition to this the teacher was guided to mobilise assets in her classroom that could in turn support her teaching.

Ferreira (2006, 2013) specifically focused on "asset-based coping". Her study looked at the relationship between the asset-based approach and coping with HIV/AIDS with the purpose of facilitating change and empowering community members. The findings of the study indicate that asset-based coping can support individuals to cope with challenges by mobilising available assets and resources. Similarly, Loots (2005), as part of Ferreira's and Ebersohn's (2011) broader study, used a case study design to empower teachers to mobilise their assets in coping with HIV/AIDS. She found that the asset-based approach supported teachers and members of the community to use effective coping strategies in dealing with challenges.

Kriek and Eloff (2004) implemented the asset-based approach to support educational psychological early intervention. The findings of their study indicate that the key factor to the asset-based approach is sustained relationships and an investment in time. They found that the closer the assets were to a participant the more readily they would be mobilised. In another study the asset-based approach was implemented with teachers to investigate relationships within the approach. The findings of this study (Olivier, 2009) indicate positive changes such as teamwork between teachers and how they care, support and communicate with one another. In addition to this teachers learned to overcome challenges to achieve positive changes. The findings of studies such as these guided me in this study to also look at the relationships within the microsystems of the bio-ecological model in which the learners' assets could be identified, shared and exchanged (Donald *et al.*, 2002).

Matentje (2006) implemented the asset-based approach to analyse education policies on adult reading literacy in South Africa. She found that when external and internal assets are mobilised, they may contribute to a positive academic self-concept with regard to reading. Furthermore, in

implementing the asset-based approach in teaching and learning, Eloff and De Wet (2009) explored the use of assets to support preschool learning in a community. The aim of their study was to focus on assets instead of needs to support learning. The results of the study suggest that assets such as potentials, opportunities and resources in a community can enrich the learning of preschool children. Similarly, Starkman (2006) conducted a study in using a developmental assets framework to support teaching. The study looked at 18 teachers from different schools throughout South Africa and how they fostered relationships in their classroom that could lead to learner success. The following five important teacher qualities were identified within teaching: “Trusting, Engaging, Asset-building, Caring and Hardworking”. To show the importance of these qualities, Starkman (2006:6) used the first letters of each of these to compile “*TEACH*”, as explained in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Qualities of effective teaching** (Starkman, 2006:6)

<b>T</b> <i>rusting</i>	The teacher should be able to trust learners with responsibilities, trust that each learner has his/her own assets or strengths and give learners the opportunity to mobilise their assets. Trusting learners will support the teacher to see the potential of learners.
<b>E</b> <i>ngaging</i>	Engaging learners in class discussions and activities. In identifying learners’ assets they can engage using their assets. Motivation and encouragement form part of the engaging process.
<b>A</b> <i>sset-building</i>	Developmental assets can be incorporated into the curriculum and support learners’ learning.
<b>C</b> <i>aring</i>	Teachers need to care, support, value, nurture and believe in learners.
<b>H</b> <i>ardworking</i>	Teachers need to work hard to establish relationships with their learners and members of the community in order to enhance the learners’ learning processes.

Asset-building played an important role in Starkman’s (2006) study and supported learners to reach their potential. Teachers aimed to identify, mobilise and incorporate developmental assets in the curriculum to support learners academically, socially and emotionally. Starkman (2006:9) divided developmental assets into eight main categories, namely “support (e.g. family support, caring school climate); empowerment (e.g. community values, services, safety); boundaries and expectations (e.g. family boundaries, school boundaries); constructive use of time (e.g. creative activities, youth programs); commitment to learning (e.g. achievement motivation, school engagement); positive values (e.g. caring, integrity, honesty); social competencies (planning and decisionmaking, interpersonal competence); and positive identification (e.g. personal power, self-esteem)”. In using these developmental assets several sustainable benefits were identified such as better academic achievement and fewer challenges in relation to learners’ behaviour. These implied possible expected benefits for my study as the aim was to incorporate the asset-based approach into teaching in a similar manner.

Despite many studies on the application of the asset-based approach, studies in terms of its application to teach learners still seem to be limited. In this study I aimed to address this limitation by

focusing on a teacher's application of the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners. I used the term "asset-based teaching" (refer to section 2.4) in explaining the application of the asset-based approach when teaching in the classroom.

In my view the asset-based approach may assist in creating a teaching and learning environment in which assets and strengths are identified that may in turn have a positive effect on learners' learning. These assets may include personal learning assets, "adult role models", "adult relationships" that can support learners, "positive peer influence", "creative activities", "youth programs", reading groups or academic motivational and support groups (Starkman, 2006:11). Classroom teachers could potentially be trained to implement the asset-based approach and so support learners to identify, mobilise and manage their assets. This in turn may contribute to more effective teaching and learning processes. It is against this view that I set out to investigate the possibilities of applying such an approach in the classroom.

## **2.3 BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL AS BACKDROP TO ASSET-BASED TEACHING**

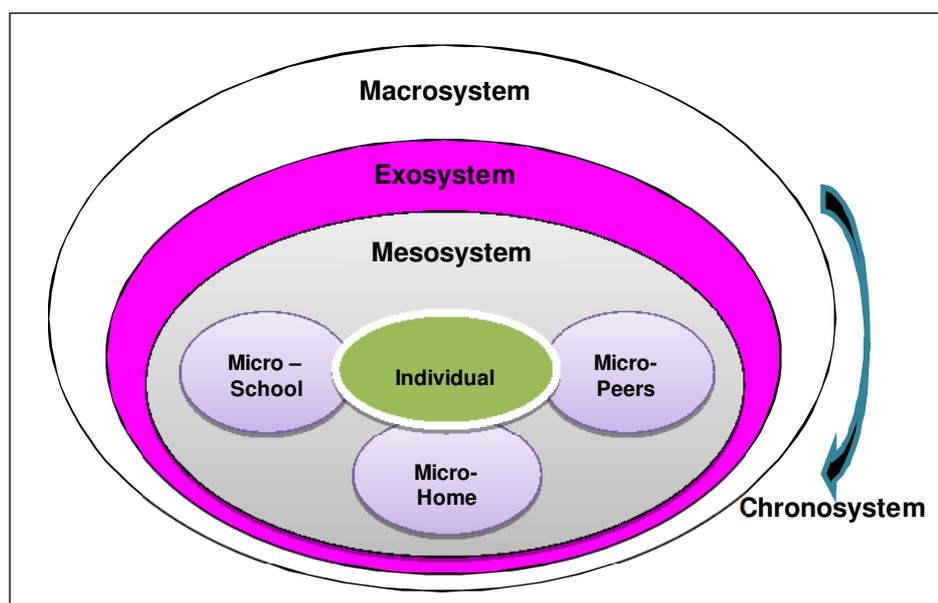
In this section I define the bio-ecological model, the application of the model to this study and the relationship between the model and the asset-based approach.

### **2.3.1 DEFINING THE BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL**

The bio-ecological model is part of the broader ecological systems theory or systems change perspective (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). The paradigm shift away from the medical model where the focus is on "specialness of the learners" implies a movement towards ecological systems theory where the focus is on removing the "stumbling blocks within the society" or social context of learners (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:6). As founder of the bio-ecological approach, Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1992, 1994, 1998) views the approach as the collaboration between systems in the social context (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Donald *et al.*, 2002, 2010; Lazarus, 2007).

The bio-ecological model demonstrates how classrooms may be influenced by interaction with others who are not directly part of the classroom. These interactions between learners, teachers and other systems are complex and important to understand as they form the social context of the learners. Learners' social context will in turn gradually shape their development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002, 2010). I agree with Donald *et al.* (2002, 2010) as well as Swart and Pettipher (2005) that the bio-ecological model is meaningful as it describes the different systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem), their interactions (face-to-face or sustained social interactions) and their different dimensions. The different dimensions in the process of interaction include the following: person factors (behavioural tendencies that incite reaction from others), process factors (patterns of interaction occurring in the system), contexts (family, school, classroom, community) and time (changes over time due to maturation in the individual as well as in the

environment) (Donald, *et al.*, 2010). Understanding the interaction of the different levels of the social context in this model could support one to understand the different assets and resources available in each system. Figure 2.3 summarises the different systems and their interacting relationship.



**Figure 2.3:** Visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems approach (Adapted from Donald *et al.*, 2010:41)

The inner circles in Figure 2.3 represent the microsystem which is the immediate setting of the learner in which he or she interacts and develops. This system includes the daily activities and interactions with others, for example the school, immediate family and peer group as well as other social relationships. The mesosystem represents the interaction between the different microsystems in which an individual functions. Therefore positive change at school could contribute to positive change at home. The exosystem represents individuals with whom the individual does not have direct contact but who could play a role in an individual's development, such as the parent's workplace. The macrosystem is the broad system that includes the general orientation to the world such as poverty within specific geographic areas. Finally, the chronosystem represents the development over time which affects the interactions between systems (Donald, *et al.*, 2002, 2010:40-41; Lazarus, 2007; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the bio-ecological model is viewed within the context of different assets available in the different systems. Against this background I regard the link or relationship between the bio-ecological model and the asset-based approach as meaningful.

### 2.3.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL AND THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

The bio-ecological model focuses on the interacting relationships between different systems. Within the asset-based approach partnerships are formed between these systems to identify, exchange, mobilise and manage assets (Alant & Harty, 2005; Donald *et al.*, 2002; Eloff, 2006; Eloff, 2006; Kriek, 2002). Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2012) found in an on-going longitudinal intervention study that

teachers have access to support and resources through relationships with others. These relationships may promote resilience and support teachers in on-going challenges related to time, space and resources. Furthermore, Ebersöhn (2012) proposes that relationships will allow for access to and mobilisation of resources. Ebersöhn (2012) subsequently developed the Relationship Resourced Resilience (RRR) model, suggesting a collective response when dealing with stress in a poverty setting.

In this study I assumed that the different systems and relationships within systems could support the implementation of the asset-based approach and in the process empower the different systems such as learners, teachers, parents at home and other members in the community. This in turn implied the potential to change interaction patterns between the different systems which could influence aspects of development. Applying the asset-based approach to one classroom does not mean that assets were merely identified and mobilised within the classroom but rather in the whole school and wider community. Implementing the asset-based approach is a process and a vehicle to exchange and develop assets within positive relationships with others (Starkman, 2006).

Within this study the asset-based approach was implemented in one classroom (one microsystem). This microsystem has interaction with other microsystems such as homes and peer groups in other classes. Within the interaction between systems other individuals could become aware of the presence of assets and capacities, consequently empowering different people and contributing to positive change (Eloff, 2006; Starkman, 2006). Practically this could be done in sending asset maps home for parents to support learners in identifying and mobilising assets and bringing families into school to share knowledge on the process of asset-based teaching.

I elected the bio-ecological model for this study to view asset-based teaching within the different systems of the model. The bio-ecological model is meaningful as the asset-based approach is a relationship-driven approach. The teacher and learners do not find themselves in an isolated classroom but in one where they interact with the different systems of the bio-ecological model (Eloff, 2006). Looking at this study through the lens of the bio-ecological model supported me to not only focus on identifying, mobilising and managing individual assets and resources in the classroom, but also on the teacher's and learners' assets and resources in relationship with others that may support teaching and learning.

## **2.4 ASSET-BASED TEACHING**

In this section I discuss the concept teaching Life Orientation as well as five teaching-related concepts central to this study, linking these to the asset-based approach.

### 2.4.1 TEACHING LIFE ORIENTATION

Life Orientation lessons focus on teaching learners skills, knowledge and values that contribute to social, emotional, personal, intellectual and physical growth (DoE, 2011; Jacobs, 2011). According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002), the “Life Orientation learning area aims to empower learners to use their talents to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential ...”(Department of Education, 2002). It therefore seems evident that the subject Life Orientation supports learners to reach their potential and to use their talents. As the asset-based approach focuses on identifying, mobilising and managing assets and talents it might be a suitable approach to apply within the subject of Life Orientation.

The topics of Life Orientation lessons in Grade 7 includes development of the self in society, healthy, social and environmental responsibility, constitutional rights and responsibility, physical education and world of work. The topic world of work focuses on the importance of work in order to fulfil in learners’ personal needs and potential (DoE, 2011). The world of work topic could be applied within the context of the asset-based approach, by facilitating the identification and development of learners’ assets in preparation of their possible future careers.

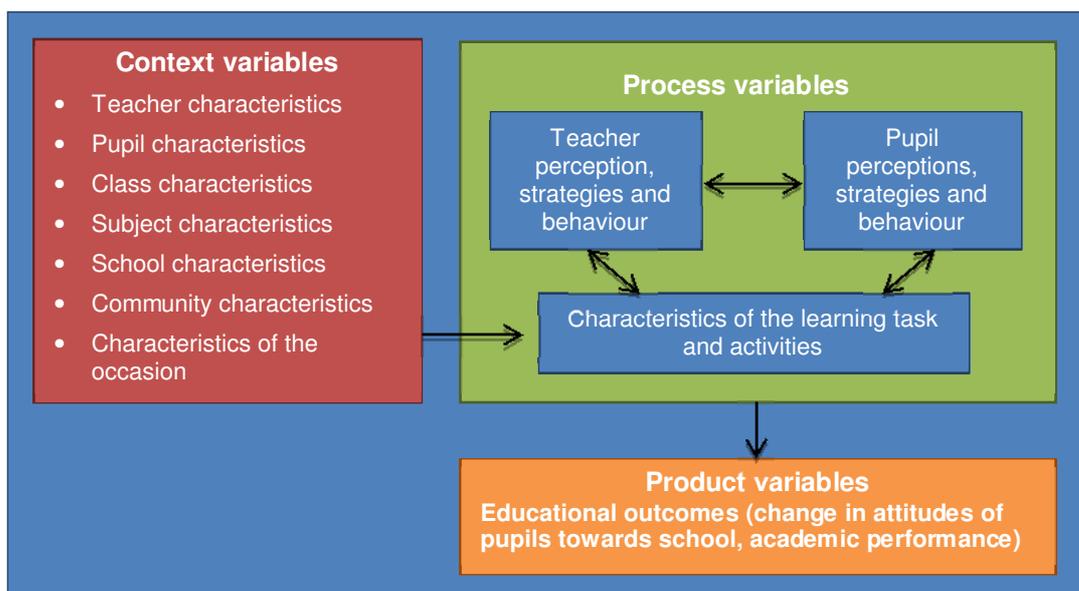
### 2.4.2 EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Kyriacou (1997:5) defines effective teaching as “teaching which successfully achieves the learning by pupils intended by the teacher”. Therefore effective teaching will provide a good learning experience to learners. This study proposes asset-based teaching as one possible way of creating a good learning experience by focusing on the assets and strengths of learners instead of on their barriers and deficits. In addition to focusing on the learners’ assets and strengths, the application of the asset-based approach may also support a teacher to focus on her own assets which could support her to fulfil the roles as a teacher. Effective teaching in South Africa is described in terms of seven roles of a teacher (as explained in Chapter 1, section 1.6.5).

In support Eccles (2004), Eccles *et al.* (1993) as well as Lee and Smith (2001) describe a good teacher as one who develops competence in learners, one who guides learners to succeed in their academic work, one who has high expectations of learners and one who has a positive outlook in terms of themselves and their learners. Predicted benefits of asset-based teaching include a teacher who focuses on the positive aspects in the classroom, within the self as teacher and within learners, which may contribute to an overall positive outlook by the teacher. A teacher’s characteristics, roles and outlook are therefore important components in effective teaching, though these are not the only components to consider.

Effective teaching can be described in terms of three main variables, namely context variables, process variables and product variables. Context variables include the different characteristics of the teacher (experience, training, personality), learners (ability, personality), class (size, social mix, ability), subject (difficulty level, interest), school (size, building), community (population, geographical location) and occasional characteristics (weather, period of the years). Within asset-based teaching, context variables also include assets, strengths, capacities and resources within the learners, the teacher, the school and the community.

Process variables entail the interaction between the learners and a teacher within the classroom which could have a powerful impact on the learning and teaching process (Scheuermann & Hall, 2008; Starkman, 2006). The interaction between the teacher and the learners within asset-based teaching could be one in which assets are identified, mobilised and managed. Finally, product variables include the educational outcomes as a result of the process such as learners' knowledge, interest and motivation. Applying asset-based teaching could mean that product variables may vary as the asset-based approach is implemented in terms of the context and process variables. Figure 2.4 summarises the different variables that may contribute to effective teaching.



**Figure 2.4:** Variables that may contribute to effective teaching (Adapted from Kyriacou, 1997:6)

The variables captured in Figure 2.4 are meaningful in terms of this study as the application of asset-based teaching could influence context and process variables. The aim of implementing the asset-based approach during teaching is to focus on what is present, positive and available which could, in turn, possibly change teacher's and learners' perceptions and beliefs. Consequently this may in turn influence product variables. A change in process variables may even be referred to as a new teaching style that will in turn influence product variables.

### 2.4.3 TEACHING STYLE

Teaching style refers to a combination of teaching methods and techniques used during teaching instruction (Visser, McChlery & Vreken, 2006). Many teaching styles exist and the choice of a particular one depends on a teacher's strengths and preferences. Some teachers choose to lead children to self-discovery, where others demonstrate, and others prefer a combination of self-discovery and demonstration (Felder, 1993). Teaching styles can range from memory-focused to understanding-focused, learner-centred to teacher-centred (Felder, 1993), asset-based driven (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) to outcome-driven (Alexander, Khabanyane & Ramabenyane, 2010), the use of visual, verbal or kinetic preferred style of teaching (Dunn, Dunn & Price, 1989; Dunn, Dunn & Griggs, 2003) and the use of a multiple intelligence model as a teaching style (Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002). Within this study the participating teacher guided the learners with worksheets to identify their study assets in terms of their preferred learning style, preferred learning environment and strengths based on a multiple intelligence model. In identifying the learners' study assets, the teacher was able to adapt her teaching style to mobilise these assets.

I agree with Visser *et al.* (2006) and Mohanna *et al.* (2007) that a teaching style should be flexible and include a combination of approaches and strategies to accommodate the majority of learners. I explored the application of the asset-based approach as basis of teaching style. Within this teaching style the teacher could focus on the assets, strengths and resources available in her classroom and teach the learners to identify, mobilise and manage their assets. Such an approach may potentially support a teacher in her teaching, and learners in their learning, as teaching and learning styles are linked. It may even support teachers and learners in their emotional well-being and in coping with challenges. Therefore, such an approach may support a teacher in fulfilling the roles of learning mediator, interpreter and pastoral supporter (DoE, 2006).

Comprehensive research has been completed on the link between teaching and learning styles (Knolb, 1984; Riding & Cheema, 1991; Honey & Mumford, 1992; Flemings, 2001; Dunn, Dunn & Griggs, 2003; Mohanna, Chambers & Wall, 2007). McLoughlin (1999) suggests that teaching styles and learning styles are linked as literature on learning styles provides insight into effective teaching styles. Mismatches between teaching and learning styles could have a negative effect on learners' achievements. The task of the teacher is thus to find a suitable instruction for the majority of learners. Teachers who are flexible in their teaching styles will typically practise more effective teaching than when they are not flexible in their approach (Mohanna *et al.*, 2007).

Some studies (Flemming, 2001; Hawk & Shah, 2007) further indicate that the matching of teaching and learning styles will have a positive impact on students' performance. Applying the asset-based approach in teaching may support a teacher to focus on learners' study assets. This could in turn support learners in their learning and in the process match a teaching style with learners' preferred learning style. A study conducted on students of a university in South Africa and a university in the

United Kingdom indicate that students prefer a balanced approach when it comes to teaching styles (Visser *et al.*, 2006). With regard to this study, the participating teacher's focus on the learners' different study assets possibly supported the teacher to establish a balanced teaching style and attend to the different study assets of the learners in her class. On the contrary Mohanna *et al.* (2007) found that when a teacher is only attending to his/her own preferred teaching style learners may become demotivated and experience a decline in their confidence and trust in themselves. This may in turn negatively affect the classroom climate.

#### **2.4.4 CLASSROOM CLIMATE**

An essential aspect of teaching includes classroom climate. Several factors contribute to classroom climate such as the relationship between a teacher and learners, physical appearance of a classroom, a teacher's ability to organise and manage the class, a teacher's positive regard for the learners, encouragement and positive feedback to learners, and having positive expectations of learners (Eccles, 2004; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998; Kyriacou, 1997; Scheuermann & Hall, 2008; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Many of these aspects correlate with a strength-based approach (positive psychology and the asset-based approach) where the focus falls on the positive, as relevant to this study (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

A strength-based approach may further help to establish a safe and welcoming classroom environment. Kyriacou (1997) explains that it is important for a teacher to ensure that learners receive the opportunity to share in the learning process in order to establish a safe and welcoming classroom climate. Therefore a teacher can play a vital role in showing learners how to use their assets and strengths, and contribute to classroom discussion and activity. In this study I aimed to support one teacher to create a positive classroom climate in implementing the asset-based approach during her teaching.

Additionally, a teacher's words and ways of communicating with learners may influence the classroom climate. Positive words and affirmation could enhance self-esteem. However, focusing on learners' weaknesses and responding with negative words may cause psychological harm and influence their learning negatively. Negative labelling of pupils could also negatively influence learners' behaviour and motivation (Kyriacou, 1997).

Asset-based teaching can provide one way for teachers to focus on learners' assets, strengths and positive characteristics, thereby supporting teachers to use positive words and affirmation in their classrooms. Positive labelling instead of negative labelling may be a new term that could be used in the class where the teacher uses positive characteristics or strengths to label children, for example the super scientist, the master mathematician or the one who is always smiling. The application of the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to learners may in this way contribute to a positive classroom climate and even assist individuals to deal with challenges such as negative labelling.

## 2.4.5 TEACHING CHALLENGES

Within teaching, teachers experience several challenges on a daily basis. These challenges are different for different teachers and they depend on how a teacher views the teaching circumstances. General challenges include learners' behaviour difficulties, poor relationships between co-workers in school, an unwelcoming school environment, poor working conditions, poor career development opportunities or compensation for work done, dealing with changes in teaching and the curriculum, and a lack of resources and support (Bennell, 2004; Hayward, 2002; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Kyriacou, 1997; Loots, 2001; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Travers & Cooper, 1996). The aim of this study was to deal with some of these challenges by guiding a teacher to focus on the assets, strengths and resources available.

Behaviour difficulties in the classroom are a challenge experienced by many teachers and are something that could potentially contribute to a teacher's experiences of stress and negativity (Scheuermann & Hall, 2008; Zirpoli & Melloy, 1993). Zirpoli and Melloy (1993:306) suggest several strategies to prevent behaviour difficulties in class such as to "inform students of what is expected of them, establish a positive learning climate, provide meaningful learning experiences, avoid threats, demonstrate fairness, build and exhibit self-confidence, recognise positive student attributes, use positive modelling, pay attention to the physical arrangement of the classroom and limit downtime". These strategies correlate with the process of implementing the asset-based approach as the approach may support a teacher to identify and focus on the positive attributes of learners (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

In addition to these challenges studies have found that teachers' workload and responsibilities are gradually increasing, causing additional stressors and negatively influencing the quality of teaching (Bennell, 2004; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Loots, 2011; Loots & Mnguni, 2008; Olivier & Venter, 2003). One important responsibility of teachers involves creating an inclusive classroom as indicated in inclusive education policy (DoE, 2001). However this responsibility seems to create stress among teachers as they often feel they do not have the knowledge, experience and resources to do so (Paule, 2005). In the application of asset-based teaching, a teacher may potentially be able to identify resources and assets that have not been mobilised yet, in order to deal with challenges and attend to the needs of learners.

Another teaching challenge that teachers often need to deal with, includes the lack of support and involvement of parents due to factors such as single-parent status and long working hours (Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000; Loots, 2011; Ogina, 2007). Limited parent involvement could lead to poor communication between teachers and parents, limited encouraging relationships and possible lower academic achievement of learners (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Kohl *et al.*, 2000; Middlemiss, 2005). Challenges such as these may in turn negatively affect the effectiveness of asset-

based teaching as asset and resource sharing are essential in the relationships between teachers and parents.

Furthermore, teachers may find it challenging to deal with a lack of motivation, respect and discipline among learners (Howard & Johnson, 2004). According to Starkman (2006) the application of the asset-based approach in teaching could increase motivation among learners, which may in turn decrease the tension experienced by a teacher. This could also support teachers with the challenge of a high teacher-to-child ratio in the classroom which often makes it difficult to support and motivate all learners (Bennell, 2004; Olivier & Venter, 2003).

In dealing with challenges such as those mentioned above, existing studies indicate that when teachers feel that they have control over challenges, they find it easier to deal with such challenges (Gold & Roth, 1993; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Kyriacou (1997) suggests three main strategies to deal with teaching challenges. Firstly, teachers can express their feelings to others and seek social support. Secondly, teachers can carefully consider potential challenges and think of the best way of dealing with these. Finally, they can focus on positive aspects and think of pleasurable activities.

In this study the asset-based approach was used as one way of dealing with teaching challenges. The asset-based approach could potentially support the teacher to move her focus from challenges to assets, strengths and resources and in the process use these assets to overcome challenges (Coetzee *et al.*, 2009; Eloff, 2006). Even though teaching challenges cannot be avoided, teachers may be supported in terms of ways to deal with such challenges (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Reflection on how to apply assets to deal with challenges may be one way to start doing this.

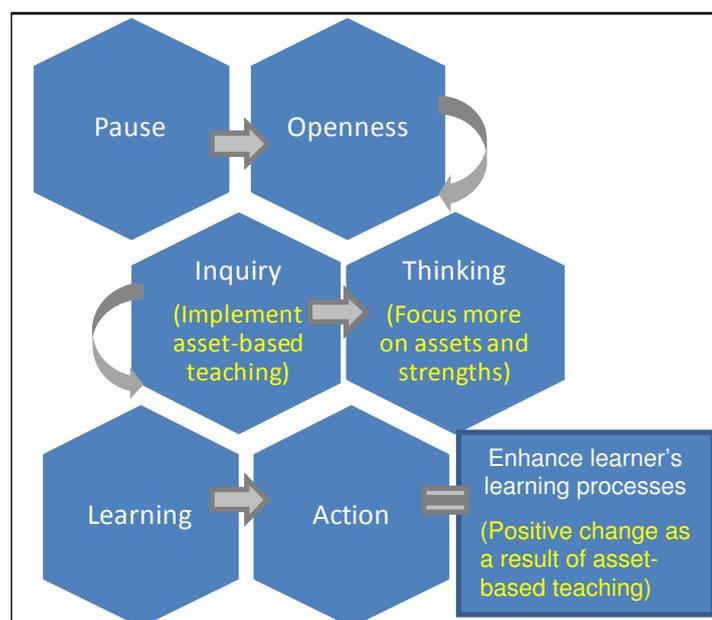
#### **2.4.6 TEACHING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

Teacher reflection is seen as a key ingredient for effective teaching. It could enhance the quality of the learning process as the teacher will evaluate several components in relation to his/her teaching during a reflection process. These components include teaching strategies and techniques, lesson organisation and teaching methods, evaluations of intended outcomes, academic success and personal growth as a teacher (Kyriacou, 1997). When a teacher reflects on his/her teaching, it could support him/her to give feedback to learners, which in turn may promote self-understanding and motivation. Therefore, teachers need to learn how to reflect on their teaching in order to support effective teaching (Calderhead & Gates, 1993). The process of asset-based teaching in this study included the identifying, mobilising and managing of assets, of which reflection, rethinking and reconsideration formed an essential part (Eloff, 2006; Ferreira, 2006; Kretzmann & Mcknight, 1993).

Reflective practice can be defined as a way of re-visiting and organising one's own thoughts, experiences and learning processes (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore & Montie, 2006). Killion and

Todnem (1991) describe this as a process of rethinking decisions that may guide certain patterns of behaviour. Hatton and Smith (1995) also view this as a process of reconsidering actions and decisions in order to improve behaviour. I agree with York-Barr *et al.* (2006) that a reflective practice connects the processes of thinking about actions that result in certain behaviours and will eventually influence learners' learning processes. The implementation of the asset-based approach may therefore guide positive thinking processes and in turn lead to different actions which may subsequently influence learners' learning processes.

A reflection process starts with a teacher who pauses, makes time and creates opportunities for reflection. In reflecting on practice, openness is important. The teacher should be open to change, open to identify assets, strengths, needs or challenges in the classroom, and open to start an inquiry or ask questions about his/her teaching. During the process of finding answers to such questions, learning and knowledge generation may take place leading to a teacher's insight into how he/she could improve practice in implementing asset-based teaching. This may result in action for changing behaviour, strategies and thinking processes such as focusing more on the resources available in the classroom and using these to attend to challenges. A change in a teacher's behaviour and teaching may possibly lead to better learning processes of learners when learners identify, mobilise and manage their assets. A reflective process is an active process which involves on-going action and continuous learning (York-Barr *et al.*, 2006). Figure 2.5 shows the process of a reflective practice in which reflection can enhance learners' learning processes. In this study, I proposed the incorporation of the asset-based approach into the reflective practice of a teacher. This potentially supported changing thinking processes which in turn could have resulted in positive changes in learners' learning processes. Asset-based teaching may therefore be used as one way of supporting a reflective practice, where the focus of a teacher's thinking processes may change from focussing on challenges, to focusing on assets and strengths.



**Figure 2.5:** Process of a reflective practice (Adapted from York-Barr *et al.*, 2006)

## 2.5 EARLY ADOLESCENCE AS BACKDROP FOR APPLYING ASSET-BASED TEACHING

In explaining the context of the learners involved in this study, I now discuss relevant components and characteristics of the adolescent phase.

### 2.5.1 ADOLESCENCE AS A PERIOD OF CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

This study was implemented in a Grade 7 classroom. Grade 7 learners are entering adolescence which is seen as the growth period from childhood to adulthood and usually takes place between the ages 12 and 21 years (Louw & Edwards, 1998; Frydenberg, 2008; Smit, Cowie & Blades, 2003; Weiten, 2010). For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand typical changes during the adolescent phase.

The adolescent phase is divided into three sub-phases namely early adolescence, middle adolescence and late adolescence (Frydenberg, 2008; Louw *et al.*, 2002; Meeus, Van De Schoot, Keijsers, Schwartz, & Branje, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the focus fell on early adolescence (Grade 7 learners). My rationale for involving Grade 7 learners included the possible value of implementing the asset-based approach to support them with the many changes they faced. Early adolescents namely for example experience physical changes, cognitive changes, social-emotional changes and moral challenges (Frydenberg, 2008). They are confronted with transitions in relation to school, home and the peer group, experiencing conflict in relationships with parents, teachers and friends.

Research shows that adolescence can primarily be seen as a phase of transition, development and change (Bosco, Renk, Dinger, Epstein & Phares, 2003; Frydenberg, 2008; Rice, 1990; Louw, Gerdes & Meyer, 2002; Smit, Cowie & Blades, 2003). The three main difficulties experienced in adolescence includes “achievement-related concerns, relationships concerns and social issues” (Frydenberg, 2008:15). As the changes during early adolescence are closely linked to experiences in the classroom, implementing the asset-based approach while teaching could potentially result in positive changes in learners’ learning and also support them in dealing with other changes that they experience during the adolescence phase. I agree with Ebersöhn (2006b) that the asset-based approach could support adolescents with life skills that could be used to cope with the changing demands of the adolescent phase.

This study therefore used Life Orientation lessons to implement the asset-based approach as learners were provided with the opportunity to learn how the asset-based approach could be used to develop their life skills. Table 2.3 presents the changes typically experienced by adolescents and indicates how the implementation of the asset-based approach could possibly support adolescents with these changes.

**Table 2.3: Supporting adolescents' changes**

Changes	Asset-based support
<b>Physical changes</b>	
Physically learners start to develop in terms of sexual maturity and need to deal with the changes of puberty. These physical changes can lead to self-consciousness of their physical appearance which in turn could affect their psychological functioning (Rycus & Hughes, 1998; Smit <i>et al.</i> , 2003).	The implementation of the asset-based approach might support adolescents to view their physical changes as assets and positive characteristics in their journey of entering adulthood.
<b>Cognitive changes</b>	
Cognitively, learners start to develop higher cognitive thinking patterns. According to Piaget's developmental stages, adolescents start to enter the formal operation stage (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). Within this phase learners start to think hypothetically, abstract and more logically (Keating, 1980, 1990; Markovits & Barrouillet, 2002; Rycus & Hughes, 1998). Furthermore, they start with introspection and to think about their thoughts (Rycus & Hughes, 1998).	Directing adolescents' focus to their assets, gifts and talents may contribute to positive thoughts, introspection and the development of a positive self-concept.
<b>Social-emotional changes</b>	
Adolescents experience a psychosocial crisis with their main task being identity formation and their movement towards independence (Frydenberg, 2008; Louw <i>et al.</i> , 2002). Therefore they may start to display risky behaviour, reject their parents' standards and over-react to parental criticisms (Rycus & Hughes, 1998).	When parents and teachers are focused on adolescents' strengths and assets it might minimise adolescents' experiences of being criticised by them.
Adolescents start to identify themselves with their peer group instead of their parents. They long for social acceptance and may experience difficulties with regard to peer pressure (Bosco <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Rycus & Hughes, 1998).	The implementation of the asset-based approach in the classroom might support adolescents to establish an accepting environment in class and one in which assets are celebrated.
Love, support and acceptance are the key components that could support adolescents with their emotional and social development (Bosco <i>et al.</i> , 2003).	Focusing on adolescents' assets and strengths may support them to feel they have a purpose, something to contribute and are accepted by others.
<b>Moral changes</b>	
Adolescents start to justify their decisions and develop moral reasoning using real-life moral dilemmas (Eisenberg & Sheffield-Morris, 2004; Kohlberg, 1981). Adolescents start to use their interaction with others as a way of understanding others' perspectives of pro-social behaviours, sympathy and moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984). They start to develop trusting and respectful interpersonal relationships with others. Within these relationships, they begin to learn what is expected from them and how to live up to these expectations (Eisenberg & Sheffield-Morris, 2004).	As the asset-based approach is a relationship-driven approach (Eloff, 2006), the application of the approach could support adolescents to build trusting and respectful relationships with others in which they develop morally. Sharing assets within relationships and supporting one another to mobilise these assets might also be seen as pro-social behaviour.

It is evident that adolescents experience many changes and often need support to deal with these transition points. Depression and poor scholastic performance during adolescence seem to become more common as adolescents are not able to cope with the pressures and uncertainties associated

with this developmental phase (Frydenberg, 2008). With the application of the asset-based approach under the framework of positive psychology, the aim in this study was to move the focus away from adolescents' deficits and needs towards their assets and strengths. The idea was to support them to deal with pressures and uncertainties, in particular within the context of the classroom (Eloff, 2006; Seligman *et al.*, 2005).

### **2.5.2 THE ADOLESCENT IN THE CLASSROOM**

In addition to the different changes that adolescents typically experience within themselves, they also change from primary to secondary school during this life phase. The many changes may negatively affect their behaviour or motivation in the classroom (Eccles, 2004; Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Furthermore as adolescents change and develop, their cognitive, emotional and social needs change, which means that the teaching in a classroom should change to accommodate and motivate them (Eccles, 2004). The asset-based approach could support teachers and learners to identify and mobilise assets and resources, and in turn potentially support adolescents to deal with changes and challenges related to their developmental phase (Coetzee *et al.*, 2009). This study specifically focused on the potential role that asset-based teaching could play in teaching Grade 7 teachers.

Various aspects in the classroom and in school may affect adolescents. Firstly, in the classroom a teacher's beliefs and perceptions of learners (Eccles *et al.*, 1993; Lee & Smith, 2001) could affect adolescents' scholastic performance and behaviour. Research shows that a teacher with high and positive expectations for learners can contribute to better learning and more self-worth and competence amongst learners. Similarly, teachers who believe and have confidence in their own ability to teach, can promote confidence within adolescents and their learning at the same time (Eccles, 2004). In relation to this study, one possible way of developing confidence within teachers, could be to identify their teaching assets and personal assets that may in turn be mobilised in class during their teaching.

Furthermore, researchers have found that teacher-student relationships, classroom management and motivational climate will all contribute to the classroom climate. A positive classroom climate may support adolescents in their development changes and could contribute to mutual respect and trust, self-esteem, motivation, engagement, and a sense of belonging (Eccles, 2004; Eccles *et al.*, 1998; Kyriacou, 1997; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Building relationships within the classroom could therefore support adolescents to identify and mobilise their assets and in addition to these relationships, they would also have access to assets in other relationships within the different systems of the bio-ecological model.

### **2.5.3 ADOLESCENTS FUNCTIONING WITHIN THE SYSTEMS OF THE BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL**

In relation to the bio-ecological model the different systems in which an adolescent functions, may influence the adolescent's cognitive, emotional, social and moral development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The adolescent could be seen as one system that is changing within interaction with other systems such as the home, school and peers. These interactions between systems influence an adolescent's view of the self and the world. Therefore it is important for the school and home to create a positive climate that can contribute to healthy functioning and development of the adolescent. A positive climate includes warm, loving, supportive and active teachers and parents (Frydenberg, 2008; Garbarino, 1985). Within this study the application of the asset-based approach was one potential way of creating a positive climate as the focus fell on what was positive and available in the various systems.

Eccles and Roeser (1999) explain that the interactions between the different levels (classroom level, school level and school district) in a school may influence adolescents' feelings and behaviour. When such interaction is complementary where different levels work together and empower one another, adolescents may benefit from the process (Eccles, 2004). The stronger the positive connection between different systems, the better it may support adolescents in their development. The asset-based approach is one possible way of empowering individuals in forming relationships and partnerships between different systems (Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 1997). This study aimed at supporting a teacher to use the asset-based approach to identify, share and exchange assets within learners and the classroom, and to strengthen the connections between systems.

### **2.5.4 APPLYING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH DURING THE ADOLESCENT PHASE**

According to Nurmi (2004:87) adolescence is a time of change during which the individual experiences four main phases, namely "channelling, selection, adjustment, and reflection". In each of these phases the application of the asset-based approach to teach adolescents could be meaningful. The first phase can be described as the phase during which the adolescent's home, school and other socio-cultural structures may channel his/her thinking patterns and direct behaviour. Within this phase, asset-based teaching may possibly change the thinking patterns of an adolescent from negative towards positive, as the asset-based approach focuses on the positive (Eloff, 2006). Secondly, adolescents start to plan and decide on their future during this time, following commitment making to a specific education or career path. Within the context of this study, the process of identifying adolescents' assets contributed to positive awareness and increased self-knowledge in terms of their assets and strengths, to support learners in their future plans (Eloff, 2006).

During the next step adolescents start to understand the consequences of their decisions and receive feedback from others. This feedback can support them to adjust their plans and cope with challenges

in future. According to Coetzee *et al.* (2009) and Eloff (2006) assets and resources may be relied on to deal with challenges. Therefore, with the focus on assets and strengths, feedback to learners may support them to use their assets in decision-making processes. Finally, adolescents reflect on their development and growth as individuals. The last phase of the asset-based approach (management of assets) also includes reflection and reconsideration of how assets can be managed. Therefore, this phase can be meaningful in the reflection process of the adolescent (Eloff, 2006).

Frydenberg (2008) studied adolescents in terms of resilience and protective factors and found that adolescents have access to many interpersonal assets and resources that could support them. In further support Herman-Stahl and Petersen (1996) found that adolescents with resources and coping strategies available to them are less likely to experience depressive symptoms and more likely to cope with challenges. In addition to this, they found that adolescents with positive social relations with others, a high self-esteem, problem-solving skills, and optimism are more likely to have an optimistic outlook (Herman-Stahl & Petersen, 1996; Dumont & Provost, 1999). These different protective resources may influence one another. As Frydenberg (2008) states, positive relations with others may in turn enhance self-esteem. Therefore, it is important for adolescents to have a positive outlook and to acquire coping skills. As part of this study, I considered problem-solving skills, optimism, self-esteem and positive social relations as assets that could be mobilised and utilised to support adolescents in dealing with experienced challenges.

Other studies have been conducted in terms of adolescents' happiness (Konu, Lintonen & Rimpela, 2002; Mahon & Yarcheski, 2002; Magen & Aharoni, 1991). Happiness is one of the key aspects of positive psychology which is the overarching theory for the asset-based approach and therefore applicable to this particular study (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Happiness implies more than the absence of challenges or dysfunction, and includes positive emotions, self-worth and resilience to bounce back from challenges (Frydenberg, 2008; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Magen and Aharoni (1991) identify five things that will contribute to happiness among adolescents. Firstly, they found that when adolescents make others happy or provide others with happy moments it would contribute to their own happiness. Secondly, when adolescents move their focus to positive thoughts and events in their lives and think positively about themselves, it will support them to be happier. A third aspect that could contribute to happier adolescents relates to a healthy lifestyle such as doing exercise, getting enough sleep, taking breaks and feeling proud when goals are reached. Fourthly, happiness does not mean that life is without challenges but rather that adolescents change their thinking patterns and behaviours to focus on the positive aspects of life and use this to deal with challenges. Finally, adolescents need to learn that happiness cannot be found in materialistic things but rather in fulfilling activities such as acts of kindness.

According to Frydenberg (2008) it is important to sustain happiness within adolescents. This could be done in choosing activities that match adolescents' interests. Adolescents' interest and strengths

(related to the identifying assets phase in asset-based teaching) could be used to choose activities that bring a sense of belonging and self-efficiency. Teachers can play a vital role in matching learning activities to learners' interests, strengths and assets. In my study, I therefore investigated how a teacher could match learners' learning to their strengths and assets in applying the asset-based approach to teach the learners.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

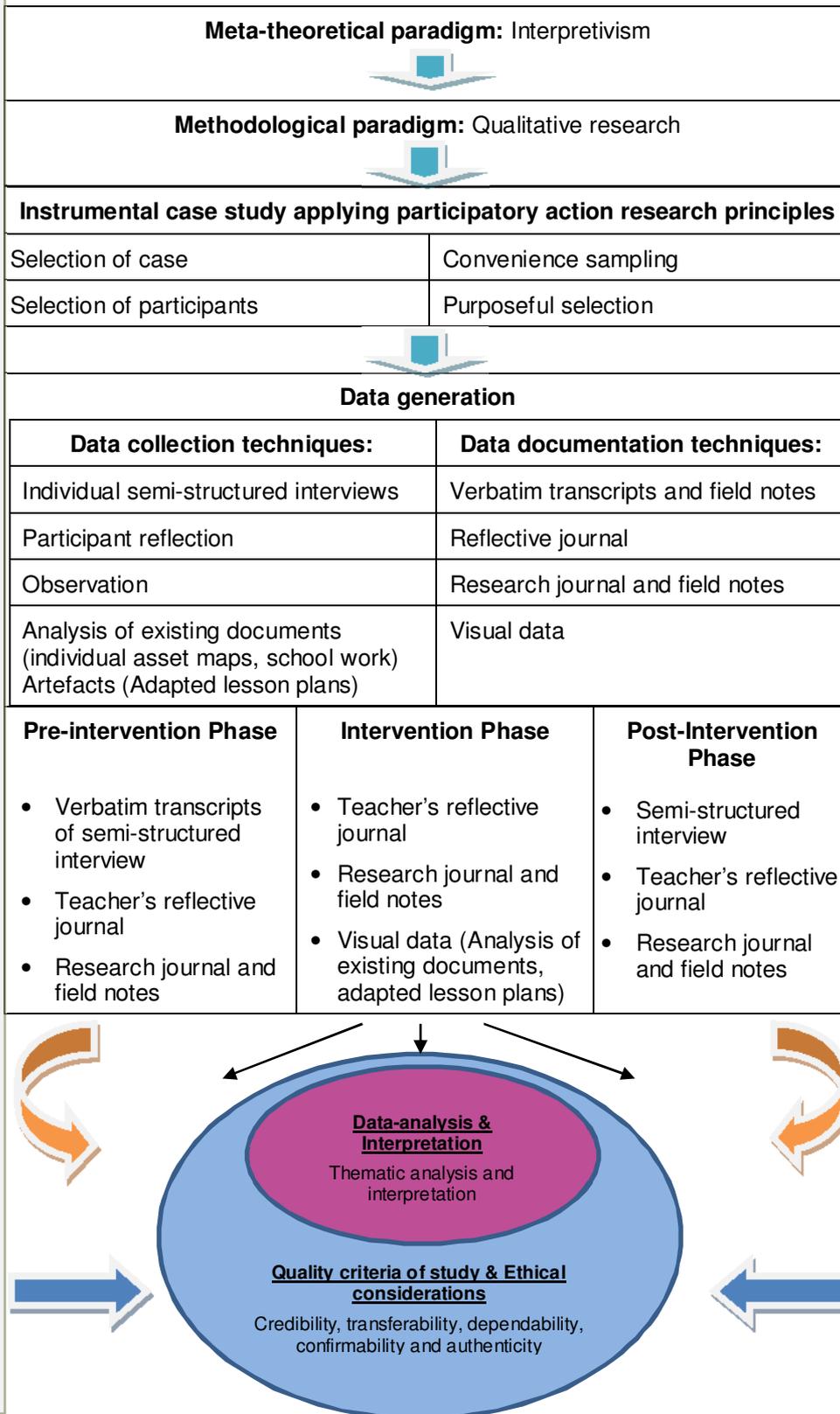
In this chapter, I presented my literature review. My readings on the asset-based approach were discussed in relation to positive psychology as over-arching theory, previous studies conducted in relation to the asset-based approach and asset-based teaching, with specific relevance to this study. I also discussed the bio-ecological model and its link with the asset-based approach. In discussing the term "teaching", I referred to effective teaching, teaching style, classroom climate, teaching challenges and teaching as a reflective practice. I concluded the chapter by discussing the early adolescent phase, the changes related to this phase and how the asset-based approach could potentially support learners in this phase.

In Chapter 3 I explain the research process in terms of my selected research design and methodology. I discuss my data collection, analysis and interpretation, and justify the choices I made. Finally, I explain quality criteria and ethical considerations.

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# Personal Conceptualisation of Chapter 3

Research question guiding research:  
How does a teacher experience the implementation of the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?



Personal assets used in research: Interviewing skills, skills to remain empathetic & sensitive towards participants, reflective researcher

## CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I discussed existing literature related to the application of the asset-based approach as well as theories on teaching and learning. In this chapter I explain the research methodology and strategies of this study. I elaborate on the selection of the case and participants, data collection, data documentation, data analysis and data interpretation in terms of the different phases of the study. Throughout I justify my choices against the background of the research questions, as formulated in Chapter 1. Finally I discuss the quality criteria and ethical considerations of the study.

### 3.2 PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

I discuss the selected meta-theoretical and methodological paradigms in this section. Mertens (2010) explains a paradigm as personal worldviews and assumptions that guide a researcher's thoughts and actions.

#### 3.2.1 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM

I selected qualitative research as I investigated the views of participants, collected data consisting of words, and analysed words for themes (Cresswell, 2007; Hogan, Dolan & Donnelly, 2009). Qualitative research implies a holistic approach that includes a comprehensive understanding of a "social phenomenon" in the "real world" in order to construct a portrait of a complex situation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Hogan *et al.*, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The aim of my study was namely to obtain an in-depth understanding of how the asset-based approach could be implemented in a Grade 7 classroom, during teaching. I made sense of the different dimensions of the research question in attempting to understand the said social phenomenon. I agree with Leedy and Ormrod (2005) that no single truth exists but rather multiple truths from different individuals that carry equal weight. However, in this study, I aimed to obtain a clear understanding of what the world looks like for one teacher in a particular Grade 7 classroom.

Merriam (2009:14) describes qualitative research in terms of four main characteristics, namely "the focus is on process, understanding and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive, and the product is richly descriptive". As a qualitative researcher, I required specific competencies such as asking relevant questions with regard to my

research focus, observing carefully and being flexible but effective in the manner in which I collected data. Qualitative research enabled me to discover and understand the behaviour and perceptions of the participating teacher within her natural environment (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I could further aim to not only focus on the findings of the study but on the descriptive detail during the course of the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Hogan *et al.* (2009:4) explain that “qualitative research is all about researching specific meanings, emotions, and practices that emerge through the interactions between people”. This contributes to subjective meaning-making because the researcher is involved in the meaning-making process. My reflections as a researcher formed part of the meaning-making process and therefore this process was not an objective one (Hogan *et al.*, 2009).

One benefit of using a qualitative approach was that it provided me with the opportunity to use research to improve practice in the everyday lives of people. This meant that I had to understand another’s perspective and experiences as well as the meaning attached to them in order to make a difference or bring about social change (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). As part of my meaning-making process, I applied good listening skills and reflective thoughts. I aimed to understand one teacher’s experiences before and after implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners. Another benefit of this paradigm included the opportunity to understand experiences in the participating teacher’s context. I was able to do this in becoming a participant observer and observe things as they occurred. This meant that I could not only observe but also explore social action and change as I attempted to position myself in the participating teacher’s shoes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

With a special interest in the phenomenon of asset-based teaching, I relied on subjective meanings. Being a subjective researcher could pose a challenge as it could affect the trustworthiness of the findings. In response to this potential challenge, I used a research journal (see Appendix F) and member checking to support the credibility of the data (Seale, 2000).

### **3.2.2 META-THEORETICAL PARADIGM**

A meta-theoretical paradigm can be described as a set of beliefs that are used to look at individuals and their relationships (Denzil & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 1998; Punch, 2009). Punch (2009:16) describes a paradigm “as a way of looking at the world”. I relied on the interpretivist paradigm as I aimed to understand human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Interpretive researchers “assume that reality is socially constructed and that there are multiple realities” (Merriam, 2009:8). Meanings are constructed within interaction with others. These meanings are gathered by experiences and could thus be described as subjective meanings (Merriam, 2009; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). I thus understand interpretivism as a way of understanding behaviour and constructing meaning in an

interactive manner (Merriam, 1998). I agree with Ferreira (2006a) that I entered into an interactive relationship with the participating teacher.

As such, meanings were important to me in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the specific social phenomenon, being the application of the asset-based approach to teach learners. The interpretivist paradigm matches my personal experiences, skills, character and perspectives in the sense that I aim to understand human behaviour and the meanings attached to behaviour in my career as future educational psychologist and also in my personal life (Merriam, 2009). Interpretivism thus provided me with the opportunity to interpret past and present experiences, behaviour and feelings of the participating teacher as well as the communication used to share these experiences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

In order to collect data within the interpretivist paradigm, humans are viewed as the best instrument for data collection because they are sensitive towards the underlying meaning that research brings. They aim to pursue, explore, define and understand meaning that people have constructed (Merriam, 2009). According to this paradigm, human behaviour can be understood through interpreting people's behaviours, norms, standards and social contexts (Jansen, 2004). Thus with this study, I had the opportunity to collect and understand data in an interactive manner. Consequently, I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of a teacher after implementing the asset-based approach in a Grade 7 classroom. The benefits of using interpretivism as meta-theoretical paradigm included the fact that I was able to co-construct meaning with the participating teacher (Terre Blanche, 2002), and observe the participating teacher in her natural environment. This meant that I could observe how she used assets that were present and available during the intervention phase (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Eloff, 2006).

The interpretivist paradigm is often criticised due to its focus on subjective experiences and the interpretation of these. I used my personal background and worldview to interpret the experiences of the participating teacher (Seale, 1999). A limitation to the study was thus the possibility of an incomprehensive study that does not attend fully to the social and historical reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). However, the aim was not to make generalisations but to obtain an in-depth understanding of one case that could inform other teachers in practice. I used a research journal to capture my subjective experiences in order for others to read this and to decide how it could inform their practices (Seale, 2000). Similar to Loots (2011) I also used a first person writing style to share my personal experiences.

Another experienced challenge included the possible influence of previous studies in relation to the asset-based approach on my own understanding and interpretation of this study (Schwandt, 2000). In dealing with this challenge, it was important to be open-minded and identify new ways of understanding and interpreting meanings and themes of the social phenomenon instead of only focusing on existing themes in literature. Member checking gave me the opportunity to understand the

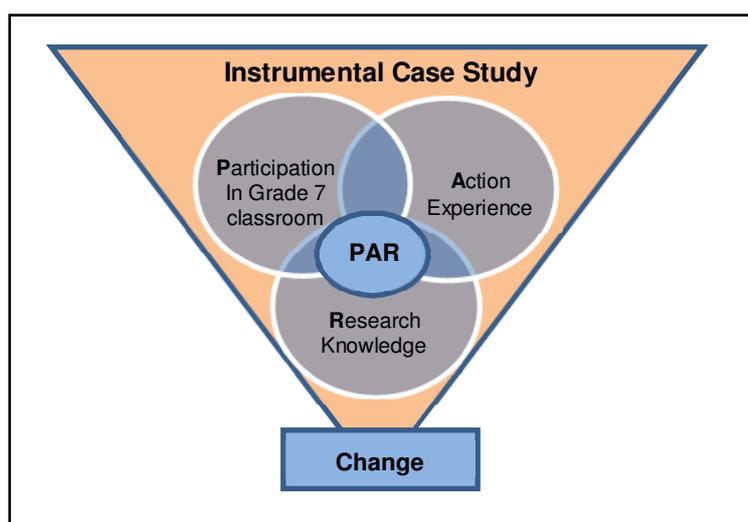
data through the eyes of the participant during the interpretation phase (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

### 3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section I explain the research process in terms of the research design, the selection of the case and participant, and the processes of collecting, documenting, analysing, and interpreting data. The focus of this study was to understand and describe one case before and after implementation of the asset-based approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

#### 3.3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

I utilised an instrumental case study design, while applying principles of participatory action research (PAR). As such participation, action and research were integrated to bring about change, as shown in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1:** Instrumental case study research design applying principles of PAR (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Stake, 1995)

##### 3.3.1.1 Instrumental case study research design

I selected an instrumental case study as research design as I aimed to understand one case in depth. The goal was however not only to achieve an understanding but also to contribute to practice in identifying whether the phenomenon studied could influence teaching or not. It could therefore be described as an instrument to knowledge in terms of asset-based teaching (Stake, 1995).

More specifically the aim of this study was to focus on one teacher's experiences in order to understand a particular case, namely asset-based teaching in a particular setting (Grade 7 classroom) (Punch, 2009). I relied on several advantages associated with this research design. An instrumental case study was namely useful for providing preliminary support for my initial working assumptions as I

attempted to learn more about implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners, and to investigate a particular Grade 7 teacher over time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This design furthermore gave me, as researcher, the opportunity to investigate the phenomenon of asset-based teaching in-depth within an everyday context of a Grade 7 classroom (Bell, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Punch, 2009). The use of an instrumental case study thus led to a rich and thorough description of one case. Another advantage of using an instrumental case study in this research was the potential contribution to education in terms of identifying and understanding important aspects of asset-based teaching. This in turn provided opportunities for further investigation in future studies such as investigating the implementation of the asset-based approach as part of a whole school intervention (Punch, 2009).

Although an instrumental case study was appropriate for my specific research study, a limitation in applying this research design is that representativeness of the wider population cannot be claimed and that I (as the researcher) am thus not able to make generalisations. In using one case, it limits the possibility to cross-check information which may question the value of the study (Bell, 2010; Burton & Barlett, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Punch, 2009; Slavin, 2007). However the aim of this study was not to make generalisations but rather to obtain an in-depth understanding of one case. If the aim of a case study design is to “improve education” and it is carried out in a critical and effective manner, it could contribute to “valid education research” (Bell, 2010:11). As a result other teachers and relevant personnel in the fields of Education and Psychology may investigate the applicability and transferability of results obtained against their own unique contexts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Another possible limitation in using a case study design is the possible bias of a researcher that may affect the outcome of a study (Merriam, 2009). It was essential for me as researcher to reflect on such possible biases in order to avoid any misrepresentation or exclusion of information. Throughout my research I reflected during discussions with my supervisors and by means of a research journal.

### **3.3.1.2 Applying principles of participatory action research (PAR)**

Principles of PAR guided the participating teacher in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners (Strydom, 2011; Chambers, 2008; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Schurink, 1998b). I thus relied on components of PAR as this implied both research and action, and involved self-reflective inquiry undertaken by a participant (teacher) in a social situation (Grade 7 classroom) in order to take ownership and improve her own (teaching) practice in her everyday life by changing it (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2006; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Punch, 2009; Slavin, 2007; Strydom, 2011). Applying PAR principles gave the participating teacher the opportunity to integrate teaching, action, participation and research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). PAR principles thereby allowed the teacher the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and challenges of her own

practice with the aim of improving these by implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.

PAR commences with planning steps for change, then implementing change and finally evaluating the results (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). In my study, the planning phase consisted of adapting the Grade 7 teacher's Life Orientation lesson plans to incorporate the asset-based approach. The implementation phase involved implementing these lesson plans, and the evaluation of change included the use of a semi-structured interview with the teacher as well as analysing and interpreting the teacher's reflective journal. As PAR can be described as a "cycle or a spiral", the evaluation of results is not the final step and may lead to further action or new research questions (Punch, 2009:136-137). In my study this resulted in my identification of follow-up research questions for future studies such as how the asset-based approach may be implemented as a whole school approach, when parents and the community can be involved.

According to Borgia and Schuler (1996:2) "five Cs" are essential when conducting PAR, namely "commitment, collaboration, concern, consideration and change". I implemented the five C's by following the steps of "designing the study, collecting data, implementing the intervention, collecting more data, analysing the data" and making recommendations according to findings (Slavin, 2007:16). In designing this study, I relied on collaboration and considerations with my supervisors and the participating teacher/school to identify the main research questions and the outline of the study in terms of the pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention phases. I used concern and collaboration when I collected data during the pre-intervention interview with the teacher. The third step was to implement the intervention during which the teacher taught adapted lesson plans to incorporate the asset-based approach. In this step collaboration between me and the teacher, commitment and change was essential. The next step was to collect more data during the post-intervention phase interview with the teacher. Finally thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and to make recommendations based on the findings I obtained. In this phase, collaboration and consideration were used in considering the sources of information, such as the transcribed interviews, the teacher's reflective journal, my field notes, my research journal, and the teacher's perspective of the identified themes during the process of member checking.

One of the benefits of relying on PAR principles in this study was that it provided me with the opportunity to combine theory and practice and potentially use the research to improve practice. The application of PAR principles provided the teacher with an opportunity to implement the asset-based approach as a possible way of teaching Grade 7 learners in a systematic way (Slavin, 2007). Furthermore, with PAR, I could form a partnership with the teacher where empowerment and change were essential components (Baum *et al.*, 2006).

On the other hand some limitations of applying PAR principles relate to the possible lack of objectivity and inconclusive findings (Slavin, 2007). In order to address some of these limitations, I reflected as a

researcher and requested the participant to do the same. This was done by using a research journal, consulting the teacher's reflective journal and conducting member checking. PAR was thus a "social process" in which collaboration and participation between people were of paramount importance (Punch, 2009:137).

### 3.3.2 SELECTION OF CASE AND PARTICIPANTS

I employed convenience sampling in selecting a government primary school in Pretoria based on its availability and convenience to myself as researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The primary school was a convenient choice as I had previously worked with the Principal of the school as part of the district-based support team. I thus had easy access to the school (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003). One of the advantages of this way of sampling is that it is convenient and makes it easy for the researcher. The disadvantage of convenience sampling is however that such a sample does not represent society. Yet the aim of the study was to gain a deep understanding of one case and not to make generalisations about the wider population (Burton & Barlett, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

I used purposeful sampling to select the Grade 7 teacher as participant. The following selection criteria applied to the participating teacher:

- The principal had to provide access to the selected teacher.
- The teacher had to be a Grade 7 Life Orientation teacher.
- The teacher had to be competent in English or Afrikaans.
- The teacher had to have time for and display interest in the proposed research.

The advantage of using purposeful sampling is that such a decision lies with the researcher. However, this could also be seen as a limitation as the decision may be viewed as subjective (Strydom & De Vos, 1998). I selected a Grade 7 teacher for three main reasons, the first being that such a teacher would teach Grade 7 learners who start to become more aware of their own learning processes, personal and social development (Roese, Eccles & Sameroff, 2000). Secondly, Grade 7 teachers support their learners to prepare for high school and to become more independent. Finally, Grade 7 teachers support learners who are entering the adolescent development phase with their main task of identity formation where knowledge of their personal strengths and assets might be beneficial (Frydenberg, 2008; Louw *et al.*, 2002). Even though no learners directly participated in this study, the teacher identified documents from three learners in her classroom during the intervention phase that I analysed. In selecting the documents, the teacher ensured that these were in either Afrikaans or English, and that the learners had permission from their parents/guardians to provide examples of their school work during these lessons.

### 3.3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION

As an introduction Table 3.1 provides a summary of the three phases of the research process, namely the *pre-intervention phase*, the *intervention phase* and the *post-intervention phase*.

**Table 3.1: Phases of the research process**

Research collection strategies	Research documentation strategies	Timeframe	Duration
<b>Phase 1- Pre-intervention phase</b>			
<b>Purpose: To obtain baseline information on how the participating teacher teaches Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners</b>			
1. Semi-structured interview with teacher to obtain base-line information (Appendix B, E & F)	Audio-recorded verbatim transcripts Teacher's reflective journal Research journal and field notes	Beginning of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> term (9 May 2012)	60 minutes
2. Construct an asset map (artefacts) with the teacher to identify her own assets (Appendix H)	Visual data	Beginning of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> term (9 May 2012)	30 minutes
3. Discuss background on the asset-based approach and adapt lesson plans (Appendix C)	Lesson plans, research journal and field notes	Beginning of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> term (9 May 2012)	60 minutes
<b>Phase 2 – Intervention phase</b>			
<b>Purpose: To guide and support the teacher in the application of the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners</b>			
<b>Phase 2.1 - Identifying assets</b>			
1. Teacher teaches learners to construct an asset map (Appendix C & D)	Visual data (asset map and school work that relates to identifying assets)	During the second term (16 May – 17 May 2012)	2 lessons (2 x 30 min)
2. Teacher reflects on the teaching process on identifying assets (Appendix E & F)	Teacher's reflective journal Research journal and field notes	During the second term (16 May – 17 May 2012)	2 x 10 min
<b>Phase 2.2 - Mobilising assets</b>			
1. Teacher teaches the learners ways to mobilise their assets (Appendix C & D)	Visual data (photographs, adapted lesson plans) Analysis of existing documents (school work relating to mobilising assets)	During the second term (22 May – 30 May 2012)	3 lessons (3 x 30 min)
2. Teacher reflects on the teaching process of mobilising assets (Appendix E & F)	Teacher's reflective journal Research journal and field notes	During the second term (22 May – 30 May 2012)	3 x 10 min

<b>Phase 2.3 - Managing assets</b>			
1. Teacher teaches learners how to manage their assets (Appendix C & D)	Visual data (school work relating to managing assets)	During the second term (1 June – 5 June 2012)	3 lessons (3 x 30 min)
2. Teacher reflects on the teaching process of managing assets (Appendix E & F)	Teacher's reflective journal Research journal and field notes	During the second term ( 1 June – 5 June 2012)	3 x 10 min
<b>Phase 3 – Post intervention phase</b>			
<b>Purpose: To determine the teacher's experience of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners</b>			
1. Semi-structured interview with teacher to determine her experience on the implementation of the asset-based approach (Appendix G, E & F)	Audio-recorded verbatim transcripts Teacher's reflective journal Research journal and field notes	End of the second term (20 June 2012)	60 minutes

During the **pre-intervention phase** I obtained base-line information by means of an interview with the teacher (see Appendix J for the pre-interview guide and Appendix B to view the thematic analysis of the transcribed pre-intervention interview) and non-participant observation, documented in the form of a research journal and field notes (see Appendix F). Towards the end of the interview, I explained the asset-based approach to the teacher and showed her how to incorporate it into her lessons (see Appendix C to view the original lesson plans and adapted lesson plans used to implement the asset-based approach).

During the **intervention phase**, the participating teacher implemented the asset-based approach in teaching Grade 7 learners. Data were collected by means of observations documented in a research journal (Appendix F). Documents were also collected, including examples of teacher reflections (Appendix E), learners' work (Appendix D) and the teacher's lesson plans (Appendix C). The adapted lesson plans are divided into the three phases of the asset-based approach, namely identifying, mobilising and managing assets (Eloff, 2006).

Firstly, learners identified their individual assets with the support of worksheets and by constructing asset maps. Asset maps (see Appendix D for examples of learners' asset maps) with four different sections (personal, study, family and friends, as well as school assets) were compiled by the learners during this stage as visual presentation of their assets (Eloff, 2006; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). The learners' assets could be divided into four main categories as indicated by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). The first category includes learners' individual assets such as personal skills and talents (indicated under the personal and study assets sections on the learners' asset maps). Secondly, the assets shared between the teachers and learners in school (indicated under the school assets section on learners' asset maps) formed a category. The next category includes the learners' assets available

in their relationships with others (indicated under the family and friends section of the learner's asset maps). The last category includes the economical and physical resources available to learners in the school context (under the school section of the learners' asset maps).

During the second stage of the intervention, learners took part in a *world of work day*<sup>ii</sup> where they had an opportunity to mobilise their assets by shadowing someone else for a day, for example a principal, secretary or a teacher. During this phase learners were encouraged to form relationships in order to mobilise their assets. Within these relationships assets were shared, exchanged and utilised (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Finally, during the third phase of managing assets, the teacher worked with the learners to combine action plans to manage their assets by keeping up the relationships that could mobilise assets (Eloff, 2006:22). During this stage new assets were identified and added to the learners' asset maps, for the process of the asset-based approach to start over again.

The ***post-intervention phase*** of the study was used to determine the teacher's experience of implementing the asset-based approach during the intervention phase. I collected data on the experiences of the teacher by means of a semi-structured interview (see Appendix J for the post-interview guide and Appendix G for a thematic analysis of the transcribed post-intervention interview) with her. A research journal (Appendix F) assisted me in reflecting on each session (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### 3.3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

During the pre- and post-intervention phases, I thus collected data by means of semi-structured interviews with the teacher on 9 May 2012 and 20 June 2012. Each interview of an hour was based on a selection of formulated questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005), which guided me during the interviews (see Appendix B & G) (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Punch, 2009). Questions were used in a flexible manner, yet with a clear focus in mind. As the focus for the research was to understand experiences, behaviour and beliefs, interviewing was essential to gain insight into the teacher's perspective (Merriam, 2009; Mayan, 2001). I audio-recorded the interviews and later transcribed them verbatim. Additionally, I documented my observations during the interviews in my research journal (Schurink, 1998c).

I selected semi-structured interviews to provide the teacher with an opportunity to discuss her experiences of implementing the asset-based approach and report on her everyday life in the classroom (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). One of the advantages of semi-structured interviews in this study was that it allowed me some flexibility in terms of the length of the sessions with the participant and enabled me to follow her interests and thoughts (Bell, 2010). Another advantage relates to the

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<sup>ii</sup> The world of work day formed part of the intervention phase to provide learners with the opportunity to mobilise their assets. During this day, learners were appointed for a job in which their personal assets were required.

freedom to explore the phenomenon at hand in-depth, collect sufficient data and deal with potential challenges that arose at the time (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Schurink, 1998a).

In conducting interviews, I faced certain challenges. Firstly several factors could have influenced the participant's view such as my personal bias. For the purpose of this research, it was important to hear the participant's voice. As one of the teacher's strengths was a love for learning; I faced the challenge of her choosing to follow my voice as researcher by adapting my views and opinions on the benefits of applying the asset-based approach. In response to this challenge, I continuously reflected on my personal bias and how it could have affected the participant's view, as indicated in the following extract from my research journal (Bell, 2010).

*As a researcher I have experienced it challenged me to keep my focus on the teacher's experiences and perspective as I could observe changes within the learners that the teacher did not observe at first. I was not sure whether I should share these findings in my discussions with the teacher. After reflecting on this challenge I realised that these findings formed part of my personal subjective meanings. After revisiting my research questions, I realised that the main aim was to learn more from the teacher's meanings and perspective of implementing the asset-based approach. This realisation guided my decision in not discussing my findings and perspective on the learners' change and behaviour with the teacher to minimise the influences of my personal bias on the teacher's meaning-making process. With my personal background, I have studied learner's behaviour as a teacher and as a student of Educational Psychology. Therefore I have personal subjective meanings in terms of learners' behaviour and change. As a researcher, I realised that my focus needed to remain on the teacher's experiences and perspectives and not my own. Furthermore I attempted to provide a safe space for the teacher to reflect her personal view and not the ideas that she might see as ideal (Research Journal, 16 May 2012).*

To ensure ethical and fair research, I conducted interviews after school hours, not taking the teacher away from her responsibilities. The sessions took place at a time that was convenient to her and at a place where she felt comfortable to share her views and perspectives, such as her home.

### **3.3.3.2 Observation and field notes**

In support of the semi-structured interviews, I used non-participant observation as data collection technique. I initially entered as a non-participant observer who did not participate in activities. However I attempted to establish a trusting relationship with the teacher in order to become a participant observer who was partially involved in the activities that took place during the intervention phase (Cresswell, 2007). I employed observations throughout the research process. These observations were documented in my research journal in the form of field notes and reflective thoughts (see Appendix F).

Observations allowed me with the opportunity to observe "live data from live situations" (Cohen *et al.*, 2003:305). I observed the behaviour of the teacher and learners as well as possible changing patterns of behaviour in implementing the asset-based approach. The advantage of using observation

was that I had the opportunity to observe events that the teacher could potentially feel uncomfortable to discuss during the interviews. Furthermore the observations formed an essential part of understanding the phenomenon under study because it could be used as one source of data to triangulate information (Merriam, 2009).

Babbie and Mouton (2001) mention another advantage in explaining that a researcher is able to observe verbal and non-verbal communication and any dissimilarities between the two. This was evident when the teacher explained during the pre-intervention interview that she believed the learners possessed potential. However, her non-verbal communication did not fully support this statement (Appendix B – Pre-II, P2, L 8)<sup>iii</sup>.

A potential challenge of using observations relates to the possibility of my presence (as researcher and as observer) making the teacher uncomfortable (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). In being aware of this challenge, I could address this by reflecting in my research journal. As a result, I effectively built up rapport with the teacher and prepared her in advance by explaining how and why observations would be used. Furthermore, I took the necessary actions to ensure confidentiality, anonymity and trust. The teacher did not seem to be uncomfortable with my presence in the classroom. Another essential step that I took was to explain to the learners that I was there to observe their teacher's experiences and not to assess them nor to identify their progress in any way.

Another challenge I experienced as researcher was to keep my focus on the research questions, centring on the teacher and her experiences, and not the experiences of the learners or my own (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). I found this challenging as the learners, the teacher and my own personal experiences were closely related. This led to another challenge in terms of potentially biased interpretations of the teacher's experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In response to this possible challenge I used the strategies of triangulation and member checking (see section 3.4.1) to ensure that I focused on the teacher's perceptions and experiences and not on my personal experiences and interpretations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

During the course of my research, field notes supported me to document the main events, activities and research proceedings (Mouton, 2003; Schurink, 1998c). My field notes did not merely include observations but also detailed descriptions when answering the questions what, when, where, how and who (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Schurink, 1998c). I agree with Merriam (2009:120-121) that one needs to observe different elements such as "the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors and my own behaviour". In my observations of the physical setting, I focused on the classroom layout, the atmosphere in the classroom which was influenced by interactions between the teacher and the learners, and possible assets available in the physical setting that could be mobilised. I observed the participating teacher's patterns of behaviour, how her

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<sup>iii</sup> The following codes apply to Appendix B: Pre-II = Pre-intervention interview; P = Page, L = Line.

behaviour affected the learners, her verbal and non-verbal communication as well as the changes in these factors before and after the intervention. It was also essential for me to write notes on my own behaviour and how it could possibly influence the study. These field notes supported other sources of data to contribute to a quality study (Leedy & Omrod, 2005). In addition field notes supported me to create a record of the research events, which meant that I could revisit these events at a later stage to triangulate these with other data sources (Mouton, 2001).

Field notes thus guided the research and data analysis processes (Schurink, 1998c). In addition to this, field notes served as a form of quality control in the study as it supported me in evaluating my research practice, events and decisions in order to ensure quality (Mouton, 2003).

### **3.3.3.3 Personal research journal and teacher's reflective journal**

Reflective thoughts on observations, feelings, experiences, questions and decisions that were made during the course of the research were collected in my own research journal and the teacher's (as co-researcher) reflective journal (Merriam, 2009; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002) (see Appendix F for extracts of my reflective thoughts and Appendix E for extracts of the teacher's reflective thoughts). Throughout I reflected on five different areas, namely the analysis of data; methods and strategies used; challenges and ethical dilemmas; personal framework and thoughts as a researcher; and points of clarity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). All reflective thoughts were part of the data for this research.

I recognised several strengths of using a research journal in this study. Firstly, reflections guided my thinking processes and provided me with an opportunity to justify decisions related to the research process and my contact with the participant. In addition to this, my research journal was helpful in identifying and addressing issues that I identified during the course of the research (Mayan, 2001; McMillan & Shumacher, 2001). Thirdly, the research journal supported me in identifying my subjective meanings, regulating my biases and eliminating misinterpretation of information (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2009). Lastly, my research journal contains notes on how I engaged with the research and identified possible questions for future research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Although a research journal supported me as researcher in many ways, I faced some challenges such as finding time every day to write thorough reflections. In response to this challenge, I followed the guidelines suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), aiming to always write the main points of the reflection immediately after each research session and then complete the reflections at a later stage.

### **3.3.3.4 Audio-visual data collection and visual documentation**

I obtained informed consent to record the semi-structured interviews with an audio-recorder. Transcribed interviews supported me in ensuring transferability, credibility, dependability, confirmability and authenticity, as this provided me with the opportunity to revisit the data and

consider possible concerns in relation to the quality criteria of the study as described in section 3.4. The strength of using an audio-visual data documentation technique is thus that it provided visual records of the semi-structured interviews and gave me an opportunity to view and face the “reality” of the situation (Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel, 1998). One challenge of including audio-recorded transcribed interviews is that it was time-consuming to create and difficult to interpret in a manner that the meanings of the participants were not misplaced (Cresswell, 2007). In response to this challenge, I used member checking to verify the meanings of the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005 & Merriam, 2009).

Visual data comprised photographs of the lessons that I observed (see Appendix D) during the intervention phase, the teacher’s asset map (see Appendix H) as well as the learners’ assets maps. I agree with Bogdan and Biklen (2003) that visual documentation such as photographs contributed to my research in the sense that I was able to capture details of the research. Furthermore I could use visual data in conjunction with other data in order to strengthen my findings (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

I agree with De Lange, Mitchell and Stuart (2007) that photographs may show something about a study at a specific time. Photographs can therefore be described as “visual field notes” (De Lange, Mitchell and Stuart, 2007:136). Photographs contribute to the richness of this study as they provided a rich source of data. Photographs could however become a possible challenge when the focus is more on the “looking at looking than looking at the doing” (De Lange, Mitchell and Stuart, 2007:136). To avoid this challenge, I triangulated the data obtained from the photographs with other sources of data.

### **3.3.3.5 Analysis of existing documents**

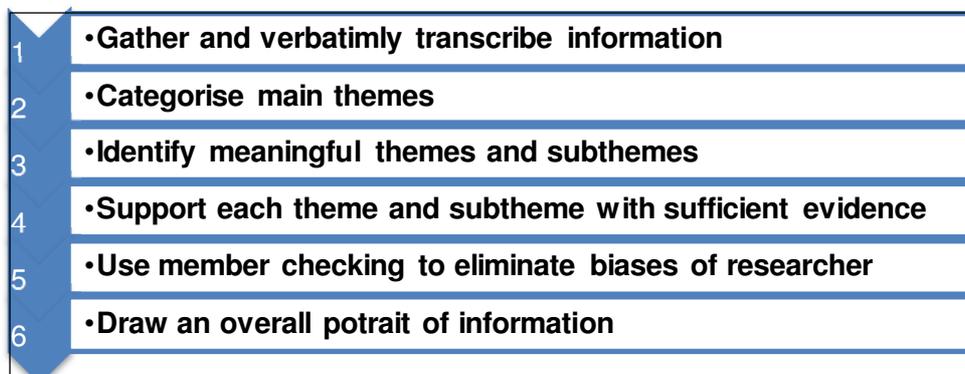
I analysed school work from three learners, who were indicated by the participating teacher (see Appendix D) as secondary data. The teacher’s lesson plans to incorporate the asset-based approach (see Appendix C) also formed part of the documents I analysed. I was thus not involved in the process of documentation of these documents yet relied on the participating teacher who collected them as data source.

Heaton (2008) explains that secondary analysis of qualitative data could support a researcher to verify findings and to answer research questions. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe three different types of sharing secondary data, namely personal data sharing in which personal documents created by a participant are shared such as school work, official data sharing where documents from an institution could be shared such as policies or minutes of a meeting, and popular culture data sharing such as music or movies. For the purpose of this study, I looked at the personal examples of three learners’ school work shared with the participating teacher, as well as the teacher’s asset map and the adapted lesson plans.

### 3.3.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

I conducted inductive content analysis (see Appendix B and G for examples) to analyse the data I obtained (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The first step was to gather all the information that had been obtained, and to read through all verbatim transcriptions and view all visual data in order to become familiar with the data. The second step was to identify and broadly categorise themes. Thirdly, I consulted with my supervisors in order to group the possible themes I identified into meaningful themes and subthemes. For the purpose of grouping these, I formulated and used inclusion and exclusion criteria (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The next step was to support each theme and subtheme with sufficient evidence using the different sources of information, namely the transcriptions of the interviews (Appendix B & G), research journal and field notes (Appendix F), teacher’s reflective journal (Appendix E), teacher’s asset map (Appendix H), examples of learners’ work and photographs (Appendix D). Following this step, I used member checking to eliminate subjective biases of me as researcher and any misunderstandings that could have occurred (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, member checking contributed to the quality criteria of the study, providing a true reflection of the teacher’s experience of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners. Finally I drew an overall portrait of the information and themes identified (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Figure 3.2 presents a visual outline of the steps I followed during the process of data analysis and interpretation.



**Figure 3.2: Steps of data analysis and interpretation**

The data analysis and interpretation phase therefore entailed an on-going process during which I identified essential meanings (Poggenpoel, 1998). The process was conducted by asking questions, searching and identifying meaning, seeking more data and using different sources of information in order to build a strong case (Mayan, 2001). As researcher, it was important for me to constantly return to my research questions in order to direct my focus and find answers to these questions (Poggenpoel, 1998).

I considered Bogdan and Biklen’s (2007) guidelines in analysing the data. I “disciplined myself not to pursue everything”, by directing my focus to the formulated research questions (Bogdan & Biklen’s,

2007:161). During the data analysis and interpretation phase, I focused on the importance of “observation comments”, by keeping a record of my observations in a research journal. I continuously developed ideas and consulted relevant research in relation to these ideas. By making use of regular reflections on what I have learned, I was able to see my growth as researcher and how it guided my decisions to contribute to qualitative research. Photographs supported me in capturing the process of the intervention and asset-based teaching. In order to revisit information, I made use of audio-visual devices to record and to document all interviews conducted. Lastly, I discussed potential themes and subthemes with the participating teacher during member checking to contribute to accurate and effective identification of themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

### 3.4 QUALITY CRITERIA

Confidence and quality are important in qualitative research, which is based on personal worldviews and assumptions. As a result, I had to address possible concerns with regard to the criteria of *credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As an introduction Table 3.2 summarises the different strategies I implemented.

**Table 3.2: Strategies to ensure quality in research**

Strategy	Definition	Example in research
Member checking	Verification of conclusions drawn with participants in the study. Misinterpretation of information could be eliminated (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Merriam, 2009).	The teacher’s comment during member checking: “I agree with the themes, you have grasped it well” <sup>iv</sup> (Member checking discussion, 29 November 2012).
Triangulation	Using multiple sources of information to cross-check information and to confirm findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Data could be triangulated in terms of methods, sources, analysts that review findings and theory (Patton, 2002).	I used several methods of data collection and documentation including verbatim transcribed interviews, observations in my research journal, extracts of the teacher’s reflections, photographs, the teacher’s asset map and examples of learners’ work in the form of asset maps and worksheets. The information came from different sources of information including the teacher’s observations and reflections, the learners’ opinions in their work and my observations. The findings were reviewed by me as researcher, my supervisor, co-supervisor as well as the participating teacher (during member checking) which indicated analyst triangulation.
Adequate engagement in data collection	Supporting the researcher to come as close as possible to fully understand and interpret the data accurately. With the help of this strategy, information started to repeat itself which in turn contributed to the quality of the study (Merriam, 2009).	Themes started to repeat themselves such as the change in the teacher’s thinking patterns. This was evident in the data from the interview, field notes and observations. The process of asset-based teaching and positive changes as a result were evident in the learners’ school work and the photographs taken during the intervention phase.

<sup>iv</sup> Translated into English for dissertation purposes from: “Ek stem saam met die temas, jy het alles mooi raakgevat”

Strategy	Definition	Example in research
Provide a rich and thick description	Paying attention to detail in the on-going process, including the conflicts and tensions between practice, theory and research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002).	In giving attention to detail, I was able to observe changes in the teacher's thinking patterns, behaviour and her teaching as well as how these changes affected the learners.
Reflect on personal bias and subjective opinions in research journal	My research journal included my reflective thoughts on observations, feelings, experiences, questions and decisions made during the course of the research (Merriam, 2009; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).	Extract from my research journal: "I became aware of my subjective meanings and bias towards the asset-based approach. Consequently, I ensured that my focus was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the teacher's perspective and avoid the exclusion of information based on my personal bias and belief" (20 June 2012).
Audit trail	Supporting the researcher to audit change, decisions and events, and to provide a detailed description of the course of the research (Koch, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999).	The audit trail for this research consisted of my research journal, field notes, the teacher's reflective journal, and examples of learners' school work, audiotapes and transcribed interviews.

### 3.4.1 CREDIBILITY

*Credibility* relates to the question whether or not findings make sense and how they support reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Ratcliffe (1983) explains that three key thoughts should be considered when conducting qualitative research. Firstly "data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator" (Ratcliffe 1983:149). Secondly, when a phenomenon is observed, it naturally changes. Finally, words cannot be seen as reality but rather a representation of reality. Therefore, as reality is always changing and being discovered, it can be viewed relatively and cannot be fully captured. Taking these thoughts into consideration, it was essential to evaluate the quality of this study through the lens of credibility. There are several strategies that could be used to enhance the credibility of a study such as thorough documentation, appropriateness of data, using multiple sources, the verification of data and consulting with others (Powers, 2011).

Patton (2002:552) refers to three key elements that could be used to judge the quality of a study. These elements include "using rigorous methods" to ensure high-quality data, taking the "credibility of the researcher" into account and considering "philosophical beliefs in the value of qualitative inquiry". In order to enhance credibility in relation to rigorous methods, I aimed to explain my pre-conceptualised beliefs and biases at the onset of the study. I used open-mindedness to discover new possibilities of collecting and interpreting data. The aim was to engage with the data and look for data that support my research questions. Another strategy that I used was to keep record of my classification systems and reasons for my choices (Patton, 2002). In addition to this, I used different ways of triangulation (as indicated in Table 3.2) to find compatibilities, consistencies and inconsistencies in the results (Patton, 2002). I also implemented member checking and adequate engagement in data collection as captured in Table 3.2 (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Each researcher perceives and analyse information differently. In order to enhance my credibility as researcher, I included personal information on my personal experiences and training in relation to the field of the study (Patton, 2002). I aimed to develop research skills, use creativity and engage with the selected methodology (Seale, 2004). I documented the challenges I experienced during the course of the research and reflected on possible bias, reactions in the research setting, changes in the research, potential personal incompetence and the influence of my presence on the participating teacher and the Grade 7 learners. To further enhance the credibility of the study I aimed to be emphatic, interested and neutral towards the participant's opinions and views (Patton, 2002). In terms of philosophical beliefs and perspectives, I aimed to understand and identify suitable qualitative methods for this study. I selected the methods after considering the benefits and challenges associated with each and choosing methods that could answer the research questions (Patton, 2002).

### **3.4.2 TRANSFERABILITY**

Transferability implies a rich, detailed description of the research setting and participants in order to make sense of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Powers, 2011). Detailed information and findings of the study can then be used by the reader in applying the findings to other settings (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). I aimed for transferability by using a research journal in which I documented my observations on the setting and participants, and then described this in detail in my mini-dissertation. Another strategy I used to enhance transferability was to use “the principal of proximal similarity” in which I aimed to keep the descriptions of events and settings as similar as possible to the original events in the research (Patton, 2002:581).

I am aware of the possible limitation of the findings of this study not being generalisable (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). However, the aim of the study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of one instead of generalising findings, in order to assist the reader in deciding on the extent of similarity between research contexts. A strategy to enhance the transferability of this study in spite of the challenge mentioned above was to identify which results of the study could be transferred to other studies in other contexts and which results are context-sensitive and not transferable. Within this study it might be possible to transfer the intervention to classrooms in different contexts. However the specific experiences of the teachers in terms of changes and challenges are not transferrable. Therefore I aimed to pay attention to the specific context of this study, for example the characteristics of the participants, as well as the controlled and uncontrolled conditions (Patton, 2002).

### **3.4.3 DEPENDABILITY**

Dependability indicates whether or not the same findings could be obtained if a study were to be repeated in a similar manner and context (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 1998; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). I am aware of the changing reality implied by qualitative research and therefore the

possibility of obtaining the same results in a different setting is limited. In qualitative research, it is more important to ensure that results are consistent with the collected data (Merriam, 1998). I aimed for this by using different sources of data and member checking to evaluate the recurrence of themes and subthemes from different sources.

Dependability involves auditing and reflexivity to demonstrate quality. I made use of an audit trail that supported me to include a detailed account of events, change and decisions made during the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999). The audit trail consisted of my research journal and field notes where I could critically reflect on the methodology I used, and my observations on site of the process of events. The teacher's reflective journal, my analysis of learners' school work, lesson plans and the teacher's asset map also formed part of the audit trail. In addition to this, I made use of audiotapes and transcribed all interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was further established through accurate maintenance of documentation and in providing evidence for conclusions. Documentation of the observations, notes, asset maps, interviews, artefacts and other methods was kept safely and copies of these were made and stored in separate places (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Powers, 2011). In addition to this, to enhance dependability it was important for me to justify the case of asset-based teaching in looking for patterns with the asset-based approach across studies (Patton, 2002).

#### **3.4.4 CONFIRMABILITY**

Confirmability supported me in ensuring that the focus and findings of the study were not based on my personal biases or subjective opinions as researcher but on the inquiry itself. To achieve confirmability, I aimed for a profound understanding of the findings and to ground any interpretations in the data (Powers, 2011). I used an audit trail that enabled me to link my findings, interpretations and conclusions to the results I obtained (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Mertens, 1998). In addition to this, I used reflections in my research journal to record my personal biases and subjective opinions in order for me to distinguish between my views and the views of the participants. In using thorough descriptions of the progress and processes I was able to revisit the data and to confirm preliminary results by means of member checking (Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002). Furthermore, attending to links in the findings supported me in confirming some of the findings (Patton, 2002; Seale, 2004).

#### **3.4.5 AUTHENTICITY**

Authenticity determines the integrity of qualitative research in the sense that it brings various descriptions, views and explanations together and develops a balanced view of these descriptions (Seale, 1999; Mertens, 1998). Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to different types of authenticity, namely "ontological authenticity" that refers to the degree of enhancing personal insights; "educative authenticity" which includes the understanding and appreciation of participants' opinions and

perspectives; “catalytic authenticity” to motivate change and action; and “tactical authenticity” that refer to the manner and grade of empowering participants’ actions (Powers, 2011:155). To obtain authenticity in the research, attention to detail in the on-going process was essential, including the conflicts and tensions between practice, theory and research. I paid attention to my moral responsibility as a researcher, and provided reasons for my decisions on when to take action.

I took a reflective stance in terms of my own practices and also reflected on possible limitations (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). In addition to employing a rich and detailed description, I used member checking. Employing these strategies contributed to a balanced view by me as researcher (Mertens, 1998). Furthermore methodology standards were used in my aim to contribute to accurate, quality and ethical research. In aiming to be open to possibilities, investigating findings thoroughly and learning how to improve things for future research, also possibly contributed to the authenticity of this study (Patton, 2002).

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

My expertise as a researcher is based on my postgraduate studies in Educational Psychology, my personal experience working as a teacher in England and completing my practical training as a counsellor. These experiences provided me with interviewing skills and qualities that assisted me to remain empathetic, neutral and objective during the research process, and also to reflect on my decisions and potential ways to handle challenges. In addition to this, I was guided by my supervisors, who provided me with accountable supervision and guidance. Their expert skills and comprehensive experience in qualitative research and the implementation of the asset-based approach supported me in conducting ethical research.

#### **3.5.1 PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

First, I obtained the necessary permission from the Department of Basic Education to conduct research in a primary school. Secondly, informed consent from the principal gave me permission to conduct research in the selected primary school. Next, I obtained permission to conduct research from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. Informed consent was also sought at the start of the relationship with the relevant teacher to participate in the research (Denzin, 2011). Refer to Appendix A for the relevant consent forms and permission letters to conduct the research.

Before analysing the existing documents (school work) of three Grade 7 learners, I sought permission from the learners’ parents and the learners themselves. Throughout, all were informed that participation was voluntary, and the full purpose of the research was disclosed. The participant (teacher) was informed of the outline of the intervention, the duration, the aim of the study, possible risks and the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Denzin, 2011; McMillan

& Schumacher, 2001; Mouton, 2003). Learners had the opportunity to ask questions before giving permission for their school work to be analysed, to ensure that they understood the purpose of the research and the meaning of permission (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Permission was also obtained to use a recording device during the interviews and to take photographs of the intervention process (Clesne, 2006).

### 3.5.2 CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMITY AND TRUST

I agree with Cohen *et al.* (2003); Denzin (2011); Josselson (2007); McMillan and Schumacher (2001); and Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002) that my responsibility was to safeguard the privacy of participants and the information they provided so that their identity could not be recognised by others. Therefore, I concealed identifying information on the visual data. Furthermore, I treated all data with confidentiality and the only other people who handled the data, were my supervisors. In line with this, an important guideline for me was that there are no easy solutions to potential research challenges. However, when one shows respect to people, is guided by ethical codes and communicates challenges, research that is fair and ethical may be produced (Clesne, 2006).

The participating teacher disclosed information about her teaching, yet not to the principal who had provided me with access to the teacher. A possible ethical challenge thus related to the power that the principal could hold. It was important to tell the principal about the research process and keep him informed, however, not to share the details of the conversation with the principal. I dealt with this potential challenge in protecting the privacy and dignity of the teacher who participated and aimed to safeguard her privacy in all aspects (Patton, 2002; Strydom, 1998). I assured the teacher that no information would be shared with others without her permission and that her own and the learners' names would not be revealed. Furthermore, I assured her that any private information that she felt should not be part of the research, would not be used or shared in any way (Josselson, 2007). In addition to this I hid the faces on all photographs in respect of confidentiality and anonymity.

Respect and trust were two essential ingredients to prevent harm, minimise risks and preserve the dignity and worth of the participating teacher (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Merriam, 1998). I aimed to avoid active deception of any kind and showed respect for the teacher's time by limiting the interviews to an hour each and by being prepared and on time for the interviews (Denzil, 2011). I further aimed to place myself in the participating teacher's shoes and be sensitive to her rights and feelings. I gave the participating teacher the opportunity to change or withdraw statements during the interviews or from the results. The teacher will also receive a copy of the final dissertation (Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

### 3.6 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

My role as a researcher was to engage with the participating teacher in a fair and professional manner and to reflect on my actions, to show the rationale behind each decision and to always behave in a morally justifiable way (Burton & Bartlett, 2009). Discussing potential ethical issues with my supervisors and how to deal with these contributed to fair research. The participating teacher was aware that the research was not about measuring her capabilities as a teacher, but rather obtaining an in-depth understanding of her experiences on implementing the asset-based approach in her classroom (Josselson, 2007). Furthermore my role was to ensure a calm, non-judgemental environment where the teacher could feel that she could openly and honestly share her experiences, opinions and views. In my experience I have learned to be sensitive towards people's reactions. Therefore I believe I was able to recognise when the participant felt uncomfortable (Josselson, 2007).

I used semi-structured interviews to ensure that the participant would feel comfortable with the questions I asked. I showed gratitude to the participant's time, cooperation and words in displaying appreciation and thanking her for her contribution to the research. Giving the participating teacher a sense of importance in listening effectively to her, showing appreciation and respect, and responding sensitively to her feelings, were all essential aspects of the research process (Clesne, 2006).

Throughout the research, I ensured that the participating teacher did not develop false expectations from the discussions on learners' achievements. I clarified at the start of the study exactly what the aim of the study was in order to prevent false expectations. Openness was a vital part of my research and in being open with the teacher and communicating effectively with her, I provided a basis for fair accountable research (Schostak, 2002).

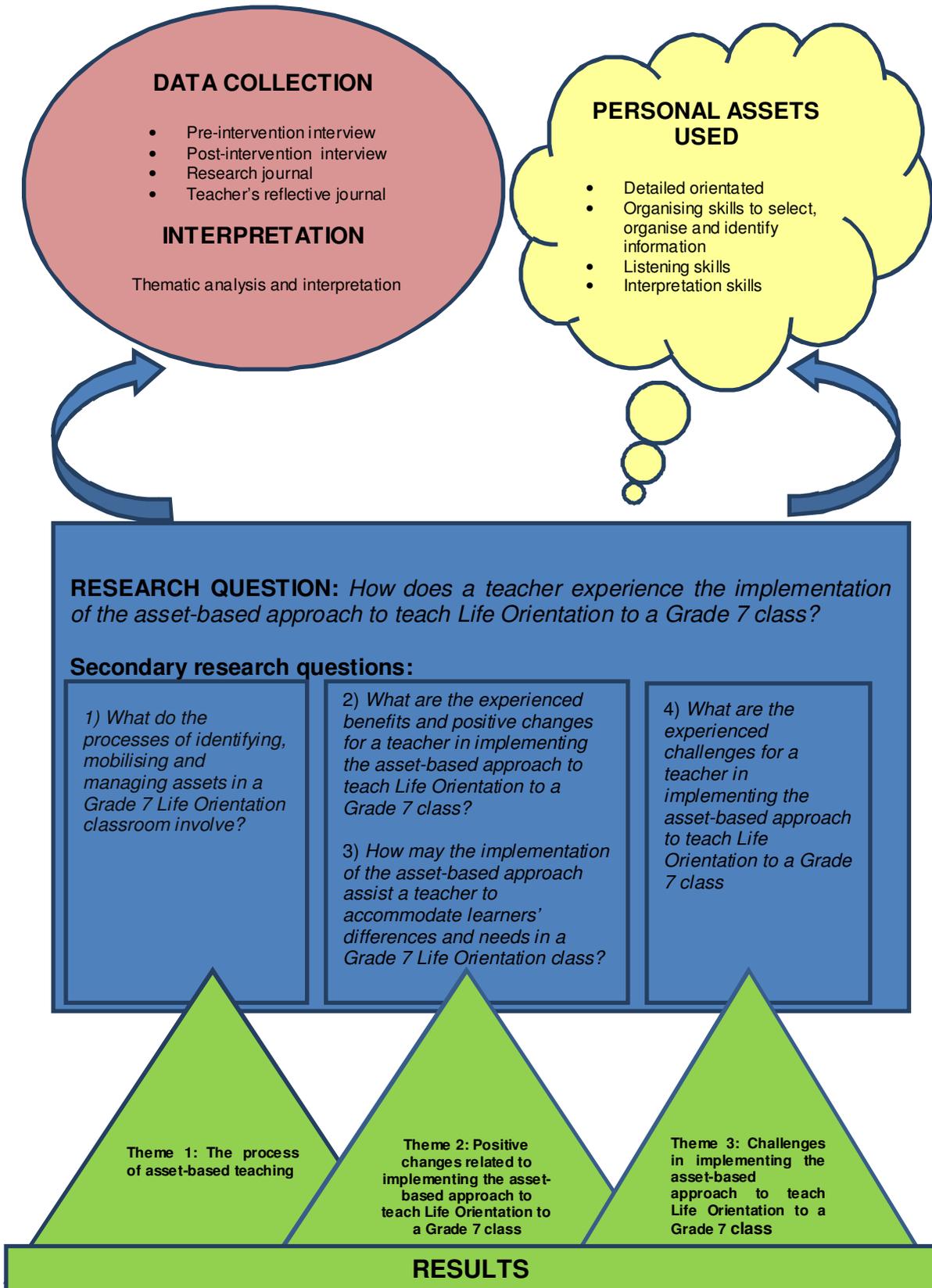
### 3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed and justified the methodological choices I made. I elaborated on my reasons for choosing qualitative research as methodological paradigm and Interpretivism as epistemology for this study. In line with the selected paradigmatic assumptions, I explained my reasons for choosing a case study design applying PAR principles. I also elaborated on the methods I used to collect, document, analyse and interpret data, and highlighted the strengths and potential challenges I faced in using these methods. In addition to these, I discussed the quality criteria of the study and concluded the chapter by explaining the ethical guidelines I had considered.

In the next chapter I present the results of the study. I discuss the results in terms of the themes and subthemes I identified during content analysis.

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# Personal Conceptualisation of Chapter 4



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, I explained the research methodology and strategies I used in this study. I described the selected paradigms, data collection, documentation, analysis and interpretation procedures. In this chapter I present the results of the study by indicating the themes, subthemes and categories that emerged subsequent to data analysis. Inclusion indicators guided me to categorise the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 1998). In presenting the themes, I include extracts from my research journal, verbatim transcripts of the interviews and the teacher's reflective journal. In the next chapter I relate these to existing literature and present the findings of the research.

#### 4.2 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Three main themes emerged. The first theme relates to the process of asset-based teaching, the second theme to positive changes associated with implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class, and the last theme to the challenges experienced by the teacher in implementing the asset-based approach. Figure 4.1 summarises the main themes and related subthemes. The change arrow indicates the change that took place from the pre-intervention phase to the post-intervention phase.

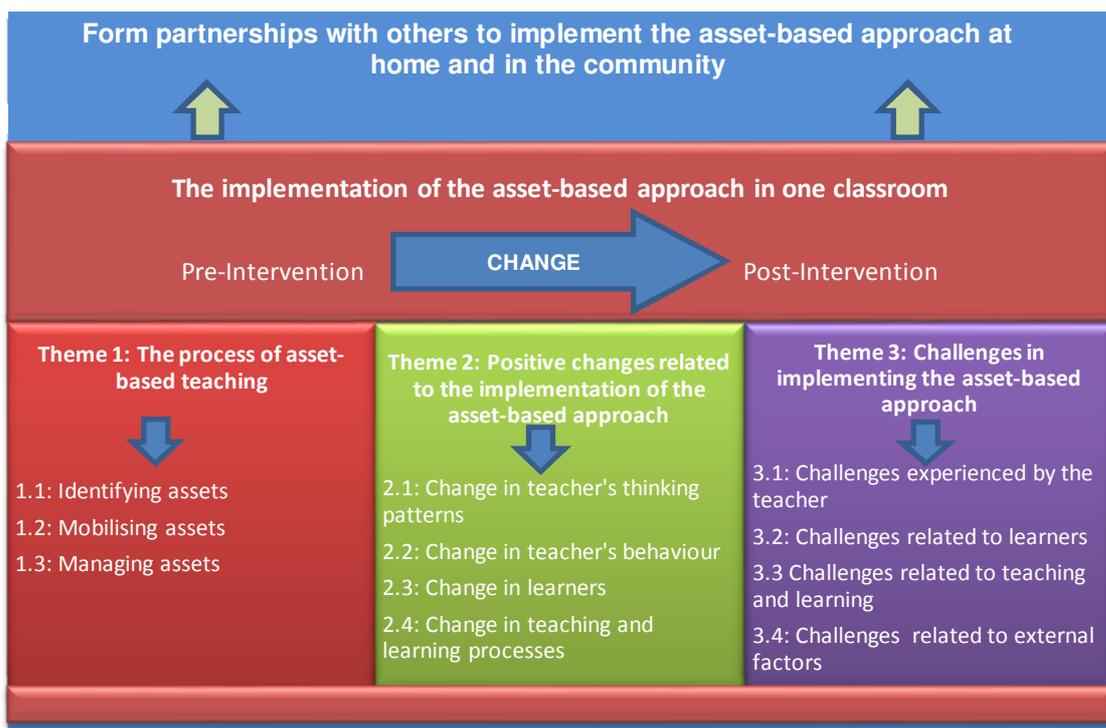


Figure 4.1: Overview of themes and subthemes

#### 4.2.1 THEME 1: THE PROCESS OF ASSET-BASED TEACHING

The first theme supported me in answering my main research question because it focuses on the process of asset-based teaching. The asset-based approach consists of three main phases, namely identifying, mobilising and managing assets (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). These phases constituted the subthemes for Theme 1 and present the meaning-making process of the participating teacher during each of these phases.

During the pre-intervention interview the teacher explained that she was unaware of the asset-based approach as well as the three phases that could be used to implement the asset-based approach: “...You are the first one who told me about it”<sup>1</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P7, L 160)<sup>v</sup>. During the post-intervention interview, the teacher indicated her view on the three phases of asset-based teaching: “I think the three phases converge well and I think it is a cycle that you can repeat”<sup>2</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P10, L 291). During all three phases of the process of asset-based teaching, the teacher emphasised the important value of the different role-players such as other teachers, parents at home and other members of the broader community: “I think everyone in the community should work together to identify, mobilise and manage the children’s strengths”<sup>3</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 214).

The results that emerged within Theme 1 from the three different phases of asset-based teaching, are discussed in terms of expected benefits before the intervention, benefits identified during implementation of the intervention, and future application of these phases. Table 4.1 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria I used.

**Table 4.1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 1**

Theme 1: The process of asset-based teaching		
Subthemes	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Subtheme 1.1: Identifying assets	This subtheme includes data related to the participating teacher’s experiences and observations in terms of identifying assets as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to the participating teacher’s experiences and observations in terms of identifying assets as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Subtheme 1.2: Mobilising assets	This subtheme includes data related to the participating teacher’s experiences and observations in terms of mobilising assets as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to the participating teacher’s experiences and observations in terms of mobilising assets as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.

<sup>v</sup> Translated into English for dissertation purposes from Afrikaans (See Appendix I for translations). In presenting the results, the following codes will apply: Pre-II = Pre-intervention interview; Post-II = Post-intervention interview; TRJ = Teacher’s reflective journal; SL1 = Work examples from learner 1 (Afrikaans Female, 13 years old); SL 2 = Work examples from learner 2 (Afrikaans Male, 12 years old); SL3 = Work examples from learner 3 (Afrikaans Female, 13 years old); P = Page; L = Line.

Subtheme 1.3: Managing assets	This subtheme includes data related to the participating teacher's experiences and observations in terms of managing assets as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to the participating teacher's experiences and observations in terms of managing assets as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
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#### 4.2.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Identifying assets

Prior to the intervention the teacher predicted three possible benefits related to the identification of assets in the classroom. The first predicted benefit was that learners could perhaps become aware of their strengths during this phase: “I think awareness of this is important so that they can use it”<sup>4</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P11, L 283). Secondly, as a teacher, she indicated that she could possibly use the identified assets in her classroom if she had knowledge about them: “I think if I know more or less as teacher what it is, then I can focus on it”<sup>5</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P10, L 256). Another predicted benefit relates to the possibility to subsequently identify the learners' assets at home: “If they can tell the people at home what their strengths are, they can use it at home”<sup>6</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P10, L 257).

During the pre-intervention phase the teacher seemingly believed that the best way to identify learners' assets would be by providing them with examples of possible assets that they could choose from as she was of the opinion that they could perhaps find it difficult to identify such assets independently: “They will not think that it could be a possible strength, so I think if you give them options to choose from, then they will choose”<sup>7</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P10, L 239). Subsequently to this view of the teacher, the learners were guided with worksheets to identify their assets during the intervention phase. The teacher made use of a smartie-game and worksheet (See Appendix D for an example of Smartie game worksheet of Learner 1) to identify their assets in general, a learning style preference worksheet (See Appendix D for an example of learning style preference worksheet of Learner 1), a learning habits worksheet (See Appendix D for an example of learning habits worksheet of Learner 1), and a multiple intelligence worksheet (See Appendix D for an example of multiple intelligence worksheet of Learner 1) to identify the learners' study assets.

The learners used these worksheets to construct asset maps for themselves as indicated in photograph 4.1. Photograph 4.2 provides an example of Learner 1's asset map. Examples of Learner 2's and Learner 3's worksheets and asset maps are available in Appendix D.



**Photograph 4.1:**  
Learners draw up asset maps of their assets



**Photograph 4.2:**  
Example of Learner 1's asset map as found in Appendix D

As an example Learner 1 identified the following personal assets: “I am calm, beautiful, and clever. I am good in ballet, netball and leadership. I enjoy laughing and playing at once. I have music skills and appreciate sound, rhythm and music. I have good movement skills such as run, kick, throw and balance. I can communicate well”<sup>8</sup> (Appendix D - Asset map SL1), using the smartie game-worksheet (Appendix D) and the multiple intelligence worksheet (Appendix D). She also identified family and friends as assets: “These people support me and believe in me: people close to me ... my mum and dad and family. My mum and dad will protect me. This helped me to ask people for advice ...”<sup>9</sup> (Appendix D - Asset map SL1) from the smartie game worksheet (Appendix D). Learner 1 further identified study assets from the remaining worksheets (Appendix D): “I like it to study in the afternoon. I do what teachers ask me to do and I do what my parents tell me to do. I am successful. When I start something, I will finish it”<sup>10</sup> (Appendix D - Asset map SL1). Learner 1 finally indicated assets and resources in school: “good teachers, good people that will help me, a library, friends and a lady that give me advice”<sup>11</sup> (Appendix D- Asset map SL1).

The teacher’s awareness of the learners’ strengths was mainly focused on factors external to the learners. When she was requested to list some of the learners’ strengths, she could initially only provide a list of three main external assets: “The opportunity to learn, the fact that there is a teacher that is willing to help and the fact that they have books and textbooks”<sup>12</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P11, L 286). The teacher initially seemed to find it difficult to identify assets within the learners and within herself as she was apparently focused on the challenges of teaching: “I thought that I could maintain good discipline in a class when I did my practicals as student teacher because my class was quiet and co-operated. Thus, discipline was one of my strengths, but I do not think it is anymore”<sup>13</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P12, L 301). The following extracts from my research journal explain my observation as researcher in terms of the participating teacher’s focus on such challenges:

*A repeating theme that emerged from the interview with the teacher was that she currently experiences great behaviour and discipline difficulty in her classroom. In addition to this, she feels*

*overwhelmed with the different challenges of teaching in a school where the learners are confronted with social and economical challenges. These challenges that the teacher seems to be experiencing, seemingly directed her focus away from the learners' assets as well as her personal and teaching assets as a teacher and the assets that she has available in her classroom to support her teaching* (Research Journal, 9 May 2012).

*During the lesson the terms assets and strengths were discussed and it was surprising to see that the learners didn't understand the meaning of the words. They further found it difficult to identify assets within themselves, and therefore it was important for the teacher to guide them in identifying these assets* (Research Journal, 16 May 2012).

In spite of these challenges experienced by the teacher, she seemingly felt positive about the intervention and predicted a possible change in the learners' focus: *"I think they can realise that in spite of the negative characteristics on which other people focus, they have positive characteristics on which they can focus. That they can work with someone on their challenges by focusing on their strengths"*<sup>14</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P14, L 382).

After implementation of the asset-based intervention, the teacher mentioned that benefits she expected prior to the research matched the benefits that she identified during the course of the study. One example of these benefits involves the idea that identification of learners' assets could potentially support learners to change their focus from challenges to assets. The identification of assets apparently did not only support the learners to become aware of their assets but also the teacher, as indicated in the following excerpts from her reflective journal: *"The identification of the assets phase supported me to use assets in future because I learned to understand the children better. For example the quiet girl in class started to participate in class and realised that she does not have to be quiet because her contribution in class is important. I think it helped them to get to know themselves, to identify their assets and to learn how to focus on their assets"*<sup>15</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 26); and also: *"The quicker the learners can identify and use their strengths to their advantage, the better"*<sup>16</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 92).

During the phase of identifying assets, the teacher identified her personal strengths as well as other assets with regard to her teaching. This was evident in her asset map, to which she added additional assets after the intervention, as presented in Appendix H.

In addition to the benefits predicted by the teacher before the intervention, the teacher reportedly discovered additional benefits of identifying assets during the intervention phase. One apparent benefit was that the teacher started to identify strengths in order to overcome some of her personal challenges. She explained one of her areas of growth as relating to learners upsetting her: *"...the fact that I show too much emotion"*<sup>17</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P8, L 217). However, she also explained how she had identified an asset to overcome this challenge: *"I think I can use the fact that I like being in control of a situation"*<sup>18</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P8, L 223).

According to the teacher another benefit of identifying assets was the learners' apparent enhanced understanding concerning their learning processes: "I think the identifying of assets helped the learners to better understand their study techniques and to understand their strengths when studying."<sup>19</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P2, L 47). One of the learners indicated that the intervention supported her in identifying her assets: "The school helped me to get to know my strengths"<sup>20</sup> (Appendix D - Asset map SL3).

The teacher explained that this phase of the asset-based approach contributed to a change in her action and positive changes within the learners: "I experienced that the fact that I focused positively on the learners gave them the chance to discover more potential in themselves".<sup>21</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 235). In addition to the benefits of identifying assets the teacher identified several related ideas that she wanted to use in future. Firstly, she seemed to believe that learners should learn to identify their assets at a much earlier stage: "...the earlier, the better, we should start in Grade R already for that matter"<sup>22</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P3, L 39). According to the teacher, this could support learners to identify their assets more easily and contribute to self-knowledge at an early age: "...I think a person must start in Grade R and every year have it as part of the learner profile and describe and describe and describe until at the end of matric you can say: wow, that is who I am and include it in your CV and say over 12 years that is how I got to know myself"<sup>23</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P3, L 44). Secondly, the teacher was of the opinion that self-knowledge on personality could support learners to further identify their assets: "There are different ways of how you can identify the learners' strengths for example looking at their personality types and in this way identifying their strengths"<sup>24</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 174).

According to the participating teacher another way to identify assets in future was to involve parents and the community: "I also think it is important that the learners' parents get to know their children's strengths. That can be done for example by holding a parents evening or handing out a document saying that we looked at your child's strengths and here is a summary thereof or give the parents the opportunity to say what they think their children's strengths are. A person can also highlight the strengths on the children's report cards. I think if the parents work with the teachers a lot can be achieved"<sup>25</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 188); and also: "The identification process of assets is not something that I alone need to do with the learners, but the other teachers must also see the potential... The process of identifying strengths is something that teachers, parents, the church and the community must do"<sup>26</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 236).

The teacher was therefore able to identify several benefits of implementing the first phase of the asset-based approach, namely that of identifying assets. She seemed excited to identify learners' assets in future. In terms of the learners' experiences, they seemed surprised by discovering their assets: "We did not actually know that we have so many strengths"<sup>27</sup> (Appendix D – Learner

discussion with teacher, SL 2, L8); and also: “I have learned a lot more about my strengths”<sup>28</sup>(Appendix D – Learner discussion with teacher, SL 1, L 22).

The following extract from my research journal explains how I observed the benefits of the phase of identifying assets:

*During the lesson observation, I started to wonder why the teacher and the learners found it so hard to identify assets within themselves and whether it could be that the people around them focused so much on their personal flaws or difficult circumstances that they forgot that they had assets or strengths at all. It seemed as if the use of the asset-based approach already made a difference during the first lesson in the first phase of the intervention for some learners (Research Journal, 16 May 2012).*

#### **4.2.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Mobilising assets**

The next phase of the asset-based approach involves mobilising assets. A *world of work day* was implemented as part of the intervention to provide learners with the opportunity to mobilise some of their individual assets. In doing so learners reportedly gathered some knowledge of possible careers. This day was planned and executed in three main steps. The first step for the learners was to “apply” for a work that matched their individual assets. Appendix D shows an example of an application form.

The learners apparently experienced this step as challenging as they had limited access to career knowledge and found it hard to match their assets to a suitable career: “As the learners completed their application forms for the world of work day, they appeared to be very interested and excited. They did however find it difficult to use their new found skills to complete the forms. With guidance they were capable of completing the application forms and understand that they had to apply for jobs in which they could use their personal assets”<sup>29</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P2, L 60).

The following extract from my research journal supports the teacher’s experience:

*During phase 2 the teacher explained the different work opportunities that were available for the world of work day. There were a few occupations that the learners were not aware of and not sure what should be done in this kind of work or what assets could be used in the work. The occupations were therefore explained to the learners especially occupations such as engineering, artisanship or psychology. In explaining these, the specific strengths related to these occupations were also identified in order for the learners to complete their application forms for the different work opportunities. The learners had to apply for a specific work using their assets which will be used during the world of work day. The learners found it difficult to match their identified assets with a desired career for the day. However they found the whole activity a very rewarding one (Research Journal, 22 May 2012).*

Even though the learners found it challenging at first, they were seemingly able to match their assets with suitable occupations and applied for these. Table 4.2 indicates the different occupations that the learners applied for during the *world of work day* and how they linked their assets, favourite subjects and hobbies to the specific occupations as indicated in the different learners’ application forms in

Appendix D. Learners seemed to apply mostly for careers that suited their assets, for example Learner 2 who had qualities such as good manners and respect that could be used in the occupation as principal.

**Table 4.2: Summary of learners' application forms for world of work day**

Occupation	Assets	Hobbies	Favourite subjects
<b>Learner 1</b>			
Photographer / Psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loyal</li> <li>• Punctual</li> <li>• Calm</li> <li>• Enjoy laughing and playing</li> </ul>	Taking pictures of people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art</li> <li>• Natural Science</li> </ul>
<b>Learner 2</b>			
Principal / Artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly</li> <li>• Good manners</li> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• Obedient</li> <li>• Responsible</li> <li>• Good at controlling things</li> </ul>	Playing soccer and watching a movie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Art and culture</li> </ul>
<b>Learner 3</b>			
Secretary / Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly</li> <li>• Beautiful</li> <li>• Like to be very busy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singer</li> <li>• Modelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afrikaans</li> <li>• Life Orientation</li> <li>• Arts and Culture</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> </ul>

The next step was to prepare for the *world of work day*. The following excerpt from my research journal explains this step:

*In preparing for the world of work day, the teacher supported the learners to complete an action plan for the day in which they explained how they would use their identified assets during the world of work day. The idea of the action plan was for the learners to identify relationships that could support them in mobilising their assets. These relationships provide resources that could be used to mobilise the assets of the learners. The teacher seemed to find it meaningful to know that the relationships with the learners' parents, friends, and other teachers could be meaningful in the mobilising of assets. The learners were all able to identify meaningful relationships that could support them in mobilising their assets. As the teacher explained that many of the learners' experienced challenges in their relationships and circumstances at home, it was meaningful for them to know that they also had meaningful relationships that could support them in mobilising their assets (Research Journal, 25 May 2012).*

The participating teacher experienced this step of the asset-based approach as an important one as the learners reportedly obtained access to assets within their relationships with others: “**They thought about where they had to go if they needed assistance**”<sup>30</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 79). The learners

identified several people such as their teachers, friends and family who supported them in their preparation for the *world of work day*: “Other people supported me to do a big job like being a principal”<sup>31</sup> (Appendix D – Asset map, SL 2); “The teacher showed me how to communicate”<sup>32</sup> (Appendix D – Learner discussion with teacher, SL 1, L 16); and also: “the principal’s secretary supported me. She told me what I can do when I am with the principal, what the principal will say and how it feels to be a principal”<sup>33</sup> (Appendix D – Learner discussion with teacher, SL 2, L 17).

The third step included the *world of work day*. The teacher identified several associated benefits of using the *world of work day*: “The learners learned a lot from the world of work day. It gave them the opportunity to identify the skills required for specific jobs”<sup>34</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P2, L 74). The learners supported this statement in their work: “I learned that I need to be responsible because I would have done this if I were a real principal because there would be people that work for me at that moment”<sup>35</sup> (Appendix D – experience reflection sheet, SL 2). The day allegedly supported the learners to mobilise their assets and identify new assets in the process: “The entrepreneurs who need leadership and management skills. They realised that they required the skills and during the world of work day they for example realised that they can dish out work and can be in control of the situation at the same time so I think it taught them about their strengths and how to mobilise them”<sup>36</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P11, L 318); and also: “Further it helped the learners to mobilise their strengths on the day and to identify new strengths”<sup>37</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 76). Learner 1 identified the following new assets in being a photographer and psychologist: “Good communication and listening skills, respectful, honesty and helpfulness”<sup>38</sup> (Appendix D – experience reflection sheet, SL 1). Learner 2 identified new assets while being a principal: “I know that I can take on big responsibilities”<sup>39</sup> (Appendix D – Asset map, SL 2). Learner 3 identified being friendly as a new asset: “to make other people’s day in being friendly”<sup>40</sup> (Appendix D – Workbook, SL 3). Photographs 4.3 - 4.6 present the different occupations that the learners took part in during the world of work day.



**Photograph 4.3:**  
The learners who were hired as engineers mobilised their strengths to build a bridge



**Photograph 4.4:**  
The learners who were hired as entrepreneurs mobilised their assets to sell cup-cakes



**Photograph 4.5:**  
The learners who were hired as psychologists mobilised their strengths to support possible clients



**Photograph 4.6:**  
The learners who were hired as photographers mobilised their assets to take photographs of other learners

During the phase of mobilising assets, the *world of work day* taught learners how to mobilise their assets. They seemed quite surprised by this discovery, as captured in my research journal:

*The experience taught them how their assets could be used in the different jobs. It seems as if the learners live in a world where they are confronted with negativity in which they focus on what they cannot do or their daily failures. As the world of work day focused on showing the learners that they had potential and could do something well, the learners felt surprised by their assets and abilities (Research Journal, 30 May 2012).*

The teacher's beliefs prior to the intervention on her responsibility in terms of the mobilisation of learners' asset were different from her beliefs after the intervention: "I think it is more the children's responsibility but I must be aware of it to be able to help them"<sup>41</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P11, L 268). After the intervention, the teacher explained that the process of mobilising assets showed her the importance of supporting the learners in mobilising their assets: "I think as a teacher I can help them to mobilise it"<sup>42</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 81). This idea is also evident in my research journal, as captured in the following extract:

*Teacher found it challenging but she was able to show trust in the learners in spite of their fears and misbehaviour and focused on using their assets during the day. The teacher's trust and positive attitude towards the learners supported the learners to carry out the different jobs in a very successful manner and it gave them the opportunity to mobilise their assets during this day (Research Journal, 30 May 2012).*

The participating teacher explained that she increasingly focused on the learners' identified strengths and in doing so gave them the opportunity to mobilise these assets in class: "if a person focuses on how they learn, for example a child who prefers to draw rather than write, then it will help a lot"<sup>43</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P6, L 148). In the teacher's view learner reflection was another experienced benefit during the mobilising assets phase: "I feel that the mobilising of assets has helped the children to learn how to reflect over their assets and to use them"<sup>44</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 78). According

to the teacher, a further benefit of mobilising assets was that the learners reportedly found ways to mobilise their assets to support their studies: “Also the way they learn and the way they use it. I think it will help them until the day they have finished studying”<sup>45</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 80).

In terms of future application the teacher explained that cooperation with other teachers in the school was important: “I believe all the teachers must work together to help the learners with this. I can’t work on this on my own. Therefore I think the whole school can benefit from implementing the asset-based approach. So if all the teachers work together and focus on the children’s strengths then the children can be supported to become a success in life instead of for example where their parents are at the moment”<sup>46</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P2, L 42). She further explained that she planned to focus more on the mobilisation of assets in other subjects in future thereby extending her utilisation of the asset-based approach: “So I think I will incorporate it more and more in my subjects”<sup>47</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P4, L 74).

The teacher thought of ways that she could include the mobilising asset phase in her lesson plans by making it part of her teaching on a regular basis: “... for example dividing the class into groups based on their strengths like this is the great listeners, this is the public speakers and so forth you develop opportunities to use the children’s strengths”<sup>48</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 171); and also: “And maybe you can regroup them and tell them to sit together based on their strengths”<sup>49</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P4, L 101). This strategy could possibly provide learners with responsibilities in the classroom that compliment their assets and in turn contribute to the mobilisation of their assets: “Or I can group the children together based on their strengths and give them responsibilities that relates to the lesson”<sup>50</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 166). An abstract from my research journal elaborates on this idea:

*The teacher came up with a few useful ways that she would like to use to mobilise the learners’ assets in future such as divide the learners into groups and give them responsibilities in the classroom that match their assets (Research Journal, 1 June 2012).*

#### **4.2.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Managing assets**

According to the teacher the phase of managing assets is an essential phase that concludes the process of asset-based teaching. This phase includes revision, evaluation and management of assets and strengths: “The management of assets was an important part of the intervention. The final phase of the asset-based approach gave the learners the opportunity to evaluate their assets and add newly found assets to their assets-maps”<sup>51</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 101); and also: “...the managing part is very important, you need to kind of evaluate whether or not it is still a strength or whether it has changed. It is actually a cycle that you need to personally undertake and continue with”<sup>52</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P10, L 296).

The teacher was of the opinion that the phases of asset-based teaching formed part of a continuous integrated cycle: “The three phases of the assets based approach works together well like a cycle that can be repeated in the future”<sup>53</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 103). I captured the teacher’s opinions with regard to the phase of managing assets as follows:

*During the lessons in the managing assets phase the teacher taught the learners how their assets could be managed by adding their newly identified assets from the world of work day to their asset maps and think of ways how they could mobilise and manage these assets in future* (Research Journal, 1 June 2012).

The participating teacher also emphasised her role in supporting learners to manage their assets: “I think that I as a teacher must help them to manage it like continuing to remind them. I think I must remember to work in something so that we go back every now and then and work on it again, like working it into a lesson plan”<sup>54</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P11, L 327). She elaborated on her role in assisting learners to manage their assets in the classroom: “Therefore I realised that there is so much more to do in a school environment than I am doing. Like identifying the opportunities where learners can use their strengths”<sup>55</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 163).

Furthermore, the teacher reflected on possible ideas to manage learners’ assets: “I will be able to use it in future, I think as part of the Life Skill Orientation curriculum everyone must write their strengths in their books or put them up somewhere in their rooms”<sup>56</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P2, L 27). She was of the view that visually displaying learners’ assets might support learners to manage their assets: “to remember them what they like and what they are good in and to use it like that”<sup>57</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P4, L 77). The teacher reflected that the learners’ assets should be revisited at least each term, as this could provide the learners with the opportunity to evaluate their assets and add new identified assets: “I think in the upcoming term I should allow everyone to speak about their strengths and then they can focus on them again”<sup>58</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P7, L 169); and also: “Every term you must do an assignment on their strengths and how they use them”<sup>59</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 86).

The teacher further identified ways for herself to implement this phase into her lessons: “To implement it in future you can make notes on your lesson plans”<sup>60</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 165). She explained that collaboration between different systems within the bio-ecological model such as the individual, school and health services during the mobilising assets phase is essential: “I also think everyone in the community must work together to identify, mobilise and manage their strengths”<sup>61</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 214); and also: “A person can ask for advice from many other people like other teachers and psychologists on how to treat the class to mobilise their strengths”<sup>62</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 168).

#### 4.2.2 THEME 2: POSITIVE CHANGES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

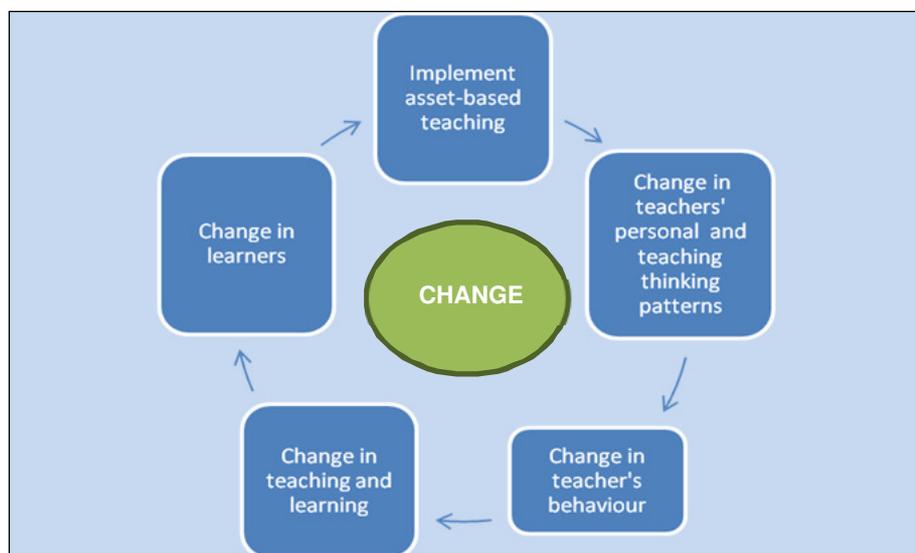
The second theme that I identified relates to positive changes as a result of the implementation of the asset-based approach in a Grade 7 classroom. These changes are discussed in terms of the following four subthemes: (i) changes related to the teachers' thinking patterns, (ii) changes in relation to the teacher's behaviour, (iii) personal changes within the learners, and (iv) changes in relation to teaching and learning processes. Table 4.3 provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria I used.

**Table 4.3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 2**

Theme 2: Positive changes related to the implementation of the asset-based approach		
Subthemes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Subtheme 2.1: Change in teacher's thinking patterns	This subtheme focuses on positive change or outcomes in terms of the teacher's thinking patterns as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to positive change or outcomes in terms of the teacher's thinking patterns as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Category 1: Change in teacher's personal thinking patterns	This category includes data related to changes in the teacher's personal thinking patterns as an outcome of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to changes in the teacher's personal thinking patterns as an outcome of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Category 2: Change in teacher's thinking about teaching patterns	This category includes data related to changes in the teacher's thinking patterns on her teaching practices as an outcome of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to changes in the teacher's thinking patterns related to her teaching practices as an outcome of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Subtheme 2.2: Change in teacher's behaviour	This subtheme includes data related to changes in the teacher's behaviour as an outcome of the asset-based intervention.	Any reference not related to changes in the teacher's behaviour as an outcome of the asset-based intervention.
Subtheme 2.3: Change in learners	This subtheme focuses on personal changes in learners as observed and experienced by the teacher, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to personal change in learners as observed and experienced by the teacher, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Subtheme 2.4: Change in teaching and learning practices	This subtheme focuses on positive change or outcomes in terms of teaching and learning practices as experienced by the teacher during implementation of the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to positive change or outcomes in relation to teaching and learning practices as experienced by the teacher as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.

The subthemes in Theme 2 are in an interactive relationship with one another in the sense that the changes in each subtheme influenced the changes in other subthemes. As a result of implementing the asset-based approach, the teacher changed her personal and teaching thinking patterns which in

turn changed her behaviour in the classroom. Due to the change in the teacher's behaviour, there in turn was a change in her teaching. Consequently the teacher was also able to identify changes within the learners as illustrated in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2: Cycle of change as a result of asset-based teaching**

The cycle of change as a result of asset-based teaching was evident in the teacher's reflective journal: "What I learnt is that the more one believes in learners, the better the chance of trusting them with more responsibilities. For example, one boy in my class acted very unpredictably but the way I worked with him led to me achieving more with him than most other teachers. I could see that the fact that someone believed in him changed his behaviour. I learned to get to know the learners better and in turn they learned to trust me because I listened to what they had to say and this made them feel important"<sup>63</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 142). The interactive relationship between these changes is further evident in the following excerpt from my research journal:

*What was evident during the interview was the way the teacher started to applying the asset-based approach to herself. This directed her change in her thinking patterns and behaviour and in turn influenced her teaching. During the interview, the teacher reflected on her personal growth. As researcher I could see the teacher's growth from the pre-intervention phase interview. She reflected on her experiences on implementing the asset-based approach and in the process discovered her own growth and how her reflections contributed to this growth (Research Journal, 20 June 2012).*

#### 4.2.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Change in teacher's thinking patterns

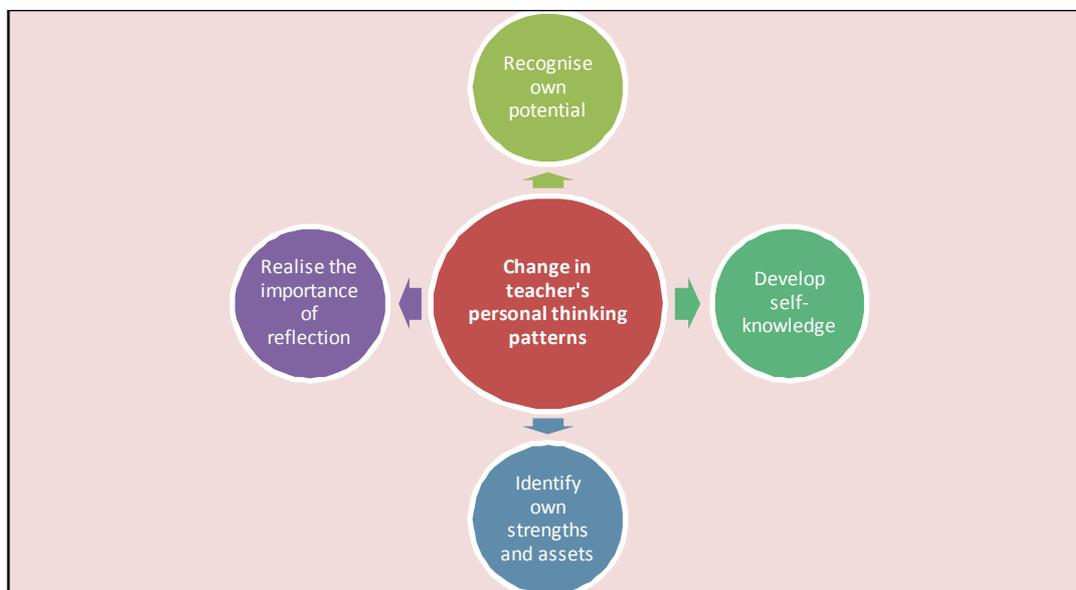
This subtheme relates to the changes in the participating teacher's thinking patterns, in terms of two categories, namely the teacher's personal thinking patterns and the teacher's teaching patterns. The teacher explained that she changed her focus to strengths, assets and positive aspects: "Learned to focus on the positive. I think the positive and strengths go hand in hand"<sup>64</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P2, L 12). In changing her thinking patterns she was able to gather new insight about herself, the learners

and her teaching: “I think it was a very positive experience that gave me the chance to see different sides of myself, other possibilities and also more potential in the children”<sup>65</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 454). The teacher’s reported change in her thinking patterns is supported by the following excerpt taken from my research journal:

*As researcher I expected the teacher to reflect on the learners’ change that she experienced as a result of implementing the asset-based approach. However, she reflected more on her personal change and growth as a result of the intervention. I was surprised by this new emerging theme in the research and realised that if you put your personal expectations as researcher aside, it would increase the possibility to discover the important meanings that the participants bring to the research* (Research Journal, 20 June 2012).

**(a) Category 1: Change in personal thinking patterns**

Prior to the intervention, the teacher predicted that a change in her thinking patterns towards assets might be beneficial in dealing with challenges: “I think if a person focuses on the positive he/she can work on the negative subconsciously”<sup>66</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P13, L 336). After the intervention, the teacher explained that she experienced positive changes in her personal thoughts: “It is a bit of a mind-shift”<sup>67</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P2, L 15). Figure 4.3 illustrates these positive changes that seemingly contributed to her growth as a person and as teacher in terms of recognising her potential; developing her self-knowledge; focusing and identifying her personal strengths, assets and positive aspects; and doing personal reflections.



**Figure 4.3: Positive outcomes as a result of the teacher’s change in her personal thinking patterns**

The teacher’s change in personal thoughts supported her in focusing on her personal assets and strengths which in turn supported her to view herself differently “... to see potential in yourself”<sup>68</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P2, L 15). In addition to identifying potential within herself, her self-knowledge increased in terms of her awareness of her assets and strengths: “I think the part that I found most

useful was the chance to get to know the positive side of myself”<sup>69</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P3, L 54); and also: “I got to know myself better”<sup>70</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P3, L 60). The teacher regarded the development of self-knowledge as essential as she felt that there was a gap in her self-knowledge in terms of her assets and strengths: “...few people (even I who am 24) still do not know exactly what their strengths are because life goes on about a lot of other stuff and then you don’t realise that you are good with this and not that”<sup>71</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P12, L 351). The changes in her personal thoughts led her to be in a better position to identify her personal strengths, assets and positive aspects which in turn led to the mobilisation of these assets and her facing certain challenges: “But I can apply my strengths more by focusing on them and developing them. Focusing on my strengths also supported me in dealing with my weaknesses”<sup>72</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P8, L 210).

Finally, the teacher became aware of the importance of personal reflection. During the course of the research, she realised that reflection is important in order to organise personal thoughts and reflect on decisions and actions: “You learn to resolve things within yourself”<sup>73</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P10, L 300). Prior to the intervention, the teacher explained that she would not usually reflect on her thoughts because she felt that it was time-consuming: “...I think a person gets little time to reflect on oneself”<sup>74</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P10, L 298). Another reported reason was that it was apparently not easy for her to reflect: “As a person I don’t reflect easily on things that bother me. I will rather divert my attention and handle it subconsciously... Therefore it was difficult to reflect during the intervention”<sup>75</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 153).

However, the teacher explained that the research process taught her to use reflection to obtain a better understanding of her thoughts and actions: “But with the intervention I learned to reflect and that is how I realised how I resolve problems and think about things”<sup>76</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 157); and also: “At the beginning of the year my job as a teacher was just plain difficult and I think that the intervention helped me reflect on what I do as a teacher and that helped me a lot just like I am reflecting now”<sup>77</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 195). The teacher indicated that she had benefited from learning how to reflect and that subsequently she believed that she could use this skill on a daily basis: “I think it is great that I learned to reflect and I think you must use it in all aspects of your life, your relationships and your work”<sup>78</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 158). As researcher, I could also see the growth of the teacher when comparing the pre-intervention phase with the post-intervention phase, captured as follows in my research journal:

*What was evident for me was the fact that the teacher did not seem very confident in sharing personal reflections about herself and her teaching. I have learned from my master’s studies in educational psychology that reflection is an essential part of personal and professional growth, therefore one of the predicted benefits of this study might be personal or professional growth of the teacher as a result of learning how to reflect on her experiences and decisions (Research Journal, 9 May 2012).*

*As the researcher, I could see further growth in the teacher's reflections and teaching such as that she was more aware of her actions and thoughts and how it directed her teaching (Research Journal, 29 June 2012).*

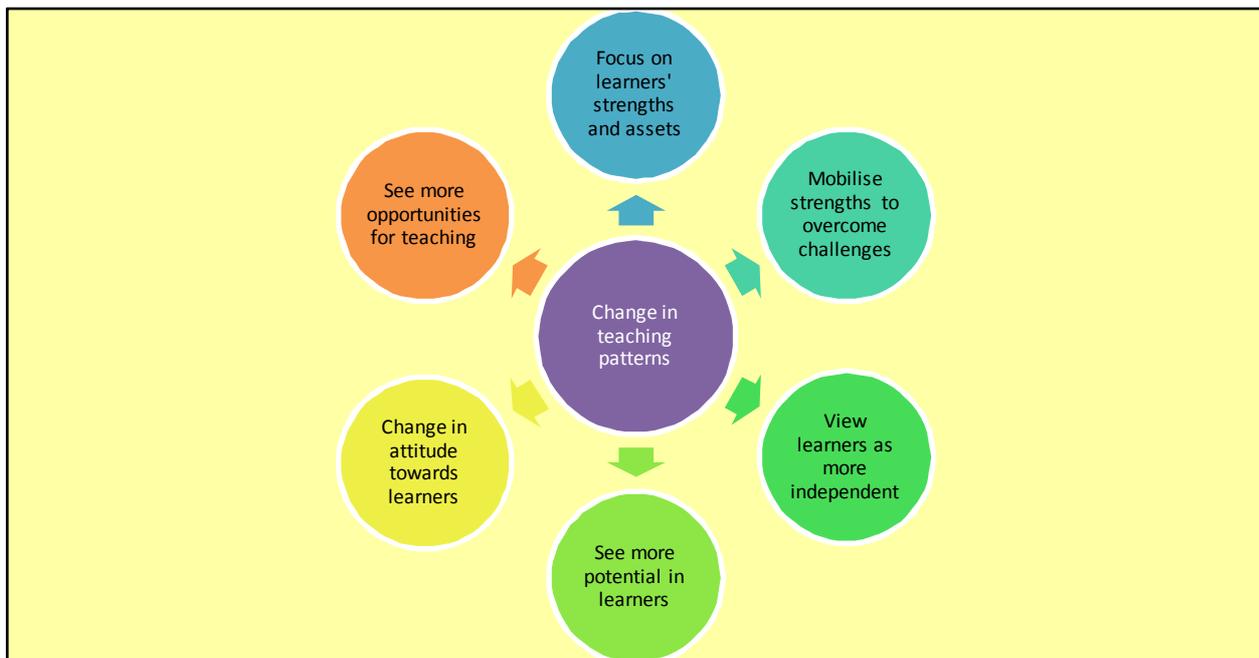
## **(b) Category 2: Change in teaching patterns**

The second category focuses on the teacher's change in her thinking with regard to her teaching patterns. Data in this category showed how the teacher moved her focus away from the challenges in the classroom towards available assets and strengths as captured in the following extracts from my research journal:

*Another expected benefit of implementing the asset-based approach during the intervention phase might be to direct the teacher's focus towards the assets that she has available to use in her teaching (Research Journal, 9 May 2012).*

*Personally, I have realised how we as human beings are so focused on what is wrong and what should be fixed that we forget to look for the assets and strengths in one another that could support us in our challenges. The teacher seemed so focused on the challenges in her classroom such as the discipline difficulties, the amount of admin work, the challenges of maintaining the learner's attention, that she seemed to lose focus on the assets and strengths that she has within herself, her classroom and within her learners. As her focus started to move away from the challenges towards the assets, she seemed to develop a positive attitude towards teaching as a whole. This indeed did not mean that she forgot about the challenges that she was facing but rather her focus did not remain on the challenges that she could see the assets and strengths. The implementation of the asset-based approach supported the teacher to move her focus and in turn support her learners to move their focus (Research Journal, 30 May 2012).*

The change in the teacher's thinking patterns related to her teaching practices were also evident in the following verbatim quotations: "I learned to think outside the box"<sup>79</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P2, L 22); and also: "It really made me think differently about the matter"<sup>80</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 470). The teacher explained that the implementation of a different approach in her classroom supported her to change: "the fact that someone else's approach was incorporated really helped me"<sup>81</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P2, L 4); and also: "I felt that not only did I benefit from it but the children as well"<sup>82</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P2, L 5). The six positive outcomes as a result of the teacher's change in her teaching patterns are namely an increased focus on learners' strengths and assets; mobilising strengths to overcome challenges; viewing learners as more independent; seeing the potential of learners; a change in mindset that led to changed attitudes towards learners; and realising more opportunities in teaching. These positive outcomes are visually presented in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: Positive outcomes as a result of the teacher's change in her teaching patterns**

The teacher therefore firstly seemed to believe that the change in her thinking patterns led her to focus more on the learners' assets and strengths: "I think the intervention helped me to focus on the children's strengths and on the learners that want to work"<sup>83</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 134). The change supported her to see the learners in a different light: "Instead of focusing on the children's weaknesses which are obvious I can focus more on their strengths"<sup>84</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P3, L 61). Furthermore, she demonstrated the ability to focus on her strengths as a teacher instead of developing negative thoughts due to difficult circumstances: "I realised that I have many strengths and therefore I must just focus on them instead of thinking, okay that was a bad day so I must be a bad teacher. I think that changed my mindset a little"<sup>85</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P7, L 181).

Secondly, in line with the teacher's adjusted focus on the learners' assets, it supported her to focus less on the challenges in her classroom: "I stopped focusing on the problems that the children bring along like poor discipline. This helped me to find ways to deal with the discipline problems and not allow them to demoralise me"<sup>86</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 176). She dealt with these discipline difficulties in identifying and mobilising underutilised assets within herself that could support her in this: "I also identified my strengths that way and found that I have a lot of patience"<sup>87</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 179). The way the teacher changed her focus and dealt with the discipline difficulties in her classroom is further evident in the following excerpt from my research journal:

*It was evident to me that it was particularly difficult for the teacher to identify assets within the learners as the teacher's attention was focused on the discipline difficulties of the learners and on being in control of the classroom. The teacher appeared to focus more on the negative aspects of the learners and not on their assets. In my discussion with the teacher during break time, we discussed a few strategies which are underlined by the asset-based approach in order to deal with some of the*

*behaviour difficulties in class. One of these strategies includes focusing on the positive behaviour that the learners display and to look for any strengths and assets within the learners. The activity supported the teacher to begin to move her negative thoughts in a positive direction and in doing so; she seemed quite surprised* (Research Journal, 16 May 2012).

Third, as a result of the teacher's change in her teaching patterns, she started viewing the learners as competent to work independently. Prior to the intervention the teacher was of opinion that the learners needed a great deal of guidance in the classroom and it seemed to her as if they could not work independently: "They definitely need guidance as their own work is not something that they do very well"<sup>88</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P5, L 111). However, during the intervention she started to view the learners differently and as a result changed her behaviour (see subtheme 2.2: change in the teacher's behaviour) by giving them more responsibility. This in turn supported her to regard the learners as more independent: "I saw how the children became a little bit more independent in Grade 7"<sup>89</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 127). This change is captured in the following extract from my research journal:

*The world of work day seemed to have brought changes to the teacher's mindset as she discovered the changes within the learners when they were trusted with more responsibility and when they discovered they had assets and strengths that could be put to good use* (Research Journal, 30 May 2012).

Another positive outcome as a result of the teacher's changing teaching patterns was her ability to recognise the potential of the learners. This was a positive change that the teacher hoped for prior to the intervention: "That I see the potential in them even if others do not"<sup>90</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P9, L 202). The teacher explained her changed view of the learners in her class as follows: "But the intervention made that I see them differently. That I see a bit more potential instead of just another naughty child"<sup>91</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P5, L 111); and also: "So I definitely think that more potential was noticed"<sup>92</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P14, L 427). Not only did the teacher start to identify the potential of learners but she also started to identify her important role as teacher to support learners in reaching their potential: "I realised that I have a big influence on the children and secondly that I give them the chance to be themselves and to reach their full potential because I am maybe the only one believing in them"<sup>93</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 107).

Fifthly the teacher reflected on her changed attitude towards the learners and the possible influence of a positive attitude and mindset towards learners: "I remember when I was in high school I was negative towards Science because the teacher had a negative attitude towards me and that influenced my performance in the subject. If the teacher focused on my strengths it could have made a difference. Therefore if the children see a teacher believing in them, they can believe in themselves. They can therefore identify their strengths and address their weaknesses"<sup>94</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P2, L 52). The personal application of these possible changes seems to show that she placed herself in the learners' shoes and therefore considered these benefits on a practical level.

Finally the teacher began to see more opportunities in her teaching: “...that gave me the chance to realise that I can do so much more with the children than I could do in the past”<sup>95</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 467); “...the fact that I can see more potential in terms of the teaching options available to me”<sup>96</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P12, L 346); and also: “I saw more opportunities to teach them to focus on their strengths”<sup>97</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P12, L 362).

#### 4.2.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Change in teacher’s behaviour

This subtheme relates to changes in the teacher’s behaviour which in many instances was guided by the teacher’s changed thinking patterns, as discussed in subtheme 2.1. The teacher’s aim for the intervention was to change her behaviour in such a way that she could become an example for the learners on how to apply the asset-based approach in their lives: “Try to set an example”<sup>98</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P3, L 322). The teacher seemed to believe that her classroom behaviour did in fact change after the intervention: “I can see how I treat my other classes differently after the intervention”<sup>99</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P4, L 71).

The first change in the teacher’s behaviour relates to the change in her interactions with the learners. She explained that in her interaction she was able to forget about the learners’ previous negative behaviour and gave them a new chance to change their behaviour: “Therefore instead of the negative behaviour that the learners had recently or the negative behaviour I had towards the learners, let’s see if we can start over and it seems to work. I have seen a positive difference”<sup>100</sup> (Appendix G– Post-II, P5, L 119). In addition to this the teacher would thank the learners for giving their cooperation in lessons instead of complaining about their negative behaviour: “Then I focus more on the fact they are working and thank them for working hard, then they automatically work harder than at the beginning of the year when I was quick to see the negative behaviour”<sup>101</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P5, L 126).

In her interaction with the learners, the participating teacher’s focus changed towards the learners’ strengths and assets: “I focus more on the strengths of all the children and try to get them to focus on what they are good at”<sup>102</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 452). One example of doing this was for the teacher to mention the learners’ assets and strengths in their school reports: “And that is also how I wrote the report cards”<sup>103</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 454). This reported change in the teacher’s interactions with the learners in turn contributed to a change in the learners’ behaviour as noted in my research journal:

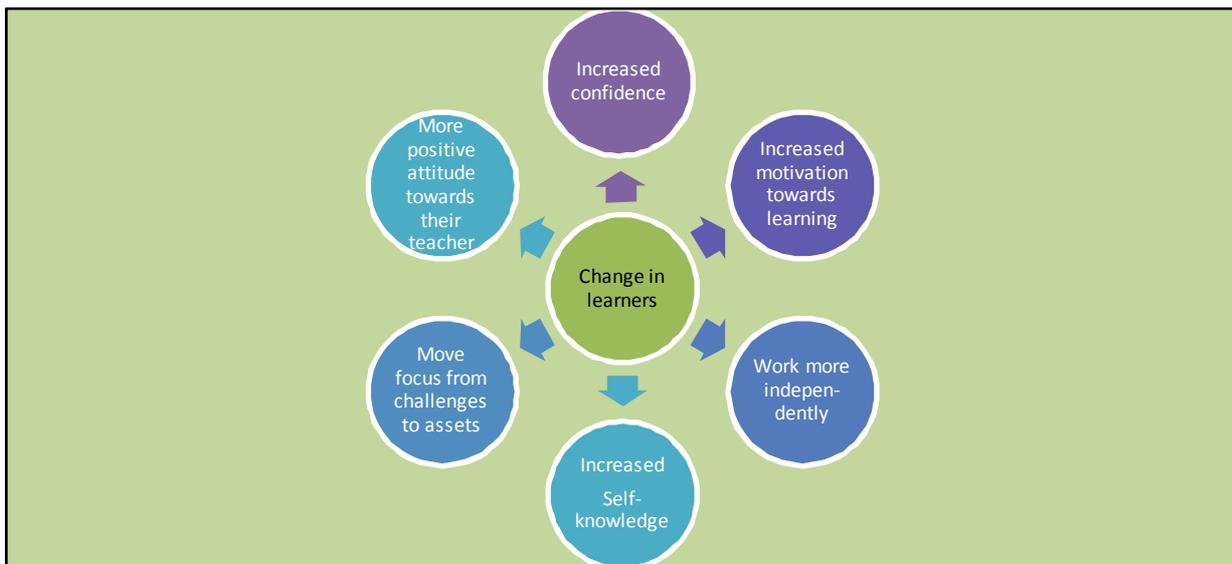
*During the next part of the lesson, it was interesting to see how the learners’ behaviour and attitude changed once the teacher focused on their strengths and on the children that display positive behaviour. The change in the way the teacher approached the lesson differently, gave her the opportunity to obtain the learners’ attention and begin the lesson successfully (Research Journal, 16 May 2012).*

The change in the teacher's behaviour therefore seemed to be an example for the learners. She explained that her aim was to be an example for the learners so that they could be an example for others in the community: "That is how I changed as a teacher and hopefully that is transferred to the children and they hopefully take it home to others and so on. Like a pay it forward thing"<sup>104</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 456).

#### 4.2.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Change in learners

This subtheme relates to the changes that could be observed in learners, as experienced by the participating teacher, as a possible result of implementing the asset-based approach. As the Grade 7 learners in this study were entering adolescence at the time, they were confronted with many changes and challenges in their development. The participating teacher felt that asset-based teaching potentially supported them in dealing with these challenges: "... if you as a teacher focus on their strengths, you can help to build their character especially because they are at such a vulnerable age"<sup>105</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 146). Consequently, the teacher explained that the application of the asset-based approach in Grade 7 gave the learners the opportunity to change before they become set in their ways: "This was a good age to choose for the intervention. It give you the chance to change something before they become too old and it becomes difficult to change their ways of thinking"<sup>106</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 148). It also seemed as if the learners felt that they had benefited from the intervention: "We learned a lot"<sup>107</sup> (Appendix D - Learners discussion with teacher, SL 2, L 4).

The changes amongst learners, as experienced and observed by the participating teacher, included the following: increased confidence; increased motivation towards learning, more independent work; increased self-knowledge; moving the focus from challenges to assets, and a more positive attitude towards the teacher. Figure 4.5 summarises the changes that the learners reportedly underwent.



**Figure 4.5: Positive changes amongst learners, as observed and experienced by the participating teacher**

The first change in the learners, as observed by the participating teacher, was an increase in their self-confidence. The implementation of the asset-based approach seemingly supported the learners to realise that they have potential and that other people believe in their strengths. This positive change within the learners was predicted by the teacher at the start of the intervention: “I think the learners can realise that they have something good in them, that they can make a difference and that someone believes in them even if it is just me. I think that everyone has a need for someone to believe in them”<sup>108</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P13, L 340). After implementing the asset-based approach, these predicted changes in the learners reportedly became a reality. The learners’ self-confidence was apparently built by identifying and acknowledging their assets: “They started to feel more important and that they also matter and they are individuals with their own strengths”<sup>109</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P13, L 374).

The teacher perceived that the asset-based intervention provided the learners with the opportunity to increase their self-confidence and to be themselves: “I think the intervention worked well and was necessary for the learners... the learners had to learn that they are worth more than what they thought they were”<sup>110</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 135); “give them the chance to be themselves within a controlled space”<sup>111</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 470); and also: “They learned to see more value and worth in themselves”<sup>112</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 128).

The participating teacher referred to two examples of shy learners in her class, who gained more self-confidence after the asset-based intervention: “Like one of the girls used to pull her hood over her head and try to hide and she is not doing that anymore”<sup>113</sup> (Appendix G– Post-II, P14, L 429); and secondly: “Today for example we were discussing religions and I had to stop to handle a disciplinary case. Then this girl asked if she could borrow my textbook. Then she read to the class to keep the lesson going. This is something that I never thought she would do, she is actually an introvert, a quiet

girl who doesn't even want to participate in Life Orientation activities because she doesn't want anyone to look at her. And here she asked me for the textbook to continue with the class"<sup>114</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P14, L 432).

Another perceived change amongst the learners relates to their increased motivation towards learning. Prior to the intervention, the teacher explained that the learners were not motivated to learn and did not always engage in lessons: "...they are very demotivated to work"<sup>115</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P2, L 26); and: "They look like they are in a dream world but they are there"<sup>116</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P2, L 4). The teacher's explanation for the learners' apparent lack of motivation was the many failures that they had experienced in the past: "I think they feel... if they are not going to pass now, then they never will"<sup>117</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P2, L 28). Their lack of motivation was therefore evident in their behaviour prior to the intervention: "... they constantly feel unwell. They have a headache or whatever. And I think this is just an excuse"<sup>118</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P2, L 28).

However, the teacher explained that the learners' motivation towards learning increased, as a result of the asset-based intervention. Prior to the intervention the learners seemed negative towards learning: "The learners don't seem positive about the lesson and about learning in general"<sup>119</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 5). Yet, the teacher noted change in the learners during the intervention: "But it was interesting to see that the learners' behaviour changed when I started the lesson and explained that I was going to help them identify their strengths and assets in the lesson."<sup>120</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 6). With the increased focus on the learners' assets, the teacher observed the learners as feeling that they were succeeding in their learning, with this promoting their motivation to learn: "... they are much more motivated when they feel they are achieving something..."<sup>121</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P9, L 254). The learners' reported increased motivation towards learning was observed in their changed behaviour: "They arrived on time for class more often and little things like that which gave an indication that they view the subject as important"<sup>122</sup> (Appendix G – Post II, P12, L 368).

In addition to an increased motivation towards learning, the learners reportedly became more independent. According to the teacher the application of the asset-based approach supported the learners in this: "I think that support, compliments, focus on positive behaviour in spite of negative behaviour has helped to develop the independence of the learners"<sup>123</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 31). This idea is captured in the following extract from my research journal:

*It seemed like the teacher explained the whole process of how to mobilise assets during the world of work day which developed a sense of independence in the learners (Research Journal, 22 May 2012).*

An increase of self-knowledge was another change amongst the learners, as experienced by the participating teacher. According to the teacher, the learners had limited self-knowledge in Grade 7 but were supported by the intervention to increase their self-knowledge: "I think Grade 7 learners don't know themselves well and it is the age that they are getting to know themselves"<sup>124</sup> (Appendix E –

TRJ, P1, L 32); and: “...they are getting to know themselves better”<sup>125</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P12, L 350). Benefits of the learners’ increased self-knowledge include a better understanding of who they were and how they could use their strengths at school and at home: “They can find work easier, they understand what their goal is, they can maybe tell it to other people. Listen mom, I am better at home setting the table...Or if they have to study for an exam they realise that they have to study harder in the mornings at school because they study better in the mornings than in the afternoon where they get nowhere”<sup>126</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P8, L 185).

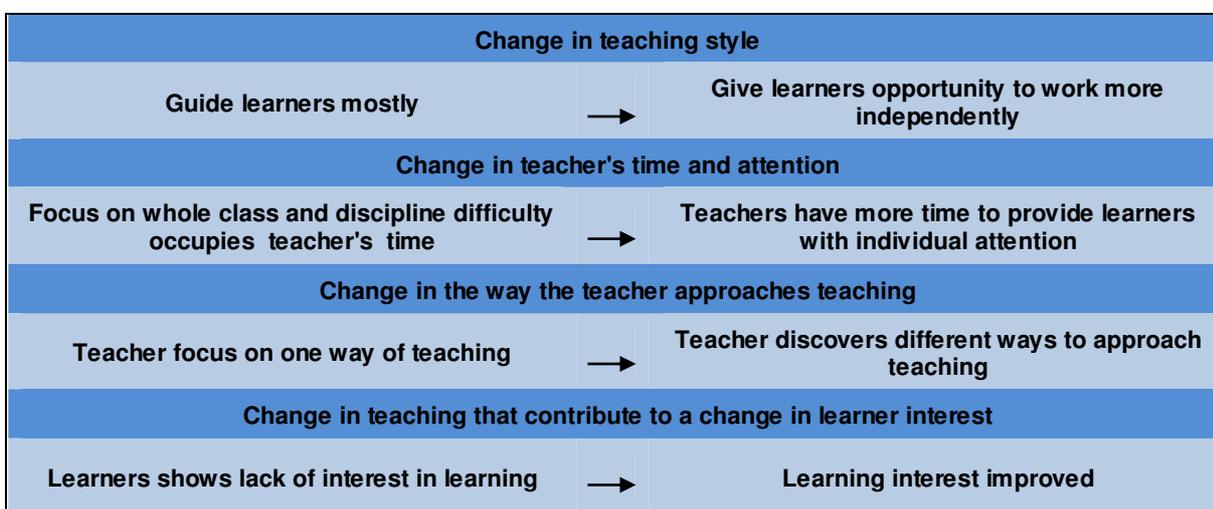
In addition to this, increased self-knowledge could potentially support the learners with future choices in relation to subject, high school or career choices: “...it can help with placing them in a high school”<sup>127</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P10, L 274). The learners agreed that asset-based teaching could support their future: “We learned to think about our future”<sup>128</sup> (Appendix D - Learner discussion with teacher, SL 1, L5); and: “It supported me who I actually am and what I can do someday that will suit me”<sup>129</sup> (Appendix D - Learner discussion with teacher, SL 2, L5).

Furthermore, the teacher observed that the learners focused less on their challenges: “The children used to focus on their failures and now they focus on their strengths”<sup>130</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P12, L 348). The more the learners tended to focus on positive aspects, assets and strengths, the more positive they became: “If the learners see their positive side more, they become more positive over the work and more positive about life in general”<sup>131</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 39). Focusing on assets allegedly supported the learners to avoid challenges and missteps: “If I didn’t learn about my strengths, I might have chosen the wrong path”<sup>132</sup> (Appendix D - Learner discussion with teacher, SL 2, L 24).

The learners’ positive attitude and increased focus on assets apparently also contributed to a positive attitude towards the teacher: “For example some of the Grade 7’s wrote me a letter in which they apologised for their bad behaviour and some trusted me enough to discuss issues from their home life that bothered them”<sup>133</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 120). The change in the learner’ attitude towards the teacher was further evident in a statement by one of the learners: “I knew that when my teacher gives me a lesson, I need to listen because she spends her time on my future”<sup>134</sup> (Appendix D – Experience reflection sheet, L 2). Although many changes were evident in some Grade 7 learners, it was however not necessarily evident in all learners: “After the intervention, the fact that I focused on the learners’ strengths, I saw a great difference in some children and in others no change”<sup>135</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 130).

#### 4.2.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: Change in teaching and learning practices

The application of the asset-based approach also led to changes in the teaching and learning processes in the classroom. During the pre-intervention phase, the teacher predicted that the intervention could potentially bring about positive changes to her teaching and that this possibility contributed to her willingness to participate in the study: “That is why I wanted to participate in the research because I think it will make a difference in my teaching”<sup>136</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P15, L 392). Changes with regard to the participating teacher’s teaching and learning practices include: change in the teacher’s teaching style from guiding learners to providing them with more opportunities to work independently; change in the teacher’s time and attention, by directing more attention to individual learners; change in the way the teacher approaches teaching; and change in teaching that contributes to a change in learner interest. Figure 4.6 illustrates the changes in the participating teacher’s teaching and learning practices.



**Figure 4.6: Changes evident in the participating teacher’s teaching and learning practices**

The teachers’ teaching style thus changed from one in which she mostly guided the learners during lessons to one in which she provided learners with the opportunity to work more independently and trusted them with more responsibility. Prior to the intervention, the teacher explained that she would normally guide the learners in lessons as they found it difficult to work on their own: “Always leading and always motivating. Are you finished now? I see you are talking, are you finished?”<sup>137</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P 6, L 138); and: “So basically I must give them an instruction and give them an opportunity to complete it immediately. I can’t come back after a while and they don’t seem to realise that”<sup>138</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P 6, L 132).

However, the teacher explained that this teaching style of guiding the learners through steps changed during the asset-based intervention. In focussing on the learners’ strengths, she was reportedly able to see the potential of the learners and at the same time started to trust them with more responsibility: “Think differently about the children, have a different approach and see more potential in them”<sup>139</sup>

(Appendix G – Post-II, P13, L 395); “Therefore I lead less and gave the learners more responsibility and I tried this in all my classes”<sup>140</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 182); and also: “Now I let the learners work a lot more independently”<sup>141</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 183).

With the change in teaching style, the teacher was reportedly also able to distribute the use of her time more efficiently: “The fact that I am leaving them to work independently gives me more time to get to my other responsibilities and also to spend time with individual learners”<sup>142</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 184); and: “The lesson was structured in such a manner that I was able to give more individual attention to learners”<sup>143</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 9). The participating teacher subsequently became aware of the benefits of attending to learners individually as a result of having the time to do so: “I could now give more attention to learners who received less attention and I realised there are other problem cases in the class”<sup>144</sup> (Appendix G – Post II, P14, L 425); and: “It was clear that the learners really appreciated it and has a big need for individual attention”<sup>145</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 10).

In addition to providing opportunities for learners to work independently, the teacher was of the opinion that she was able to trust the learners with more responsibility: “Because I gave the children an opportunity to do something and trusted them to do it”<sup>146</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 95); and: “I think in some instances, it also helped that I gave the learners more responsibility to make them more independent”<sup>147</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 139).

Another change during the course of the intervention was that the teacher realised that asset-based teaching might be a different way of teaching that could result in positive changes: “I realised that there are different ways of teaching and as a result I learned to know myself better”<sup>148</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 186). Finally, as a result of the changed teaching methods, the learners’ interest in learning reportedly increased. Prior to the intervention, the teacher found it challenging to keep the learners engaged and interested in the lesson: “I always try to keep them interested in the lesson”<sup>149</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P4, L 79); and: “They are sometimes not interested because they feel they don’t know... they feel they don’t want to guess or they are scared their friends laugh at them”<sup>150</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P4, L 72). Post-intervention the teacher was of the opinion that the learners’ perception that they could contribute to the lesson in turn supported their learning: “I think it has improved their learning process because they feel that they are important and that they are viewed as important and that they are not less worthy”<sup>151</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P9, L 250). As a result of the learners’ improved interest in the lessons, they apparently engaged in the lessons more and even attempted to convince other learners to also engage: “Even the learners who normally have very bad behaviour, listened and when some of the learners started to disrupt the class the other learners would ask them to be quiet because they wanted to listen”<sup>152</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 23).

In general the change in teaching processes might have also contributed to the learners’ learning processes and academic performance. However there could have been other factors that contributed

to the learners' performance: "I had far fewer cases of learners not passing this term than I had last term"<sup>153</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P9, L 259). This aspect requires further research.

#### 4.2.3 THEME 3: CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

Theme 3 focuses on identified challenges in utilising the asset-based teaching. I identified four subthemes namely: challenges experienced by the teacher; challenges related to the learners; challenges related to teaching and learning processes; and challenges related to external factors. Table 4.3 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria I used.

**Table 4.4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3**

Theme 3 : Challenges in implementing the asset-based approach		
Subthemes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Subtheme 3.1: Challenges experienced by the teacher	This subtheme includes data related to personal challenges experienced by the teacher, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to personal challenges experienced by the teacher, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Subtheme 3.2: Challenges related to learners	This subtheme includes data related to any challenges with regard to learners as experienced and observed by the teacher, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to learner challenges experienced and observed by the teacher, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Subtheme 3.3: Challenges related to teaching and learning	This subtheme includes data related to challenges with teaching and learning practices, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to challenges with teaching and learning practices, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.
Subtheme 3.4: Challenges related to external factors	This subtheme includes data related to external factors as challenges, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.	Any reference not related to external challenges, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners.

##### 4.2.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Challenges experienced by the teacher

The first subtheme relates to the challenges experienced by the teacher following the implementation of the asset-based approach. The teacher felt she was confronted with three main challenges. Firstly she initially found it challenging to change her thinking patterns. Secondly she experienced that the multiple responsibilities and challenges in the classroom influenced the perceived effectiveness of the asset-based approach. Finally she was concerned that the positive changes of the asset-based approach would not be sustainable unless the approach was continuously implemented.

Although the teacher identified several benefits of asset-based teaching as described in subtheme 2.1, she initially found it challenging to change her teaching patterns: “But the challenge was for me to change what I think of them”<sup>154</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P12, L 358). She elaborated on this statement: “It was difficult for me to look at the learners’ weaknesses and see them as strengths”<sup>155</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 12). As the teacher reflected on this experience, she realised that the focus on the learners’ weaknesses made it challenging to see the learners’ assets and strengths: “Now that I reflect about the strengths, I realise that I have seen their strengths before but never realised it because I was looking at their weaknesses. This realisation helped me to focus on the positive and make a difference”<sup>156</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P1, L 15). However, the teacher was able to start moving her focus towards assets and strengths during the course of the intervention: “I think it was a challenge to focus on the positive at the beginning but it is now a lot easier”<sup>157</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 193).

Another challenge experienced by the teacher relates to the multiple responsibilities and challenges in the classroom that reportedly influenced the effectiveness of asset-based teaching. According to her the intervention gave her the opportunity to bring about positive change in her classroom, yet at times challenges such as discipline difficulties, or administrative responsibilities caused her to feel overwhelmed and demotivated: “I always try to believe in them but sometimes it is difficult because you feel tired or you feel that you are not getting anywhere with them or you are not getting through the work or the department wants you to do some points adjustments”<sup>158</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 110); and: “Sometimes it feels that I am trying hard to motivate them but they demotivate me”<sup>159</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 114). I also noted these experienced challenges in my research journal:

*A repeating theme that emerged from the interview with the teacher was that she currently experiences great behaviour and discipline difficulty in her classroom. In addition to this, she feels overwhelmed by the different challenges of teaching in a school where the learners are confronted with social and economic challenges. These challenges that the teacher seem to be experiencing, directed her focus away from her personal and teaching assets as a teacher as well as the assets that she has available in her classroom to support her teaching (Research Journal, 9 May 2012).*

In addition to these challenges, the teacher reported that she found it difficult to sustain the asset-based approach in her classroom and as a result to this, could not keep up the positive changes: “... if you don’t maintain the strengths, the learners stop using them”<sup>160</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P7, L 219). In her view, the asset-based approach should be sustained on a regular basis. The teacher thus felt that she should have managed the learners’ assets in such a way that they could keep on mobilising their assets: “After the intervention, it looks as if some of the children have lost their strengths again, I think it is because it is a process that you should implement on a regular basis”<sup>161</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P7, L 220).

#### 4.2.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Challenges related to learners

The challenges related to learners as experienced and observed by the teacher, as part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners, include limited language proficiency; age differences within the same grade; entering a challenging developmental phase; and discipline challenges in class.

The first challenge experienced by the teacher relates to the learners' limited vocabulary. The teacher explained that there were times when the learners were not sure of the meaning of words: "I have experienced that the learners' language (their knowledge about language) is a little bit poor"<sup>162</sup>(Appendix B – Pre-II, P5, L 99); and: "It feels that there are basic words that they are supposed to know but they don't know what they mean"<sup>163</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P5, L 104). This challenge was evident in the explanation of new terms such as assets and strengths during the intervention, as described in my research journal:

*During the lesson the term assets and strengths were discussed and it was surprising to see that the learners didn't understand the meaning of the words* (Research Journal, 16 May 2012).

Another challenge relates to the learners' age differences. The teacher explained that there were many learners in the grade that were older than they should have been at the time: "There are a few children who have failed a phase or who were put into school a year too late and failed a few phases. For example I have a girl who is turning 16"<sup>164</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P2, L 22). This had implications such as experienced behaviour difficulties during implementation of the asset-based approach: "But it is a group where in there are quite a few children who are older than what they should be. These children are sometime swimming against the stream and do not want to cooperate"<sup>165</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P2, L 8).

On the other hand the majority of learners were entering the challenging developmental phase of adolescence during which they would typically experience challenges and have to deal with many changes. Positive changes within the learners in this developmental phase were discussed in subtheme 2.3. Despite several positive changes, it was allegedly still challenging to implement the asset-based approach with the learners in this development phase as the teacher had to show an understanding of the learners' developmental changes in addition to implementing the asset-based approach: "... and also to realise that the Grade 7's are in a difficult period but they are still people, a little child and a little grown-up and to have more compassion for them"<sup>166</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P15, L 471).

One of the most difficult challenges perceived by the teacher relates to discipline as part of her daily teaching. Prior to the intervention the teacher was concerned that the learners might not give their participation and that the discipline challenges in class might affect the intervention negatively: "I

wonder about how well they are going to work together during the intervention”<sup>167</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P15, L 397). During the intervention, dealing with behaviour challenges seemed time consuming, as I noted in my research journal:

*In observing the first and second lesson, it was clear that the classroom teacher had to deal with many discipline difficulties during the lesson and dealing with these difficulties took much time away from the lesson. The learners in the classroom seemed very unsure of themselves and seem to fear rejection. As a result of these fears, they are reluctant to answer questions and would go to great lengths to receive attention in displaying negative behaviour* (Research Journal, 16 May 2012).

Post-intervention, it seems that the teacher’s concerns about the possible negative influence of discipline difficulties were valid: “I think that the discipline problem in the classroom is still affecting the effectiveness of the assets-based approach”<sup>168</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 203). She explained that, despite positive changes in some learners, other learners’ behaviour negatively influenced the effectiveness of asset-based teaching: “I think the learners have a negative influence on one another and that is breaking down the work we have done”<sup>169</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P5, L 109).

Despite these difficulties, the teacher was able to observe positive changes in the learners’ behaviour as explained in subtheme 2.3: “But in the same breath another teacher mentioned to me that my class is doing a lot better than in the beginning of the year and then I realised that I had also noticed this. Therefore I feel that I have achieved something and that a part of it is still valid”<sup>170</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 206); and also: “The discipline was a bit of a problem at the beginning but it has improved as I went along”<sup>171</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P12, L 357).

The teacher predicted further positive changes within a classroom where the teacher would not be confronted with so many behaviour difficulties: “Therefore, in a school where children are not confronted with problems at home or discipline issues in the classroom, I believe it would have worked even better”<sup>172</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 208). However, at the same time the teacher was also of the view that the learners in her classroom needed the intervention as they were confronted with many challenges at home: “But it is actually these children who need it”<sup>173</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P7, L 213).

#### 4.2.3.3 Subtheme 3.3: Challenges related to teaching and learning practices

With the implementation of the asset-based approach, the teacher experienced challenges relating to teaching and learning practices. First, she found it challenging to incorporate the asset-based approach in her lessons on a regular basis. She explained that she found it challenging to know where and when she could revisit assets during her lessons: “After the intervention I started to use the strengths in my lesson planning but I would like to do this even more. I still find it difficult to include the strengths in the lesson that I present”<sup>174</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 161).

Secondly, the teacher reportedly found it challenging to use the asset-based approach in different subjects. The implementation of the asset-based approach worked well in the subject Life Orientation because the subject taught life skills and provided opportunities to teach learners about their assets, rights and responsibilities: “I think a person can use this in other subjects as well, but I think is easier in Life Orientation because it focuses on you”<sup>175</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P3, L 33); and also: “There are good things in the Life Orientation subject for example that it teaches them about human rights so that if they are abused at home they can realise that this is not how it should be”<sup>176</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P4, L 85). However, it seemed challenging to implement the asset-based approach in other subjects: “... the work that I am currently doing with them does not lend itself to giving them a lot of opportunities to apply this”<sup>177</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P14, L 416). In response to this challenge, the teacher explained that it was possible to use the asset-based approach in different subjects, yet that it took more effort: “I have started to identify ideas of how I can apply this in other subjects”<sup>178</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P5, L 168).

Another challenge experienced by the teacher relates to the challenge of teaching many learners in one classroom and a high teacher-learner ratio. The teacher was of the opinion that the application of the asset-based approach could be more beneficial if implemented in smaller classes with a lower teacher-learner ratio: “In terms of the classes that are big, I think the intervention would work better if there were more people to work individually with the children and lead them on their strengths. It would be ideal if there were assistants in the classroom or the classes were smaller but I know this is not always possible”<sup>179</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 231); and: “My registration class is too big...with the smaller classes it is easier”<sup>180</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P7, L 195).

#### 4.2.3.4 Subtheme 3.4: Challenges related to external factors

External factors such as learners’ circumstances at home were also identified as challenges in implementing the asset-based approach. The teacher explained that many learners faced challenging circumstances: “There are a lot of factors that influence the learners, especially at the school”<sup>181</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P3, L 33); and: “Various conditions play a role, for example the household conditions that you have to take into consideration”<sup>182</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 132). Challenges that the learners experienced at home included social, emotional and academic challenges: “Parents who are divorced or the children who are in a children’s home or the household conditions don’t allow for them to do homework. Or they have a lot of chores to do. Or their mom or dad comes home late. Or they are staying at their sister’s boyfriend’s house or there just is not a caring environment”<sup>183</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P3, L 36); and: “Because a lot of the children who come from bad homes think they are worthless”<sup>184</sup> (Appendix G – Post-II, P9, L 252). As a result of these challenges, the teacher felt that it was important for her to show the learners that she believed in them and supported them in using their assets even though she did not find this an easy task: “There are times when I still don’t

know how to support the learners to utilise their strengths and show them that as a teacher I believe in them. Especially when the children have very poor home circumstances”<sup>185</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P3, L 87).

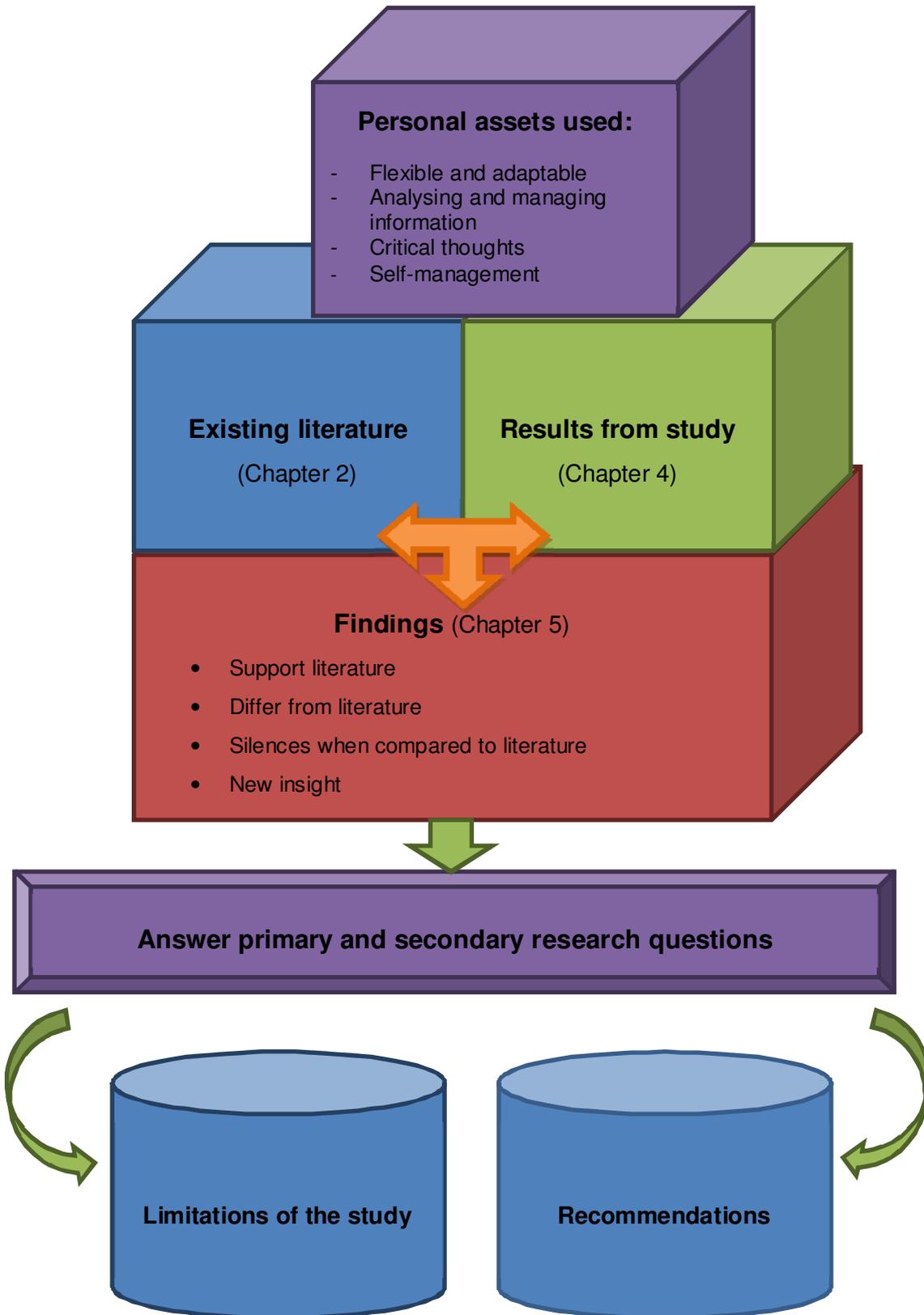
Furthermore, the teacher felt that the learners’ external factors could have influenced their positive outlook on life and in turn the application of the asset-based approach: “I think society focuses on the negative like your room is a mess or you don’t dress neatly instead of focusing on what they do well or that they are studying hard”<sup>186</sup> (Appendix B – Pre-II, P10, L 244); and: “In a school where the children are confronted with so many challenges at home that cause discipline issues at the school, it is difficult to stay positive.”<sup>187</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L 116). The teacher was of the opinion that the parents at home did not always support the positive changes of learners in class: “I think that sometimes the parents break down what we have built up... therefore it is important to work together.”<sup>188</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 226). As a result the teacher occasionally found it difficult to identify the learners’ assets and trust them with responsibility: “But sometimes the children’s environment is such a big influence that it is difficult to give them a lot of responsibility”<sup>189</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P4, L140). In response to this challenge, collaboration between systems from the bio-ecological model could support the teacher to deal with this challenge: “I think the school and the community must work together for the intervention because I only see them for half an hour per day and that is not enough”<sup>190</sup> (Appendix E – TRJ, P6, L 230).

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the results of the study in terms of the three main themes, I identified each consisting of relevant subthemes. In the next and final chapter, I relate the results to existing literature, thereby presenting the findings of the study. Subsequently, I revisit my research questions and discuss the limitations of the study. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for the implementation of asset-based teaching in future.

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# Personal Conceptualisation of Chapter 5



## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

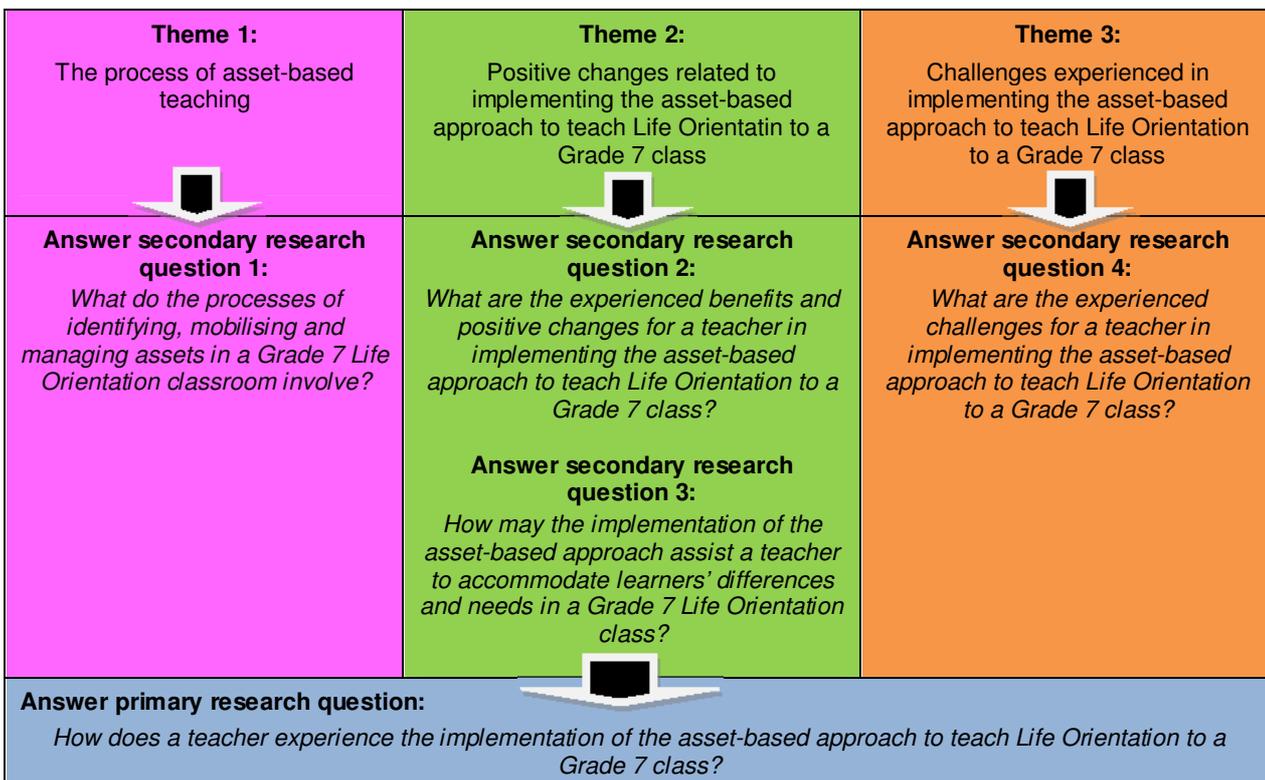
#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented the results of the study in terms of the three main themes that I identified, namely the process of asset-based teaching, positive changes associated with asset-based teaching, and challenges related to asset-based teaching. These themes were discussed in terms of relevant subthemes and categories.

In this chapter I situate the results against the background of existing literature presented in Chapter 2, to discuss the findings of the study. Next I revisit my research questions in terms of the findings I obtained. Finally I present the limitations of the study and make recommendations based on the findings of the study.

#### 5.2 LITERATURE CONTROL: POSITIONING FINDINGS WITHIN EXISTING LITERATURE TO ANSWER RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I considered a broad range of existing studies to identify similarities, contradictions and silences in current literature, when compared to the results I obtained. Figure 5.1 provides an outline of the themes and how these assisted me in answering the research questions.



**Figure 5.1: Outline of research themes and related research questions**

## **5.2.1 THE PROCESS OF ASSET-BASED TEACHING**

In this section I position the results of Theme 1 within existing literature in order to present findings and answer secondary research question 1.

### **5.2.1.1 Findings related to the process of asset-based teaching**

The results from Theme 1 were mostly supported by existing literature, with some evidence of silences as captured in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Theme 1 positioned within existing literature**

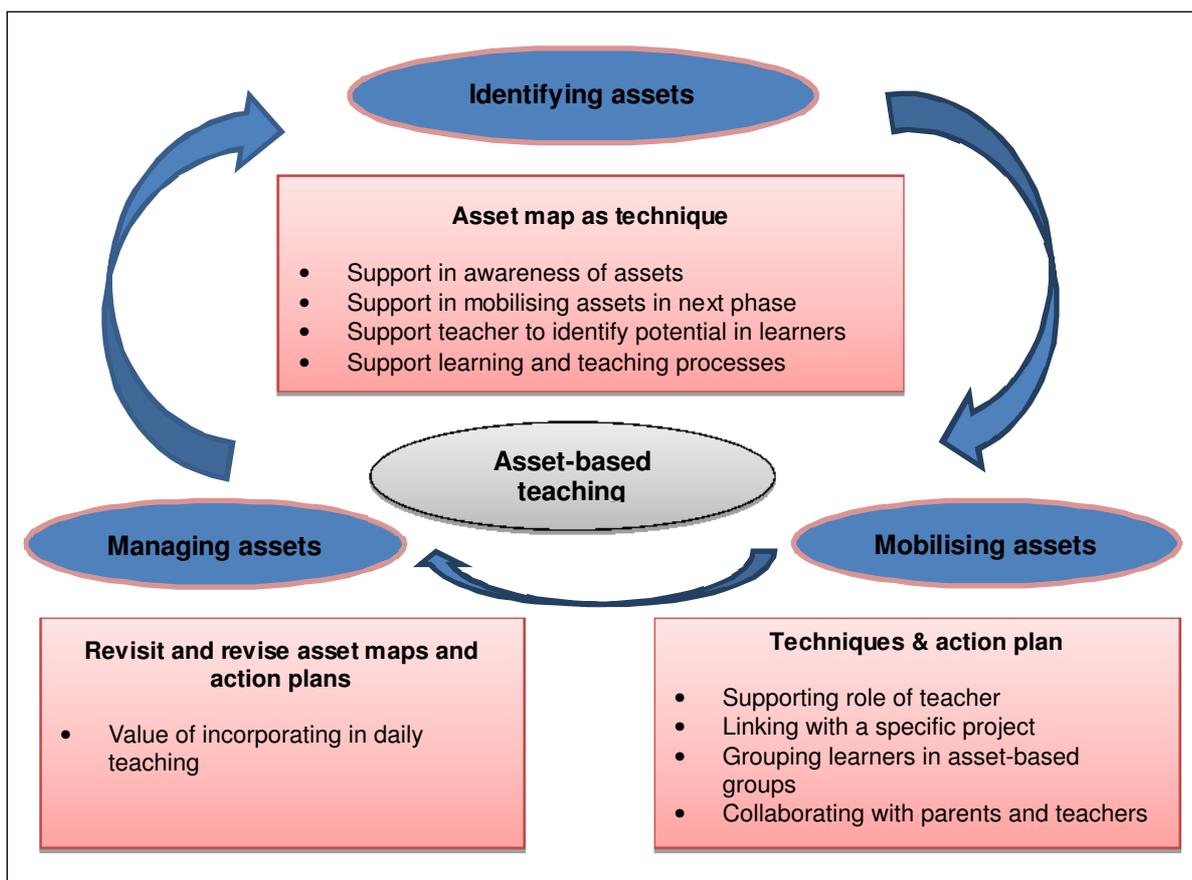
THEME 1: THE PROCESS OF ASSET-BASED TEACHING		
CORRELATING FINDINGS		
Results	Existing literature	Findings: interpretation and discussion
<p><b>Link between asset-based approach and the bio-ecological model</b></p> <p>The teacher emphasised the important value of different role-players in different subsystems, such as other teachers, parents at home and other members within the wider community context and how they provided access to assets and resources.</p>	<p>Existing literature confirms that there is an important link between the asset-based approach and the bio-ecological model as assets can be identified and mobilised within the different systems of the bio-ecological model (Donald <i>et al.</i>, 2010; Eloff, 2006). A study by Ferreira and Ebersöhn (2012) indicates the valuable connection between the asset-based approach and bio-ecological model, which includes access to assets within systems. A similar study by Loots (2011) found that communication and involvement of different role-players in systems are essential for the application of the asset-based approach.</p>	<p>When implementing the asset-based approach in teaching, it is valuable to identify and utilise assets in different subsystems, such as other classrooms in school, learners' homes and members in the community (for example educational psychologists and the local clinic). By making use of asset-based teaching, Grade 7 teachers could share and exchange assets within these subsystems that support their teaching and contribute to the learners' learning.</p>
<p><b>The three phases of asset-based teaching work well together</b></p> <p>The three phases of the asset-based approach seemingly complemented one another in the process of asset-based teaching.</p>	<p>The asset-based approach is viewed as a flexible and dynamic approach and a positive continuous cycle of identifying, mobilising and managing assets (Eloff, 2006).</p>	<p>The process of asset-based teaching includes three main phases namely: identifying, mobilising and managing assets. These phases complement one another and form part of a continuous cycle and dynamic process of asset identification, mobilisation and management.</p>
Subtheme 1.1: Identifying assets		
<p><b>Learners identify personal, study, family and friends, and school assets</b></p> <p>The participating teacher and learners identified the following assets and resources: positive individual traits and characteristics, human resources such as teachers, learners, family members, friends and support at school. This process of identifying assets and resources seemed to support the teacher and learners to realise that they have access to various assets and resources.</p>	<p>Within the STAR-project teachers were able to classify the “children, teachers, the school, school communities, members of the society, positive traits and positive emotions” as assets and strengths (Ferreira &amp; Ebersöhn, 2012). Starkman (2006:11) identified assets such as personal learning assets, adult role models, adult relationships, positive peer influence, creative activities, youth programs, reading groups and academic motivational and support groups. Frydenberg (2008) studied adolescence in terms of resilience and protective factors and found that adolescents have access to many interpersonal assets and resources that can support them.</p>	<p>Three main types of assets can be identified when assets are identified in asset-based teaching, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal assets and characteristics</li> <li>• Assets within the school (activities, teachers, learners)</li> <li>• Assets outside the school (relationships with family and friends).</li> </ul> <p>The process of identifying assets can support teachers and learners (in particular adolescents) in providing them access to start mobilising these assets.</p>

<p><b>Support awareness and mobilisation of assets</b></p> <p>The identification and mapping of assets seemly supported the learners and participating teacher with an awareness of their assets. Visually mapping the assets further seemed to assist the teacher and learners in planning how to mobilise their assets.</p>	<p>Existing literature agrees that asset mapping will support individuals to become aware of their assets and resources as well as the connections between them. Asset mapping is a key step to support individuals in planning for the mobilising asset phase (Eloff, 2006; Eloff, 2006; Eloff and Ebersöhn, 2001). According to Kretzmann and Mcknight (1993) asset mapping is a powerful and valuable process which includes the construction of a visual presentation of assets.</p>	<p>The awareness of assets, through the process of asset mapping, could be regarded as a benefit of the identifying asset phase in asset-based teaching. Asset mapping can be viewed as a key step when identifying assets, as it provides a visual presentation of assets that could support the mobilisation of assets in asset-based teaching.</p>
<p><b>Support learning and teaching processes</b></p> <p>The identification of assets in this study seemly supported the learners and the participating teacher to understand which assets could be used to support their teaching and learning processes.</p>	<p>Existing literature explains that the implementation of the asset-based approach could contribute to self-knowledge in terms of teaching and learning processes, and support teaching and learning in this manner (Eloff &amp; De Wet, 2009; Starkman, 2006).</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching may support learners to become aware of their preferred learning style, learning habits and in ways how to utilise these assets to improve their learning. Similarly, asset-based teaching can support teaching and learning, as assets are identified in order to support these processes.</p>
<p><b>Early identification</b></p> <p>The teacher realised the importance of identifying assets in the course of this study and suggested that early identification (as early as Grade R) could possibly support asset-based teaching.</p>	<p>Starkman (2006) explains that identifying assets could support teachers in promoting responsibility and self-esteem. Kriek and Eloff (2004) found that the closer assets are to the individual the easier it is to mobilise these assets. Eloff and De Wet (2009) also conducted a study in which the asset-based approach was successfully used to enrich preschool learning.</p>	<p>Identifying assets close to an individual (for example assets available in school) seems to be essential. Furthermore, the application of the asset-based approach could enrich pre-school learning. Therefore, early identification of assets within learners could possibly support learners to mobilise assets early in their lives.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 1.2: Mobilising assets</b></p>		
<p><b>Support learners to mobilise assets within relationships with others</b></p> <p>The results of this study seemed to emphasise the importance of sharing assets within relationships with others. Sharing assets with parents, family, friends and members of the community (such as the school psychologist), in supporting learners to mobilise their assets.</p>	<p>Existing literature agrees that the aim of the asset-based approach is to utilise and share available assets in empowering relationships with others (Ammermann &amp; Parks, 1998; Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann &amp; McKnight, 1993, 1997).</p>	<p>During the process of asset-based teaching, learners' assets may be mobilised in sharing and utilising the assets within relationships with others such as teachers, families and friends.</p>
<p><b>The use of action plans and projects in the mobilisation phase</b></p> <p>The use of an action plan seemingly supported learners to mobilise their assets during the <i>world of work day</i>.</p>	<p>In the STAR-project action plans were constructed during the mobilising asset phase to deal with HIV/AIDS-related conditions. Action plans related to projects such as initiating a vegetable garden (Ferreira &amp; Ebersöhn, 2012).</p>	<p>Action plans that are linked to specific projects could create opportunities for learners to mobilise their assets.</p>

<p><b>Group learners according to assets to mobilise assets in class</b></p> <p>The teacher reflected on ways in which assets could be mobilised in her classroom. One possibility was to mobilise learners' assets by grouping them according to their assets and assigning classroom responsibilities which correlate with the learners' identified assets (for example learners who could spell could support others to check their spelling).</p>	<p>The mobilising assets stage increases the efficiency and power of the asset-based approach as individuals share their identified assets and mobilise them in the process (Ebersöhn &amp; Eloff, 2003, 2006; Kretzmann &amp; McKnight, 1993, 1997, 1999).</p>	<p>The mobilisation of individual assets in the classroom may enhance the power of asset-based teaching.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 1.3: Managing assets</b></p>		
<p><b>Provide opportunities to evaluate assets and identify new assets</b></p> <p>The participating teacher identified possible ways of providing the learners with opportunities to revisit and evaluate their assets (for example re-visit asset maps in learners' books).</p>	<p>The asset-based approach provides the opportunity to review the utilisation and mobilisation of assets and identify new found assets in the process. The approach could be viewed as a flexible and dynamic approach and a positive continuous cycle of identifying, mobilising and managing assets (Eloff, 2006).</p>	<p>Within the context of asset-based teaching, the managing asset phase could be linked with the identifying assets phase as assets are revisited and new assets are identified. This can be done in class on a regular basis in displaying learners' asset maps in order for them to revisit, evaluate and add new assets.</p>
<p><b>Incorporate into lesson plans</b></p> <p>The teacher identified ways to manage assets on a regular basis (for example making notes on her lesson plans to incorporate into her lessons).</p>	<p>Revision, reflection, reconsideration, taking ownership and commitment are key elements in the stage of managing assets (Eloff, 2006; Ferreira, 2006; Kretzmann &amp; Mcknight).</p>	<p>Incorporating ownership and commitment as possible ways to manage assets and resources may support the process of asset-based teaching.</p>
<p><b>SILENCES</b></p>		
<p><b>Existing literature</b></p>	<p><b>Findings: interpretation and discussion</b></p>	
<p><b>Subtheme 1.1: Identifying assets</b></p>		
<p><b>Important to work in collaboration with other teachers</b></p> <p>In the STAR-project the teachers relied on useful discussions in small groups when identifying and mapping assets and found this very useful (Ferreira &amp; Ebersöhn, 2012).</p>	<p>Within this study, the teacher was the only participant and therefore, she was not in the position to collaborate with other teachers during the process of identifying assets in learners, herself and the school.</p>	

### 5.2.1.2 Addressing research question 1: *What do the processes of identifying, mobilising and managing assets in a Grade 7 Life Orientation classroom involve?*

The findings of this study suggest that the process of asset-based teaching relates to the asset-based approach and is divided in three main phases, namely identifying assets, mobilising assets and managing assets. These phases complement one another and form part of a positive continuous cycle (Eloff, 2006). Within the context of asset-based teaching, it is thus important to identify, mobilise and manage assets within the different systems of the bio-ecological model, as the different systems provide access to assets in building partnerships with others (Donald *et al.*, 2010; Eloff, 2006). For example the teacher could build partnerships with the educational psychologist, parents of the learners, or colleague teachers to share assets, skills and knowledge. Sharing assets with other members of the community could support the teacher in dealing with scholastic, emotional or socio-economic challenges experienced by the learners. As such the learners' assets may potentially be mobilised within partnerships with others. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the process that the participating teacher followed in implementing asset-based teaching in a Grade 7 classroom:



**Figure 5.2: The process of asset-based teaching**

During the first phase of asset-based teaching, the learners were given the opportunity to identify assets and strengths within themselves as well as those external to them. Asset maps (Eloff, 2006) were useful in visually presenting assets and strengths within the systems the learners functioned in. Learners identified their personal assets and strengths (personal characteristics, learning styles and

learning habits), assets within the school (activities, teachers and learners) as well as assets outside the school (relationships with family and friends). As the learners and teacher progressively became aware of existing assets, their focus started to move away from challenges, deficits and barriers in the classroom towards assets, strengths and resources. Findings of this study therefore suggest that the process of identifying assets could support learners (adolescents in this instance) with enhanced personal awareness of assets. Similarly, existing literature indicates that the identification of assets may contribute to self-knowledge and the understanding of learning and teaching processes (Eloff & De Wet, 2009; Starkman, 2006). The use of asset maps further supported learners in this study to start planning for the mobilising asset phase. In addition, the identification phase supported the participating teacher to identify potential within the learners as well as to provide support to teaching and learning activities.

During the second phase, the teacher assisted learners to mobilise identified assets. The findings highlight the benefits of constructing an action plan on ways to mobilise identified assets, as it supported learners to mobilise assets within relationships with others (Ammermann & Parks, 1998; Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 1997) and to link assets to specific projects (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012). Furthermore the utilisation of asset-based groups was found to be a useful technique in mobilising assets in a classroom, where learners are categorised in groups according to their assets and assigned specific responsibilities in the group. Findings further highlight that working in collaboration with other teachers and parents could possibly assist learners to mobilise their assets more effectively by relying on the various systems they function in. The final phase of the process of asset-based teaching provided learners with the opportunity to evaluate existing assets and identify possible new assets (Eloff, 2006). The participating teacher incorporated this phase into her daily teaching and in such a way managed the learners' assets on a regular basis. Possible ways of managing the assets of learners could include pasting asset maps into learners' books for them to revisit the asset maps, sending out letters to parents to explain their children's assets, or incorporating assets into learners' reports.

## **5.2.2 POSITIVE CHANGES RELATED TO ASSET-BASED TEACHING**

In this section I rely on Theme 2 to answer secondary research questions 2 and 3.

### **5.2.2.1 Findings on positive changes associated with asset-based teaching**

Table 5.2 summarises the results of Theme 2 in relation to existing literature. Within this theme most results were supported by existing literature, with some evidence of silences.

**Table 5.2: Theme 2 positioned within existing literature**

THEME 2: POSITIVE CHANGES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO TEACH LIFE ORIENTATION TO A GRADE 7 CLASS		
CORRELATING FINDINGS		
Results	Existing literature	Findings: interpretation and discussion
<b>Subtheme 2.1: Change in the teacher's thinking patterns</b>		
<b>Category 1: Change in teacher's personal thinking patterns</b>		
<p><b>Recognise own potential</b> As the participating teacher identified her personal assets, it contributed to the positive change of recognising her own potential and increased her confidence.</p>	<p>Existing literature agrees that the asset-based approach leads to enablement and self-determination of individuals (Eloff &amp; Ebersöhn, 2001; Loots, 2011). Literature also indicates a positive effect on teachers' confidence, self-worth and contribution to positive identity formation as a result of implementing the asset-based approach (Ebersöhn, 2006b; Loots, 2011).</p>	<p>The implementation of asset-based teaching may result in positive changes such as enablement, self-determination and increased confidence in a teacher implementing this approach. These qualities could possibly support teachers to recognise their own potential, which may in turn positively impact on their teaching practice and indirectly on the learning that takes place amongst learners.</p>
<p><b>Develop self-knowledge</b> Identifying assets supported a positive awareness and increased self-knowledge of the teacher with regard to her assets and strengths.</p>	<p>Existing studies indicate that identifying assets will support individuals with a positive awareness of assets and self-awareness (Eloff, 2006; Ebersöhn, 2006b).</p>	<p>A teacher's awareness of his/her own assets and strengths during the process of asset-based teaching, may develop self-awareness and self-knowledge in terms of his/her assets and strengths. Such awareness may in turn positively impact on his/her teaching practice.</p>
<p><b>Identify own strengths and assets</b> A benefit of asset-based teaching, as reported by the participating teacher, includes the opportunity to identify her own personal assets and strengths.</p>	<p>The asset-based approach includes the phase of identifying assets during which an individual's assets, strengths and talents are identified (Ammerman &amp; Parks, 1998; Kretzmann &amp; McKnight, 1993).</p>	<p>The implementation of asset-based teaching may provide a teacher with the opportunity to identify personal assets and strengths, and subsequently utilise these during teaching practices.</p>
<p><b>Realised the importance of reflection</b> Reflection was experienced in a positive light by the teacher as a result of implementing asset-based teaching.</p>	<p>Kyriacou (1997) agrees that teacher reflection is a key ingredient for effective teaching. It could enhance the quality of the learning process as a teacher evaluates several components in relation to teaching during a reflection process. Reflective thinking has been identified as a positive change in existing literature in relation to the asset-based approach (Keys &amp; Lopez, 2005; Loots, 2011).</p>	<p>Implementing asset-based teaching could enhance levels of reflection, which will facilitate positive results when teachers become reflective practitioners. This aligns with one of the key roles of teachers, as stipulated by the Department of Education (2006).</p>

Category 2: Change in the teacher's teaching patterns		
<p><b>Mobilise strengths to overcome challenges and accommodate learners' different needs in the classroom</b></p> <p>The participating teacher seemed to change her focus from challenges (for example a lack of discipline) to assets and strengths. The identification of assets apparently supported her to more effectively deal with challenges and to support learners with diverse needs (for example by means of a buddy system).</p>	<p>The asset-based approach focuses on available strengths, talents and intrinsic creativity of the individual rather than on problems and challenges (Eloff, 2006). Positive psychology focuses on the positive and on what works inside individuals to address what is not working (Seligman &amp; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Studies conducted within the STAR-project found that teachers identified and mobilised assets in their classrooms, schools and communities to support coping (Ferreira, 2006; Loots, 2005, 2011). Similarly, Loots (2011) found that implementing the asset-based approach could result in increased optimism in teachers, by them viewing challenges in a different light.</p>	<p>The implementation of asset-based teaching may support teachers to move their focus away from needs and challenges to available assets and strengths; and to use these assets to deal with challenges and accommodate the different needs of learners in the classroom. For example dealing with the challenge of having many learners in one class with different needs to attend to, the teacher in this study could mobilise learners' different assets to attend to other learners' needs. In addition to this, the teacher could identify and mobilise assets in the community to attend to learners' needs such as parents who can support learners in a homework club.</p>
<p><b>View learners as more independent</b></p> <p>As the participating teacher learned to trust learners to work more independently, she was able to view the learners as more independent and responsible.</p>	<p>Starkman (2006) confirms that teachers should be able to trust learners with responsibilities, trust that each learner has his own assets or strengths, and give learners the opportunity to mobilise their assets.</p>	<p>The process of asset-based teaching could support teachers to trust their learners with more responsibility and with opportunities to mobilise their strengths, which may in return result in teachers viewing learners as capable to work more independently. Such an approach is of importance during adolescence when learners are expected to increasingly behave as independent individuals.</p>
<p><b>See more potential in learners</b></p> <p>Focusing on learners' assets supported the teacher to identify potential within learners which in turn was used to accommodate their diverse needs.</p>	<p>According to a study by Starkman (2006), a key quality to effective teaching and possible benefit of focusing on learners' assets includes trust and recognising potential within learners.</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching can support teachers to become aware of learners' assets and recognise potential within learners that could in turn be used to accommodate learners' diverse needs. This may allow for different preferences in one classroom and may assist more learners to reach their potential and flourish.</p>
<p><b>Change in attitude towards learners</b></p> <p>The teacher focused more on assets and capabilities of learners than deficits and needs, which in turn contributed to a more positive attitude.</p>	<p>The asset-based approach has been linked to a changing attitude in individuals by focusing on assets and strengths and moving away from challenges (Coetzee <i>et al.</i>, 2009; Eloff, 2006).</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching could possibly guide teachers to change their attitude towards learners by using a positive lens (the focus is on their capabilities and assets rather than on deficits and needs) to view learners. The positive attitude of a teacher can indirectly impact on learners' attitude and motivation towards learning.</p>

<p><b>See more opportunities to implement asset-based teaching</b></p> <p>As the teacher focused on available assets, resources and positive aspects in her classroom, she was able to see opportunities to implement asset-based teaching. Examples of these included her use of teaching to support learners with the identification and mobilisation of assets to recognise potential within themselves, opportunities to learners to work independently, and provision for learners' diverse needs in order to develop self-knowledge.</p>	<p>Effective teaching includes a teacher who sees opportunities in his/her teaching, one who has high expectations of learners and one who focuses on positive aspects in class and thus has a positive outlook in terms of him/herself and the learners (Lee &amp; Smith, 2001). Similarly, positive psychology focuses on what is positive and what works (Seligman &amp; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In addition, the asset-based approach focuses on what is present and available (Eloff, 2006).</p>	<p>Focusing on what works, what is present, positive and available in the classroom may assist teachers to identify more opportunities to implement asset-based teaching and contribute to effective teaching in this manner. This can in turn allow teachers to follow an approach that may support learners despite a variety of needs and preferences in one classroom, allowing for the individual development of diverse learners in one classroom.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 2.2: Change in the teacher's behaviour</b></p>		
<p><b>Be an example for learners on how to implement the asset-based approach</b></p> <p>The participating teacher indicated that the asset-based approach could possibly be used to enable other individuals at the school, home and in the community to implement the asset-based approach. In showing learners how to identify, mobilise and manage assets in class they could in turn show this to others at home or in the community.</p>	<p>Existing literature confirms that through the interaction between two systems, individuals may become aware of the presence of assets and capacities. Consequently the asset-based approach may empower people and contribute to positive change (Eloff, 2006; Starkman, 2006). In a similar way, the bio-ecological model could be described as a spider's web or model creating a ripple effect. When change appears in one system (for example the classroom), it will affect the other systems as they are all interconnected (Donald <i>et al.</i>, 2002, 2010).</p>	<p>The implementation of asset-based teaching could lead to positive behaviour and enablement of individuals in one system (for example learners in class), which could have a ripple effect in other related systems (for example other teachers in school, parents at home or other members in the community). The link between the asset-based approach and the bio-ecological model are evident here as the focus is on relationships. These relationships interact with one another in terms of the bio-ecological model and share assets and strengths within the context of the asset-based approach.</p>
<p><b>Focus on positive behaviour rather than negative behaviour</b></p> <p>The teacher aimed to forget previous negative behaviour and gave learners a blank slate. Giving attention to positive behaviour of learners contributed to a positive classroom climate and increased motivation amongst learners, trusting learners with more responsibility and increased self-confidence.</p>	<p>A positive classroom includes creating a positive atmosphere in class. The benefits of creating a positive classroom climate could include trust, self-esteem and motivation (Eccles, 2004; Eccles <i>et al.</i>, 1998; Kyriacou, 1997; Roeser &amp; Eccles, 1998).</p>	<p>The application of asset-based teaching may contribute to a positive classroom climate which may in turn result in benefits such as increased motivation, trust and self-esteem. As a positive classroom climate is essential for effective teaching, the asset-based approach therefore supports teaching behaviours that could contribute to effective teaching and indirectly effective learning.</p>

<p><b>Identify practical ways of incorporating asset-based teaching</b></p> <p>The participating teacher suggested writing the learners' assets on their report cards in order for their parents to assist in building a positive identity during the adolescent phase.</p>	<p>In a study conducted in relation to career facilitation and the asset-based approach, it was found that an asset-based facilitator needs to be open-minded and flexible. In applying some creativity, assets were used to deal with challenges (Coetzee <i>et al.</i>, 2009; Eloff, 2006).</p>	<p>The asset-based approach may support teachers to be creative in identifying practical ways of incorporating asset-based teaching through parent involvement, for example sending learners' assets maps home in order for parents to help with the identification process of their children's assets and to help them mobilise these assets.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 2.3: Change in learners</b></p>		
<p><b>Increased confidence</b></p> <p>Within this study, the application of the asset-based approach promoted confidence within the teacher which in turn seemingly promoted confidence amongst learners.</p>	<p>Teachers, who believe and have confidence in their own ability to teach, can promote confidence within adolescents about themselves and their learning (Eccles, 2004). Within the bio-ecological model, the different systems (for example learners and teachers) are interconnected. Therefore, a change in one subsystem will contribute to a change in another (Donald <i>et al.</i>, 2002, 2010).</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching could result in teachers being more confident in their abilities to teach which in turn could lead to learners being more confident in their learning. Asset-based teaching might therefore become an example of how assets could be used to increase the self-confidence of both teachers and learners.</p>
<p><b>Increased motivation towards learning</b></p> <p>The application of the asset-based approach supported the learners in this study with increased motivation to learn.</p>	<p>Starkman (2006) agrees that identifying learners' assets could increase motivation and encouragement amongst learners, as learners feel they engage in the learning process by using their assets.</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching could support learners to increase their motivation to learn and engage more actively in learning processes. For example, when learners experience that they possess assets and strengths to contribute in the classroom, they might feel more motivated to engage in classroom discussions and share these assets.</p>
<p><b>Work more independently</b></p> <p>In this study learners reportedly displayed an increased ability to work more independently as the field work progressed.</p>	<p>The asset-based approach contributes to the enablement and self-determination of individuals (Eloff &amp; Ebersöhn, 2001). One of adolescents' psychosocial crises includes their movement towards independence (Frydenberg, 2008; Louw <i>et al.</i>, 2002).</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching may contribute to enablement of learners, which may in turn result in learners working more independently and needing less input from the teacher. Such a positive change could support adolescents in dealing with developmental changes when they become more independent. Teachers should provide opportunities to learners to work more independently.</p>
<p><b>Increased self-knowledge</b></p> <p>Learners experienced increased self-knowledge as a possible result of asset-based teaching.</p>	<p>Eloff (2006) agrees that the process of identifying adolescents' assets may contribute to positive awareness and increased self-knowledge in terms of their assets and strengths supporting their future plans.</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching may contribute to learners' increased self-knowledge in terms of their assets and strengths. One of adolescents' (Grade7's) developmental tasks include forming their identity and increasing their self-knowledge. Focusing on assets may contribute to positive self-concept amongst adolescents.</p>

<p><b>Move focus from challenges to assets</b></p> <p>The learners in this study started focusing on their assets instead of their challenges.</p>	<p>Identifying assets may support individuals with a positive awareness and change in mindset, where they start focusing on undiscovered assets instead of only challenges and needs, according to Eloff, (2006).</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching could support learners to focus less on their challenges and more on their assets and strengths. A focus on assets and strengths may contribute to a positive attitude towards themselves and others and an attitude where they are likely to face challenges in a positive way.</p>
<p><b>Fewer behaviour difficulties in class</b></p> <p>The application of the asset-based approach reportedly minimised some of the behaviour difficulties in the classroom (for example the learners focused more on their assets, changed their attitude towards the teacher and displayed less negative behaviour).</p>	<p>Asset-building in a classroom could contribute to fewer behaviour challenges (Starkman, 2006). According to Zirpoli and Melloy (1993), one strategy to prevent behaviour difficulties is to establish a positive learning climate and recognise positive student attributes. The asset-based approach could support teachers to identify positive attributes of learners (Kretzmann &amp; McKnight, 1993).</p>	<p>The application of asset-based teaching could support learners to focus on their strengths and assets, which may possibly contribute to reduced behaviour difficulties as learners focus on receiving positive attention instead of negative attention.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 2.4: Change in teaching and learning practices</b></p>		
<p><b>Change in teaching style</b></p> <p>The participating teacher's teaching style changed from mostly guiding to providing learners with the opportunity to work more independently.</p>	<p>Identifying assets could support teachers in several ways such as trusting learners with more responsibility which in turn may decrease behaviour challenges and feelings of incompetence and low self-esteem (Starkman, 2006). Adolescents with positive social relations with others and a high self-esteem are more likely to have an optimistic outlook (Dumont &amp; Provost, 1999; Herman-Stahl &amp; Petersen, 1996).</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching could result in teachers adopting a teaching style which is characterised by focusing on assets, responsibility and where independence of learners is emphasised. Such a change in teaching may contribute to learners' more positive outlook on school and learning.</p>
<p><b>Change in teacher's time and attention</b></p> <p>The teacher focused less on time-consuming discipline challenges in class and more on positive aspects of learners. In doing this, she found that she had more time available to provide learners with individual attention and attend to their individual and diverse needs.</p>	<p>The application of the asset-based approach could contribute to sustainable benefits such as fewer challenges in relation to learners' behaviour. Teachers could save time when they have to deal less with behaviour challenges (Starkman, 2006). Creating a positive classroom environment may contribute to less behaviour challenges (Zirpoli &amp; Melloy, 1993).</p>	<p>The implementation of asset-based teaching and using it to contribute to a positive classroom environment may result in fewer behavioural challenges in the classroom, which may in turn lead to a teacher having more time to attend to the individual needs of learners.</p>
<p><b>Different approach to teaching</b></p> <p>The asset-based approach was viewed by the teacher as a different way of teaching that may support learning.</p>	<p>The asset-based approach has been implemented to support teaching and learning in previous studies. Eloff and De Wet (2009) explored the use of assets to support pre-school learning in a community. Starkman (2006) conducted a study in using a developmental</p>	<p>Asset-based teaching could be viewed as an alternative approach to teaching which may support learning. It could be used to promote school-based psychosocial support, empower teachers to mobilise their assets, contribute to teamwork between teachers, learners and their parents, or teaching Grade</p>

	<p>assets framework to support teaching. Loots (2011) implemented the asset-based approach in four schools to promote school-based psychosocial support. Similarly, Ferreira (2006) and Loots (2005), as part of Ferreira's and Ebersohn's (2011) broader study, guided teachers to mobilise assets in coping with HIV/AIDS. Olivier (2009) indicates positive changes such as teamwork between teachers and how they care, support and communicate with one another as important. Matentje (2006) implemented the asset-based approach to analyse education policies on adult reading literacy in South Africa.</p>	<p>7 learners to identify, mobilise and manage their assets.</p>
<p><b>Change in teaching contributed to a change in learners' interest</b></p> <p>The application of asset-based teaching seemingly contributed to change in the learners' interest towards their learning. Learners started to be on time for class and reportedly put more effort into their work.</p>	<p>Effective teaching could be described with three main variables namely context variables, process variables and product variables. Context variables include the different characteristics of the teacher. Process variables include the interaction between the learners and the teacher within the classroom. Product variables include the educational outcomes (Scheuermann &amp; Hall, 2008; Starkman, 2006).</p>	<p>The application of asset-based teaching could influence context and process variables which may consequently lead to a change in product variables (for example learners' increased interest in their learning).</p>
<b>SILENCES</b>		
<b>Subtheme 2.4: Change in teaching and learning practices</b>		
<b>Existing literature</b>	<b>Findings: interpretation and discussion</b>	
<p><b>Fostering of closer relationships</b></p> <p>The implementation of the asset-based may foster more effective and closer relationships within the classroom, as a result of the teacher being able to handle classroom challenges more effectively (Starkman, 2006).</p>	<p>The participating teacher did not explicitly report that the implementation of asset-based teaching led to more effective or closer relationships between herself and the learners. However, the teacher indicated many positive changes that she experienced that could possibly lead to closer relationships within the classroom in future. A possible reason why this study did not report on closer relationships might be that the focus of this study was not on the relationships between learners, or the teacher and learners; but rather on implementing the asset-based approach in class.</p>	

### 5.2.2.2 Addressing research question 2: *What are the experienced benefits and positive changes for a teacher in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?*

The teacher described the positive changes during the process of asset-based teaching in terms of changes related to her thinking patterns, her behaviour, changes within the learners, and changes in teaching and learning practices. The positive changes in the teacher's thinking patterns related to her personally as well as to her teaching. In agreement with existing literature, her personal thinking patterns included the following positive changes: the teacher was able to recognise potential within herself and her self-confidence increased (Bagherpour, 2011; Ebersöhn, 2006b Ferreira, 2006; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots, 2006), she developed increased self-knowledge (Ebersöhn, 2006b; Eloff; 2006), she could identify her personal assets (Ammerman & Parks, 1998; Kretzmann & R 200McKnight, 1993) and she realised the importance of reflection (Keys & Lopez, 2005; Kyriacou, 1997; Loots, 2011). In terms of her teaching, positive changes in her thinking patterns indicate that she started mobilising strengths in her classroom to overcome challenges (Eloff, 2006; Ferreira, 2006; Loots, 2005, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), recognised more potential in the learners, viewed them as being able to work more independently (Starkman; 2006), identified more opportunities for her teaching (Eloff, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and changed her attitude towards the learners in her classroom in focusing on learners' assets and strengths instead of their needs and challenges (Coetzee *et al.*, 2009; Eloff, 2006).

As a result of the teacher's changed thinking patterns, her behaviour in the classroom changed. The teacher subsequently handled her classes differently, and aimed to create a positive classroom climate in forgetting about previous negative behaviour, and provided the learners with a blank slate to start with (Eccles *et al.*, 1998; Kyriacou, 1997; Eccles, 2004; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Furthermore, she aimed to set an example for learners on how to identify, mobilise and manage their assets (Eloff, 2006; Starkman, 2006). The changes in the teacher's behaviour in turn contributed to the following changes amongst the learners, as observed by the teacher: increased confidence (Eccles, 2004), increased motivation towards learning (Starkman, 2006), increased self-knowledge (Eloff, 2006), moving their focus from challenges to assets (Eloff, 2006), and fewer behaviour difficulties in class as the learners changed their attitude towards learning (Starkman, 2006).

Finally positive changes in relation to teaching and learning practices were evident, possibly as a result of implementing the asset-based approach. The teacher found that her teaching style changed from guiding learners to them working more independently as her trust in them increased (Starkman, 2006). As the teacher identified assets and potential within the learners, it was easier for her to trust them with more responsibility. In addition, she experienced a change in dividing her time and attention in the classroom. The teacher namely experienced fewer behaviour difficulties in class as her focus moved away from these challenges (Eloff, 2006; Starkman, 2006). Therefore, she was able to spend

less time on discipline difficulties and more time on supporting learners individually in focusing on their assets.

In conclusion the findings of the current study suggest that the implementation of asset-based teaching could lead to increased confidence and increased self-knowledge, identification of assets as well as enablement and awareness in the classroom. In addition, this approach may support teachers to recognise the value of reflection in teaching and to move the focus away from learners' needs towards their assets and strengths. In terms of positive changes among learners, asset-based teaching may lead to increased motivation and trust, fewer behaviour difficulties and working more independently. I therefore posit that the implementation of asset-based teaching could result in positive changes in teachers' thinking patterns and behaviour; positive changes in learners; as well as positive changes in teaching and learning practices. In terms of the bio-ecological model such positive changes may potentially affect microsystems other than the teacher and learners themselves, such as the learners' homes, other classrooms in schools or members of the community. This hypothesis requires on-going investigation.

### **5.2.2.3 Addressing research question 3: *How may the implementation of the asset-based approach assist a teacher to accommodate learners' differences and needs in a Grade 7 Life Orientation class?***

As part of the personal positive changes that the teacher experienced during the implementation of the asset-based approach, she also experienced how such an approach to teaching could allow for the accommodation of learners' different needs in one classroom. At the start of the intervention the teacher focused on the challenges and needs of the learners and did not fully recognise the variety of assets and strengths within the classroom. However, the teacher progressively became aware of individual yet diverse assets and strengths, which supported her to attend to the individual needs of the learners. As such the teacher moved her focus away from challenges towards assets, strengths and what works, without ignoring existing diverse needs (Forster, 2003; Kowalski, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

As indicated, the application of the asset-based approach in this study led to self-determination and enablement as the teacher recognised more potential within herself and her learners, and used identified assets to attend to learners' needs (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). The teacher also utilised learners' assets to support other learners, for example she relied on learners that are good in spelling, reading, writing, mathematics or social skills to assist some of the learners who experienced difficulties in these areas. With the belief that each learner possesses unique strengths, learners could support themselves and others in addressing needs. The application of the asset-based approach also supported the teacher to identify and mobilise her own assets as teacher and to see opportunities for her teaching to attend to learners' needs. The teacher indicated that asset-based

teaching allowed her to rely on the assets, strengths and recourses from different systems within the bio-ecological model in attending to current needs in class. She seemed aware that this possibility has the potential to be built out even further, mobilising existing assets and strengths widely.

Other experienced benefits in this study as a result of a changing teaching style include the teacher's trust that learners could work more independently as well as her experience of fewer behaviour difficulties in class. These benefits provided the teacher with more time to attend to learners' individual needs. This implies that the classroom environment can potentially become an enabling and inclusive environment in which the asset-based approach may support a teacher to attend to learners' different needs (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

The findings of this study therefore highlight how teachers may implement asset-based teaching to accommodate learners' differences and needs in one classroom by implementing a teaching style whereby they establish an enabling environment and focus on learners' assets and strengths, and mobilise these to attend to diverse needs in one classroom. Within such an enabling environment each learner may potentially contribute by using his/her unique assets to attend to his/her own or even other learners' needs. In the bigger picture this may in turn lead to additional positive changes such as a teacher being able to identify potential within learners and seeing more opportunities for teaching in order to enable learners to mobilise their assets within the different systems of the bio-ecological model. Asset-based teaching may in this manner contribute to a positive classroom environment where trust, motivation, increased self-awareness and increased self-confidence are key elements. As there are many differences in one classroom that a teacher need to attend to, this study however merely started to indicate how the asset-based approach could support a teacher to attend to diverse needs. This idea requires further exploration.

### **5.2.3 CHALLENGES RELATED TO ASSET-BASED TEACHING**

In this section I position the results of Theme 3 within existing literature in order to present findings and answer secondary research question 4.

#### **5.2.3.1 Findings on challenges associated with asset-based teaching**

Table 5.3 summarises the findings from Theme 3 indicating where findings support and contradict existing literature, as well as where silences in existing literature were evident.

**Table 5.3: Theme 3 positioned within existing literature**

THEME 3 : CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN IMPLEMENTING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO TEACH LIFE ORIENTATION TO A GRADE 7 CLASS		
CORRELATING FINDINGS		
Results	Existing literature	Findings: interpretation and discussion
<b>Subtheme 3.1: Challenges experienced by the teacher</b>		
<p><b>High workload and responsibilities</b>            The participating teacher experienced her multiple responsibilities as teacher as challenging and felt that this challenge possibly influenced the effectiveness of her implementation of the asset-based approach.</p>	<p>Studies confirm that teachers' workload and responsibilities are increasing and cause additional stressors which may negatively influence their quality of teaching (Bennell, 2004; Howard &amp; Jonhson, 2004; Loots, 2011; Loots &amp; Mnguni, 2008; Olivier &amp; Venter, 2003).</p>	<p>Increased workload and responsibilities in teaching as well as time constraints may be possible challenges when practicing asset-based teaching as these factors may contribute to stress and negative attitudes amongst teachers. Negative attitudes could in turn influence teachers' willingness to implement a new approach such as asset-based teaching in their classrooms.</p>
<p><b>Moving the focus from weaknesses to assets</b>            The teacher initially found it challenging to change her thinking patterns and not to focus on learners' weaknesses and needs.</p>	<p>Eloff (2006:17) reports that teachers often find it challenging to move their focus from the needs-based approach to the asset-based approach as they are "prone to deficit thinking".</p>	<p>Teachers may find it difficult to make a paradigm shift from focusing on deficits and needs to focusing on assets and strengths. Asset-based teaching is a new way of thinking about teaching. Teachers who have focused on the challenges and needs of learners for many years may thus find such a paradigm shift to be a challenging one to make.</p>
<p><b>Regular implementation</b>            The teacher was of the opinion that regular implementation is important to sustain positive changes in terms of the asset-based approach. She was concerned that this could be a challenge.</p>	<p>Sustainable school-based psychosocial support was identified in the on-going STAR-project as a result of implementing the asset-based approach over several years (Bagherpour, 2011).</p>	<p>The sustainability of positive changes in the context of asset-based teaching may be enhanced through regular implementation thereof. As teachers have many responsibilities and experience daily stressors in their teaching, regular implementation of a new strategy might be experienced as overwhelming. However, if a paradigm shift occurs, this may turn out to be an easy task. When the asset-based approach is not implemented on a regular basis, the managing of asset phase would be neglected and the continuous cycle of identifying, mobilising and managing assets would not be possible.</p>

Subtheme 3.2: Challenges related to learners		
<b>Behaviour difficulties as part of a challenging developmental phase</b> The participating teacher was of the opinion that the changes related to the adolescent phase contributed to behaviour difficulties in class which possibly affected the effectiveness of the approach.	The adolescent phase is a period of change and development with difficulties such as: “achievement-related concerns, relationships concerns and social issues” (Frydenberg, 2008:15). The challenges experienced in this phase may negatively affect learners’ behaviour or motivation in the classroom (Eccel & Midgley, 1989; Eccles, 2004).	Behaviour challenges associated with the adolescent phase could possibly affect the effectiveness of the implementation of asset-based teaching. Adolescents undergo many changes and face many challenges to deal with during this phase which in turn may cause a lack of interest in learning, behaviour difficulties or relationship difficulties. As the asset-based approach is a relationship driven approach such challenges may affect the effectiveness of the approach. This hypothesis, however, requires further investigation.
<b>Limited understanding of asset-based vocabulary</b> The learners reportedly found it challenging to fully understand the vocabulary used in relation to the asset-based approach.	Even though asset-based terminology has been introduced into the teaching profession, it is still not comprehensively understood. The main focus in schools is often on the needs of learners, and teachers are typically not fully familiar with the vocabulary of the asset-based approach (Eloff, 2006).	Learners’ limited knowledge and understanding of asset-based terminology may pose a challenge when implementing the asset-based approach in a classroom. Additional explanation of asset-based terminology might be useful in successful implementation of asset-based teaching. This hypothesis requires on-going research.
Subtheme 3.3: Challenges related to teaching and learning		
<b>Incorporation in lessons on a regular basis and in different subjects</b> The participating teacher indicated that she would find it challenging to implement the asset-based approach in different subjects and that it might be easier to incorporate this into the subject Life Orientation than in any other subjects.	Critique on implementing the asset-based approach into teaching includes the statement that it involves hard work and that teachers find it difficult to incorporate this into the curriculum of different subjects (Starkman, 2006). The application of the asset-based approach could however support learners to acquire life skills that support them with changing demands such as changes as adolescents (Ebersöhn, 2006b).	A possible challenge in relation to asset-based teaching involves the difficulty of incorporating the asset-based approach in a curriculum of different subjects. This challenge may perhaps be overcome by means of a shift in paradigm (towards strength-based thinking) and creative methods. This hypothesis requires on-going research.
<b>Implementation in large classrooms</b> One challenge in relation to the implementation of the asset-based approach included the difficulty of implementing asset-based teaching in a high teacher-learner ratio classroom as the participating teacher was of the opinion that individual attention is important for implementation.	Loots (2011) conducted a study which indicated that high teacher-to-child ratios may pose a challenge in the implementation of the asset-based approach, as teachers have less time available for individual attention.	A possible challenge in implementing asset-based teaching is high teacher-learner ratios. The challenge may be addressed by mobilising learners’ assets in class to support teaching, to guide learners to work more independently and to implement the asset-based approach to minimise behaviour challenges in class. This is however a mere hypothesis that requires further investigation.

Subtheme 3.4: Challenges related to external factors		
<p><b>Learners experience of challenging circumstances at home</b></p> <p>According to the teacher, socio-economic challenges such as unemployment of parents and poverty influenced the learners' development and academic performance, as they needed to look after their siblings at home and had limited resources available to attend to their basic needs. The teacher was of the opinion that this could influence the effectiveness of asset-based teaching due to learners' limited access to resources and assets.</p>	<p>The dynamic relationship within and across the different systems and sub-systems of the bio-ecological model will influence learners' development and growth. The macrosystem includes the general orientation to the world such as poverty within specific geographic areas. The macrosystem will influence the microsystems (learners, school and family). For example, poverty within a specific geographic area that influences the family's circumstances and resources may in turn affect learners' development (Donald <i>et al.</i>, 2002, 2010; Lazarus, 2007; Swart &amp; Pettipher, 2005). Studies as part of the STAR-project identified several challenges associated with the implementation of the asset-based approach that influenced learners' academic progress, namely poverty, unemployment, financial constraints and learners' additional responsibilities at home by taking care of younger siblings (Coetzee, 2010; Ferreira &amp; Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots, 2011; Meintjies, 2009).</p>	<p>Socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and learners' additional responsibilities at home could influence the successful implementation of asset-based teaching. However, the asset-based approach may also be used to deal with these challenges. This hypothesis requires on-going research.</p>
<p><b>Moving from a needs-based approach to the asset-based approach</b></p> <p>The teacher was of the opinion that society mostly focuses on learners' weaknesses. She further indicated the opinion that such a needs-based orientation could influence the effectiveness of asset-based teaching.</p>	<p>The medical model or needs-based approach focuses on needs, challenges and deficiencies of learners. As a result of implementing the medical model in society, individuals seem to be stuck on focusing on needs and therefore often overlook assets and potential (Eloff, 2006).</p>	<p>A needs-based orientation in society could be a potential challenge in implementing the asset-based approach in the classroom.</p>

<p><b>Limited parental support and involvement</b></p> <p>Another challenge evident in this study is the challenge of limited parental support and involvement. The teacher was of opinion that some of the parents/guardians at home did not support the positive changes of the learners in class as limited parental involvement was a concern in the school. The teacher found it difficult to support learners to believe in themselves without support from home.</p>	<p>Limited support from home (for example with homework) is evident in several studies where the asset-based approach has been implemented in school-contexts (Coetzee, 2010; Ferreira &amp; Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots, 2011). Limited parent involvement could lead to poor communication between teachers and parents, limited encouraging relationships and possible lower academic achievement by learners (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran &amp; Hoy, 2001; Kohl <i>et al.</i>, 2000; Middlemiss, 2005).</p>	<p>Limited support from home and parent involvement pose as a potential challenge in asset-based teaching, as assets should be mobilised within relationships with others.</p>
<b>CONTRADICTIONS</b>		
<p><b>Results</b></p>	<p><b>Existing literature</b></p>	<p><b>Findings: Interpretation and discussion</b></p>
<p><b>Reasons for research participation</b></p> <p>The participating teacher found the implementation of the asset-based approach rewarding, as one of her main assets was a love for learning. She did not expect any form of compensation or financial gain for participation in the study. She reflected that personal growth and development was essential to her.</p>	<p>In studies conducted where the asset-based approach was implemented in resource-scarce schools, the participating teachers typically expected financial benefits (Loots, 2011) or health and social services (Koné, Sullivan, Senturia, Chrisman, Ciske, Krieger, 2000).</p>	<p>The rationale for the teacher's participation in this study is in contradiction with current literature. The teacher in this study did not expect financial or social benefits, but rather viewed participation as an opportunity for personal growth and development as a teacher. Possible reasons for the contradiction might include the fact that existing studies where financial benefits were important have often been conducted in resourced-scarce areas. Even though the participating teacher works in a school situated in an area with socio-economic barriers, the teacher in this study resides in a middle-class socio-economic environment and had a personal interest in the research. Her motivation seemed to be intrinsic by nature. This hypothesis requires further exploration.</p>
<p><b>Enhancing limited parent support</b></p> <p>The teacher experienced it difficult to enhance parent support through asset-based teaching.</p>	<p>Loots (2011) conducted a study in relation to the asset-based approach in which the findings indicated that parent involvement could be enhanced by means of the application of the asset-based approach in a school-community context.</p>	<p>The result of this study is in contradiction with current literature regarding the role of parent involvement in implementation of the asset-based approach. A possible reason for this contradiction could be related to the fact that the participating teacher did not have the opportunity to enhance parent support as the study focused on implementing the asset-based approach in her classroom and not in a wider school-community context.</p>

SILENCES	
<b>Existing literature</b>	<b>Findings: interpretation and discussion</b>
<b>Subtheme 3.1: Challenges experienced by the teacher</b>	
<p><b>Scholastic underperformance</b></p> <p>Scholastic underperformance of learners is reported as a typical challenge experienced by teachers in existing literature during the implementation of the asset-based approach (Loots, 2011).</p>	<p>Within this study, the teacher did not refer to underperformance as a challenge, but rather emphasised the challenge of discipline difficulties in class. A possible reason for this silence might relate to the possibility of the teacher focusing on discipline difficulties as she is experiencing this challenge as overwhelming.</p>
<b>Subtheme 3.3: Challenges related to teaching and learning</b>	
<p><b>Attrition of teachers</b></p> <p>Challenges in relation to teaching in other asset-based intervention studies conducted in resources-scarce schools reported on the loss of teachers from the teaching profession due to death or better career opportunities available in other schools. This challenge typically contributes to stress experienced by teachers (Bennell, 2004; Loots, 2011).</p>	<p>Within this study, there were no results in relation to the experienced challenge of the attrition of teachers. A possible explanation for this might be that the school in this study is not situated in a rural area. Existing studies show that this challenge is more likely in rural schools where teachers prefer to choose teaching positions close to home (Balfour, Mitchell &amp; Moletsane, 2008; Loots, 2011). The participating teacher from this study rather felt that the study should be conducted within whole school contexts as long-standing relationships between teachers might support the process of asset-based teaching. This study has been conducted in a middle class school and not a resource-scarce school.</p>
<b>Subtheme 3.4: Challenges related to external factors</b>	
<p><b>Challenges in resource-scarce schools</b></p> <p>An asset-based study in resource-scarce schools conducted by Loots (2011) indicated challenges related to external factors in schools such as absenteeism as a result of HIV/AIDS, a lack of learner engagement, long distances between home and school, child-headed homes and child abuse. Other literature confirms and elaborates on potential challenges: challenges associated with HIV/AIDS (Bennel, 2005); contextual barriers (for example long distances between home and school that is time consuming to travel) (De Lannoy, 2009), child-headed homes (Townsend &amp; Dawes, 2004) and child-abuse (Agaibi &amp; Wilson, 2005).</p>	<p>This study reports on external challenges such as poverty or limited parental support, however there were silences in terms of the challenges found in resource-scarce schools as reported on in existing literature. A possible reason is that I conducted research in a middle-class school that possibly has access to more resources than schools in resource-scarce communities.</p>

### **5.2.3.2 Addressing research question 4: *What are the experienced challenges for a teacher in implementing the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?***

Findings of this study indicate several challenges associated with the application of the asset-based approach in a Grade 7 classroom, as experienced by the participating teacher. These challenges relate to the teacher, the learners, teaching and learning, and external factors. One of the challenges experienced by the teacher on a personal level concerns changing her thinking patterns to focus on learners' assets and strengths instead of on their weaknesses and needs. Eloff (2006) highlights that the needs-based approach or medical model is still practised in many classrooms; and that within these approaches individuals are prone to think of learners in terms of deficits and needs. In addition to this the pressure from teaching, many responsibilities as a teacher and limited time may influence the effectiveness of implementing asset-based teaching (Bennell, 2004; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Loots, 2011; Loots & Mnguni, 2008; Olivier & Venter, 2003). In this regard, the participating teacher in this study indicated that time constraints may also hamper the sustainability of asset-based teaching.

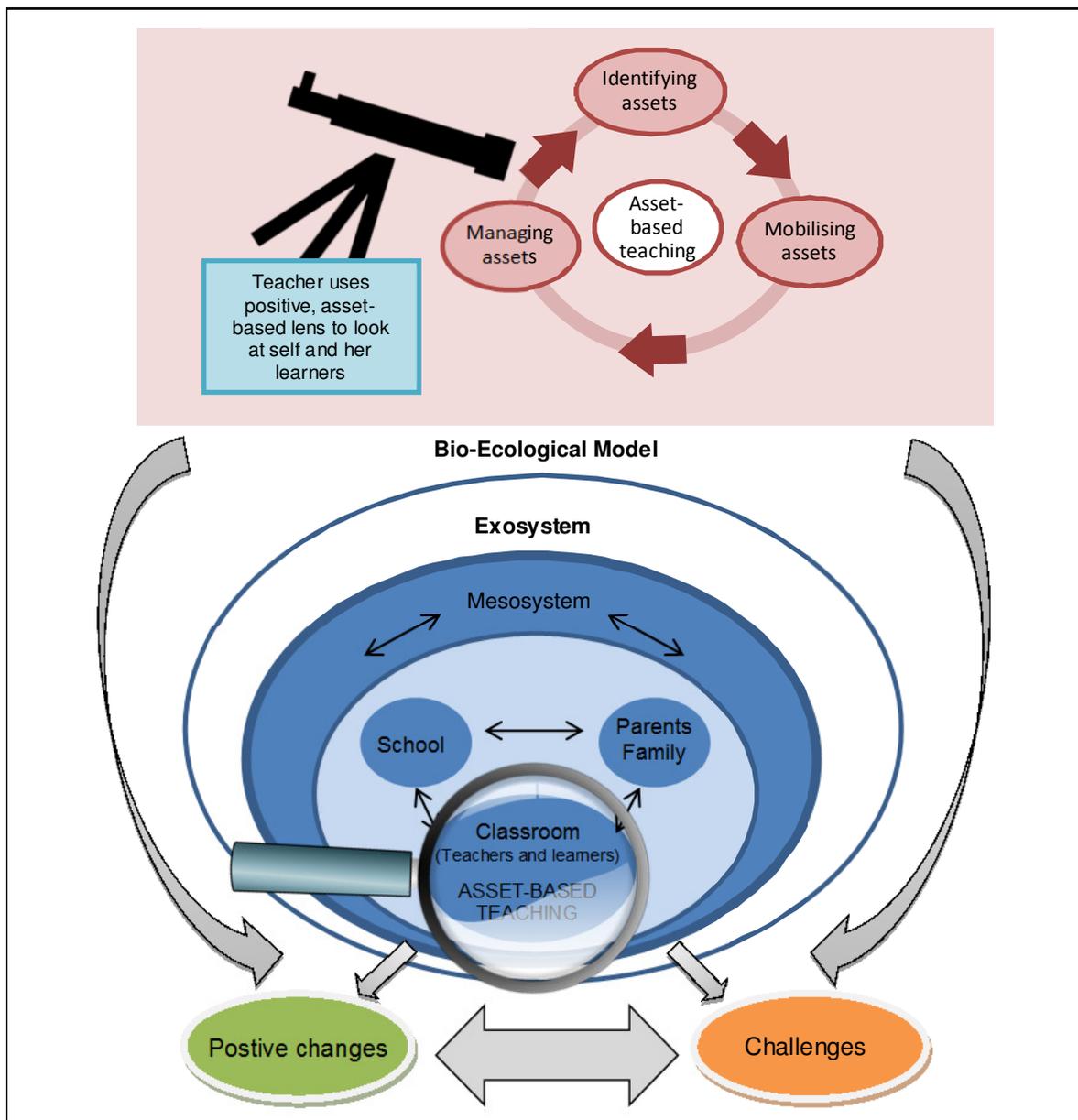
The findings of this study suggest that challenges in relation to the learners in class could also affect the effectiveness of asset-based teaching. In line with existing literature, these challenges include learners' limited understanding of asset-based vocabulary (Eloff, 2006), challenges associated with adolescence as developmental phase, and discipline challenges (Eccles, 2004; Frydenberg, 2008). In terms of teaching and learning in general, a possible challenge that the teacher indicated was the difficulty to incorporate the asset-based approach in lessons on a regular basis and in different subjects as also found in other studies (Ebersöhn, 2006b; Starkman, 2006).

In line with existing literature, the teacher indicated that external factors such as challenging home circumstances (Coetzee, 2010; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots, 2011; Meintjies, 2009), limited support by parents (Coetzee, 2010; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2012; Loots, 2011) and the societal habit to focus on learners' weaknesses may influence the effectiveness of implementing the asset-based approach (Eloff, 2006). In addition the current study indicates that challenges experienced during the implementation of the asset-based approach could in turn influence the effectiveness of the day-to-day teaching of a teacher.

Based on the findings of this study I therefore argue that possible challenges and barriers could be expected when implementing the asset-based approach to teaching. Although these barriers are typically context-related, they could include personal challenges experienced by teachers (such as increased workload and responsibility in teaching, the difficulty of focusing away from needs to challenges, lack of sustainability of positive changes), challenges related to learners (behaviour challenges, limited understanding of the asset-based approach terminology), challenges related to teaching and learning (difficulty to implement into curriculum of different subjects, high teacher-learner ratio) as well as challenges related to external factors within the macro-system of the bio-ecological model (socio-economic factors, need-based orientation in society, limited support from home).

### 5.2.4 ADDRESSING THE PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION: *How does a teacher experience the implementation of the asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class?*

In Figure 5.3, I present my understanding of how teachers may implement the *asset-based approach to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class*, based on the findings I obtained.



**Figure 5.3: Implementing the asset-based approach in teaching**

Prior to my research, much evidence existed that the asset-based approach could be implemented and result in positive changes, yet I could not find evidence on such application in teaching Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class. The aim of this study was thus to explore and describe how the asset-based approach may be implemented to teach Life Orientation to a Grade 7 class. Initially, upon entering the research field, it seemed clear that teachers are confronted with many challenges when teaching adolescents (in particular Grade 7 learners) such as discipline difficulties, underperformance, a lack of motivation amongst learners, and not being able to work independently. These challenges were emphasised by the teacher who participated during the pre-intervention interview. In dealing

with these challenges I assumed that the asset-based approach could be used as one way to support teachers in focusing less on challenges and more on assets and strengths of learners, and in turn using these assets to deal more effectively with challenges. One of my working assumptions for this study was thus that it could be useful to the participating teacher to learn more about the asset-based approach and implement this when teaching Life Orientation to her Grade 7 learners. As the asset-based approach is a dynamic approach that focuses on assets and strengths and typically results in positive changes, I assumed that it could be applied as part of teaching to identify, mobilise and manage learners' assets. I further assumed that all learners and teachers possess strengths and that these could be used to support teaching and learning processes.

At the start of the study the participating teacher seemed unaware of the use and meaning of the asset-based approach. She gradually became aware of this meaning during application of the asset-based approach in the intervention phase. In implementing this approach, I found that the terms "asset-based approach" and "teaching" could be combined to construct the concept of "asset-based teaching". In this study I thus proposed asset-based teaching as an alternative approach to teaching where learners' and teachers' assets can be identified, mobilised and managed within the classroom. In this study I also found that the phases of identifying, mobilising and managing assets are a dynamic process in which the phases form part of a continuous cycle (as indicated in the top rectangle in Figure 5.3).

The phase of identifying assets may support an awareness of assets, the mobilisation of assets, identification of potential within learners, and learning and teaching processes in general. Different assets may be identified in the various systems indicated by the bio-ecological model (such as personal assets and assets within and outside schools) and displayed on an asset map. During the mobilisation phase an action plan that is linked to a project could support learners in mobilising their assets. Assets could be mobilised in utilising the assets within the relationships with others such as teachers, families and friends, facilitating reciprocal impact between the various systems learners and teachers function in. Within the final phase, namely the managing asset phase, assets are revisited and new assets identified. This process involves taking ownership and making a commitment.

My study demonstrates that the application of the three phases of the asset-based approach within a Life Orientation classroom can be associated with both positive changes (indicated in green in Figure 5.3) and challenges (indicated in orange in Figure 5.3). Although positive outcomes will be context-bound and differ across contexts, possible positive changes may include increased confidence and self-knowledge amongst learners and teachers, identification of assets, enablement in the classroom, recognising the value of reflection in teaching, focusing away from learners' needs towards their assets and strengths, increased motivation and trust amongst learners, a decrease in behaviour difficulties, and learners working more independently. Possible challenges related to asset-based teaching may include an increased workload and responsibility in teaching, difficulty to focus away

from needs to strengths, lack of sustainability of positive changes, behaviour challenges, limited understanding of asset-based terminology, difficulty to implement asset-based teaching into the curriculum of different subjects, high teacher-learner ratios, socio-economic challenges, a need-based orientation in society, and limited support to learners from home.

The positive changes (as indicated in the green oval in Figure 5.3) and challenges (as indicated in the orange oval in Figure 5.3) may in turn affect other microsystems within the bio-ecological model as the different systems are interrelated (as indicated by the arrows in Figure 5.3). When the asset-based approach is implemented in one microsystem (classroom), it could affect other microsystems (home, rest of the school). There seems to be an important link between positive changes and challenges, as available assets, resources and positive changes could be mobilised to address challenges (indicated with the arrow in Figure 5.3).

The findings of this study therefore highlight the potential value of asset-based teaching as an alternative way of teaching. It involves a paradigm shift by teachers to focus on assets as opposed to needs and challenges. I argue that in the process of implementing asset-based teaching, teachers will be guided to look through a positive lens at themselves, the learners and their teaching practices. Looking through an asset-based lens, teachers may be able to identify new possibilities and opportunities for successful teaching and learning as well as ways to accommodate learners' differences and needs in one classroom.

### **5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations of this study relate to the level of transferability, my role as researcher, differences with regard to languages, and complexity of the positive changes experienced.

#### **5.3.1 TRANSFERABILITY OF THE STUDY**

This study focused on one teacher's experiences in a specific school. As such the findings cannot be transferred to teachers in all classrooms in different schools, and conclusions on the implementation of asset-based teaching cannot be generalised (Bell, 2010). As the participatory teacher is still relatively young (24 years) and recently started working as a teacher she is very enthusiastic to learn and develop as a person and on a professional level. It follows that the same results may not necessarily be obtained in a different school with a different teacher. However, working from a qualitative, interpretivist perspective, the aim was to obtain an in-depth understanding of one teacher's experiences (Babbie & Mounton, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and not to generalise the findings.

As such the study may inform other teachers of one teacher's experience of implementing asset-based teaching. The idea is not to compare this experience with other teachers' experiences.

Teachers from different contexts need to decide to what extent the results of this study are applicable in their specific classrooms. As researcher, I however argue that this study is possibly transferable to teachers in similar contexts and circumstances. Therefore, I aimed to describe this case in detail for other teachers to decide on the level of transferability to their own classrooms and contexts.

### **5.3.2 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

A second limitation relates to objectivity and subjective influences. As researcher I had a special interest in this study and became a participant observer during the intervention phase of the study (Cresswell, 2007). I formed a research partnership with the participating teacher when we shared meaningful conversations during the course of the research. During these conversations, it was important to be aware of my own subjective opinions of the implementation of asset-based teaching and to avoid influencing the teacher's opinions. One of the teacher's signature strengths is a love for learning, and therefore she agreed to partake in the research. However, one of my responsibilities as researcher was to explain to the teacher that we would work together to understand a specific phenomenon and not to use my subjective opinions to do so. In response to this limitation, I aimed not to share my subjective experiences with the teacher but rather captured them in my research journal and focused on her experiences during the course of the research (Seale, 2000). Furthermore I made use of different strategies (member checking, triangulation, rich descriptions, reflection and an audit trail) to contribute to the quality criteria of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As researcher I had several roles to attend to and aimed not to confuse these roles or transfer personal, subjective experiences to the teacher within any of my roles. I attended to the roles as ethical, professional and reflective researcher, non-participating and participating observer, lesson designer and supportive colleague. Reflection as a researcher guided my thoughts and actions, thereby supporting me to explain the rationale behind my decisions and attend to the different roles separately (Burton & Bartlett, 2009).

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the teacher's experiences of asset-based teaching, therefore as researcher it was important for me to look at the learners' experiences through the teacher's findings and not my own. My focus had to remain on the teacher, which I found challenging at times as I have a great interest in children and their experiences, being an intern educational psychologist. Reflection helped me to distinguish between my own subjective meanings of the learners and the meanings that the teacher brought to the study.

### **5.3.3 DIFFERENCES WITH REGARD TO LANGUAGES USED**

Using two languages was another challenge that I had to keep in mind as researcher. All conversations during the research took place in Afrikaans which is both my own and the teacher's first language and therefore meanings were transferred and understood accurately. However, this dissertation is written in English for the sake of the international research audience. As a result the words of the teacher were translated into English for dissertation purposes. To ensure that no meaning was misinterpreted or lost, I made use of endnotes (See Appendix I) to also include the original Afrikaans conversations. In addition to this I used member checking to ensure that I did not misinterpret meanings due to translation. As the participating teacher is fluent in English she was able to comment on the results I presented to her in English.

### **5.3.4 COMPLEXITY OF POSITIVE CHANGES EXPERIENCED**

I agree with Kreuter, Lezin and Young (2000) as well as Minkler, Vasquez, Warner, Streusel and Faceted (2006) that the findings of this study cannot be quantified as a direct outcome of the asset-based approach intervention, as there might have been several other factors that contributed to positive change in relation to the learners, the teacher, and learning and teaching processes. From a bio-ecological perspective, there are constant and interrelated influences on the different systems and subsystems that might have contributed to positive changes (Donald *et al.*, 2010). Positive changes experienced by the teacher could for example be a result of substantial circumstances that changed at school or at the children's homes. As there are many aspects that influence learners' academic performance, I cannot assume that the positive changes in learners such as better academic performance is a result of the implementation of asset-based teaching. Similar to Loots (2011), I aimed to address this limitation by providing a detailed description of the teacher's experiences, avoid making conclusions from these experiences and recommend further research concerning possible positive changes in relation to asset-based teaching.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this section I make recommendations for practice, training and future research.

### **5.4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

The application of asset-based teaching in the classroom is recommended as an alternative way of teaching learners. Findings from this study suggest early implementation of the asset-based approach in order to make early identification and mobilisation of learners' assets possible. Different ways of incorporating assets within teaching on a daily basis could be beneficial. The creativity of teachers and existing literature may guide teachers to identify ways to incorporate asset-based teaching.

The findings of this study suggest a few practical ideas to incorporate the asset-based approach into daily teaching, for example making notes on lesson plans on how to incorporate learners' assets into the lesson, organising a parents' evening where learners' assets instead of barriers are discussed, indicating learners' strengths on their report cards, sticking learners' asset maps in the front of their books to re-visit and add on these assets on a regular basis, distributing an information pamphlet to parents on how assets could be identified, mobilised and managed at home, creating a check-list presenting assets for learners to tick off when used at home or at school, or displaying information on assets in the classrooms or in school to encourage learners to use their assets. In order to mobilise learners' assets this study further suggests on-going projects in school such as a *world of work day* to provide learners with opportunities to mobilise their assets. Another idea to incorporate asset-based teaching in the classroom is to group learners according to their assets and assign class responsibilities to them where they specifically mobilise their assets, for example establishing a reading buddy group where some learners support others with reading. In a similar way there could be a mathematics mechanics group, a science supporter group or friendship founders group in which learners use their strengths to support other learners.

Based on the findings of this study, I further recommend that terminology related to the asset-based approach be explained to learners on their level of understanding when implementing asset-based teaching. This may ensure that learners acquire a comprehensive understanding of concepts such as *assets, strengths, resources and asset maps*, before becoming involved in the processes of identifying, mapping, mobilising and managing their assets.

#### **5.4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING**

I recommend that the principles and processes of asset-based teaching be included in the training programmes of teachers. This could support and motivate future teachers to start thinking about learners in terms of assets and strengths instead of barriers, needs and deficits, which in turn could result in other positive changes. For example if a teacher focuses on a child's kindness instead of learning disabilities the learner may receive support by increased self-confidence and in turn change his/her interest towards school or learning. This recommendation, however, implies a certain paradigm shift, where teachers in training should adopt an asset-based philosophy.

Teachers in practice may also benefit by being introduced to asset-based teaching and the principles of the asset-based approach. It is however important to make teachers aware of the possible challenges and benefits that could be expected by implementing asset-based teaching in their classrooms. In addition such an approach may only be applicable in schools where school principals supported this philosophy, allowing for a strength-based ethos to be established in the school.

### 5.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following recommendations can be made for future research, based on my findings:

- Exploratory studies on asset-based teaching as part of a whole school or whole community project where different schools are involved. The potential roles and contributions of various teachers in school as well as parents in the community could be investigated, being part of interrelated systems.
- A follow-up study on the experiences of learners who participated in this study to describe their own perceptions of the process of asset-based teaching and learning and the positive changes or challenges associated with this.
- A follow-up study exploring the perceptions of the parents of the learners who participated in the study. This study might investigate the possible involvement of parents in asset-based teaching and in sharing assets within the mesosystem of the bio-ecological model.
- A follow-up study to explain the importance of understanding asset-based terminology as part of asset-based teaching.
- A follow-up study to investigate the relationship between adolescents' way of dealing with behaviour challenges and the application of asset-based teaching.
- A case study on the implementation of asset-based teaching in grades other than Grade 7 and in different learning areas.
- A descriptive study investigating the early implementation (possibly as early as Grade R) of asset-based teaching.
- An exploratory study on the application of asset-based teaching to overcome challenges such as high teacher-learner ratios and socio-economic factors.

### 5.5 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

By using meta-cognition and in revisiting my thoughts as researcher, I conclude with some reflecting thoughts.

*My aim for this study...*

The aim of this study was to explore and describe one teacher's experience of implementing the asset-based approach to teach Grade 7 learners. In exploring this phenomenon, I became aware of the possible process of asset-based teaching as well as the positive changes and challenges associated with this process as experienced by the teacher who participated. The study seemingly had a positive impact on the teacher, her Grade 7 learners and on myself as researcher. The findings contribute to existing literature on teaching and the asset-based approach. One specific contribution relates to the possibility of informing teachers to consider asset-based teaching in their classrooms.

### *What really excited me...*

What really excited me during this study were the possible positive changes in teachers and learners in terms of recognising their potential, assets and strengths within themselves. Personally I have had many experiences working with teachers in the past, who were so focused on learners' and their own needs and deficits that they forgot to look for and find strengths, assets and characteristics that make them special. Personally the asset-based approach taught me to look at the glass as half full, giving me the energy and courage to deal with the half empty part as I had the assets and resources to do so. As researcher, I also aimed to personally apply the asset-based approach during the course of the research and I referred to my personal assets that I used to write each chapter based on my own conceptualisations of the different chapters.

### *What I would have done differently...*

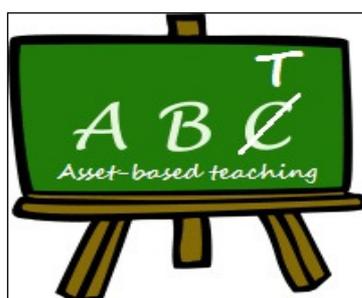
Looking back on my journey as researcher, I think I could have read even more (as one can never read enough), planned research steps in more detail (as planning is essential) and initially wrote more personal reflections (as I gradually discovered the power of reflections and how they guided my decisions). However, recognising these important aspects of research supported me in my growth as researcher and prepared me to conduct future research.

### *I would still want to find out more about...*

This study guided me to ask some questions in relation to asset-based teaching at the conclusion of this journey: *How could asset-based teaching be implemented as part of a whole school intervention? What could the possible benefits be when parents are directly involved in asset-based teaching? What are the Grade 7 learners' experiences of asset-based teaching? How may asset-based teaching be implemented within the curriculum of different subjects within different grades?* As captured in the previous section, I am thus of the opinion that several further studies may be conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

### *Personal gain...*

As researcher, teacher and educational psychologist in training this study contributed to personal self-knowledge and my own career knowledge. In a world where teachers experience a lot of pressure in their classrooms and learners experience many academic challenges, my hope is that asset-based teaching could be used in order for learners to know what they are good at before they even become aware of their barriers or challenges. Therefore, I propose that we turn the ABC of teaching into ABT (Asset-Based Teaching).



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## Appendix I: Endnotes from Chapter 4

Translated into English for dissertation purposes from Afrikaans. In presenting the results, the following codes will apply: Pre-II = Pre-intervention interview; Post-II = Post-intervention interview; TRJ = Teacher's reflective journal; SL1 = Work examples from learner 1 (Afrikaans Female, 13 years old); SL 2 = Work examples from learner 2 (Afrikaans Male, 12 years old); SL3 = Work examples from learner 3 (Afrikaans Female, 13 years old); P = Page; L = Line.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated into English for dissertation purposes from: "Jy was die eerste een wat my daarvan vertel het".

<sup>2</sup> "Ek dink die drie fases vloei mooi inmekaar en ek dink dit is 'n siklus wat jy weer kan herhaal".

<sup>3</sup> "Ek dink ook almal in die gemeenskap moet saamwerk om die kinders se sterkpunte te identifiseer, mobiliseer en te bestuur".

<sup>4</sup> "Ek dink bewusmaking daarvan is belangrik sodat hulle dit kan gebruik".

<sup>5</sup> "Ek dink as ek as onderwyser min of meer weet wat dit is, dan kan ek daarop fokus".

<sup>6</sup> "As hulle vir die ander mense kan sê by die huis wat hulle sterkpunte is, kan hulle dit by die huis gebruik".

<sup>7</sup> "Hulle sal nie daaraan dink dat dit moontlike sterkpunte is nie. So ek dink as 'n mens vir hulle opsies gee om van uit te kies, dan sal hulle kies".

<sup>8</sup> "Ek is rustig, mooi, slim. Ek is goed in ballet, netbal en leierskap. Ek hou van lag en speel in een. Ek het musiek vaardighede en waardeer klank, ritme en musiek. Ek het goeie bewegingsvaardighede soos hardloop, skop, gooi en hou balans goed. Ek kan goed kommunikeer".

<sup>9</sup> "Hierdie mense ondersteun en glo in my: mense naby my ...my ma en pa en familie. My ma en pa sal my bewaar. Dit help my om mense raad te vrae ...".

<sup>10</sup> "Ek hou van om in die middag te leer. Ek doen wat onderwysers vra en ek doen wat my ouers sê ek moet doen. Ek is suksesvol. As ek iets begin, sal ek dit klaarmaak".

<sup>11</sup> "goeie onderwysers, goeie mense wat my sal help, 'n mediasentrum, vriende en 'n tannie wat my raad gee".

<sup>12</sup> "Die geleentheid om te kan leer, die feit dat daar 'n onderwyser is wat bereid is om te help en die feit dat hulle boeke en handboeke het".

<sup>13</sup> "Ek het gedink ek kan goeie dissipline handhaaf want toe ek geproef het as onderwysstudent was my klas stil en hulle het saam gewerk. So dissipline was een van my sterkpunte maar ek dink nie dit is meer nie".

<sup>14</sup> "Ek dink hulle kan besef dat ten spyte van die slegte eienskappe waarop ander mense fokus, het hulle positiewe eienskappe waarop hulle kan fokus. Dat hulle saam met iemand aan hulle swakpunte kan werk deur te fokus op hul sterkpunte".

<sup>15</sup> "Die identifisering van bates fase het gehelp om bates te gebruik in die toekoms want ek het geleer om die kinders beter te verstaan. Soos byvoorbeeld die stil meisie in die klas, het meer deel begin neem in die klas en besef sy hoef nie stil te wees nie maar haar bydrae in die klas is belangrik. Ek dink dit het die leerders gehelp om hulself te leer ken en veral hul sterkpunte te identifiseer want so het hulle geleer om op hul eie sterkpunte te fokus".

<sup>16</sup> "Hoe gouer jy die kinders se sterkpunte kan identifiseer en kan gebruik tot hul voordeel, hoe beter".

<sup>17</sup> "...die feit dat ek te veel emosie wys".

<sup>18</sup> "Ek dink ek kan die feit gebruik dat ek daarvan hou om in beheer van die situasie te wees".

<sup>19</sup> "Ek dink die identifisering van bates het die leerders gehelp om hul leertegnieke beter te verstaan en hul sterkpunte wat hul het om te leer".

<sup>20</sup> "Die skool help my om my sterkpunte te leer ken".

<sup>21</sup> "Ek het ervaar dat die feit dat ek positief fokus op die leerders dat dit hulle die kans gee om meer potensiaal in hulself te ontdek".

<sup>22</sup> "...hoe vroeër, hoe beter, somer al in Graad R for that matter".

<sup>23</sup> "...ek dink 'n mens moet dalk in Graad R al begin en elke jaar so half deel van hulle leerderprofiel hê en byskryf en byskryf en byskryf tot jy einde matriek kan sê maar wow dit is wie ek is en somer saam met jou CV ingee en sê oor die 12 jaar is dit hoe ek myself leer ken het".

- <sup>24</sup> “Daar is verskillende maniere hoe ’n mens die leerders se sterkpunte kan identifiseer byvoorbeeld deur hul persoonlikheid tipes te identifiseer en so hul sterkpunte ontdek”.
- <sup>25</sup> “Ek dink dit is ook belangrik dat die leerders se ouers hul kinders se sterkpunte leer ken. Dit kan gedoen word deur byvoorbeeld ’n oueraand te hou of ’n dokument vir die ouers uitdeel wat sê ons het na jou kind se sterkpunte gekyk; hier is ’n opsomming daarvan of ouers se insette vra en hul die geleentheid gee om te noem wat hulle dink hul kinders se sterkpunte is. ’n Mens kan ook hul sterkpunte uitlig op die kinders se rapporte. Ek dink as die ouers saam met die onderwysers werk, kan daar baie vermag word”.
- <sup>26</sup> “Die identifisering van bates is nie net iets wat ek alleen nodig het om met die leerders te doen nie, maar ander onderwysers het ook nodig om die potensiaal raak te sien... Die proses van sterkpunte ontdek is iets wat onderwysers, ouers, die kerk en die gemeenskap moet doen”.
- <sup>27</sup> “Ons het nie eintlik geweet ons het so baie sterkpunte nie”.
- <sup>28</sup> “Ek het baie meer oor my sterkpunte geleer”.
- <sup>29</sup> “Soos wat die leerders hul aansoekvorms vir die wêreld van werk dag voltooi het, het die leerders baie geïnteresseerd en opgewonde voorgekom. Hul het dit wel moeilik gevind om hul nuut geïdentifiseerde bates te gebruik om hul aansoekvorms te voltooi. Met leiding was hul in staat om die aansoekvorms te voltooi en te begin verstaan dat hul aansoek moes doen vir ’n werk waarin hul persoonlike bates kan gebruik”.
- <sup>30</sup> “Hulle het gedink oor waarheen hul moet gaan as hul hulp nodig het”.
- <sup>31</sup> “Ander mense het my gehelp om ’n groot werk te doen soos om ’n hoof te wees”.
- <sup>32</sup> “Onderwyser het vir my gewys hoe om te kommunikeer”.
- <sup>33</sup> “Die hoof se sekretaresse het my gehelp. Sy het vir my gesê wat kan ek doen as ek saam met die hoof is en wat die hoof alles gaan sê en hoe voel dit om hoof te kan wees”.
- <sup>34</sup> “Die leerders het baie van die wêreld van werk dag geleer. Dit het hul die geleentheid gegee om die vaardighede wat nodig is vir ’n spesifieke werk te identifiseer”.
- <sup>35</sup> “Ek het geleer dat ek verantwoordelik moet wees want as ek ’n regte hoof was sou ek dit gedoen het want daar is mense wat vir my werk op daardie oomblik”.
- <sup>36</sup> “Die entrepreneurs wat leierskap- en bestuursvaardighede nodig het. Hulle het besef hulle het die vaardighede nodig en gedurende die wêreld van werk dag, het hulle byvoorbeeld besef dat hulle byvoorbeeld goed werk kan uitdeel en in beheer wees van die situasie op dieselfde tyd so ek dink definitief dit het hulle geleer van hulle sterkpunte en hoe om dit te mobiliseer”.
- <sup>37</sup> “Verder het dit die leerders gehelp om hul sterkpunte gedurende die dag te mobiliseer en nuwe sterkpunte te identifiseer”.
- <sup>38</sup> “Goeie kommunikasie en luister vaardighede, respekvol, eerlik, en hulsaam”.
- <sup>39</sup> “Ek weet ek kan groot verantwoordelikheid neem”.
- <sup>40</sup> “Om ander mense se dag te maak deur vriendelik te wees”
- <sup>41</sup> “Ek dink dit is meer die kinders se verantwoordelikheid maar ek moet bewus wees daarvan om hulle daarmee te kan help”.
- <sup>42</sup> “Ek dink as onderwyser kan ek hul help om dit te mobiliseer”.
- <sup>43</sup> “as ’n mens fokus oor hoe hulle leer soos sê nou maar ’n kind wat verkies om te teken eerder as skryf en jy gee hulle die kans om te teken eerder as skryf dan gaan dit baie help”.
- <sup>44</sup> “Ek voel dat die mobilisering van bates, die kinders baie goed gedoen het want dit het hulle gehelp om te leer om te reflekteer oor hul bates en dit so te gebruik”.
- <sup>45</sup> “Asook die maniere wat hul leer en hoe hul dit kan gebruik. Ek dink dit sal hul help tot hul eendag klaar gestudeer het”.
- <sup>46</sup> “Ek glo al die onderwysers moet saamwerk om die leerders te help hiermee. Ek kan nie op my eie hieraan werk nie. Dus dink ek die hele skool kan baat daarby deur die bate-gebaseerde benadering te implementeer. So as al die onderwysers saam werk en saam fokus op die kinders se sterkpunte dan kan die kinders ondersteun word om ’n sukses in die lewe te maak in plaas daarvan waar hul ouers byvoorbeeld op die oomblik is”.
- <sup>47</sup> “So ek dink ek sal dit al meer in my vakke kan inkorporeer”.
- <sup>48</sup> “deur soos byvoorbeeld die klas in groepe te verdeel volgens hulle sterkpunte soos hierdie is die uitstekende luisteraars, hierdie is die publieke sprekers en so ontwikkel jy geleenthede om die kinders se sterkpunte te gebruik”.
- <sup>49</sup> “En dalk kan ’n mens hulle dan ook hergroepeer en vir hulle sê hoor hier die wat dieselfde sterkpunte het, sit julle saam”.

<sup>50</sup> “Of ek kan die kinders opdeel in groepe volgens hulle sterkpunte en vir hul ’n vasgestelde werkie gee ten opsigte van die klasaanbieding”.

<sup>51</sup> “Die bestuur van bates was ’n baie belangrike deel van die intervensie. Die finale fase van die bate-gebaseerde benadering het die leerders die geleentheid gegee om hul bates te evalueer en nuut gevonde bates by te voeg op hul ‘asset maps”.

<sup>52</sup> “Maar die bestuur deel is baie belangrik, jy moet dit so half evalueer of dit nog ’n sterkpunt is of het dit verander. Dit is eintlik ’n siklus wat jy persoonlik ook moet self neem om aan te hou doen”.

<sup>53</sup> “Die drie fases van die bate-gebaseerde benadering werk goed saam soos ’n siklus wat herhaal kan word in die toekoms”.

<sup>54</sup> “Ek dink ek as onderwyser moet hulle help om aan te hou om dit te bestuur soos om aan te hou herinner. Ek dink ek moet regtig onthou om ietsie in te werk dat ons elke nou en dan teruggaan en weer daaraan werk soos in my lesplanne in te werk”.

<sup>55</sup> “Dus het ek besef dat daar soveel meer is om te doen in ’n skoolomgewing as wat ek doen, soos om die geleenthede te identifiseer waarin die kinders hul sterkpunte kan gebruik”.

<sup>56</sup> “Ek sal in die toekoms kan gebruik, ek dink as deel van die Lewensorientering-sillabus moet almal die sterkpunte van hulself iewers in hulle boeke en iewers in hulle kamers opsit”.

<sup>57</sup> “om hulle te herinner aan dit waarvan hulle hou en in dit waarin hulle goed is en dit so te gebruik”.

<sup>58</sup> “Ek dink ons moet dalk in die kwartaal wat kom elkeen laat praat oor hulle sterkpunte en dan kan hulle ook weer daarop fokus”.

<sup>59</sup> “En jy moet elke kwartaal weer ’n opdrag doen oor hul sterkpunte en hoe hul dit gebruik”.

<sup>60</sup> “Om dit te implementeer in die toekoms, kan jy dalk vir jou aantekeninge maak op jou lesplanne”.

<sup>61</sup> “Ek dink ook almal in die gemeenskap moet saamwerk om die kinders se sterkpunte te identifiseer, mobiliseer en te bestuur”.

<sup>62</sup> “... ’n mens kan raad vra van baie ander mense oor hoe jy die klas kan hanteer om hul sterkpunte te mobiliseer soos ander onderwysers of sielkundiges”.

<sup>63</sup> “Wat ek wel geleer het is dat hoe meer jy in leerders glo, hoe beter kans is daar dat jy vir hulle meer verantwoordelikhede kan gee. Soos byvoorbeeld, die een outjie in my klas se gedrag is baie onvoorspelbaar maar die manier hoe ek met hom gewerk het, het ek baie meer met hom uitgerig gekry as baie van die ander onderwysers. Ek kon sien dat die feit dat iemand in hom glo dit sy gedrag beïnvloed het. Ek het geleer om die leerders beter te leer ken en die leerders het my meer begin vertrou omdat ek luister na wat hulle sê”.

<sup>64</sup> “Geleer om te fokus op die positiewe. Ek dink die positiewe en sterkpunte gaan vir my baie hand aan hand”.

<sup>65</sup> “Ek dink dit was ’n baie positiewe ervaring wat my kans gegee het om ander dele van myself raak te sien, ander geleenthede en ook meer potensiaal in die kinders”.

<sup>66</sup> “Ek dink as ’n mens fokus op die positiewe, kan jy aan die negatiewe werk onbewustelik”.

<sup>67</sup> “Dit is ’n bietjie van ’n mind-shift”.

<sup>68</sup> “...dat jy potensiaal in jousef raaksien”

<sup>69</sup> “Ek dink die deel wat ek die handigste gevind het, is die kans om die positiewe deel van myself te leer ken”.

<sup>70</sup> “...ek het myself beter leer ken”.

<sup>71</sup> “...min mense (selfs ek wat nou 24 is) weet nog nie presies wat al my sterkpunte is nie want die lewe gaan so aan oor allerhande ander goed en dan besef jy nie maar ek is oulik hiermee en daarmee nie”.

<sup>72</sup> “Maar my sterkpunte kan ek meer toepas deur meer klem daarop te lê en dit te ontwikkel. Deur meer te fokus op my sterkpunte het my ondersteun om aan my swakpunte te werk”.

<sup>73</sup> “Jy leer om goed binne jousef uit te sorteer”.

<sup>74</sup> “...ek dink mens kry min tyd om op jousef te reflekteer”.

<sup>75</sup> “As persoon reflekteer ek nie maklik oor goed wat my pla nie. Ek sal eerder my aandag probeer aftrek daarvan en dit onbewustelik hanteer... Dus om te reflekteer gedurende die intervensie was vir my moeilik”.

<sup>76</sup> “Maar met die intervensie het ek meer geleer om te reflekteer en so besef hoe ek probleme oplos en dink oor dinge”.

<sup>77</sup> “Aan die begin van die jaar was my werk as onderwyser vir my net plein weg moeilik en ek vermoed dat die feit dat die intervensie my gehelp het om te reflekteer oor wat ek doen as onderwyser, het my baie gehelp net soos ek nou besig is om te reflekteer”.

- <sup>78</sup> “Ek dink dit is ’n baie goeie ding dat ek geleer het om meer te reflekteer en ek dink jy moet dit doen met alles in jou lewe, jou verhoudings en jou werk”.
- <sup>79</sup> “Ek het geleer om uit die boks uit te dink”.
- <sup>80</sup> “Dit het definitief my bietjie anders laat dink oor die saak”.
- <sup>81</sup> “...die feit dat daar iemand anders se benadering ingebring is, het vir my baie gehelp”.
- <sup>82</sup> “En ek het gevoel dat nie net ek daaruit gebaat het nie maar die kinders ook”.
- <sup>83</sup> “Ek dink die intervensie het my gehelp om meer te fokus op die kinders se sterkpunte en op die kinders wat wil werk”.
- <sup>84</sup> “Om in plaas van die kinders se swakpunte wat obvious is te fokus kan ek meer op hulle sterkpunte fokus”.
- <sup>85</sup> “Ek het besef ek het baie sterkpunte so dan moet ek net fokus daarop in plaas daarvan om te dink, okay my dag was sleg so dit beteken ek is ’n slegte onderwyser. Ek dink dit het my mind-shift bietjie ge’change’ ”.
- <sup>86</sup> “Ek het ophou fokus op die probleem wat die kinders saambring soos byvoorbeeld die dissipline probleem. Dit het my gehelp om dus maniere te vind om die dissiplineprobleme te hanteer en dat dit my nie so onder kry nie”.
- <sup>87</sup> “Ek het so my sterkpunte ook geïdentifiseer deur te sien dat ek baie geduld het “.
- <sup>88</sup> “Hulle het definitief leiding nodig want hulle eie werk is nie iets wat hulle baie goed doen nie”.
- <sup>89</sup> “Ek het gesien hoe die kinders bietjie meer selfstandig raak in Graad 7”.
- <sup>90</sup> “Dat ek potensiaal in hulle sien selfs al sien ander nie”.
- <sup>91</sup> “Maar die intervensie het gemaak dat ek hulle anders sien. Dat ek bietjie meer potensiaal in hulle raak sien in plaas daarvan om net nog ’n stoute kind te sien”.
- <sup>92</sup> “So ek dink definitief dat daar meer potensiaal raakgesien is”.
- <sup>93</sup> “Ek het besef dat ek ’n groot invloed het op die kinders en tweedens dat ek hul die geleentheid gee om hulself te wees en hul volle potensiaal te bereik want ek is dalk al een wat in hul glo”.
- <sup>94</sup> “Ek onthou dat toe ek op hoërskool was, was ek baie negatief oor Wetenskap as gevolg van die juffrou se negatiewe houding teenoor my en dit het my prestasie in die vak beïnvloed. As die juffrou op my sterkpunte gefokus het, kon dit dalk ’n verskil gemaak het. Dus as die kinders sien dat hul onderwyser in hul glo, begin hul in hulself glo. Hul kan dus hul sterkpunte identifiseer en hul swakpunte aanspreek”.
- <sup>95</sup> “...dit het vir my kans gegee om te besef dat ek soveel meer met die kinders kan doen as wat ek gedoen het in die verlede”.
- <sup>96</sup> “...die feit dat ek meer potensiaal raakgesien het in terme van die onderwys opsies wat ek het”.
- <sup>97</sup> “Ek het meer geleenthede gesien wat ek hulle kan leer om op hulle sterkpunte te fokus”.
- <sup>98</sup> “Probeer om ’n voorbeeld te stel”.
- <sup>99</sup> “Ek kan sien hoe ek nou my ander klasse anders hanteer na afloop van die intervensie”.
- <sup>100</sup> “Dus in plaas van die negatiewe gedrag wat die leerders die afgelope tyd gehad het of die negatiewe gedrag wat ek teenoor die leerders gehad het, kom ons kyk of ons van voor af kan begin en dit werk nogal. Ek het ’n positiewe verskil gesien”.
- <sup>101</sup> “Dan fokus ek meer op die feit dat hulle werk en dan gaan sê ek vir hulle dankie dat hulle hard werk so dan outomaties werk hulle meer as aan die begin van die jaar wat ek baie vinnig hul negatiewe gedrag gesien het”.
- <sup>102</sup> “Ek fokus nou meer op die sterkpunte van al die kinders en probeer hulle laat fokus op dit waarin ek weet hulle goed is”.
- <sup>103</sup> “En dit is hoe ek rapporte ook geskryf het”.
- <sup>104</sup> “Dit is hoe ek as onderwyser ook verander het en hopelik is dit iets wat ek aan die kinders oordra wat hulle weer by hulle huis oordra en so. Soos ’n pay it forward tipe ding”.
- <sup>105</sup> “... as jy as onderwyser op hulle sterkpunte fokus, help jy om aan hul karakter te bou want hulle is op so ’n ‘vulnerable’ ouderdom”.
- <sup>106</sup> “Hierdie was ’n goeie ouderdom om te kies vir die intervensie. Dit gee jou die geleentheid om iets te verander voor hul te groot raak en dit moeiliker raak om hul denke te verander”.
- <sup>107</sup> “Ons het baie geleer”.
- <sup>108</sup> “Ek dink die leerders kan besef dat hulle ietsie goed in hulle self het, dat hulle ’n verskil kan maak, dat iemand in hul glo, selfs as is dit net ek. Ek dink elke mens het die behoefte dat iemand in hul glo”.

- <sup>109</sup> “Hulle het meer belangrik begin voel en hulle maak ook saak en hulle is ’n individu wat hulle eie sterkpunte het”.
- <sup>110</sup> “Ek dink die intervensie het goed gewerk en was nodig vir die leerders ... die leerders moes leer hulle is meer werd as dit wat hulle gedink het hulle is”.
- <sup>111</sup> “hulle die kans kan gee om hulle self te wees binne ’n beperkte area”.
- <sup>112</sup> “Hulle het geleer om hulself meer te vertrou en waarde in hulself te sien”.
- <sup>113</sup> “Soos een van die meisies het altyd haar kappie oor haar kop getrek en probeer wegkruip en sy doen nie dit meer nie”.
- <sup>114</sup> “Vandag byvoorbeeld nou bespreek ons die gelowe en toe moes ek ’n dissiplinêre saak hanteer toe ons daarmee besig was. Toe vra die meisie juis of sy my handboek kan leen. Toe lees sy vir die klas voor. Iets wat ek nie kan dink dat sy dit ooit vantevore sou doen nie en sy is eintlik baie geïntroverteer, stil meisie wat nie eers deelneem aan haar fisiese LO-aktiwiteite nie want sy wil nie en sy hou nie daarvan dat almal vir haar kyk nie. En hier vra sy of sy die boek kan kry om aan te gaan met die klas”.
- <sup>115</sup> “... hulle is baie ongemotiveerd om te werk”.
- <sup>116</sup> “Hulle lyk of hulle in ’n droomwêreld is maar hulle is tog daar”.
- <sup>117</sup> “Ek dink hulle voel .... as hulle nie teen nou al gaan slaag nie, gaan hulle nooit nie”.
- <sup>118</sup> “... hulle voel permanent nie lekker nie. Hulle kop is seer of ‘whatever’. En ek dink dit is sommer net ’n verskoning”.
- <sup>119</sup> “Die leerders blyk nie positief teenoor die les en teenoor leer in die algemeen te wees nie”.
- <sup>120</sup> “Maar dit was interessant om te sien dat die leerders se gedrag begin verander het nadat ek begin het met die les en verduidelik het dat ek hul gaan help om hul sterkpunte en bates te identifiseer in die les”.
- <sup>121</sup> “...hulle is baie meer gemotiveerd as hulle voel hulle kry iets reg ...”.
- <sup>122</sup> “Hulle het bietjie meer betyds opgedaag vir klas en sulke tipe goedjies was ook belangrike aanduiding is dat hulle die vak belangrik ag”.
- <sup>123</sup> “Ek dink bemoediging, ondersteuning, komplimente, fokus op positiewe gedrag ten spyte van negatiewe gedrag het gehelp om selfstandigheid by die leerders te ontwikkel”.
- <sup>124</sup> “Ek dink Graad 7 leerders ken hulself nog nie so goed nie en ek dink die is die ouderdom waar hulself ondersoek instel en hulself te leer ken”.
- <sup>125</sup> “...hulle leer hulself beter ken”.
- <sup>126</sup> “Hulle kan makliker werk vind, hulle verstaan wat hulle doel is, hulle kan dalk vir ander mense sê. Hoor hier mamma, ek is beter by die huis om tafel te dek...of as hulle moet leer in die eksamen dan besef hulle, hulle moet harder leer in die oggende by die skool want hulle leer beter in die oggend as wat hulle in die middag leer en nêrens kom nie”.
- <sup>127</sup> “...dit kan help met hoërskoolplasing”.
- <sup>128</sup> “Ons het geleer om aan ons toekoms te dink”.
- <sup>129</sup> “Dit het my gewys wie ek eintlik is en wat kan ek eendag doen wat by my aanpas”.
- <sup>130</sup> “Die kinders het altyd so gefokus op hulle mislukkings en nou fokus hulle op sterkpunte”.
- <sup>131</sup> “As die leerders meer hul positiewe kant sien, dan word hul meer positief oor die werk en meer positief oor die lewe in ’n geheel”.
- <sup>132</sup> “As ek nie geleer het van my sterkpunte nie, sou ek dalk by die verkeerde pad gegaan het”.
- <sup>133</sup> “Soos byvoorbeeld van die Graad 7’s het byvoorbeeld vir my briewe geskryf en om verskoning gevra vir hul slegte gedrag of dat hulle my vertrou deur met my te kom praat oor goed wat hulle pla wat tuis gebeur het”.
- <sup>134</sup> “Ek het geweet as ’n juffrou my klas gee moet ek luister want sy spandeer haar tyd vir my toekoms”.
- <sup>135</sup> “Na-afloop van die intervensie het die feit dat ek op die kinders se sterkpunte gefokus het, ek in sommige van die kinders ’n groot verkil gesien en in ander weer nie ’n verskil nie”.
- <sup>136</sup> “Dit is hoekom ek gesê het dat ek sal deelneem aan die navorsing want ek dink dit sal ’n definitiewe verskil maak in my onderrig”.
- <sup>137</sup> “Heeltyd lei en heeltyd aanmoedig. Is jy nou klaar? Ek sien jy gesels is jy klaar?”.
- <sup>138</sup> “So ek moet basies vir hulle ’n opdrag gee en kans gee dat hulle dit dadelik doen. Ek kan nie na ’n ruk weer terugkom nie, hulle vang dit nie heeltemal nie”.
- <sup>139</sup> “Anders dink oor die kinders, ’n ander benadering hê en meer potensiaal in hul raaksien”.

- <sup>140</sup> “Dus het ek minder gelei en die leerders meer verantwoordelikheid gegee en ek het dit probeer met al my klasse”.
- <sup>141</sup> “Ek laat die kinders nou baie meer selfstandig werk”.
- <sup>142</sup> “Die feit dat ek hul nou los om selfstandig te werk, gee my kans om by ander verantwoordelikhede uit te kom en so ook individueel by die kinders uit te kom”.
- <sup>143</sup> “Die les was gestruktureer op so ’n manier dat ek die geleentheid gehad het om meer individuele aandag aan die leerders te kon gee”.
- <sup>144</sup> “Ek het nou bietjie meer aandag kon gee aan die kinders wat minder aandag kry en besef dat daar ander probleem-gevalle ook in die klas is”.
- <sup>145</sup> “Dit was duidelik dat die leerders dit baie waardeer het en ’n groot behoefte het aan individuele aandag”.
- <sup>146</sup> “Omdat ek vir die kinders ’n geleentheid gegee het om iets te doen en hul te vertrou om dit te doen”.
- <sup>147</sup> “Ek dink in sommige gevalle het dit ook gehelp dat ek meer verantwoordelikheid vir die leerders gee om hul meer selfstandig te maak”.
- <sup>148</sup> “Ek het besef daar is verskillende maniere om klas te gee en gevolglik het ek my self ook beter leer ken”.
- <sup>149</sup> “Ek probeer hulle die heelyd geïnteresseerd hou in die les”.
- <sup>150</sup> “Hulle is soms nie geïnteresseerd nie want hulle voel hulle weet nie... hulle voel hulle wil nie raai nie of hulle is dalk bang hulle maatjies lag vir hulle”.
- <sup>151</sup> “Ek dink dit het die kinders se leerproses verbeter want hulle voel meer dat hulle belangrik is en dat hulle as belangrik geag word en dat hulle nie minderwaardig is nie”.
- <sup>152</sup> “Selfs die leerders wat normaalweg baie swak gedrag het, het geluister en wanneer daar van die leerders sou begin het om die les te ontwig, sou die ander leerders vir hul vra om stil te bly omdat hul graag wil luister”.
- <sup>153</sup> “Ek het baie minder gevalle gehad van kinders wat nie deurgekom het nie as laas kwartaal”.
- <sup>154</sup> “Maar die uitdaging was vir my om te verander in hoe ek van hulle dink”.
- <sup>155</sup> “Dit was vir my nogal moeilik om na die leerders se swakpunte te kyk en dit te sien as ’n sterkpunt”.
- <sup>156</sup> “Noudat ek reflekteer oor die sterkpunte, besef ek eintlik dat ek dit al voorheen raakgesien het maar nooit besef het nie omdat ek teen hul swakpunte vaskyk. Die besef het my gehelp om meer op die positiewe te fokus en so ’n verskil te maak”.
- <sup>157</sup> “Ek dink dit was vir my ’n uitdaging om op die positiewe te fokus aan die begin maar dit is nou baie makliker vir my”.
- <sup>158</sup> “Ek probeer altyd in hul glo maar somtyds is dit moeilik want jy voel moeg of jy voel jy kom nêrens met hulle of jy kom nie deur die werk nie of die departement wil hê jy moet een of ander punteverdeling doen”.
- <sup>159</sup> “Soms voel dit dat ek hard probeer om hulle te motiveer maar hul de-motiveer my”.
- <sup>160</sup> “... as jy nie die sterkpunte onderhou nie, gebruik die kinders later nie meer die sterkpunte nie”.
- <sup>161</sup> “Na die intervensie het dit gelyk of die kinders weer van hulle sterkpunte verloor het, ek dink dit is net omdat dit ’n proses is wat jy die heelyd moet implementeer”.
- <sup>162</sup> “Ek ondervind dat hul taal (hulle kennis van die taal) bietjie swak is”.
- <sup>163</sup> “Dit voel vir my soos basiese woorde wat hul moet ken maar hulle weet nie wat dit beteken nie”.
- <sup>164</sup> “Daar is ’n paar kindertjies wat ’n fase gedop het of ’n jaar te laat in die skool gesit is en ’n paar fases gedop het. Ek het byvoorbeeld ’n meisie wat nou 16 word”.
- <sup>165</sup> “Maar dit is ’n groep waarin daar ’n hele paar kinders is waar hulle ouer is as wat hulle moet wees. So dit is die wat somtyds net bietjie stroomop is en nie wil saamwerk nie”.
- <sup>166</sup> “...en ook te laat besef dat die Graad 7’s is in ’n moeilike tydperk maar dat hulle nog steeds mense is en nog steeds bietjie kind, nog steeds bietjie grootmens en om meer deernis teenoor hulle te hê”.
- <sup>167</sup> “Ek wonder oor hoe mooi hulle gaan saamwerk gedurende die intervensie”.
- <sup>168</sup> “Ek dink die dissipline-probleme in ’n klaskamer beïnvloed ongelukkig steeds die effektiwiteit van die bate-gebaseerde benadering”.
- <sup>169</sup> “Ek dink dat die kinders ’n negatiewe invloed op mekaar het en dan breek dit die opbou wat ons doen af”.
- <sup>170</sup> “Maar in dieselfde asem, het ’n ander onderwyser vir my genoem dat dit al baie beter gaan met my klas as aan die begin van die jaar so toe besef ek, ek het dit ook agter gekom. Dus voel ek, ek het iets vermag en ook iets van dit bly behoue”.

- 171 “Die dissipline was in die begin ’n bietjie van ’n probleem maar ek dink dit het beter gegaan soos wat dit aangaan”.
- 172 “Dus in ’n skool waar kinders nie so baie gekonfronteer word met probleme tuis of dissiplineprobleme in die klaskamer glo ek dit kan nog beter werk”.
- 173 “Maar tog is dit hierdie kinders wat dit nodig het”.
- 174 “Na die intervensie, het ek in my beplanning begin om die sterkpunte te gebruik in lesse maar sou dit nog meer wou gebruik as wat ek het. Dit is vir my nog moeilik om die sterkpunte te inkorporeer in die lesse wat ek moet aanbied”.
- 175 “Ek dink ’n mens sal dit in ander vakke ook kan gebruik maar ek dink net dat in Lewensoriëntering makliker is omdat dit meer fokus op jou”.
- 176 “Daar is oulike goed in die vak Lewensoriëntering soos die feit dat hulle leer wat menseregte is want hulle moet kan besef maar as hulle misbruik word by die huis, dit is nie hoe dit moet wees nie”.
- 177 “...die werk wat ek tans met hulle behandel, gee hulle nie baie kans om dit soveel toe te pas nie”.
- 178 “Ek het al begin idees identifiseer oor hoe om dit in ander vakke ook te gebruik”.
- 179 “In terme van die klasse wat groot is, ek dink die intervensie sou nog beter werk as daar meer mense is wat individueel ook met die kinders kan werk en hul lei met hul sterkpunte. Dit sou ideaal gewees het as daar assistente in die klaskamer kon gewees het of die klasse kleiner was maar ek besef ook dit is nie altyd moontlik nie”.
- 180 “My voogklas is te groot... met die kleiner klasse, is dit makliker”.
- 181 “Daar is baie faktore wat die kinders beïnvloed, veral in die skool”.
- 182 “Verskillende omstandighede speel ’n rol soos die leerders se huislike omstandighede wat jy ook in ag moet neem”.
- 183 “Ouers wat geskei is of hulle is kinderhuis toe of die huisomgewing laat nie toe dat hulle huiswerk doen nie. Of hulle het baie werkies om in die middag te doen. Of hulle ma of pa kom laat van die werk af. Of hulle bly byvoorbeeld by ’n sussie se boyfriend of daar is net nie omgee by die huis nie”.
- 184 “Want baie van die kinders wie se huislike omstandighede so swak is dink hulle is niks werd nie”.
- 185 “Daar is tye wat ek nog steeds nie weet hoe om die leerders te ondersteun om hul sterkpunte ten volle te gebruik nie en vir hul te wys dat ek as onderwyser in hul glo nie. Veral in omstandighede waar die kinders baie slegte huislike omstandighede het”.
- 186 “Ek dink die samelewing fokus so op die negatiewe soos jou kamer is deurmekaar, jy trek nie netjies aan nie in plaas daarvan om te fokus op wat hulle oulik doen of dat hulle hard leer”.
- 187 “In ’n skool waar die kinders gekonfronteer word met soveel huislike probleme wat dissiplineprobleme veroorsaak by die skool, is dit moeilik om altyd positief te bly”.
- 188 “Ek dink ook dat die ouers soms die opbou tuis afbreek... dus dit is belangrik om saam te werk”.
- 189 “Maar in sekere gevalle is die kinders se omgewing so ’n groot invloed dat dit moeilik is om vir hulle groot verantwoordelikhede te gee”.
- 190 “Ek voel die skool en gemeenskap moet saamwerk vir die intervensie om ’n verskil te maak want ek sien hulle maar ’n half uur per dag en dit is nie genoeg nie”.