

**Implementing the asset-based approach in a  
resource-constrained Special School  
Resource Centre**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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(Learning Support, Guidance and Counselling)**

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June 2017

*This dissertation is dedicated to Hermie, Tian and Stephanie*

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

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I, Hester Magrietha Burgers, declare that the dissertation, "**Implementing the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained Special School Resource Centre**" which I hereby submit for the degree MEd (Learning Support, Guidance and Counselling) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

Signature..... Date.....

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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***SOLI DEO GLORIA***

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## **DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR**

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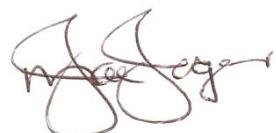
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*Implementing the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained special school resource centre*, by Mrs HM Burgers.

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The onus is on the author to attend to all my suggested changes and queries.  
Furthermore, I do not take responsibility for any changes affected in the document after the fact.



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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

## **ABSTRACT**

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Full implementation of special schools converted into special school resource centres in South Africa need to be finalised by 2021, as specified in the Education White Paper 6. The purpose of special school resource centres is firstly to provide necessary resources for the education and training of learners experiencing serious barriers to learning, and secondly to provide, together with the district-based support teams, guidance and support to full-service schools and main stream schools. Despite these expectations and goals, many special schools are not fully strengthened and functional yet. Role-players involved at special school resource centres often feel unequipped to successfully manage their centres in the absence of human resources, knowledge and infrastructure. Against this background, the purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding on how the asset-based approach could be utilised in supporting (or not) the more efficient functioning of a rural resource-constrained special school resource centre in the North West province, South Africa.

The asset-based approach and bio-ecological model was used as conceptual framework for the study. Qualitative research was elected as methodological paradigm and an instrumental case study as research design. Interpretivism was selected as meta-theory. One rural resource-constrained special school resource centre was selected through convenience sampling, and eight participants were purposefully selected. Data was collected with individual semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion, and observation; and documented in audio recorded verbatim transcripts, photographs, field notes and a research journal.

Following thematic data analysis, three main themes emerged: identified assets and resources at the resource-constrained special school resource centre (natural assets and resources, human resources, physical resources, and resources for gardening); challenges at the resource-constrained special school resource centre (limited physical space, challenges related to the use of technology, additional responsibilities and related time constraints, and participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre); ways in which mobilised assets and resources supported the functioning of the resource-constrained special school resource centre (financial support for the special school resource centre, supporting the National

School Nutrition Programme, strengthening partnerships that could support the functioning of the special school resource centre, skills development as outcome of the two asset-based projects, and intra and interpersonal qualities as a result of implementing the asset-based approach). It was therefore found that the implementation of the asset-based approach is one way to support the functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre.

**Key words:**

- Asset-based approach
- Bio-ecological approach
- Inclusive education
- Resource-constrained
- Rural
- Special school resource centre

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCING THE STUDY

<b>Introduction and background</b> <b>Problem statement</b> <b>Rationale and purpose of the study</b> <b>Working assumptions</b>		
Main research question	Secondary questions	
<p><i>How can the asset-based approach be utilised in supporting (or not) the more efficient functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre in the North West Province, South Africa?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which challenges, resources and assets can be identified at a resource-constrained special school resource centre?</i></li> <li>• <i>How can available resources and assets be mobilised in order to address existing challenges and support the functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre?</i></li> </ul>	
		
<b>Concept clarification and literature review</b>	<b>Conceptual framework</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• asset-based approach</li> <li>• bio-ecological approach</li> </ul>	<b>Research methodologies and strategies</b> <p>Qualitative research</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Interpretivism</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Case study research design</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Data collection and documentation techniques</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Data analysis and interpretation</p>

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

In 1994 the Salamanca Statement was signed in Spain by countries across the globe in support of inclusive education (IE). This implied that the medical model traditionally utilised in special schools (SS) were to be replaced with a social supportive model, from the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) defines an inclusive school as a school where all can learn regardless of the difficulties they may perceive, by recognising and addressing their needs. Quality education is accordingly provided to all learners through diverse curricula, strategies, resources and community partnerships in support of the special needs of all learners (Peters, 2004). This event marked the beginning of support of the inclusive education system around the world.

South Africa promulgated the Education White Paper 6 in 2001 (DoE, 2001) to join the inclusive education system within the South African context.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

According to the time frame of the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), the full implementation of special schools converted into special school resource centres needs to be finalised by 2021. The rationale of special school resource centres is firstly to provide institutions where all necessary resources are available to provide education and training of learners experiencing serious barriers to learning, and secondly to provide guidance and support to full-service schools and mainstream schools together with the district-based support teams (DBE<sup>1</sup>, 2013; DoE, 2001). Despite these expectations and goals of special school resource centres, no published statistics are available on the level of capacity of special school resource centres to successfully assist the neighbouring schools in their vicinities (DBE, 2015a).

Although the Department of Basic Education's Guidelines to ensure quality education and support in special schools and special school resource centres (DBE, 2013) clearly explains what is expected of special school resource centres and provides different guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of a special school resource centre (DBE, 2013) (refer to chapter 2), educators and senior management of special school resource centres still seem uncertain about how to lead and manage a special school resource centre (DoE, 2002a). According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2013), the guidelines for special school resource centres are set in such a way that role-players from such centres often feel unsure of how to manage their centres without the necessary human and infrastructure resources as described in these guidelines. Very few special school resource centres in

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<sup>1</sup> DBE: Since 2010 the National Department of Education has been known as the Department of Basic Education.

South Africa are equipped to optimally function as described in these guidelines (DoE, 2002; Simelane, 2012; DBE, 2015b). According to existing reports (DoE, 2002a; Simelane, 2012; DBE, 2015b), a series of curriculum changes in the South African education system have furthermore resulted in uncertainty amongst educators<sup>2</sup> and school management teams on how to teach learners<sup>3</sup> with barriers to learning. Curriculum changes in the South African Education system include the change to Outcomes Based Education, (DoE, 2001), Curriculum 2005 (DoE, 2001), and the implementation of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) from 2011 onwards (DBE, 2010).

Even though some special schools have been transformed to special school resource centres in the North West Province (which is the focus of the reported study), not all of these are fully strengthened and functional yet, whether due to limited human resources, knowledge, or equipment (Simelane, 2012; DBE, 2015b). After the launch of inclusive education, the Danish International Development Assistance (Danida-project) (DoE, 2002b) in collaboration with the Department of Education focused on the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa (DoE, 2001). Results from a study conducted in the North West Province revealed that educators were optimistic that a school will no longer be isolated and be able to network locally and that special schools' reputations may be improved (DoE, 2002b). However, concerns raised by teachers in the North West Province were that they did not have sufficient time to both teach and provide support to learners due to the shortage of professional staff. Teachers were also concerned as to how they will manage additional assistance to surrounding schools, as special school resource centres are expected to support the surrounding mainstream schools and full-service schools. Another concern raised by both the teachers and the hostel staff was that if more learners with severe disabilities were to be enrolled in special schools, non-teaching staff could find it hard to cope in large hostels. Similar results were found by the other two participating provinces, (Eastern Cape and Kwa Zulu Natal) (DoE, 2002b).

The Danida-project (DoE, 2002b) raised a concern due to an existing challenge of teacher training, support provision, policy implementation, leadership and management, which included socio-economic and contextual issues. Some of these conditions were raised as concerns at some special schools by the role-players. Many schools are in need of support

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<sup>2</sup> Educators versus teachers: Although South African research would sometimes refer to educators as teachers (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007) the official use for teacher in the South African context is educator (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2013; 2014). For the purpose of the reported study, the researcher refers to an educator.

<sup>3</sup> In the South African education system the word "learner(s)" refers to children enrolled in schools, while the word "child(ren)" refers to children not enrolled in schools. Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) refers to disabled learners in the system, but to disabled children who are not accommodated in any school. For the purpose of this study, I use the term "learners" for *children in school*, and *children at home*, still not enrolled in any school. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996) and Engelbrecht and Green (2007) also refer to children within the school system as learners.

from district and provincial level in order to be able to sustain what has been started during the project (DoE, 2002b). According to Danida and the Department of Education's Final Report (2002b), the concerns raised by staff were to a great extent still unanswered. Results obtained from the Danida-project (DoE, 2002b) indicate that a number of uncertainties, concerns and challenges are related to special school resource centres in the North West Province which still need to be addressed.

The North West Province was one of three provinces in which the Danida resource and training programme was conducted. The other two provinces were KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape (DoE, 2002b). Educators made comments that proved the general belief that inclusive education should belong to special education, and not the inclusion of learners in all schools, irrespective of the level of the disability of a learner (DoE, 2002b). There was though a general awareness of Education White Paper 6 and the acknowledgement of the differences in learners. Some statistics emphasise the successful placement of learners with special needs according to their barriers to learning in special school resource centres, full-service schools, and special schools as well as mainstream schools since 2001 to 2014, as part of the Education White Paper 6 short-, medium- and long term goals in establishing the inclusive education system. In 2001, all learners were e.g. placed either in mainstream schools or in the 31 special schools in North West (DoE, 2001; KK District, 2010). According to Masterlist (2012) on published special schools countrywide, there are 31 special schools in North West, whilst Western Cape has 81, Northern Cape 10, Mpumalanga 20, Limpopo 35, KwaZulu Natal 76, Gauteng 133, Free State 21 and Eastern Cape 42. Therefore North West is the sixth largest province out of nine provinces with 449 special schools established since the signing of Education White Paper 6 in 2001. Whilst North West had 35 special schools in 2001 out of 380, some schools were amalgamated either with other special schools, due to their size, or with mainstream schools in the vicinity for inclusive education-sake. In other provinces special schools were built (see Table 2.1). Gradually special schools were strengthened to become special school resource centres, until there were about seven in the province by 2009 (Burgers, 2009). Full-service schools were strengthened afterwards. Currently the latest statistics on full-service schools in North West are 77 and special school resource centres 12. The Directorate inclusive education budgets to expand the number of full-service schools and special school resource centres in the immediate future (Inclusive Education meeting, Mmabatho: May, 2016).

Against the background of the outcomes of the Danida-project (DoE, 2002b) in North West, the reported study therefore investigated how the asset-based approach could be utilised in addressing some of these concerns and supporting the functioning of an existing resource-

constrained special school resource centre in North West. The reported study more specifically focused on the identification and mobilisation of assets and resources within special school resource centres, as part of the district-based support team, with the aim of improving the inward functioning of a special school resource centre, and not directly working with the new, expected role of a special school resource centre.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR UNDERTAKING THE STUDY**

The reported study was initially born out of my curiosity as to how special school resource centres can be assisted to function more efficiently, through research. As principal of a fully functional special school resource centre in the North West Province for the past eighteen years, I had a personal interest in special school resource centres. I have experienced the benefits of these centres, but I am also familiar with the challenges that a special school resource centre encounter on a daily basis, based on experience and conversations with others within similar settings. To this end, several principals in the province have contacted me for assistance and advice when starting a new special school resource centre.

As the asset-based approach is a strength-based approach that believes in the existence of assets and resources amongst individuals and systems (Ebersöhn & Elof, 2006), the asset-based approach seemed to be a good choice in supporting the inward functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre by focusing on the identification and mobilisation of under-utilised assets and resources within the context of the special school, infrastructure and human resources (Simelane, 2012). The asset-based approach was therefore implemented with the aim of investigating the effect of implementation of this philosophy in such a resource-constrained setting. Based on the information I collected during my literature review (refer to Chapter 2), I identified the need for ongoing research in the field of the establishment and functioning of special school resource centres in the South African context (Mbelu, 2011; Peters, 2003; Makoelle, 2012; Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). Mbelu (2011) has found the need for further research in special school resource centres to assist schools in the rural areas, which made the reported study important to strengthen a special school resource centre in a rural area to be able to assist schools in the neighbourhood. Makoelle (2012), has come to the conclusion that the implementation of the inclusive education policy in South Africa has still not improved enough, and recommends that schools and other institutions still need radical changes from their current state to meet the full inclusive education policy, which was a drive for me to explore more of the concept special school resource centre as an essential part of the inclusive education system. As the implementation of the Education White Paper 6 is not on par, according to the HEDCOM, subcommittee's report, delivered by Simelane (2012), it is another drive for me to explore

more on the phenomenon: special school resource centres. The reported study therefore aimed to address this apparent limitation in literature in the field of establishing and functioning of special school resource centres, and contribute to the effective implementation of Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) in support of special school resource centres. However, the focus of the current study was on the inward functioning of the special school resource centre and not on outward change.

#### **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on personal experience and the apparent gap in existing literature with regards to the effective functioning of special school resource centres in South Africa, the purpose of the reported study was to gain an in-depth understanding of how the asset-based approach could be utilised in supporting the more effective inward functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre in the North West Province. I aimed to facilitate an interactive process of identifying, mobilising and managing assets and resources in a selected special school resource centre through implementation of the asset-based approach. This process was executed in collaboration with different role-players, with the aim of determining to what extent the asset-based approach could facilitate the functioning (or not) of the participating special school resource centre. The focus of the reported study was on improving the inward functioning of a special school resource centre, and not directly working with the expected outward role of a special school resource centre. Participating role-players were thus sensitised to take ownership of the special school resource centre, which could indirectly address the stipulations of inclusive education in South Africa (DoE, 2001).

Against this background, the primary research question for the reported study is:

*How can the asset-based approach be utilised in supporting (or not) the more efficient functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre in the North West Province, South Africa?*

In order to answer the above-mentioned primary research question, the following secondary research questions were addressed:

- Which challenges, resources and assets can be identified at a resource-constrained special school resource centre?
- How can available resources and assets be mobilised in order to address existing challenges and support the functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre?

- In addressing the research questions, this study aimed to add to existing knowledge on special school resource centres within the framework of the inclusive education system in South Africa. More specifically, this study aimed to identify possible assets and resources that could be available at a resource-constrained special school resource centre. It also aimed to provide possible ways in which assets and resources could be mobilised to improve the more efficient inward functioning of special school resource centres in rural areas.

## **1.5 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS**

I conducted the study keeping the following working assumptions in mind:

- A resource-constrained special school resource centre functions as an interconnected system consisting of different sub-systems which influence each other.
- Both assets and challenges are present in a resource-constrained special school resource centre.
- Role-players will be able to identify assets and challenges in their special school resource centre.
- The identification of existing assets and challenges can enable role-players (involved in a special school resource centre) to mobilise identified assets in support of a more efficient functioning centre.

## **1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

I next clarify the working definitions of the key concepts I relied on in the reported study.

### **1.6.1 Special school resource centre**

The primary purpose of a special school resource centre is to provide improved educational services to its learners through the services of occupational therapists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, psychology services, nursing staff, and trained educators in teaching and supporting learners with special educational needs (DBE, 2013). Special school resource centres need to be integrated with district-based support teams in order to provide services to full-service schools and mainstream schools in their districts (DBE, 2010; 2013; Mtotoba, 2009; Tong, 2009). According to Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), the long-term goal is to convert all 380 special schools in the country into special school resource centres by 2021 (DoE, 2001; Burgers, 2009).

Within the context of this study a special school resource centre refers to a special school which was converted into a special school resource centre, that does not have access to all the human, physical, and organisational resources as described in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and Guidelines to ensure quality education and support in special schools and special school resource centres (DBE, 2013). Thus, for the purpose of this study, special school resource centres that lack the necessary resources are classified as resource-constrained special school resource centres. Resources in schools include human resources (such as educators, remedial educators, therapists, psychologists, nursing sisters, administrative assistants, and hostel staff – where required); physical resources (such as classrooms, computer centres, hostels, gardens, playgrounds, transport, and workshops) (Le Roux, 2009; 2010); organisational resources (such as meetings, open days, policies, workshops for parents and staff, and fundraising); and community resources (such as local businesses, local institutions, and services such as the police, municipality, medical doctor, clinic and newspapers) (DBE, 2013; Ebersöhn & Elof, 2006; Hoff, 2009). Educational resources are other vital resources for schools, which include study materials (referred to as learning and teaching support materials in the Screening, identifying, assessing and support (SIAS)-policy (DBE, 2014a; Badenhorst, 2009; Smal, 2009; 2010; Jerling, 2010). In order for special schools and special school resource centres for learners with physical, vision and hearing barriers to learning to be able to assist the learners and educators in the learning process, other assistive devices are also needed at the schools, as prescribed in the Draft National Norms and Standards for Resource Distribution for an Inclusive Education System document (DBE, 2015c; DoE, 2001; Marumo & Struwig, 2014).

As a resource-constrained special school resource centre is not fully equipped with all the necessary resources (DBE, 2013; 2015a), it would be very difficult for special school resource centres to serve full-service schools, special schools and mainstream schools as is expected. It would not even be easy to serve their own learners and community as is expected, due to limited resources – human resources in particular. Human Rights Watch (2015) reports that the government regrettably acknowledges the lack of support teams, such as the multi-disciplinary teams needed at special school resource centres, to assist full-service schools and special schools, particularly in rural areas, as almost no officials are available to fulfil any of these responsibilities in such areas.

For this study, one of 12 special school resource centres that, in collaboration with the district-based support teams in their districts, are required to cater for 77 full-service schools, was identified (Simelane, 2012). To be able to cater sufficiently for all the learners with special needs in mainstream schools, full-service schools and special school resource

centres, special school resource centres should at least possess the minimum necessary human, physical, and organisational resources. The special school resource centre identified as case study could be categorised as one of the resource-constrained special school resource centres.

### **1.6.2 Asset-based approach**

The asset-based approach is a strength-based approach, also referred to as the “half-full glass approach” (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The asset-based approach focuses on assets, capabilities, resources and skills within people and across systems, which could make a positive contribution and potentially be mobilised to address challenges (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006b). The interconnected phases of the asset-based approach consist of the identification, mobilisation and management of assets and resources (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006b).

Based on the principle that assets and resources exist in individuals and systems, participants in this study became familiar with the asset-based approach. They used the asset-based approach to identify, mobilise and manage existing assets and resources at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, with the aim of contributing to a more efficient functioning special school resource centre, focusing on inward change.

### **1.6.3 District-based support teams**

According to the Guidelines for inclusive schools of the Department of Basic Education (2010, p. 49), district-based support teams are groups of departmental professionals. District-based support teams are composed of specialists, such as therapists, psychologists and former special school educators (Makoelle, 2012). The main responsibility of a district-based support team is to promote inclusive education through training, curriculum delivery, distribution of resources, identifying learners with special needs and addressing their barriers, as well as general management of schools, conducting of workshops, evaluation and placement of learners (DoE, 2002; DBE, 2015c). District-based support teams ensure the establishment and training, implementation of policies and support of special school resource centres, working as a team to support other schools in the district (Makoelle, 2012; DoE, 2001). District-based support teams are situated in specific districts or have satellite offices at special school resource centres and then operate from there (DBE, 2015a).

Within the context of this study, I included nine participants, of which two were from a district-based support team, in order to obtain their input from the district. The inclusion of participants from the district-based support team, could potentially serve the purpose of a

variety of input, and not gaining only a one-sided insight on information or views of the assets and resources from the participants at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.

#### **1.6.4 Full-service schools**

According to the Department Basic Education's Guidelines for full-service and inclusive schools (DBE, 2010), full-service schools are ordinary schools specifically equipped to address a wide range of barriers amongst learners with learning and/or other disabilities (physical or mental) as identified by the district-based support teams (Makoelle, 2012). Such learners accommodated in the inclusive education environment experience less barriers and only have mild needs in terms of assistance with learning (DoE, 2001). Mild barriers include those that do not require as much support on a daily basis as those experienced by learners in the special school resource centre environment, requiring the services of numerous professional staff members. These learners are thus able to cope with their barriers with little support in a mainstream school. Currently the emphasis is on establishing as many full-service schools nationally as possible. Full-service schools and district-based support teams are expected to assist mainstream schools in their vicinity with inclusive services, and to closely collaborate with special school resource centres (Makoelle, 2012).

### **1.7 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

For the purpose of this study, I selected qualitative research as methodological paradigm to present the participants' voices and experiences (Creswell, 2007; 2015). Interpretivism as meta-theoretical paradigm assisted me in generating data in an interactive way, which does not measure human behaviour, but realities that can change as the environment changes (Livesey, 2006; Ströh, 2004). I collaborated with participants at the resource-constrained special school resource centre to obtain an in-depth understanding of their views, frustrations, needs, and experiences when implementing the asset-based approach.

The framework of the research process is summarised in Table 1.1, which provides an outline of the literature review, the research questions, and the research methodology and strategies.

**Table 1.1** Overview of research methodology and process

REVIEW AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY (refer to Chapter 2)		
<b>Literature review</b> <p><b>Inclusive education in South Africa</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles and guidelines of inclusive education</li> <li>• Components of the inclusive education system in South Africa</li> <li>• Progress and related timelines of inclusive education in South Africa</li> <li>• Role-players in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa</li> <li>• Challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education</li> </ul> <p><b>Special school resource centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special school resource centres: An international perspective</li> <li>• Role and functioning of special school resource centres in South Africa</li> <li>• Progress with implementation of special school resource centres in South Africa</li> </ul>	<b>Implementation of the asset-based approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying assets</li> <li>• Mobilising assets</li> <li>• Managing assets</li> </ul> <p>In order to support (or not) the functioning of a participating resource-constrained special school resource centre</p>	<b>Conceptual framework integration of the</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset-based approach</li> <li>• Bio-ecological approach</li> </ul>
Research Questions		
<b>Primary research question</b> <p>↳ <i>How can the asset-based approach be utilised in supporting (or not) the more efficient functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre in the North West Province, South Africa?</i></p>	<b>Secondary research questions</b> <p>↳ <i>Which challenges, resources and assets can be identified at a resource-constrained special school resource centre?</i></p> <p>↳ <i>How can available resources and assets be mobilised in order to address existing challenges and support the functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre?</i></p>	



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES (refer to Chapter 3)							
Paradigmatic perspectives	Research design and sampling of case and participants	Phases of study	Data generation	Data documentation strategies	Data analysis and interpretation	Quality criteria	Ethical considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Methodological paradigm: Qualitative research</li> <li>Epistemological paradigm: Interpretivism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case study design</li> <li>Selection of case: convenience sampling</li> <li>Selection of participants: purposeful sampling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-implementation phase</li> <li>Implementation phase</li> <li>Post-implementation phase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus group discussion</li> <li>Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>Observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verbatim transcripts or audio recordings</li> <li>Research journal and field notes</li> <li>Photographs as visual data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thematic inductive analysis and interpretation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Credibility</li> <li>Confirmability</li> <li>Transferability</li> <li>Dependability</li> <li>Authenticity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidentiality, anonymity and right of privacy</li> <li>Voluntary participation</li> <li>Protection from harm and trust</li> <li>Access to research site</li> <li>Reporting and writing up of research findings</li> <li>Role of the researcher</li> <li>Expertise of the researcher</li> <li>Cultural and language differences</li> </ul>

## **1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES**

### **1.8.1 Research design**

I selected an instrumental case study research design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained special school resource centre (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010).

### **1.8.2 Selection of case and participants**

I used convenience sampling to select a resource-constrained special school resource centre as case in the North West Province, South Africa. I used purposeful sampling to select nine participants for the study (Creswell, 2015). Participants included the principal, a member from the school governing body (SGB), a member from the senior management team (SMT), a member of the institutional support team (ILST), a head of department (HOD), a non-educator, an educator, a member of the district-based support team (DBST) and the deputy chief education specialist (DCES).

### **1.8.3 Data generation and documentation**

The focus of the reported study was to investigate the implementation of the asset-based approach to support (or not) the more efficient functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre in North West Province, focusing on inward change. The asset-based approach was implemented in three phases, namely the pre-implementation phase, the implementation phase and the post-implementation phase. Data were generated from a focus group discussion, semi-structured individual interviews, and observations. Data documentation strategies included verbatim transcripts of audio recorded interviews, my research journal and field notes, as well as photographs as visual data.

### **1.8.4 Data analysis and interpretation**

I used thematic inductive analysis and interpretation, as a useful method for interpretative qualitative data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2005). Patterns, categories and themes were built from the data generated, until a set of themes had been established.

## **1.9 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

According to Hatch (2002) it is important to understand the culture, specific social phenomenon and context of the case and participants in order to be able to build successful relationships with participants. I spent ample time to build relationships with participants in

order to gain in-depth insight into their way of thinking, planning and doing (Ferreira, 2006). I also had to keep in mind Swandt's (2000) concept of empathic identification, as I come from a different educational background than many of the participants.

As a white, middle class, Afrikaans woman, I needed to be aware of possible power discrepancies that could have influenced the dynamics of the research relationship. Being a principal of a well-resourced special school resource centre and the leading principal of special schools in North West, the participants could potentially have viewed me as an expert coming to assist them with the functioning of their special school resource centre. From the onset of my research I had to make it clear that my role was that of researcher and not of principal at a special school resource centre. On the other hand, the selected resource-constrained special school resource centre is situated in a previously disadvantaged area. Although the special school resource centre had professional and competent staff, the resources and support were limited. Therefore I had to reflect on my background and broaden my understanding of the participants' points of view (Arber, 2006; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

## **1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

This dissertation consists of the following chapters:

### **Chapter 1: Introducing the study**

Chapter 1 captures the background, introduction, rationale and purpose of the reported study. The research questions and working assumptions are also stated in this chapter. The key concepts of the study, a summative framework of the research process, and an explanation of some of the key components of the study are presented, and an outline of the chapters is provided.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

In Chapter 2 I focus on existing literature, which underpins the research focus of my study. I explain inclusive education against the principles and guidelines, and components of the inclusive education system in South Africa. I further describe the role-players' role in the implementation and the challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education. The context of special school resource centres within an international perspective is described, followed by the role and functioning of special school resource centres in South Africa. I conclude the discussion on inclusive education and special school resource centres by discussing the progress made with the implementation of special school resource centres in

South Africa. As overarching framework, the asset-based approach is explained within positive psychology theory, and the bio-ecological model is presented.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology and strategies**

In Chapter 3 I discuss the research methodology and strategies used in the study. I explain Interpretivism as selected meta-theory and qualitative research as methodological paradigm. The choice of research design and selection of the case and participants are explained. Next I present the three phases of the study and explain the data collection and documentation techniques, as well as the data analysis and interpretation I completed. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on quality criteria and ethical considerations of the reported study.

### **Chapter 4: Results of the study**

In Chapter 4 I report on the results in terms of the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the analysis of my observations, the focus group discussion, individual interviews, research journal, field notes and visual data.

### **Chapter 5: Findings, recommendations and conclusion**

In Chapter 5 I interpret the results reported in Chapter 4 in line with existing literature. All attempts were made to prevent any possible contradictions and to explain inconsistencies. Each research question is reviewed and the limitations of the study, contributions and recommendations are discussed.

#### **1.11 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I introduced the topic of my study. I presented the problem statement and explained the rationale and purpose of the study. I highlighted working assumptions and clarified the main concepts used in the study. I produced a brief overview of the research process and introduced the main methodological choices I made. I also provided a brief summary of the chapters to follow.

In the next chapter, I present the literature review and conceptual framework of the reported study. To this end, I situate my study within existing theory on inclusive education, and the proposed requirements for special school resource centres within the South African context. For the conceptual framework I rely on the asset-based approach and bio-ecological theory.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

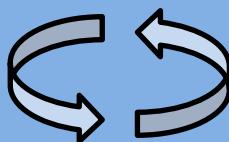
#### SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Inclusive education	Special school resource centres
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Principles and guidelines of inclusive education</li><li>• Components of the inclusive education system in South Africa</li><li>• Progress and related timelines of inclusive education in South Africa</li><li>• Role-players in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa</li><li>• Challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Special school resource centres: an international perspective</li><li>• Role and functioning of special school resource centres in South Africa</li><li>• Progress with the implementation of special school resource centres in South Africa</li></ul>

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

##### The asset-based approach within the bio-ecological model

- Identifying and mapping assets
- Mobilising assets
- Challenges and related critique on the asset-based approach



- Microsystem: Individual assets
- Mesosystem: School and home-based assets
- Exosystem: Community assets
- Macrosystem: Cultural assets

Positive psychology as underlying and overarching framework

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I investigate special school resource centres within the context of the inclusive education system in South Africa. For this purpose, I review the principles, guidelines, and components of the inclusive education system. I explore the progress and related timelines of inclusive education and I also foreground some challenges related to inclusive education. I discuss special school resource centres on both international and national level. I foreground the role and functioning of special school resource centres in South Africa and also investigate the progress with the implementation of such centres in South Africa.

In the second part of this chapter I focus on the conceptual framework employed in this study. I introduce positive psychology as overarching framework for the study and then specifically discuss the asset-based approach, after which I present the bio-ecological model as backdrop to the asset-based approach.

## **2.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In this section I discuss inclusive education as backdrop to special school resource centres in South Africa. I present underlying principles of, guidelines for, and components of the inclusive education system in South Africa. I then discuss the implementation timeline and progress with that implementation. I refer to role-players in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. Lastly, I highlight some challenges related to inclusive education and also provide an overview of current research in the field.

### **2.2.1 Principles of and guidelines for inclusive education**

The first set of principles of inclusive education was set out in the Salamanca statement, which formed the foundation for the development of inclusive education policy (UNESCO, 1994). The most important principle is that each child has the right to education, which should include an education system catering for all the different needs of learners, accounting for each child's unique abilities and interests. Furthermore, learners with special educational needs should have access to mainstream schools if needed, building an inclusive society for all people with different disabilities. This implies the need to prioritise a budget for establishing an inclusive system, including laws and policies to be adopted for the implementation of inclusive education. Planning, monitoring and evaluating should be in place, including projects to exchange knowledge with experienced countries. As early identification and intervention are important, excellent teacher training programmes should be established while parents and communities should take part in the decision-making

process about learners with special educational needs. In light of the Salamanca principles, inclusive education is not merely to include learners with learning disabilities, barriers to learning, and other disabilities in mainstream schools, but inclusive education is rather to transform the whole educational system to address barriers to learning of all learners through equitable access to quality education (Sandkull, 2005; Armstrong, 2005). Before the new inclusive role of outward support to learners can be achieved, it is important to strengthen a special school resource centre inwardly, which was the focus of the reported study.

It is important to take a holistic approach towards the successful implementation of inclusive education, which involves more than educators in a classroom. *The United Nations Convention of the Rights for People with Disabilities* (UNCRPD, 2012) explains the main principle of inclusive education as a process where students of different cultures, learning abilities and communities are included in the same education process without excluding anyone (UNESCO, 2008). In this regard, Engelbrecht and Green (2007) refer to the main principles of inclusive education as respect and collaboration. The principles of inclusive education are framed by the values in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, namely dignity, social justice, achievement of equality, human rights and freedom, as prescribed in the *Manual for inclusive education institutional-level support teams* (DoE, 2009). In line with the bio-ecological approach as conceptual framework of the reported study, the participation of other bodies such as community organisations, departments of health and parental bodies could all be encouraged to take responsibility for the learning of all learners, irrespective of their disabilities. Everybody should be motivated to learn to the best of their potential (DoE, 2001), as echoed in the slogan of inclusive education: “all learners can learn” (DoE, 2001, p.3). The South African society is now, according to Stofile and Green (2007), working towards a better future, because of their sensitivity to human rights issues as well as their commitment to improving the lives of citizens of all walks of life, especially those who are disabled.

Different documents have been issued by the Department of Education to guide the decision-making processes at different institutions, schools and departments and in assisting learners with barriers to learning within the inclusive education system in South Africa. These guidelines are based on *Education White Paper 6: Special needs education, building an inclusive education and training system* (DoE, 2001), and include the following:

- *Guidelines for inclusive teaching and learning* (DBE, 2010) that provide guidance to educators on the *National Curriculum Statement* (NCS), differentiation of learning

programmes, work schedules and lesson plans to accommodate all learners in the inclusive educational system, differentiation and learning areas in the General Education and Training Band, teaching methodologies, inclusive strategies for learning, teaching and assessment, learning styles and multiple intelligences, which include intellectual disabilities, chronic conditions and their impact on learning and syndromes.

- *Guidelines to ensure quality education and support in special schools and special school resource centres* (DBE, 2013) guide special schools and special school resource centres in curriculum management and implementation, the admission of learners, staff supply, utilisation and qualification, infrastructure and hostel accommodation. Guidelines are also provided for district-based support teams for learner, family and community support within the necessary legislative and policy framework.
- *Guidelines for full-service/inclusive schools* (DBE, 2010) contain the full definition on what special schools are, and guide the management and whole school development, collaboration and team work, continuous professional development (CPD), provision of support consisting of site-based support, indicators of support provision, on-going support in schools, organised support provision through institutional-level support teams (ILST), staff provisioning and utilisation, assessment of learners and needs, curriculum, teaching and classroom practices, behaviour support, physical and material resources and accessibility, family and community support, participation in district networks, the role of the district, provincial and national departments in supporting full-service/inclusive schools.
- *The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* (CAPS) (DBE, 2011) provides guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through curriculum and assessment policy statements. CAPS was implemented in phases until these guidelines were fully implemented in all school grades in 2013. The first Grade 12 learners wrote the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination on the CAPS curriculum in 2013.
- *The policy on the national strategy for screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS)* (DBE, 2014) aims to support by means of suitable assessments and placements according to learners' levels of need. Although the aim was to finalise the process of the development of the document and the different questionnaires by 2009, the training on this policy has still not been finalised, as it has been revisited in 2015 to streamline the process.

- *The manual on institutional-level support teams (ILST)* (DoE, 2009) provides ongoing support with regard to the learning processes in schools. The main functions of institutional-level support teams are to identify and support learners with learning disabilities, support educators teaching learners with learning disabilities at all schools, and address the needs of identified learners. The needs, which learners experience arising from the curriculum, should also be assessed and addressed through differentiation. At special schools and special school resource centres staff members need to be trained and developed in order to be able to provide support in special schools and mainstream schools. Continuous evaluation and support from the district-based support team will ensure that special schools and special school resource centres are able to provide the required services to special schools and mainstream schools. The manual on institutional-level support teams provides guidelines on establishing such teams, provides a broad focus area on support and relationships with other structures such as special school resource centres, special schools and district-based support teams, the role of institutional-level support teams, and a contact list of different resources (DoE, 2009).

According to the World Bank (Peters, 2003) and UNESCO (2010), the largest number of incidences of exclusion from education occurs in sub-Saharan African countries and South Asia. The main reason for this exclusion relates to learners coming from poor households or living in rural areas, and not being able to reach the nearest school (UNESCO, 2010). As in many multi-cultural countries, the diversity of language, culture and religion also plays a prevalent role in exclusion from education in South Africa (Peters, 2003; Brown 2012; DoE, 2001). In South Africa specifically, there are eleven official languages, with a spectrum of cultural and religious diversity which needs to be taken into account. Mother tongue education, especially in the Foundation Phase, plays a major role in successful education (Peters, 2003). In this regard, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 promotes the idea of learners being taught in their mother tongue (SASA, 1996). The South African Schools Act also supports the equality of parents of learners with disabilities in rural and disadvantaged areas, coming from multi-cultural backgrounds (Peters, 2003). Furthermore, contextual factors such as transport and access to water and basic services in sub-Saharan countries play a vital role in excluding some learners from education (UNESCO, 2014).

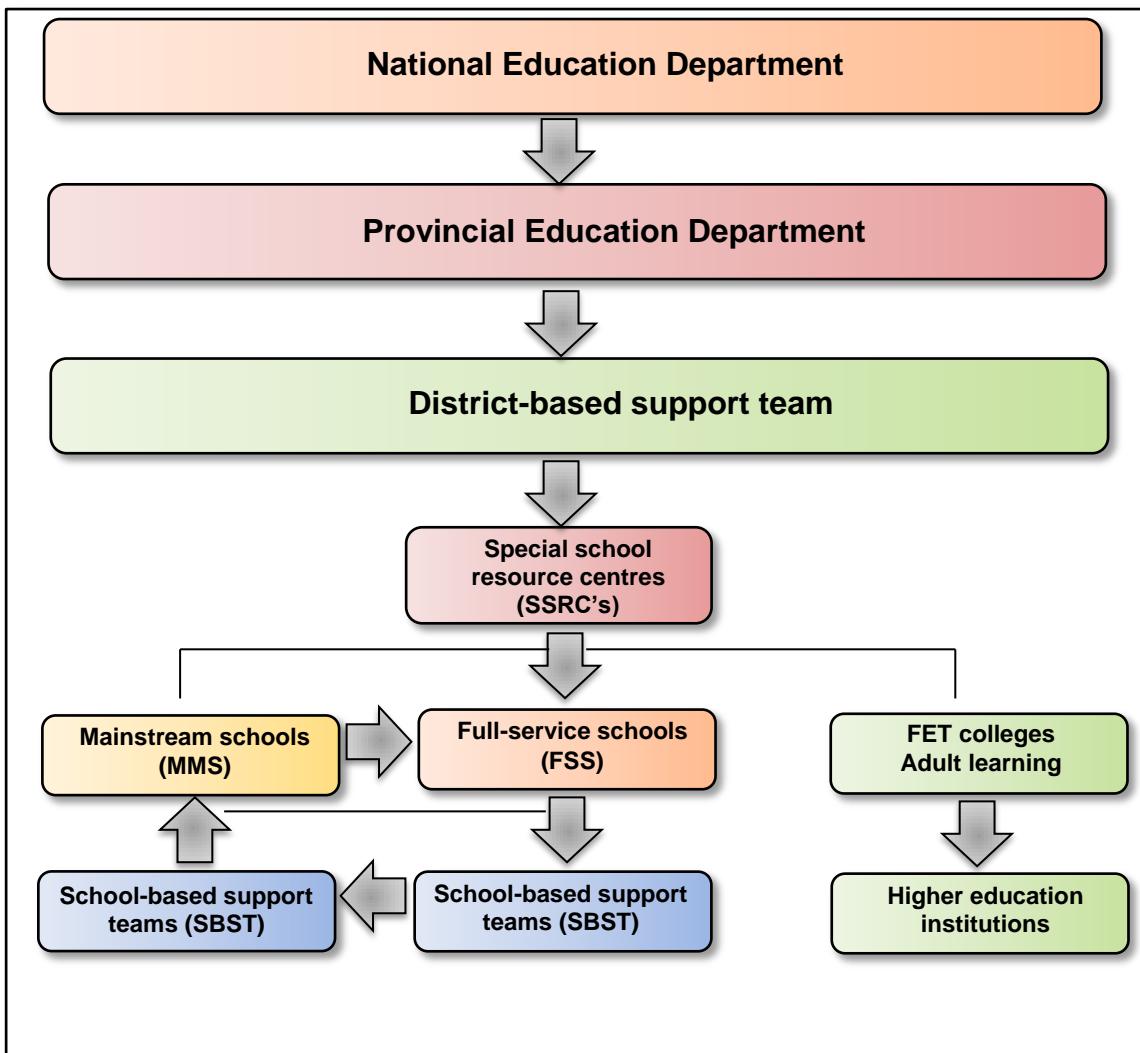
The inclusive education and training system includes further education and training, as well as higher education in an inclusive model, as the main aim of education is to educate all learners to become independent and earn a living “irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender and physical or intellectual ability” (DoE, 2001, p.13). As a result,

since 2008 several world-of-work and job-coaching programmes were implemented in different South African special schools to prepare learners with disabilities for employment. Examples of these schools are the Keurhof School in North West and the Pretoria School for Cerebral Palsied Learners in Gauteng. As part of these programmes occupational therapists would assess learners' skills and then contact employers who need such skills to determine whether they were interested in partnering in world-of-work projects with these schools in order to train learners with disabilities. In cases where learners with disabilities applied for vacancies, the school could provide the employers with realistic profiles of the learners' abilities, skills, knowledge, and competencies.

Vocational training underpins Education White Paper 6 (DoE; 2001) for South Africa, which advocates that various barriers to learning and not only disabilities and impairments as in the past, should be taken into account in order to allow more learners into special schools that provide skills training or pre-vocational training. Therefore, any learner with certain barriers to learning could at any given point in time qualify for admission to a special school until the barrier to learning has been resolved. Increased emphasis was placed on diversity in education, including the wide range of barriers to learning indicated in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). In this regard, Engelbrecht and Green (2007) comment that all schools will be required to accommodate learners of different races, cultures, languages, gender, religion, and disabilities when inclusive education is fully introduced at all schools as described in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

### **2.2.2 Components of the inclusive education system in South Africa**

The inclusive education model for South Africa is provided for in the *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*, Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996*. The Constitution, section 29(1), states that everyone has the right to basic education, as well as further education and that the state must put every reasonable measure in place to make this available and accessible (Makoelle, 2012; DoE, 2001). The National Department of Education (DoE) therefore determined a basic framework for inclusive education for the country through policies, norms and standards, planning and monitoring, support and guidelines, steered by the senior departmental leadership of the inclusive training system (DoE, 2001). Figure 2.1 provides an organogram of the South African inclusive education system, which is discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

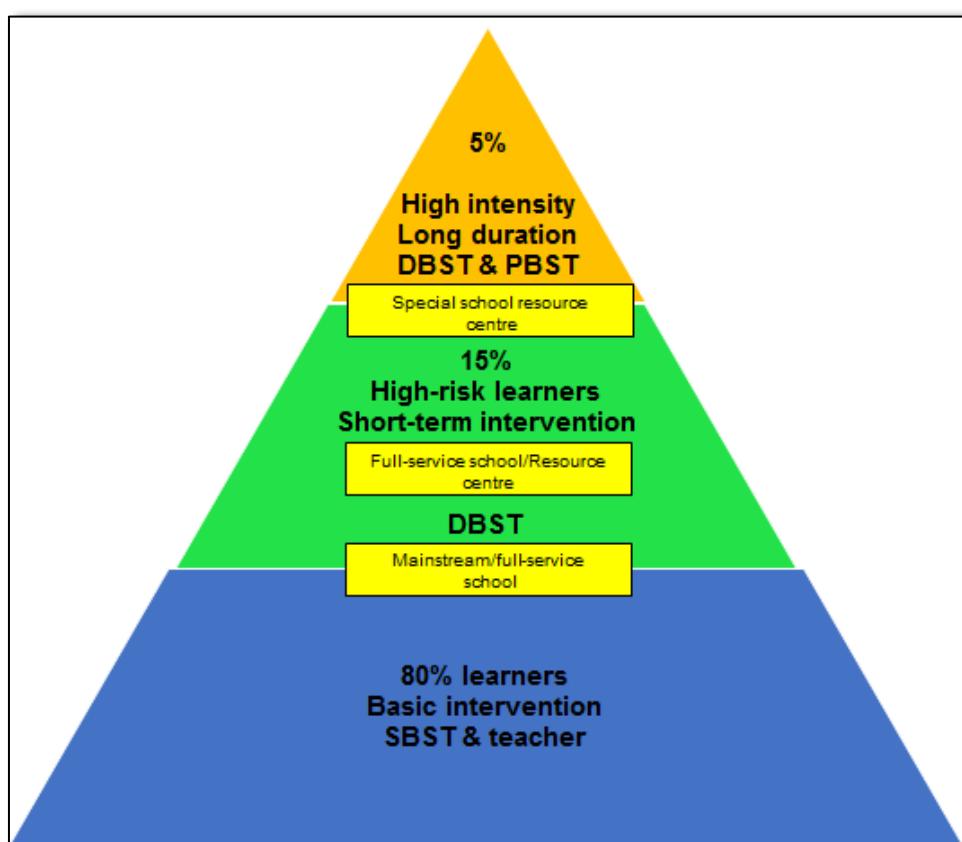


**Figure 2.1:** Inclusive education system of South Africa (Adapted from Makoelle, 2012, p.12)

The role of full-service schools, special schools and special schools as special school resource centres is described in Education White Paper 6 (2001), suggesting that special school resource centres, special schools and full-service schools operate with mainstream or ordinary schools within the overarching inclusive education system. Special school resource centres, special schools and full-service schools operate as ordinary public schools, with the same policies and curricula and adhering to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA, 1996) as ordinary mainstream schools (DBE, 2013).

According to the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DBE, 2014) learners with special educational needs who are in need of low to moderate levels of support (levels 1-2 range) could remain in mainstream schools with support from full-service schools, district-based support teams and special school resource centres or special schools, or alternatively be placed in a full-service school for short-term intervention. Learners with special educational needs who need intensive support (level 2), may be

accommodated in a full-service school. The full-service school will receive support from the special school resource centre or special school and district-based support team. Learners with level 2 special educational needs (level 2) may also remain in the mainstream school closest to home (SIAS) (DBE, 2014). Learners with special educational needs on level 2 may also remain in a mainstream school, provided that they receive the necessary support from a nearby full-service school and/or a special school resource centre (DBE, 2014). Learners with special educational needs who require high levels of support (level 3) may be accommodated in a special school resource centre, where individual care, resources and support can be provided. Learners with special educational needs may at any time be replaced in a mainstream school as soon as a barrier to learning has been resolved or a learner has received support on how to deal with the barrier to learning. Learners with special educational needs do not need to stay in the schools where they have been enrolled. The interconnection between institutions within the inclusive education system is presented in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2:** Interconnection between special school resource centres (level 3), full-service schools and special school resource centres (level 2), and mainstream schools and full-service schools (level 1), within the context of inclusive education.

The policies and guidelines from the National Department of Education cascade down to the Provincial Educational Departments (PED) that play a major role in the implementation of these policies and guidelines in the various districts, and also manage the process. The

Provincial Educational Departments set guidelines on curriculum, provide financial support for inclusive education in schools according to Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and support planning and management of the process (Makoelle, 2012; DoE, 2001). District-based support teams (DBSTs) are established by the districts and are composed of specialist educators and professionals such as therapists, psychologists, counsellors and social workers to provide guidance and support to all schools, including early childhood centres, adult education centres, colleges, and further and higher education institutions. The district-based support teams' main responsibilities in inclusive education are to ensure transformation of special schools into special school resource centres; to implement inclusive education; monitor the implementation of inclusive education; provide support with curriculum and assessment; and develop and train staff (Makoelle, 2012; DoE, 2001).

The two official documents from the Department of Education (DoE), namely Education White Paper 6 – Special needs education: building an inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001), and the conceptual and operational guidelines for special schools as resource centres (DBE; 2013) provide guidance on the approach to inclusive education in South Africa. The operational guidelines were specifically issued for existing and newly established special school resource centres in South Africa. These operational guidelines combined with the main objectives of Education White Paper 6 seem to be idealistic, as 380 special schools in South Africa need to be converted into special school resource centres. To convert all these special schools into special school resource centres as indicated in the operational guidelines, has great financial implications on infrastructure, human and other resources, and may as a result leave the staff at many special school resource centres feeling frustrated and incompetent. Against this background, the focus of the current study was to firstly improve the inward functioning of a special school resource centre, and not to directly work with the new, expected outward role of a special school resource centre.

Based on an audit to be performed on all 380 special schools in South Africa, 30 elected special schools and 30 special school resource centres were established during the first phase of implementation of Education White Paper 6, working towards the final goal in 2021. It would be required from the 30 special school resource centres established to provide an improved educational service to the learner population in the neighbourhood. Simultaneously the special school resource centres would be integrated into the district-based support teams to provide support to special schools, full-service schools and mainstream schools on curriculum, assessment and assistive devices (DoE, 2001). At each mainstream school, full-service school as well as special school, an institutional-level support team should be established, which consists of educators, special needs educators, care staff or professional

staff such as therapists, parents and members of the district-based support team (DoE, 2009). The role of this team is to identify the needs of learners and educators on institutional level, develop strategies to address needs for support and barriers to learning, monitor resources and evaluate institutions' operation in terms of inclusion. Where possible, these teams could be strengthened by the community and higher education institutions (Makoelle, 2012; DoE special school resource centres, are responsible, in collaboration with the district-based support teams, to support special schools, full-service schools, and mainstream schools in the neighbourhood. Special school resource centres would need to be upgraded, staff trained for their new roles as support staff to district-based support teams, while the services of the specialist staff services would be retained as far as possible (Makoelle, 2012, DoE, 2001; DBE, 2013).

Full-service schools have been identified by the district-based support team to render full-services to learners with special educational needs (LSEN) from the neighbouring areas in collaboration with special school resource centres, and also assist neighbouring schools with support and inclusive services. At least one full-service school per district should be designated to start the inclusive process. Primary as well as secondary schools should be transformed into full-service schools. Full-service schools should also be provided with the necessary physical, material and human resources to accommodate learners with special educational needs and diverse barriers to learning (Makoelle, 2012; DoE, 2001; DBE, 2010).

Mainstream schools form the majority of schools in South Africa. These schools are not yet providing full inclusive education services to learners and receive support from the full-service schools, special school resource centres and district-based support teams. A school-based support team should be established at each mainstream school to assist, support and coordinate all inclusive services at the school to ascertain that a network is established between the school, the district and the special school resource centre for an inclusive education system that can benefit each learner experiencing barriers to learning (Makoelle, 2012; DoE, 2001).

Further Education and Training (FET) colleges are linked with basic education to provide training to learners with special educational needs who do not require intensive support, while the enrolment of learners with special educational needs is **also** supported in **some of** the Higher Education (HE) institutions. These institutions are to be geared and upgraded to be able to accommodate these students with all the different barriers to learning, e.g. ramps for the physically disabled, sign language for the deaf, Braille for the blind, etc. (DoE, 2001). The Further Education and Training and Higher Education institutions are the immediate

responsibility of the Minister of Higher Education. The Constitution provides for governance of the inclusive education system in the country by the Government through the Minister of Education on national level, and the nine Members of Provincial Executive Councils (MEC) representing the nine provinces (DoE, 2001).

### **2.2.3 Progress and related timelines for inclusive education in South Africa**

Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) introduced inclusive education in South Africa in July 2001 and describes the short, medium and long-term goals with regard to implementation of inclusive education in South African schools. Education White Paper 6 (DoE; 2001) also includes the Further Education and Training Band institutions, which focus on the facilitation of learners' adjustment from school to the workplace by means of higher education. Further Education and Training aims to equip learners of all races, socio-economic backgrounds, gender and physical or intellectual ability with the necessary knowledge, skills and values which are required to become valued citizen of the country (DoE, 2005).

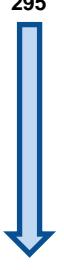
It was believed that a period of 20 years, from 2001 to 2021, would allow ample time to implement the inclusive education policy as described in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). This period of 20 years was divided into three terms: a short-term period of three years, a medium-term period of five years and a long-term period of 12 years. The short-term period of three years, which started with Education White Paper 6, began with 30 pilot special school resource centres, 30 full-service schools and 30 district-based support teams in each district and in each province, and required feedback at the end of the three years. Early identification and addressing of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase were a priority in the inclusive education system. Feedback was required to expand more special schools into special school resource centres; mainstream schools converted to full-service schools and the expanding of district-based support teams during a medium term of five years. This period was to be followed by a long-term period of 12 years in which all special schools were to be converted into special school resource centres. The expansion of the schools (which was called the 30-30 project) was to be based on the reports from the different institutions which took part in the first three-year period and the lessons learnt during that period. After 20 years 380 special schools were to have been converted into well-resourced special school resource centres, 500 well-resourced full-service schools were to have been established, and the large number of out-of-school learners (approximately 280 000 learners) were to have been accommodated within the inclusive education school system (DoE, 2001).

Following the Danida project (DoE, 2002b), the Department of Basic Education conducted a study to determine the progress on the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa (Simelane, 2012). The report Simelane (2012) indicates the key strategic levers for the Department of Basic Education as well as Provincial Education Departments to improve on the implementation of Education White Paper 6. Some of the strategic levers highlighted in the report were to develop a framework for qualification pathways for the intellectually disabled at NQF level 1; develop a curriculum for moderately and severely intellectually disabled learners which aligns to a quality framework for the intellectually disabled; develop policy directives and strategies for out-of-school disabled learners and youth including the severely and profoundly intellectually disabled; develop funding and human resource provisioning guidelines for an inclusive system; provide guidelines for an effective organisational structure and equitable resourcing; procure adapted workbooks and textbooks for affected schools using national catalogues; train and re-orientate district officials and educators on a revised and approved screening identification assessment support policy; conduct teacher training on South African Sign Language, curriculum Gr R–12 and resource implementation thereof (Simelane, 2012, p.70–71). Risks and root causes were pointed out, and mitigation strategies for all nine provinces were taken to meet the targets for the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa set in Education White Paper 6. As presented in Table 2.1, the progress report indicates statistics on different disabilities during the period 2001 to 2012, in 30 districts, 30 special schools and 30 designated full-service schools in all nine South African provinces (Simelane, 2012). In 2015 the report by the subcommittee of the Higher Education Department Committee (hereafter referred to as The HEDCOM report) was followed by a progress report from the Department of Basic Education, (DBE, 1015b) which is presented in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.1:** Statistics on learners in mainstream schools, full-service schools, special schools, and special school resource centres in North West from 2012 to 2014 (all data provided by provinces in 2014 [DBE, 2015]).

EDUCATION STATISTICS IN NORTH WEST BETWEEN 2012 AND 2014								
0–4 year old disabled ECD	5 year old disabled ed. Institute	7–15 year old disabled ed. Institute	16–18 year old disabled ed. Institute	Special schools learners (2012)	Special schools educators (2012)	Special schools (2012)	Special schools learners (2013)	Special schools (2013)
46,6%	85,7%	97,7%	78,0%	5437	465	32	6764	32
STATISTICS ON LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES IN NORTH WEST								
Disabled learners: FSSs (2014)	Learners in FSSs (disabled) (2014)	Learners (2014)	Public schools		Disabled learners in public schools	Number of special schools	Learners in special schools (disabled)	
2546	2 546	769 799	152		2006	32 (2014)	6 943 (2014)	

**Table 2.2:** Statistics on special schools: progress report of HEDCOM subcommittee of DBE (Simelane, 2012; DBE, 2015b)

PROGRESS REPORT: HEDCOM subcommittee of DBE 2012; 2015								
Profiling disabilities	Number of learners in MSS <sup>4</sup> with disabilities	Number of SS	Number of SS strengthened/ MMS	Number of SS converted to SSRCs	Number of SS built	SS and FSS received assistive devices/ technology	Number of FSS built/ up graded	Conversion MMS into FSS
1. Attention and hyperactive disorder (ADHD)	(2011) 21 976	(2002)  295	(2012) 295	(2012) 98	(2012) 25	(2012) 226	(2012) 202	
2. Specific learning disabilities	(2012) 111 598							
3. Autistic spectrum disorders	(2013) 116 530							
4. Blind								
5. Partially sighted								
6. Cerebral palsy								
7. Deaf								
8. Hard of hearing								
9. Moderate intellectual disability								
10. Physical disability								
11. Epilepsy								

According to these statistics fewer special school resource centres have been capacitated or strengthened than other schools, like special schools and full-service schools, although it is expected of special school resource centres to strengthen and reach out to mainstream schools, special schools and full-service schools in surrounding areas. It is also clear that there are not enough special school resource centres to reach out to all learners with barriers to learning, as only 98 special school resource centres in the country must provide professional and expert services to 21 976 learners with barriers to learning (Simelane, 2012). If the inclusive education system was sound and inclusive on all levels, learners with diverse barriers to learning would have been included in society and exclusion would have been reduced. Participation in their communities would have been increased and valuable contributions to the country's economy would have been made, while the burden on the economy will have been lessened due to the fact that there would be fewer dependent disabled people (UNESCO, 2008; Simelane, 2012).

The HEDCOM report (Simelane, 2012) indicates the progress of inclusive education over a period of 10 years (2001–2012). Each province submitted a progress report on different

<sup>4</sup> ECD: early childhood development; MMS: mainstream schools; SSRC: special school resource centres; FSS: full-service schools; ADHD: attention deficit hyperactive disorder

sections, such as budgets, learners and educators, profiling disabilities, strengthened special schools, new special schools built, full-service schools converted, health professionals, assistive devices and technology, and specialist professionals currently employed by the Department of Basic Education. The HEDCOM subcommittee compiled all statistics from the nine provinces in one document to compare what progress was made from 2001 to 2012 with regard to Education White Paper 6 (Simelane, 2012). According to the progress report some provinces (Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape) did not seem to have the budget allocation needed for the expansion of inclusive education. It was therefore suggested that budget programmes needed to be amended by placing more emphasis on the implementation of inclusive education (Simelane, 2012). According to the report, mitigating strategies in 2014 included a focus on training of educators in screening, identification, assessment and support of learners with barriers to learning. Another priority for 2014 was the conversion of mainstream schools into full-service schools and a mitigation strategy focused on making buildings at schools accessible for learners with disabilities (DBE, 2012).

As follow-up on the progress report by the HEDCOM (Simelane, 2012), the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2015b) released a report on the implementation of education as prescribed by Education White Paper 6 on inclusive education as an overview for the period from 2013 to March 2015. The main purpose of this report (DBE, 2015b) was to report on the progress made provincially and nationally on implementing and expanding on Education White Paper 6. Based on this report, good practises were highlighted, recommendations on norms and standards were made, and challenges identified. It was found that the provinces were not sufficiently investing in building an inclusive system, and as a result left children with disabilities in rural areas in disadvantaged positions (DBE, 2015b). The high cost of building special school resource centres was furthermore raised as a concern, resulting in many learners with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools and full-service schools.

A paper entitled, *Complicit in Exclusion*, Human Rights Watch (2015), criticises the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. The paper includes the following: an overview of inclusive education in South Africa since the signing of Education White Paper 6; international standards such as free and compulsory primary education and the right to access inclusive, quality education; discriminatory fees and expenses; discrimination in access to education; discrimination due to the lack of reasonable accommodation in schools; violence, abuse and neglect in schools; other factors limiting inclusive education such as data inconsistencies, inadequate funding and lack of adequate information and support services. According to Human Rights Watch (2015), learners with disabilities experience

gross violations of their human rights. These learners still face exclusion, lack of quality education in some public schools, lack of preparation for their life after basic education, discriminatory barriers from other learners in mainstream schools, exposure to violence and abuse, and having to pay fees at some public schools which their peers at mainstream schools do not have to pay.

#### **2.2.4 Role-players in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa**

Since UNESCO's Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education (UNESCO, 1994) was released, South Africa took baby steps towards enrolling all learners in mainstream schools. In 1997 the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) paved the way towards an inclusive education system with their report, *Quality education for all: overcoming barriers to learning and development*. The committees included all aspects of education, from early childhood development (ECD) to higher and adult education in an investigation of the entire education system and focused on the challenges to minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development in order to promote effective learning and development of all learners (DoE, 1997, p.5). During the same time, the office of deputy-president T.M. Mbeki issued the *White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy* (McClain, Howell, Lagadien, Pretorius, Rancho & Thompson, 1997) in which progress in South Africa and policy guidelines are discussed, and also include the deputy president's support of inclusive education in South Africa.

Different associations were founded to the benefit of inclusive education. Since 1997 school governing body associations such as SANASE (South Africa National Association for Special Education) have played a major role to assist chairpersons and principals of special schools in strengthening special schools (SANASE AGM, 2007). To date curricula for SID-schools (Severely Intellectually Disabled) and MMID-schools (Mildly Moderate Intellectually Disabled) have been drawn up by committees from the different schools of educators affiliated to SANASE. Principals from across the country representing all disabilities prepared a guideline to hostel policies, *Guidelines for Developing a Hostel Policy for LSEN Schools*, under the auspices of SANASE (Burgers et al., 2010). These guidelines include legislation, hostel management, admission to hostels, hostel staff, infrastructure and facilities, safety and security, medical care and finances.

Different universities offer training courses to keep educators abreast of the latest on the inclusive education system. The North-West University offers an annual opportunity for

students to attend an inclusive education symposium where national and international students voice their opinions on inclusive education. The symposium is held at Optentia Vaal Triangle Campus. Other universities, such as the University of Pretoria, present distance education courses to students, and UNISA also offers studies in this field.

The Department of Basic Education hosts quarterly NCCIE-meetings (National Co-ordinating Committee Inclusive Meetings), which cascade down to PCCIE-meetings (Provincial Co-ordinating Committee Inclusive Education) where stakeholders of the provinces take note of matters discussed during the national meeting and have the opportunity to voice their own matters at provincial level (PCCIE-NW, 2009). Matters discussed include assistive devices, transport, staff, buildings, and keeping implementation of Education White Paper 6 in mind. Questions and answers on inclusive education are also posted on an up-to-date blog. All policies, guidelines and other information on inclusive education can be viewed on the same website.

## **2.2.5 Challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education**

As part of the Danida project, results highlight challenges related to inclusive education in all three participating provinces. The following can be reported: the delivery of services, such as late or no appointment of staff members, non-teaching staff in hostels, and late payment of subsidies, result in negative attitudes (such as non-teaching staff having a large workload). Other challenges include the general functioning of schools with poor resources, a limited culture of learning and teaching, and educators' feelings of frustration and work overload as a result of policy changes. Workshops were reported to be unsatisfactory, while educators were found to be in dire need of more training. Educators felt that they could hardly cope with the existing number of learners in their classes, and reported that they were overwhelmed by learners with severe disabilities, because of the additional workload and their limited knowledge of the different disabilities (DoE, 2002b).

The Danida research (DoE, 2002b) furthermore indicates that educators' attitudes towards diversity and disability are negative and almost relate to fear due to ignorance. The implementation of inclusive education without support for people with disabilities seemingly creates uncertainty and negative attitudes (DoE, 2002b). A number of role players who took part in the study were of the opinion that guidance and support from national and provincial departments were insufficient in terms of educator development. In this regard capacity building programmes and material development were recommended, especially for educators from disadvantaged and rural areas (DoE, 2002b). In all three provinces the

setting up of district-based support teams at the different districts remained one of the greatest challenges. Although positions were advertised, therapists and other professional staff were found to be reluctant to apply for positions in rural areas (especially in North West and KwaZulu-Natal.) It was recommended that established institutional-level support teams should be continuously supported and trained. Another concern raised in this research was that human resources, management, curriculum, and provision of support on all levels of inclusive education provided through the project in the three provinces would not be sustained. Although the Danida programme (DoE, 2002b) funded this project for two years, more funds were needed to sustain and develop the formulated strategic plans and expand the implementation of inclusive education policy (DoE, 2002b).

The HEDCOM report (Simelane, 2012; DBE, 2015b) also identified some challenges related to inclusive education. One of these challenges relates to inappropriate funding in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape resulting in serious backlogs in the implementation of the recommendations of Education White Paper 6. According to the HEDCOM report (Simelane, 2012), the difference between learners with special educational needs and inclusive education is still unclear and needs to be distinguished more clearly. In addition, the development of a curriculum for moderately and severely intellectually disabled learners as well as guidelines for human resource provisioning for an inclusive system were still outstanding (DoE, 2002–2012; Simelane, 2012; DBE, 2015b). The main challenges hampering the progress of the implementation of the inclusive education system were identified (DBE, 2015b). There was a persistent incoherent understanding and developing of inclusive education, as described in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). Another challenge was the disparities regarding the provision of staff and finances; appointment of professional staff, and building of special schools across provinces. Furthermore, limited specialist support services in mainstream schools often result in too many learners being referred to special schools and special school resource centres. Moreover, it results in a large number of drop-outs among learners. In this regard, according to the household survey conducted in 2013 (DBE, 2015), there might be more than 500 000 learners with disabilities out of school, which highlights the urgency of inclusive education to be implemented and supported. Currently, special schools do not have sufficient specialist support staff and non-teaching staff, especially in hostels, to address this need. Structures, stakeholder and partnership engagement are necessary to change attitudes and address staff shortages (DBE, 2015).

While many training opportunities for both pre- and in-service educators are in place in South Africa, training is raised as one of the main challenges related to the successful

implementation of inclusive education. Although guidelines such as the *Conceptual and operational guidelines for special schools as resource centres* (DBE, 2013) and the *Guidelines for full-service/inclusive schools* (DBE, 2010) are available, the need for in-service training of all educators to be better equipped to teach learners with diverse disabilities remains. From the literature it is clear that not enough workshops are presented for officials and schools to be informed on the expectations of the Department of Basic Education (Hodkinson, 2005; Mbelu, 2011; Friend & Bursuck, 2002, Sand et al., 2000). Engelbrecht and Green (2007) are of the opinion that the most important challenge of inclusive education is to persuade educators at all schools to buy into the inclusive education system, as educators are the most important role-players in successful inclusive education.

Another key challenge raised in current literature is the practical implementation of inclusive education in South African schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). In this regard, the advantage of all learners being included and able to learn in mainstream schools is debated by Green and Engelbrecht (2001). They are of the opinion that it is not always practical to implement inclusive education in all schools. Ainscow (2003), Friend and Bursuck (2002), Hodkinson (2005) and Kavale and Forness (2002) agree that the meaning of inclusive education is still unsure, which makes the practical implementation of inclusive education difficult. In a study undertaken by Mbelu (2011) it was found that educators are of the opinion that learners with barriers could still be better taught in special schools than in inclusive schools. Another practical challenge related to inclusive education, is that inclusive education might become an integration of all learners in mainstream schools and not the inclusion of all learners, irrespective of their special educational needs or disabilities (Hodkinson, 2011).

The many contextual challenges in South Africa are viewed as yet more barriers to successful implementation of inclusive education. Ntombela (2003) found the integration of over-age learners in the inclusive education system to be a challenge in many South African schools, especially in the rural areas where learners experience various barriers to learning and development. Although guidelines exist on the implementation of inclusive education, these guidelines are often only accessible to the minority and limited clarity exists on how practical challenges related to inclusive education in the South African education system should be addressed (Ntombela, 2003).

Poverty in South Africa is a distinct contextual challenge that influences the implementation of inclusive education. Ebersöhn and Elof (2006) highlight poverty as one of the realities in South Africa, which often goes hand in hand with abandoned and neglected children,

children living on the streets and abused children. To address the challenge of poverty among children living on the streets, schools for street children were included as special schools in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). Children living on the streets now have the opportunity to attend school, sit for formal examinations, obtain certificates, and learn vocational training to develop skills to break out of the cycle of poverty (Ouma, 2004; Coren, Hossain, Pardo, Thomae, Versas, & Chakraborty, 2012).

Ntombela (2010) found accommodation for disabled students at a few South African higher education institutions challenging, as disability is a human rights issue rather than a medical problem. Within the context of the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, Makoelle (2012) refers to HIV/AIDS stigmatisation as a challenge for affected and infected learners in an inclusive environment. Makoelle (2012) also refers to the challenge of incorporating different ethnic groups and eleven official languages in one environment. A gap seemingly exists between what policies envisage and what is practiced in classrooms.

Another challenge related to the successful implementation of inclusive education is associated with limited support and resources. According to the progress report on the implementation of Education White Paper 6 (Simelane, 2012), most provinces in South Africa experience a lack of human resources, which arises from the lack of funding and the absence of the provision for well-developed guidelines for an inclusive system. Educators often report to receive minimal assistance from senior management teams, parents and school governing bodies (Mbelu, 2011; DoE, 2002b). Swart and Pettipher (2005) agree that challenges related to support structures for inclusive education, and more specifically, special school resource centres with trans-disciplinary teams, are experienced to support learners with special needs, especially those in deep rural areas (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

Stofile (2004) and Peters (2004) are of the opinion that the root of the challenge in implementing and sustaining inclusive education is the lack of the political will on the part of the government to improve the conditions and context within which the reform should take place and not the educators' lack of cooperation or resistance on their part. The education system, working hand in hand with industries and politicians, needs to prepare learners to deal effectively with the demands of technology and equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities needed by industries and businesses. Ferguson (2008) argues that the demands of the community, and not only education, could become one of the biggest challenges for inclusive education in the twenty-first century. It becomes more difficult to successfully include not only learners with disabilities in schools, but also people with different disabilities in the community.

Against this background, it is evident that the South African inclusive education system still faces many challenges. Although both inward and outward change is necessary to address these challenges, the purpose of this study was on the inward functioning of the special school resource centre.

## **2.3 SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRES**

In this section, I explore special school resource centres from an international and national perspective.

### **2.3.1 Special school resource centres: an international perspective**

Countries such as New Zealand and the United States of America have not yet included special school resource centres in their inclusive educational system (Kearney, 2009). In this regard, Kearney (2009) conducted a study on the exclusion of disabled learners in New Zealand schools to investigate whether or not these learners are denied enrolment, bullied or do not have access to the curriculum. In response to the findings of prejudice against learners with disabilities, it was advised that the local government should contribute to the reduction, elimination and exclusion of disabled learners at school level. Kearney's (2009) study emphasises the important role that special school resource centres could play in the development of neighbouring mainstream schools, the training of full-service school staff, and the disposition and knowledge of other learners at schools for learners with disabilities.

The United States of America piloted and implemented various acts to assist learners with barriers to learning. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was piloted (Peters, 2003) and subsequently came into effect in 2005. The Act was re-authorised and published in 2006 (Spellings & Justesen, 2008). According to Spellings and Justesen (2008), the NCLB had set a goal to have every child achieve proficiency by 2013/2014. Everything possible was done to ensure that learners with special educational needs kept up with the standards, achieved to the best of their abilities, and were included in district and state-wide assessments (Hossain, 2012; Hope, 2009). Spellings and Justesen (2008) also mention that the Office of Special Education Programmes (OSEP) in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) was established to ensure that educators would be able to teach and support learners with disabilities. In 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended and supports the current phase of inclusion in special education. According to the Individuals Disabilities Education Act, 94% of learners with disabilities attended regular schools, while only 4% attended schools or institutions which catered for learners with disabilities at the time. The learners who attended regular schools, mostly

attended regular classes with the necessary assistive devices and support, while some of them attended specific classes with qualified special education educators. As a result, some learners with disabilities might spend 80% or more of their time in mainstream classrooms (Spellings & Justesen, 2008).

The number of schools in the USA offering inclusive education programmes tripled in 1994 and 1995. Although inclusive education programmes have grown in the United States of America, learners with special needs still attend special classes in mainstream schools – each with additional facilitators, including learners with different kinds of disabilities in all grades (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Koretz and Hamilton (2000) report that learners with learning disabilities who receive extra classes or accommodation during assessment score higher in all subjects, except Mathematics, than their counterparts who do not receive such assistance. According to Koretz and Hamilton (2000) this could be as a result of inclusive education. Non-official statistics from the USA are positive in terms of learners with disabilities receiving extra classes or accommodation within mainstream schools (Peters, 2003). According to the results of standardised achievement tests, learners benefit by placement in special classes within mainstream schools (Peters, 2003).

Hausstätter and Takala (2008) scrutinised special teacher education in Norway and Finland. Their study indicates that inclusive education through special needs education is a high priority in Norway. Although Finland has special needs educators, they form part of the national goal of high quality education (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008). In Norway the inclusive education system is based on differentiation. Unfortunately the lack of transparency with regard to the qualifications and general core practice it is not clear what assistance learners receive, or what knowledge special needs teachers have. On the other hand in Finland, the core practice of special needs teachers is clear and shared with everyone involved. The difference of approach between the two countries lies in transparency with regard to special needs educators in classrooms; how they are appointed, what is expected of them, in which ways they are assisted, and when and who receive special education and why.

Finnish education policies are prepared by the Minister of Education and Culture and executed by the Finnish National Council of Education. The general admission policy has changed in favour of inclusive education (Beckmann & Colditz, 2013). All schools have at least one special class with a teacher trained in special needs education. Learners with special educational needs (LSEN) attend mainstream classes on a daily basis, based on the specific needs of the teachers and learners. Finland has a sound inclusive education policy, also set by the Minister of Education and Culture and executed by the Finnish National

Council of Education. Early identification of learners with barriers to learning is important in order to receive additional support throughout the school system (Beckmann & Colditz, 2013). As in South African schools, only learners with high needs are enrolled in special school resource centres in Finland. Finland has reduced the number of special schools (only some converted to special school resource centres) drastically from 350 in 1985 to 119 in 2010, and strives to have even fewer special schools and some converted into special school resource centres by the year 2018 (Beckmann & Colditz, 2013). Finland does not strive to convert all special schools to special school resource centres, and educators trained in special needs who take care of learners with barriers to learning are appointed in all schools.

Special school resource centres in Finland, as in South Africa, have support teams consisting of principals, remedial educators, senior sisters, psychologists, therapists, social workers and career guidance personnel. Support teams from various disciplines are appointed to guide learners with special needs in special cases in mainstream schools. This form of inclusive education is less expensive than having all special school resource centres and full-service schools equipped with multi-disciplinary teams. Between 1985 and 2010, while the number of special schools was reduced, the numbers of learners who needed and received support were also reduced from 2% to 1,2% of the learner population (Beckmann & Colditz, 2013). This could be as a result of early identification of learners with barriers to learning as well as specialised aid (by specialists like psychologists, nursing sisters, social workers and therapists) in all schools (Beckmann & Colditz, 2013). Beckmann and Colditz (2013) argue that Finland's inclusive education model and system could be a possible solution to inclusive education in South African schools.

Principals and parents in Finland seem satisfied with the support provided to learners with special needs (Halittunen, 2010). Possible learning disabilities are identified early and individual programmes are compiled accordingly – especially for subjects such as Finnish, English and Mathematics. Furthermore, every school in Finland is provided with a welfare unit, which caters for students' physical and psychological needs (Korpela, 2012). Finland's education system focuses on values of trust, respect, appreciation of others' work, tolerance towards individuality, responsibility, and cooperation (Beckmann & Colditz, 2013).

In France, special school resource centres are known as *zones d'education prioritaires* (resource and training centres), or special schools converted into special school resource centres. Special school resource centres are mainly located in communities with large populations and high numbers of disadvantaged students. Rather than focusing only on

specific disabilities, staff at special school resource centres are trained in inclusive education and apply diverse problem-solving approaches. By doing so, special school resource centres underpin the ideology of inclusive education, which is regarded as a high priority in France (Peters, 2003). In 1994 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris reported that there was a positive movement towards the conversion of special schools into special school resource centres in France. Studies proved that students with and without special needs benefitted from the inclusive education programmes in France (EFA, 2000).

According to EURYDICE (2003) it is a high priority to transform special schools into special school resource centres, with a strong focus on providing training for educators and other professionals; developing and disseminating materials; supporting mainstream schools and parents; providing short-term or part-time assistance to individual learners; and supporting students who enter the open labour market. Peters (2003) compared the rationale behind the establishment of special school resource centres in different countries and found that major trends in best-practice include the transformation of special schools into special school resource centre. Peters (2003) indicates that South Africa mainly utilises special school resource centres to reach out to rural areas. The expertise at special school resource centres in South Africa is often used to provide in-service training to staff, technical support, and to evaluate and support learners. In India, special school resource centres were initially established in response to natural disasters that occurred. Where clinics were set up, villagers trained in community health and people, including the disabled, were taught to take care of themselves (Peters, 2003). Peters (2003) also describes how a special school in India was successfully converted into a special school resource centre to accommodate and integrate blind learners. Results from Peters' (2003) study therefore suggest that special school resource centres should also be established for reasons other than education alone. UNESCO (2001) has developed inclusive schools and community support programmes with the fundamental goal of introducing and distributing inclusive education on an international level. UNESCO (2001) selected twelve countries (Cameroon, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, India, Madagascar, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Paraguay, South Africa, Vietnam, and Yemen) to participate in their programme which ran from 1998 to 2001. The four countries in the pilot programme (Ghana, India, Vietnam and Yemen) were very successful in the implementation of inclusive education support programmes. The four countries then assisted the regional authorities with training in the remaining eight countries. The success of the inclusive education initiatives were measured by the implementation of inclusive education, how learners with disadvantages were supported (such as refugee learners), successful involvement of non-government organisations (NGOs) in informal inclusive education programmes, and training of staff. During workshops the UNESCO Resource

Guide, which provides guidelines on assessment strategies, curriculum and evaluation procedures within the context of the inclusive education implementation, was introduced (Peters, 2003).

Although the inclusive education programme was highly successful, special school resource centres were only established in South Africa and India. A possible reason for this could be that the implementation of inclusive education in other countries was not implemented in the same way as in South Africa and that special school resource centres only form one component of the inclusive education system. An international classification of learners with barriers to learning was adopted by OECD (2000), which consisted of three categories, namely learners with physical disabilities with biological cause; learners with learning disabilities without measurable reason; and learners experiencing learning difficulties deriving from poor socio-economic conditions. After learners with barriers were screened, identified, assessed and supported, these learners could either stay in mainstream schools, or were referred to full-service schools, special schools or special school resource centres, depending on the level of need. Although special school resource centres are strongly recommended due to the worldwide success rate, a country does not necessarily need to have special school resource centres in order to have a successful inclusive education system (Peters, 2003; UNESCO, 2001).

In light of the above, Grönlund, Lim and Larsson (2010, p.6) identified some challenges that developing countries need to overcome before they can successfully implement inclusive education, which include “limited involvement of the education ministry; limited government support; ineffective policies and legislation; inadequate funding; shortage of specially trained educators; the economic crisis; and ineffective and inefficient use of assistive devices”. Despite the challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education in developing countries, Grönlund et al. (2010) also report on successes resulting from inclusive education implementation in some developing countries, like improvement of classrooms, accessibility to buildings and functional toilets. Grönlund et al. (2010) specifically found that two developing countries (Bangladesh and Tanzania) have made significant progress in inclusive education, but that the improvements were mostly funded by non-government organisations. It seems that the general public, especially in developing countries, may still hold negative attitudes toward disabled learners, while the governments in Bangladesh and Tanzania do not currently have national policies for the disabled in place (Grönlund et al., 2010).

In other African countries (Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Botswana), no reference is made to special school resource centres in their inclusive education policies. Zimbabwe mentions

resource rooms in mainstream schools. Depending on the disability and assistance needed, as determined by medical, psychological and/or speech pathology assessments, learners with special educational needs attend these classes for part of the day (approximately 10%–90% of the normal school day) to receive support from the remedial teacher or relevant professional staff (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). UNESCO (2005) estimated that 115 to 130 million learners from all over the world are not in any school of any kind. Of these, more than an estimated 80 million learners excluded from any quality education are from Africa. As a result it places a heavy financial and social burden on Africa. Inclusive education is therefore a necessity in these countries in order to ensure that all these learners are included in the schooling system (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007) and are taught to be productive members of the community. Against this background, research is of vital importance to improve ways to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning and to find alternatives in current learning frameworks (UNESCO, 2005). To this end, the current study aims to raise awareness of how existing assets and resources could be utilised to potentially strengthen the inward functioning of special school resource centres in South Africa.

According to *the guidelines to ensure quality education and support in special schools and special school resource centres* (DBE, 2013), special school resource centres have been established in several African countries like Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. Kenya received support from the German Development Cooperation that established a special school resource centre for the visually impaired, which made information accessible through large print, Braille, and MP3. The special school resource centre for the visually impaired in Kenya was launched in 2009 and has shown significant growth (DBE, 2013).

Ghana established a special school resource centre with assistive devices for the full spectrum of disabled learners, which was formerly registered as a school for the blind. It is registered as the Ghana Material Resource Centre for the Disabled and has a wide variety of materials for the blind, visually impaired and the disabled. Some medical consumables are also distributed by this centre, which serves people throughout the country (DBE, 2013). South Africa follows a similar approach as indicated in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), namely that schools which were formerly registered as specialised schools, for the cerebral palsy, for example, will now accept learners with the full spectrum of disabilities, with the exception of highly specialised disabilities, for example learners who are blind or deaf.

Nigeria hosts the Gindiri Material Centre for the Handicapped and actively supports inclusive education by including blind and visually impaired learners into local primary schools

(Peters, 2003). Resources such as Braille material and Braille typewriters were provided to this centre, and gradually a special curriculum was introduced at this centre. Apart from being taught specialised skills, learners also learn social skills and are taught to effectively function in their community. This entire project was supported by the Local Education Authority (DBE, 2013). Based on the success of the centre, educators who teach Science, Technology and Mathematics in Nigeria are now trained in practical ways to adapt their classes to accommodate learners with a wide spectrum of disabilities. According to the Nigerian Local Education Authority, secondary visually impaired students in Nigeria are introduced to Science, Technology and Mathematics and if any negative attitudes towards the use of assistive devices for the visually impaired may arise, the Gindiri Material Centre for the Visual Handicapped addresses these challenges. By means of workshops and conferences, educators are trained on how to teach the visually impaired (DBE, 2013).

Although inclusive education is encouraged in Botswana, learners with barriers to learning attend ordinary school with their peers while at least one senior teacher is appointed for the management of handicapped learners in school (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). Even though Lesotho started to invest in inclusive education as far back as 1987 (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007), the national government still experiences challenges in the implementation of the inclusive education policy on national level with regard to teacher training and policy implementation (Engelbrecht & Green 2007). Despite training of educators taking place in over 80 schools, at a pace of ten schools per year, resistance against inclusive education is slowly growing, as educators feel that their workload increases with the implementation of inclusive education, without them receiving desired incentives. On the other hand, policy makers in Lesotho argue that inclusive education schools should include all learners, with few teachers. Although resources are scarce in Lesotho, policy makers still attempt to follow through on their inclusive education policy, as they believe that it is in the best interest of all learners in the country (Serpell, 1999). However, as dedicated as the policy makers may be, many challenges still need to be addressed at grass-roots level (Stubbs, 1995; Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). Even if the educators in Lesotho are provided with the necessary learning materials, they are not able to optimally utilise them (Stubbs, 1995), because they need training on how to access and use the learning materials and assistive devices (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). However, some educators in Lesotho are dedicated to inclusive education and assist learners with special needs after hours or during breaks (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007).

Namibia is committed to follow UNESCO's (2001) principles on inclusion to educate all learners, especially learners with special educational needs. The mainstream schools in

Namibia have to meet the needs of all learners, but the Namibian Educational Act 16 (2001) does not specify precisely how the act should be implemented within an inclusive education framework. Thus, the majority of educators in Namibia are not informed, educated or prepared to teach learners with special needs, although these learners are included in mainstream schools (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). In this regard, literature emphasises the importance for educators to understand the philosophy behind inclusive education, which can only be accomplished through training (Bricker, 2000; Möwes, 2002; Naanda, 2005). Educators in Namibia seemingly have a need to be trained in order to show a better understanding of inclusive education and to educate learners with special educational needs. It is furthermore important that Teacher and Disability Resource Centres be transformed in such a way that they become supportive to schools, educators and other professionals in order to assist them to utilise existing resources and materials (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007).

### **2.3.2 Role and functioning of special school resource centres in South Africa**

According to Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), special school resource centres are part of the inclusive education system in South Africa. Special school resource centres are existing special schools that have been audited and found competent to provide quality services to learners with barriers to learning and can therefore be converted into special school resource centres. A special school resource centre should be an institution where all necessary resources are available to provide education and training to learners with serious barriers to learning, and is capable of providing guidance and support to full-service schools and mainstream schools together with the district-based support teams. Special school resource centres include human resources as well as special facilities and assistive devices (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2013). However, no statistics in the report by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2015) indicate the level of capacity of these special school resource centres to be able to successfully assist schools in their vicinity. In 2013, 116 530 South African learners with barriers to learning attended mainstream, full-service and special schools, and special school resource centres (DBE, 2015).

The DBE (DBE, 2013) clearly explains what is expected of special school resource centres. Mainstream schools should have institutional-level support teams which could contact the district-based support team, who will then ensure that the necessary support is provided to specific learners by members of the district-based support team. The process to be followed by all stakeholders involved is clearly described in the policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (DBE, 2014). This policy is aimed at learners with barriers to

learning in mainstream schools, with the goal to assess and support such learners in line with an inclusive education system (DoE, 2001). Following the prescribed protocol, the SIAS policy includes a set of forms to be used by all stakeholders who identify, assess and support learners – from the class educator to the district-based support team member. The policy furthermore includes strategies to align with different Provincial Departments of Education, aiming to support educators, district managers, parents and schools.

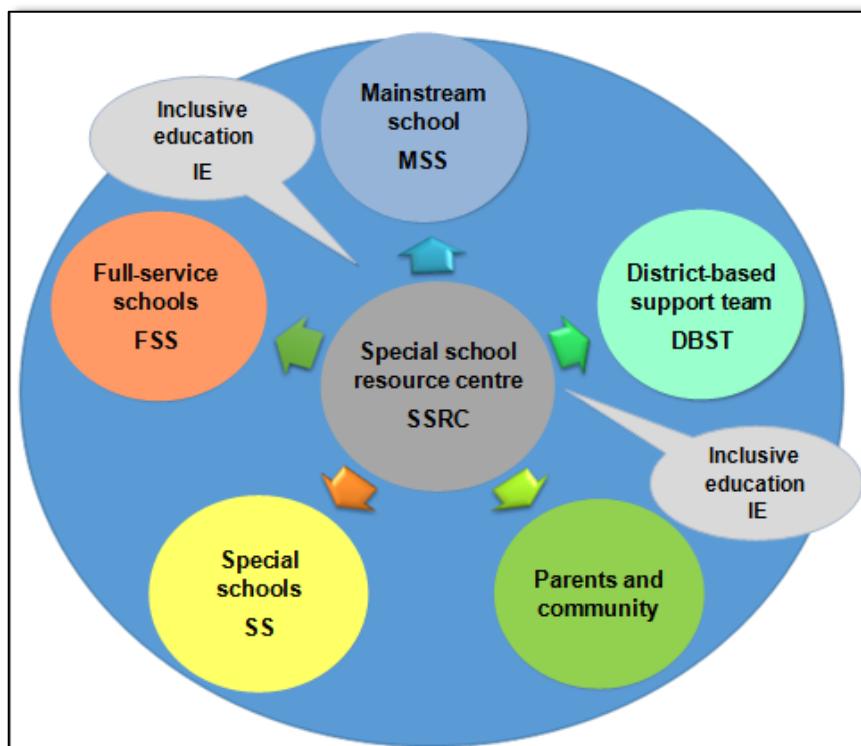
A special school resource centre should, based on the number of learners at the centre, have a multi-disciplinary team consisting of at least one or two therapists, a senior nursing sister and a psychologist. The professional staff (e.g. therapists and psychologists) at special school resource centres need to be available for assistance and training of staff at mainstream schools and full-service schools.

Learners are accordingly identified in one or more of the following main domains of specialised support: low, moderate or high levels of support. In this regard, the policy stipulates the following barriers to learning which could need low, medium or high support: "Health, which includes mental health; vision, which includes blind, low vision, partially sightedness; deaf and blind-deafness; hearing, including deaf and hard of hearing; communication (meaning little or no functional speech, requiring augmentative and alternative communication (AAC); motor function (e.g. wheelchairs); cognition, which includes moderate, severe and profound intellectual disability); neurological and neurodevelopmental impairments (including epilepsy, cerebral palsy, attention deficit disorder, specific learning disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, foetal alcohol syndrome and autism); behaviour and social skills; skills and vocational education and multiple and complex learning and developmental support" (DBE: 2014, p.8).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2007) the right of every child with a disability to have access to an inclusive system within their community, is important. As such, the screening, identification, assessment and support policy (DBE, 2014) determines the support of all learners in the schooling system and the delivery of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (DBE, 2011). Firstly, educators identify all learners with barriers to learning throughout learners' schooling careers using a predetermined set of forms. These forms provide guidance for further support to individual learners if needed (individual support plan) (DBE, 2014). Interventions must be available to the district-based support team (working closely with the special school resource centre) to identify these learners (DBE, 2015). The district-based support team typically includes educators, managers, and district-based

support team members, as well as parents/caregivers. Special school resource centres, serving and supporting disabled and vulnerable learners in a community encourage a relationship between schools and communities (DBE, 2014). This team relies on information captured in support needs assessment forms 1, 2 and 3 to determine the level of support required for a learner. Only learners with a high level of required support (5% of learners with disabilities) would be placed in a special school resource centre. Furthermore, 20% of learners with moderate levels of needs would be placed in full-service schools where they will receive support from the special school resource centres and district-based support teams, as required. Learners in need of low levels of support, being 80% of learners, will remain in mainstream schools, where they will receive support from district-based support teams, full-service schools and special school resource centres when needed (DBE, 2014).

Parents and the community are important role-players in providing quality learning and teaching support to all learners in all schools, namely special school resource centres, special schools, full-service schools and mainstream schools. In this regard, the Department of Basic Education has launched a campaign for support to schools for quality education with the aim of obtaining buy-in and support from parents and communities (DBE, 2010). Figure 2.3 provides a visual representation of special school resource centres within the inclusive education context.



**Figure 2.3:** The relationship of special school resource centres with mainstream schools, special schools, district-based support teams, parents and communities within the inclusive education system (DoE, 2001)

Schools with expertise in inclusive education may therefore provide the needed support to surrounding schools. According to Peters (2003), special school resource centres are strengthened and equipped to reach out to full-service schools as well as mainstream schools in the area by assisting with the inclusion and care of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Within this context, the current study facilitated a process of implementing the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained special school resource centre, focusing on inward change, in order to determine to what extent this approach may provide a suitable way of identifying, mobilising, and managing existing resources to potentially be utilised more optimally.

### **2.3.3 Resource centres in rural areas**

Conceptualising the term “rural” is a challenge, as literature does not contain a consistent definition thereof (Coladarci, 2007; Arnold, Newman, Gaddi & Dean, 2005). In literature a distinction is generally made by contrasting the concepts “rural” and “urban” (Cloke, 2006). A rural area in South Africa is often negatively referred to as the former homelands where people lived in a bounded system of limited available resources (Gardner, 2008). In this regard, Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2008) are of the opinion that authors should not shy away from static definitions of the concepts, as rurality seems to be context specific, and this concept is established in people’s minds and the daily practices of the modern world (Cloke, 2006). We should consider the ever-changing circumstances of rural locations, rural social and political economy, as these are significant factors, which mutually influence the manifestation of the notion of rurality (Cloke, 2006). Balfour et al. (2008) developed the generative theory of rurality by presenting three dynamic variables, namely forces, agencies and resources, which are evident in daily lived experiences and social practices.

According to Statistics SA (2011), the poverty rate in rural areas is twice as high as in urban areas (66,8% in rural areas to 30,9% in urban areas). Due to poverty and other socio-economic factors such as the effect of HIV/AIDS, the majority of people living in rural areas in South Africa are not able to financially assist their children’s schools or support them in school activities (Statistics SA, 2011; Eloff & Kgwete, 2007).

Schools in rural areas in South Africa are mainly characterised by large classes, insufficient resources and inadequately trained educators. Student transport is another barrier in rural areas as learners walk long distances to attend school and learners with wheelchairs cannot manage these long distances. In addition, physical resources such as bathrooms, classrooms and sports fields are usually not accessible to learners with disabilities (Eloff &

Kgwete, 2007). Within this context, the current study aimed to facilitate a process of implementing the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained rural special school resource centre, with the aim of determining to what extent this approach may provide a suitable way of identifying, mobilising and managing existing resources for inward change.

### **2.3.4 Progress with the implementation of special school resource centres in South Africa**

When converted into special school resource centres, existing resources are assessed and upgraded accordingly. Staff are trained in order to be able to assume their new roles and responsibilities as part of the district-based support team. According to the time frame for full implementation of the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), the target is to convert all 380 special schools in the country into special school resource centres by the end of 2021. In this regard, the report by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2015) states that since 2001, 178 special schools countrywide have been converted into special school resource centres; 308 full-service schools have been built or upgraded, while 407 mainstream schools have been converted into full-service schools.

Although the strengthening of special schools and special school resource centres remains a priority, staff at special schools are reluctant to have these converted into special school resource centres (NPCCIE, 2009). The year 2007 was devoted to the strengthening of special schools (SANASE, 2007). At the 2007 Annual General Meeting of SANASE, Sprang (2007) spoke on the implementation in North West, explaining the budget allocation to address the most basic needs such as transport, assistive devices and training of educators to focus on curriculum. Additional costly basic needs such as security and infrastructure would also be addressed (Sprang, 2007). The approach in North West was to strengthen the district-based support teams, institutional support teams, the policy on screening, identification, assessment and support, and mobilise higher education institutions to indirectly support and strengthen special school resource centres. The biggest challenge to uphold Education White Paper 6, identified in North West, was funding.

Sprang (2009) argues that, due to limited financial resources, the strengthening of special schools, rather than the conversion of more special schools into special school resource centres in North West, would be the norm for a while, while well-equipped district-based support teams are established at the districts. Sprang concludes that, in this way, the inclusive education system, as proposed in Education White Paper 6, could be upheld in the short term (Sprang, 2009). In North West, currently, the most full-service schools are

converted from mainstream schools in order to satisfy the needs of learners with special educational needs.

## **2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

In this section I discuss the way in which I relied on the asset-based approach and bio-ecological model in developing a conceptual framework for the study.

### **2.4.1 Asset-based approach**

Within the broader positive psychology paradigm, the main focus of the asset-based approach is to develop and enable individuals, schools, peers and communities (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2006). Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) define the asset-based approach as a means to focus on the potential opportunities in available systems and sub-systems. The asset-based approach thus focuses on assets, resources, capacities, skills and strengths inherent in individuals and systems (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). The asset-based approach does not deny problems and difficulties, but rather aims to address problems in a positive manner, by identifying, mobilising, and managing assets and strengths (Loots, 2011).

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2001) emphasise that relationships should accordingly be built and rebuilt constantly. Rather than waiting for resources to be provided from the outside, individuals and communities can utilise and mobilise their own available and sometimes under-utilised resources (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003). Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006b) therefore advocate for independence from external experts and the breaking of any cycle of dependency of professional dominance. Matientjie (2005) agrees and foregrounds the role of the asset-based approach in sustainable development by all involved. The asset-based approach can thus assist communities to unlock their own potential (Matientjie, 2005).

Within the context of education, the asset-based approach stands in direct contrast with the needs-based approach, which underpins the medical model of the old education system in South Africa. To this end the asset-based approach is viewed as a more holistic way of thinking about inclusive education (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2006) as it focuses on opportunities, capacities and strengths. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006b) compare the needs-based approach and the asset-based approach by categorising main role-players, such as professionals, services and clients, as summarised in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3:** Differences between the needs-based and asset-based approaches (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006b, p.24–25)

Participants/Partners	Needs-based approach	Asset-based approach
<b>Professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts in their field</li> <li>• Exclusive knowledge of the field of work, e.g. therapists only doing therapy</li> <li>• Tends to label learners</li> <li>• Data collection about problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networkers with other systems and institutions</li> <li>• Share knowledge to assist in classroom activities</li> <li>• Learners are understood, rather than labelled</li> <li>• Data collection focuses on assets and capacities</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overprotective and controlling</li> <li>• Funds provided to create dependency</li> <li>• Cycle of dependence is established</li> <li>• Fragmented services are provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services are supportive</li> <li>• Funds are provided to react proactivity</li> <li>• Cycle of enablement is established</li> <li>• Collaboration is encouraged</li> </ul>
<b>Clients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tendency of denial and ignorance</li> <li>• Clients have limited power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential viewpoints as experts in their own fields</li> <li>• All have optimal power, not only professionals</li> </ul>

The asset-based approach is implemented in three interconnected phases (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006b). I next discuss the three phases, namely identifying and mapping assets, mobilising assets, and managing assets.

#### **2.4.1.1 Identification and mapping of assets**

Eloff and Ebersöhn (2001) highlight that every individual and every system has a unique combination of assets and capacities, where every individual has something to contribute. The asset-based approach to intervention starts with assets and resources that individuals and the environment possess, rather than focusing on what is needed (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001).

Kretzman and McKnight (1993) identified five main categories for identification of assets, namely: individual assets (such as individual participants in the reported study); assets within a group of people (for example the school governing body, head of departments, institutional learner support team and district-based support team who participated in the study); relationships in the community (for example relationships among parents and between parents and the school); economic resources (such as the budget and donations); and physical resources (such as buildings, school grounds, furniture, and classrooms). In Ferreira's (2006) study, she similarly facilitated an asset inventory consisting of an overview of knowledge, skills, talents, strengths, interests and experiences of the community.

According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006b) the mapping of assets is not static and one-sided, but involves an on-going process where everybody is involved in the visual construction of an asset map. Ferreira (2006) argues that the mapping of assets is a valuable way of assisting participants to obtain more insight into their skills, talents, abilities and experiences, which is important for the mobilisation of assets. Asset maps are seen as visual representations of identified assets and resources, and can take the form of pictures, photographs, writings, drawings or symbols (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006b). To visually map the available assets and resources can assist in understanding the relationships between different systems and subsystems (Loots, 2011).

#### **2.4.1.2 Mobilisation of assets**

The mobilisation of assets involves a process of utilising information captured in asset maps for asset mobilisation (Eloff, 2006; Ferreira, 2006). Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006b) emphasise the important role of relationship building during this phase, as partnership is a core value of the asset-based approach. Eloff and Ebersöhn (2001) furthermore report on the importance of constantly strengthening and rebuilding relationships. As the asset-based approach is relationship driven, in the current study, I focus on strengthening and building different relationships within the special school resource centre for inward change.

Kretzman and McKnight (1993) similarly emphasise that this empowerment perspective approach implicates a shift away from professional dominance to collaboration and partnership; where all members participate as an integral part of the process. In line with asset-based community development (ABCD), which focuses on local solutions to local challenges to provide enhanced community-driven development and involvement (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003), the current study focuses on facilitating a process whereby participants take charge of their own assets and resources to mobilise local solutions and improve the inward functioning of a rural special school resource centre in North West. In the reported study, I facilitated the process of participants engaging in asset mobilisation with the aim of improving the effectiveness of the special school resource centre, focusing on inward change. In line with the asset-based approach, participants mobilised available assets and resources (with external facilitation), rather than waiting on external support (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Emmet, 2000; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; Foot & Hobkins, 2010).

#### **2.4.1.3 Management of assets**

The final phase of the asset-based approach is to manage mobilised assets and resources and to take ownership and responsibility to sustain the mobilised assets and initiated actions

(Loots, 2011; Eloff, 2006). The process of managing assets and resources includes assessing processes, revising strategies, and if necessary, re-identifying and re-mobilising assets and resources in order to achieve set goals (Loots, 2011). In this regard, Bender (2004) emphasises the importance of commitment by all parties involved in order to build on assets, while communicating and adjusting strategies.

Even though the asset-based approach may be viewed as an approach suggesting that communities do not need external assistance and should achieve everything on their own (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003), Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) emphasise the important role of outside community involvement in enabling and developing communities. The asset-based approach emphasises relationship building between communities, individuals and external parties, with outside parties fulfilling the role of facilitation in order to prevent dependency (McNulty, 2005).

In light of the above, I focused on only being part of the process during the initial stages of the process, as the implementation of the asset-based approach is a community-driven process. I viewed participation as inclusive and valued everybody's contribution. I allowed leadership to be community-driven and sustainable and conveyed the message that the asset-based approach is not "done to" (Jenal & Cunningham, 2003, p.484) communities by experts (me as researcher) but that it had to evolve spontaneously.

#### **2.4.1.4 Application value of the asset-based approach**

Several research studies have successfully applied the asset-based approach within different school contexts. Loots (2011) conducted a comparative case study where educators in four different school communities implemented the asset-based approach for school-based psychosocial support. Her study provided insight into educators' perspectives on the potential assets and resources available in school-community contexts that could be mobilised for psychosocial support and the promotion of resilience. Her findings suggest that educators can mobilise assets and resources so that schools can serve as protective resources to promote resilience through school-based psychosocial support (Loots, 2011).

Olivier (2009) investigated the relationships between educators when implementing the asset-based approach. Although participants experienced barriers in the asset-based intervention process, assets such as strong teamwork, care and support towards others, and effective communication emerged as protective resources to overcome such barriers. As a result, the asset-based approach resulted in positive change in Olivier's (2009) study.

Ferreira (2006) contemplated the relationship between coping with HIV/AIDS and the asset-based approach within a school-community context. Her findings propose that asset-based coping is one possible way of coping with HIV/AIDS (Ferreira, 2006). Venter (2013) conducted a study on a teacher's implementation of the asset-based approach in a Grade 7 classroom. Venter (2013) found that diverse needs of learners may be addressed in one classroom by using the asset-based approach to support adolescents in dealing with their developmental needs. Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) conducted a case study exploring the development of an intervention strategy for career education through the asset-based approach, while Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) investigated support practices of vulnerable learners through asset-based trends. They found that vulnerable learners could be supported by sharing knowledge with families and communities (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

In light of the above it seems clear that the asset-based approach can be utilised as successful framework in schools, communities and healthy relationships. Based on these studies, the implementation of the asset-based approach proved to be successful for the development of relationships (Olivier, 2009), provision of psychosocial support in school-community contexts (Loots, 2011), application of asset-based coping skills (Ferreira, 2006) and facilitation of asset-based teaching (Venter, 2013). The current study aimed to further contribute to the current body of knowledge on the application of the asset-based approach in a school context, by implementing the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained rural special school resource centre in North West, with the possible outcome of a more effective functioning centre.

#### **2.4.2 The bio-ecological model**

The bio-ecological model, which forms part of the conceptual framework of this study, focuses on the broad spectrum of interaction in and between different systems and sub-systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994). To understand the interrelationships between the individual and the environment, it is important to analyse individuals' closest environment (Swart & Pettipher, 2005; Lewis, 2009). According to the bio-ecological model, individuals and groups are bound to each other on different levels of the social context, however, are still dynamic, interactive and interdependent of each other within these relationships. No person stands isolated and every person in any context is always regarded as part of a system. Constant interaction occurs between different systems (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002) and intermittent relationships between the various systems or levels can influence individuals positively or negatively. The aim of the bio-ecological approach is thus to obtain a

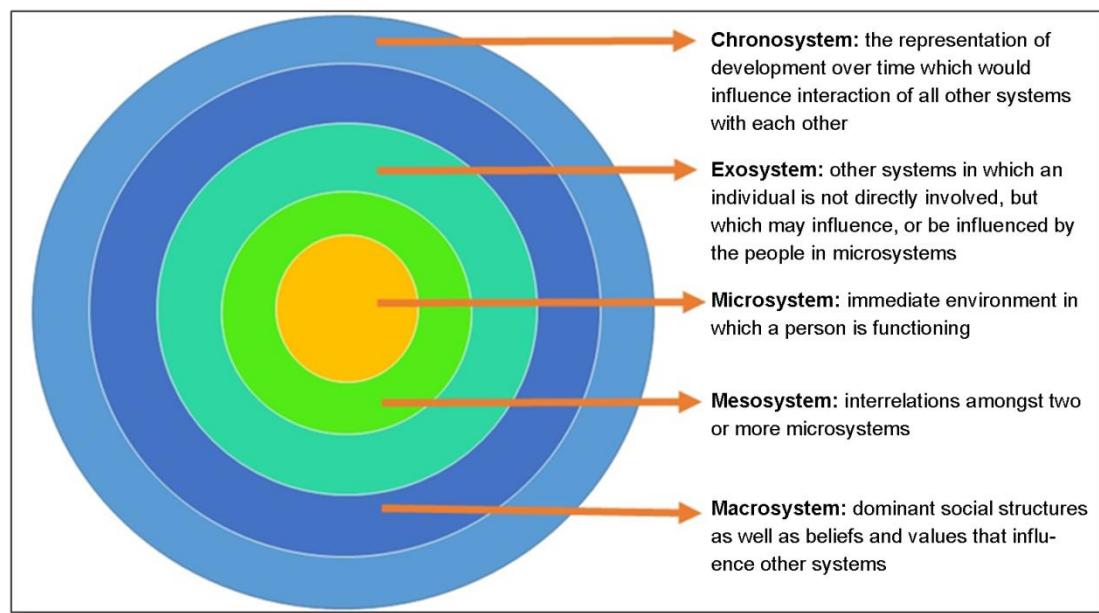
better understanding of the relationship between individuals, communities and their social settings (Lazarus, 2007).

The bio-ecological perspective is characterised by four interacting dimensions, namely the proximal process, person characteristics, systems or contexts, and time, referred to as the four PPCT-concepts (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). In this regard, Moen (2008, p.331) refers to the bio-ecological paradigm as “the interplay between characteristics of the person and the social context in affecting developmental processes over time”. The proximal process plays the most important role in human development. The first part of the proximal process entails the interaction between people, objects and the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The second part is the development of the person, the environment, or both, in which interaction between humans takes place (Bronfenbrenner (1995; 1999; 2001; 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Person characteristics or “the biological and genetic aspects of a person” (Tudge et al. 2009, p.200; Brofenbrenner, 2001; 2005) are known as the second concept of the four interacting dimensions. Bronfenbrenner (1993; 1995) argues that the characteristics of individuals play a vital role in interacting with other humans, which is divided into three types, namely: demand, resource and force characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

The third dimension refers to the systems as context, which involves four interrelated systems (Tudge et al., 2009). These four systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, and the exosystem. These systems were initially identified by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as the bio-ecological approach and have since been developed and redefined (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; 1995; 1999; 2001; 2005). The microsystem is the immediate environment in which a person is functioning and has a direct influence on that person (Tudge et al., 2009). In this regard, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) emphasise the importance of understanding the individual and the interrelationships with the immediate environment. The mesosystem is described as the interrelations among two or more microsystems (Lerner 2005; Tudge et al., 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1993). Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) argue for the importance of individuals' understanding of their influence and interaction in their immediate systems. The exosystem refers to other systems in which a child is not directly involved, but which may influence, or be influenced by the people in microsystems, e.g. parent's work, brother's peer group (Tudge et al. 2009). The macrosystem is defined as dominant social structures as well as beliefs and values that can influence other systems, e.g. a cultural value that may include obeying authority (Donald et al., 2002). The chronosystem is the

representation of development over time, which would influence interaction of all other systems with each other (Donald et al., 2002; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Figure 2.4 illustrates the relationship between the different systems of the bio-ecological approach.



**Figure 2.4:** The different interacting systems within the bio-ecological model (Donald et al., 2002)

Time is the final dimension of the PPCT-model and plays an important role in developmental processes and interacting with other human beings (Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) have divided the element of time in three sub-factors, namely micro-time, meso-time and macro-time. Micro-time is the time during which a specific activity is occurring or taking place. Meso-time refers to some consistency in a person's activities in which it is taking place. Macro-time (or chronosystem, according to Bronfenbrenner's earlier terms), refers to the historical events occurring in an individual's development (Elder, 1996). Time and timing are, relative to consistency and change, of equal importance.

Several studies demonstrate the importance of considering the influence of different systems and sub-systems on individuals and schools. For example, Matientjie (2006) investigated policy implementation on adult reading and literacy in South Africa, focusing on learners' self-concept as part of the microsystem and how the challenges they perceived impacted on the exosystem. Loots (2011) considered the interrelationship between individual community members, educators, the school and the community itself. Olivier (2009) demonstrated the important role that different systems can play in relationships and Venter (2013) described the important role that relationships within systems can play in supporting individual learners.

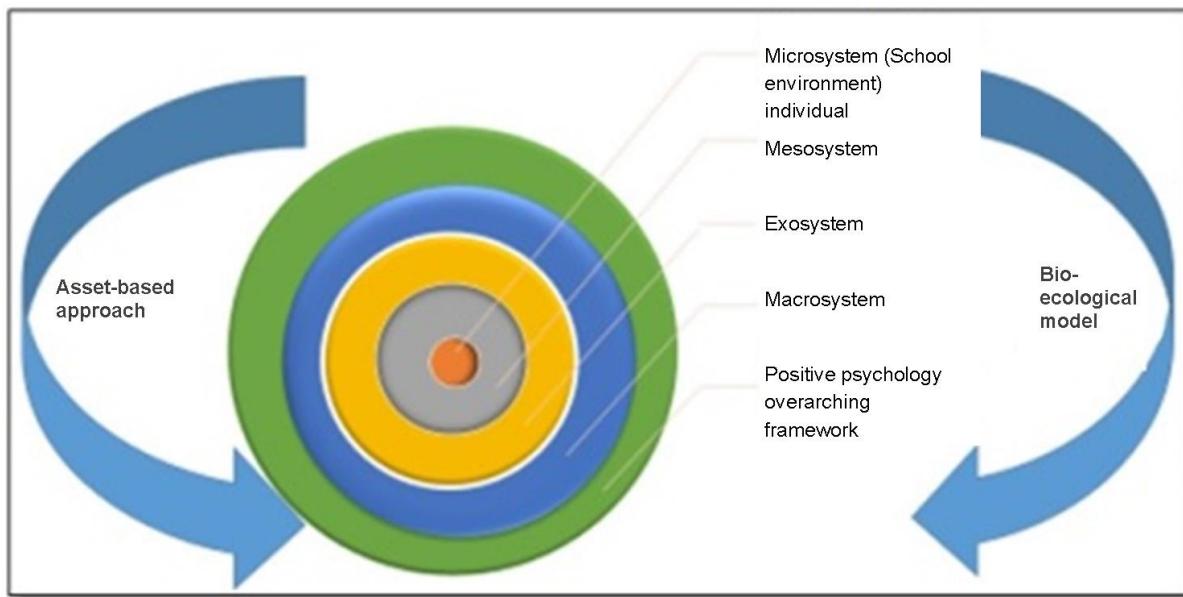
### **2.4.3 Integrating the asset-based approach and bio-ecological model in a conceptual framework**

In the current study, the asset-based approach was viewed within the bio-ecological model. The different systems and sub-systems served as a map for identifying assets and reflecting on the essential nature of thinking in terms of capacities (Ebersöhn & Elof, 2006b). Swart and Pettipher (2005) warn against the pitfall of identifying assets of participants in only one system, as the interaction between different systems as well as the context in which it takes place, is vital. The different systems, from the microsystem or the special school resource centre identified as immediate environment, to the macrosystem, which includes the values and beliefs of people, or all role-players involved in the reported study, are interacted in the different stages of the asset-based approach; from identifying the assets and resources, to mobilising and sustaining the assets and resources at the setting to improve (or not) the functioning of the special school resource centre. Table 2.4 presents the asset-based approach within different systems of the bio-ecological model as adapted as part of the conceptual framework for this study.

**Table 2.4:** Assets within the different systems in the bio-ecological model (adapted from Ebersöhn & Elof, 2006b).

<b>Assets &amp; Systems</b>	<b>Context</b>
Individual assets ( <i>microsystem</i> )	Skills; interests; cognitive abilities; values; experiences
Closer community assets ( <i>mesosystem</i> )	Family; school; leadership; human resources; classroom and peer group
Assets of citizens and local organisations ( <i>exosystem</i> )	Extra-mural activities; non-governmental organisations; businesses; churches; clinics; hospitals
Cultural and global issues ( <i>macrosystem</i> )	Attitudes and ideologies

In the reported study I facilitated a process whereby participants could consider the importance of different assets and resources within each system, and also investigated the inter-relationship between these assets and possible influences of the assets and resources on different sub-systems. This inter-relationship between the different systems and the asset-based approach is graphically presented in Figure 2.5.



**Figure 2.5:** The inter-relationship between the asset-based approach and the bio-ecological model

The asset-based approach was used in an interactive process of identifying, mobilising, and managing assets and resources at the identified resource-constrained special school resource centre in North West, which was the convenient sample for my study. At the microsystem level the skills and enthusiasm of staff could contribute to the success of both projects. However, the resources and assets identified and mapped on an asset map are within a certain setting, with an interrelationship between the bio-ecological model and the asset-based approach as illustrated by the two arrows (figure 2.5). The community and other human resources from the school as mesosystem might contribute to the success of the projects. At the exosystem level, the local clinic and police station, local shops, vegetable stalls as well as the area offices could also play a part in the success. At macrosystem level all role-players' enthusiasm, positive attitudes and willingness to do more than required, could contribute to the success. Positive psychology formed the overarching framework of the study, which could also contribute to positive attitudes, enthusiasm and future expectations.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

The first section of Chapter 2 focuses on special school resource centres in the context of the inclusive education system. I discussed the historical background on inclusive education in South Africa. I reviewed the principles and guidelines on inclusive education as well as the progress and related timelines of inclusive education in South Africa. I further highlighted the challenges related to inclusive education. I discussed special school resource centres in other developed and developing countries. I reviewed progress with the implementation of special school resource centres in South Africa and concluded with the role and

responsibilities thereof. The second section of this chapter outlines the conceptual framework used in the reported study, namely the asset-based approach and the bio-ecological model.

In the next chapter, I explain the research methodology and strategies of the study. I describe the case study I selected and the way in which the participants were sampled. I discuss the selected data generation and document strategies, and the process of data analysis and interpretation. I conclude the chapter by explaining the quality criteria and ethical considerations I adhered to in the study.

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# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES

PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES	
<b>Methodological paradigm</b>	Qualitative research
<b>Meta-theoretical paradigm</b>	Interpretivism
RESEARCH DESIGN	
Instrumental case study design	
SAMPLING PROCEDURES	
<b>Selection of case</b>	Convenience sampling
<b>Selection of participants</b>	Purposeful sampling
REPORTED RESEARCH PROCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-implementation phase</li> <li>• Implementation phase</li> <li>• Post-implementation phase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of assets and resources (asset mapping)</li> <li>• Mobilisation of assets and resources</li> <li>• Management of assets and resources</li> </ul>
DATA GENERATION AND DOCUMENTATION	
Data generation strategies	Data documentation strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group discussion</li> <li>• Individual semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbatim transcripts of audio recordings</li> <li>• Research journal; field notes; photographs</li> </ul>
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	
Thematic inductive analysis and interpretation	
QUALITY CRITERIA OF THE REPORTED STUDY	
Credibility; confirmability; transferability; dependability; authenticity	
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	
Confidentiality, anonymity and right of privacy; voluntary participation; protection from harm; access to research site; reporting and writing up of research findings; role of the researcher; expertise of the researcher; cultural and language differences	

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2 I reported on special school resource centres within the inclusive education system, with specific focus on the South African context. Secondly, I explained the asset-based approach and bio-ecological model as conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology and strategies of the study for inward change at the special school resource centre. I discuss qualitative research as selected methodological paradigm and interpretivism as meta-theoretical paradigm. I explain the case study design I utilised as well as the way in which I selected the case and participants. I describe the different data generation and documentation strategies in depth and explain the process of data analysis and interpretation. I conclude the chapter with discussions on quality criteria and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES**

In this section, I discuss qualitative research as methodological paradigm and interpretivism as epistemological paradigm.

#### **3.2.1 Methodological paradigm**

I followed a qualitative approach, as I aimed to investigate participants' views, collect data consisting of words, and analyse words for themes. Creswell (2015) argues that qualitative research **could** develop in multiple perspectives and themes from different participants, as this approach involves research on how people live and interpret their lives (Merriam, 2009; Parker, 1994). Qualitative research is described as interpretive (Parker, 1994) and the researcher is defined as the main research instrument to generate or collect data (Heppner & Heppner, 2004; Merriam, 2009).

One of the benefits of following a qualitative paradigm relates to the opportunity to understand experiences in participants' contexts (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2015) describes qualitative research as suitable when explaining a central phenomenon, or when reporting on the voices of participants and how they view the world. In line with Denzin's (1994) statement that qualitative researchers attempt to study people in their natural settings and make sense or interpret the meanings they attach to these, I aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the way in which the different role-players implemented the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre.

Qualitative research leads to an in-depth understanding of human thoughts. It thus requires different strategies to discover participants' thoughts, views, intentions, motives,

experiences and interpretations. The why, how, what, where and when needs to be investigated in an in-depth manner (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004; Vidich & Lyman, 2000; Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2015) emphasises that a small number of participants are usually involved, but that rich information can be obtained (Gringeri, Barusch, & Cambron, 2010).

Morgan and Sklar (2012) similarly argue that the building of knowledge is possible during qualitative research by using multiple data collection strategies. Creswell (2015) agrees and states that knowledge unfolds over time as research progresses. For this purpose Marton and Booth (1997) state that the building of knowledge will occur when observing participants in their own worlds, where they live, understand and observe each other. In the reported study, participants played a key role as co-creators of knowledge.

Creswell (2015) proposes ten elements as sound basis for qualitative research. I implemented these elements in the following way:

- *Having a sound rationale for choosing qualitative research.* I view qualitative research as suitable for this study, as I aimed to investigate participants' views and experiences on the implementation of the asset-based approach. Data consisted of words, which enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of the way in which different role-players implemented the asset-based approach at the selected resource constrained special school resource centre.
- *Choosing a suitable research site.* The research site that I selected was a rural resource-constrained special school resource centre.
- *Obtaining permission to do research at the site and with individuals.* I obtained permission to conduct the study from the relevant role-players (see 3.6.4).
- *Encouraging people to participate in the study.* In the study, the North West Department of Education (DCES-IE, Bojanala District) requested me to assist with the "strengthening of a special school resource centre. I, therefore, used convenience sampling to select the specific special school resource centre, which was willing to participate.
- *Sampling participants purposefully.* I purposefully selected participants according to specific criteria that aligned with the purpose and focus of my study. I selected various stakeholders at the participating site in an attempt to obtain different viewpoints and opinions.

- *Considering the demographics of participants.* Creswell (2015) advises researchers to compile a detailed profile of each participant's demographics, as captured in Table 3.1.
- *Deciding about incentives for participants.* As participants usually invest time in a research study, a researcher can reimburse them by means of financial or material benefits, personal advocacy or development if he or she chooses to do so (Creswell, 2015). During the first visit to the research site, I only took a small token of appreciation to the principal and during each following site visit I provided some refreshments for the participants. Although the participants in this study did not receive any financial gains, their special school resource centre benefitted as a whole in the sense that the projects which were developed could be utilised as pre-vocational training for the learners. The school could also sell the harvest from their vegetable garden to the community.
- *Deciding on types of data to be collected.* I utilised a variety of strategies. The focus group discussion and individual semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, and my observations were documented in a research journal and by means of photographs.
- *Considering the extent of data collection.* Creswell (2015) advises researchers to keep track of all generated data in a meaningful manner. In this study I transcribed all interviews and the focus group discussion, and kept track of observations by means of a research journal and photographs.
- *Using protocols for data collection question.* I relied on interviews and focus group schedules (refer to Addendum C).

According to Creswell (2015) qualitative research subject to only one method of data collection might be too subjective or too interpretive. Creswell (2015) however argues that this can be avoided by putting quality criteria in place. In this study the participants reviewed my interpretations before I finalised these, in order to ensure that the findings were not influenced by subjectivity.

### **3.2.2 Epistemological paradigm**

I view interpretivism as a suitable epistemological paradigm for the reported study, as the participants shared lived experiences, which informed their knowledge and perceptions (Sandberg, 2000), and could be interpreted as such. Interpretivism as meta-theoretical paradigm assisted me in generating data in an interactive way, with the purpose of

understanding and interpreting the meanings underlying the behaviour of participants (Livesey, 2006).

Ströh (2004) argues that interpretive theory does not measure human behaviour, but realities, which may change as the environment changes. Thus, I aimed to understand the participants' realities as a dynamic and changing concept. As part of the process of implementing the asset-based approach in the reported study, ideas were raised that could potentially inform policies, methods and systems assisting special school resource centres in South Africa. However, each unique special school resource centre should adjust to prescribed policies in order to be relevant in its own circumstances.

I collaborated with the participants until I obtained an in-depth understanding of their views, frustrations, needs, challenges, assets and successes within the context of implementing the asset-based approach in a rural special school resource centre in North West with the intention to potentially support more efficient functioning of the special school resource centre" (Schwandt, 2000; Weber, 2004). The success of interpretivism rests on understanding human behaviour, norms and standards upheld within social contexts (Rescher, 2000; Jansen, 2004). Schwandt (2000) refers to empathetic identification, suggesting the importance of the researcher to understand how participants experience their unique and specific situations. Goldkuhl (2007) argues that the researcher should be engaged in the understanding of participants' social contexts and remain focused on the participants. The knowledge that derived from this study thus stems from my understanding of the phenomenon under study, from the participants' perspectives, but also in relation to interaction within the groups I was working with (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Livesey, 2006; Creswell, 2009).

Due to my knowledge of the subject under study and the interpretivistic stance I took, my voice as researcher could potentially be heard in the study. Sandberg (2005) warns against the subjectivity that an interpretivist researcher could bring to the process and advises that researchers should acknowledge and address the potential implications of their subjectivity. Although I aimed to reflect the participants' voices in a trustworthy manner, my understanding cannot be totally free from subjectivism. The main aim of my study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of how the asset-based approach could be utilised in a resource-constrained special school resource centre, by listening to the voices and experiences of the participants (Venter, 2013). Consequently, I was able to gain insight into the everyday experiences of the participants while implementing the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre. In this regard, Chambers (2006)

chooses to use the term *personal* and not *subjective*. Similarly, Ferreira (2006) argues for the use of the word *personal*, as, according to her, the word *subjective* is value-laden and implies unreliable outcomes of results. I strived to address this potential pitfall by using a research journal to reflect on my subjective thoughts and views, and by engaging in regular discussions with my supervisors. I also included member checking in order to allow the participants to confirm my interpretation of their contributions.

Based on the advantages implied by interpretivist research, participants were thus able to share their lived experiences, which informed knowledge creation and assisted me in generating data in an interactive way as background to this process, resulting in an understanding of their behaviour and perceptions (Sandberg, 2000; Livesey, 2006). I remained aware of challenges such as subjectivity, against which researchers who take an interpretivistic stance is warned (Chambers, 2006). In this regard I also chose to rather use the term “personal interpretations”, and not subjective interpretations, as proposed by Ferreira (2006). Although the study was undertaken at a special school resource centre which is part of the North West Department of Education, I kept in mind that each special school resource centre is unique and may interpret policies and implement related documents in a unique “personal” manner (DBE, 2013).

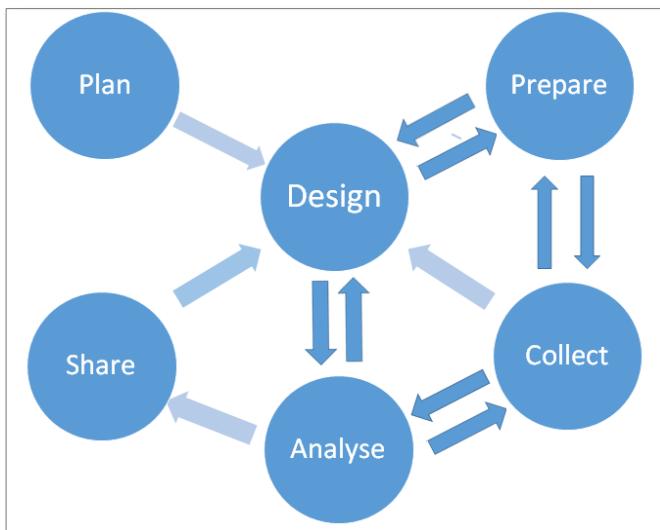
### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

My rationale for selecting a case study research design (Yin, 2003b) was based on the fact that this choice allowed me to obtain an in-depth understanding of a specific resource-constrained special school resource centre, constituting as a case. Case studies provide an opportunity to the researcher to describe, understand and explain the research question in a deep and holistic manner (Gerring, 2004; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Gillham, 2000). Simons (2009) argues that a case study design can contribute to uniqueness, complexity and different perspectives. Yin (2003) comments that case study research forms an essential part of social enquiry, and is therefore a suitable choice when research is conducted in the social sciences.

An instrumental case study design was used in order to understand the implementation of the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained special school resource centre (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). In an instrumental case study, the main focus is on the phenomenon that the researcher wants to investigate and not on the case itself. The case only plays a supportive role in gaining an understanding of the phenomenon (Grandy, 2010). The purpose of the reported study was therefore to provide a thick description of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009).

According to Bryman (2001) and Merriam (1998), case study research includes studies of individuals, communities, organisations, or a single event. I selected one special school resource centre as case, and attempted to describe the specific case in detail in order to allow the reader to decide on the transferability (or not) of the findings to other similar contexts. The aim of the reported study was thus to gain an in-depth understanding of how the asset-based approach might be utilised in a specific resource-constrained special school resource centre as chosen case, and not to generalise the findings to other special school resource centres in the North West Department of Education or South Africa. Babbie and Mouton (2001) argue that generalisability of case studies is only based on findings of other studies conducted in similar cases, where similar linkages are found between the findings and previous knowledge.

Baškarada (2014) adapted a six-stage case study process introduced by Yin (2009), including additional guidelines from the broader methodological literature, as presented in Figure 3.1. The prepare stage focuses on identifying any issues in the case study design, and the arrow back to the design stage provides an opportunity to adapt the design, based on any issues identified during preparation. Although the potential audience and the report structure are considered in the prepare stage, this does not exclusively belong to the preparation stage, but also applies to all other stages. Therefore, the link between the prepare stage and the share stage is de-emphasised. While any design modifications which require changes to data collection should first be recorded in the case study protocol (arrow from design to prepare), any design-related changes to the theoretical framework may directly impact the analysis stage (arrow from design to analyse). Peers and case study participants' reviews from draft findings may reveal issues with the original study design, and/or identify additional theoretical questions to be addressed in future during related studies (arrow from share back to design).



**Figure 3.1:** Yin's (2009) case study process (Adapted from Baškarada, 2014).

This six-stage case study process guided me throughout the study. During the prepare stage I focused on choosing a suitable design for the study, and sampled a suitable case and participants, which were aligned to the purpose of my research. I also prepared suitable research strategies in line with my research focus. I ensured that the conceptual framework of the study was in place and the data generation and analysis and collection phases were well planned and executed. In disseminating the findings of the study I was able to share new knowledge. I also made recommendations for future related research studies.

### 3.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

I relied on convenience sampling in selecting a case, and purposeful sampling procedures to select nine participants. In this section, I discuss the way in which I implemented these procedures.

#### 3.4.1 Selection of case

Gerrig (2004) comments that the selection of a case should be conducted in such a way that a balance is maintained between more knowledge gained of less, and less knowledge gained of more. If an unsuitable case is identified it can lead to invalid results (Gerrig, 2004). It was therefore important for me to select the right case that would allow me to address the purpose of my study.

As indicated, I used convenience sampling (Creswell, 2007) to select one resource-constrained special school resource centre in North West, South Africa, as case. Figure 3.2 provides a geographical location of this province.



**Figure 3.2:** Geographical location of North West within South Africa (Statistics SA, 2011)

North West is one of the inland provinces in South Africa and borders Botswana. This province hosts the Pilanesberg National Park and is also known for its platinum mines, two universities and technical colleges for tertiary education (Census, 2011). According to a national census (2007), the population in North West are primarily Black (90,2%) who mostly speak Tswana, followed by White (7,2%) who speak Afrikaans speaking, Coloured (1,6%) and Asian people (0,4%). The Tlokwe and Matlosana municipalities are two of the main urban municipalities in North West, while the remainder of the province is mostly rural (Census, 2007). According to the 2011 census, 60,4% of the population in North West lives in rural areas. The province has an unemployment rate of 33,7%, with 17,5% of the population being orphans. The disability rate of children is 5,1%, and all might need to be catered for within inclusive education as envisaged in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001; Census, 2011).

The rationale for choosing this specific case was that the deputy chief educational specialist of the district contacted me (as principal of a fully operational special school resource centre in North West) to assist her in improving the functioning of special school resource centres in North West. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), convenience sampling is based on the researchers' own knowledge, judgement, purpose and nature of the research. I thus used convenience sampling, as I knew the special school resource centre after it was introduced to me. Photographs 3.1 to 3.8 indicate the context of the selected site. Addendum D includes additional audio-visual recordings of the specific context in which the case is situated.



**Photograph 3.1:** Gravel road and entrance to special school resource centre



**Photograph 3.2:** Classrooms and assembly block in front of special school resource centre



**Photograph 3.3:** Water tanks and car shade at the main gate



**Photograph 3.4:** Garden in front of the special school resource centre



**Photograph 3.5:** Police station in the vicinity (about 1 kilometre from the special school resource centre)



**Photograph 3.6:** Local clinic in the community (across the road to the police station)



**Photograph 3.7:** Fruit and vegetable stall along road to the special school resource centre



**Photograph 3.8:** Shops at the end of the gravel road to the special school resource centre

### 3.4.2 Selection of participants

I used purposeful sampling to select nine participants for this study. According to Creswell (2015), purposeful sampling involves a process where the researcher recruits individuals who possess specific knowledge and experience regarding the research to participate in a study. In this regard, I requested the school management to assist me in selecting participants on the basis of their insight and understanding of the specific special school resource centre, as well as their willingness to participate in the study. I ensured that the participants understood what the research entailed, how they would be involved and what was expected of them.

In selecting participants, I requested representatives of all different divisions represented at the special school resource centre to participate in order to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the special school resource centre through the eyes of relevant stakeholders. Participants from the following groups were subsequently selected: the school governing body (SGB), senior management team (SMT), district-based support team (DBST), institution learner support team (ILST); heads of departments (HOD); parent/s of learners with special educational needs (LSEN); learner/s; therapist/s; educator/s; the principal, and the deputy chief educational specialist (DCES). Table 3.1 presents the participant's biographical information.

**Table 3.1:** Demographics of participants

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS				
PARTICIPANT	PROFESSION / INVOLVEMENT OR RELATIONSHIP TO THE CASE	AGE	GENDER	HOME LANGUAGE
A	Principal	58	F	Setswana
B	DCES (district-based)	58	F	Setswana
C	DBST member (therapist)	51	F	Afrikaans
D	HOD-member	43	F	Venda
E	ILST-member	43	F	Setswana
F	SGB-member (class assistant)	28	M	Setswana
G	Educator	43	F	Setswana
H	Non-educator (AA-in office)	33	F	Setswana
I	SMT-member	44	F	Setswana

### 3.5 RESEARCH PROCESS

The focus of the reported study was to investigate how the asset-based approach could be utilised for transforming a resource-constrained special school resource centre, firstly concentrating on inward change. The asset-based approach was implemented in three phases, which included a pre-implementation phase, implementation phase and post-implementation phase. Table 3.2 summarises the three phases of the research.

**Table 3.2:** Outline of the three phases of the research process

Phase	Purpose	
<b>Pre-implementation phase</b>	Session 1: Discussion session with participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain purpose of the research project</li> <li>• Discuss informed consent and the role of participants in the research</li> <li>• Answer questions and sign consent forms</li> <li>• Explain the rationale of the asset-based approach</li> <li>• Facilitate the identification of assets and resources by compiling asset maps of the special school resource centre</li> <li>• Diarise a date for session 2</li> </ul>
	Session 2: Discussion session with participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key areas of asset mobilisation (based on asset maps from session 1)</li> <li>• Facilitate and formulate action plans for asset mobilisation in phase 2 (who, what, when, how)</li> <li>• Divide participants in two asset-based groups</li> <li>• Select group leaders for each asset-based group</li> <li>• Discuss and decide on the duration of the implementation phase</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation phase</b>	Independent action by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement formulated action plans by mobilising identified assets and resources</li> <li>• Approximately 4 months</li> <li>• Monitor and observe progress of implementation of action plans on a regular basis</li> <li>• Adjust action plans where needed</li> </ul>
<b>Post-implementation phase</b>	Individual interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice experiences on what has worked, what has not worked and what can be done differently in future</li> <li>• Duration of individual interviews approximately 30 to 60 minutes</li> </ul>
	Focus group discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duration of focus group discussion approximately 90 minutes</li> </ul>

These three phases align with Maree's (2012) categories for interrelated qualitative fieldwork tasks, providing guidelines to the qualitative researcher. The three phases are interlinked with each other, as indicated in Figure 3.3. During the planning phase, I gained access to the site, familiarised myself with the context of the study and prepared for the research process to follow. I also introduced the asset-based approach to the participants, and assets and resources were identified. During the doing phase, I fulfilled the role of research instrument while participants mobilised identified assets and resources (Creswell, 2015; Maree, 2012; Ebersöhn & Elof, 2006). During the final phase, I facilitated a focus group discussion and individual interviews to generate data, guided participants to reflect on the research process and also to adjust action plans where necessary. After I had

analysed the data, I conducted member checking in order to ensure that the participants agreed with my written analysis (Creswell, 2009, 2015; Maree, 2012; Ebersöhn & Elof, 2006).



**Figure 3.3:** Guidelines for interrelated qualitative fieldwork (adopted from Maree, 2012).

### 3.5.1 Pre-implementation phase

During the first discussion with the participants I explained the purpose of the research project. Consent forms (see Addendum A) were discussed and participants were offered the opportunity to ask questions. Thereafter the rationale behind the asset-based approach was presented and explained by means of a short presentation (refer to Addendum B). The next step was to facilitate the identification of assets and resources for which participants compiled an asset map to visually illustrate these assets (Photograph 3.9). It was important to merely facilitate this process and move away from a potential professional dominance to where a collaborative and dynamic partnership is core and participation is practiced (Ebersöhn, 2007). This session concluded with a short summary of the session and participants mutually decided on a suitable date for session 2.



**Photograph 3.9:** Asset map constructed during pre-implementation phase

A follow-up session was scheduled within a week. Based on the asset maps which were constructed during the first session, the group as a whole identified possible areas of asset mobilisation. They brainstormed potential asset-based projects (see Photographs 3.10 and 3.11) and in the end decided on two key areas that they wanted to focus on, namely the upgrade of their under-utilised computer centre (Photograph 3.12) and the upgrade of an existing food garden (see Photograph 3.13). Accordingly, participants divided themselves into two groups and selected a group leader for each group. I facilitated the process where they formulated action plans for asset mobilisation. The action plans needed to provide answers and workable plans, attending to the following questions: Who? What? How? and Where? (see Photograph 3.14). We next discussed and decided on the duration of the implementation phase. Each member was allocated specific tasks to complete within a specific time frame.



**Photograph 3.10:** Participants discuss possible projects



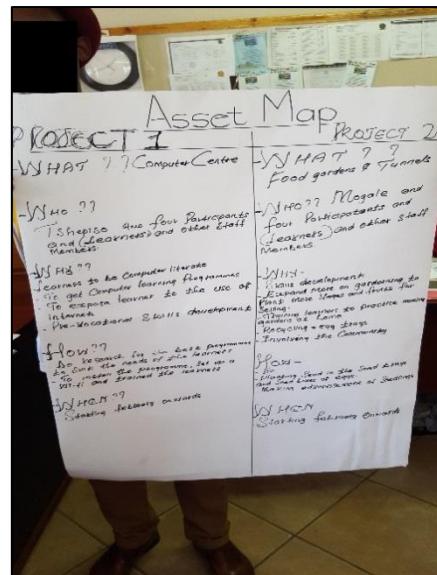
**Photograph 3.11:** Participants brainstorming the construction of their asset map



**Photograph 3.12:** Underutilised computer centre



**Photograph 3.13:** Underutilised vegetable garden



**Photograph 3.14:** Action plans for asset-based projects

The first project that the participants identified was the upgrade of their under-utilised computer centre (see Photograph 3.12). The special school resource centre had received computers from a donor, yet these were under-utilised and the need existed to start a fully functional computer centre for learners. The educators wished to develop a computer literacy programme for all learners. Another aim of this project was to teach learners pre-vocational skills.

The second project entailed the upgrade and expansion of an existing vegetable garden (see Photograph 3.13). The special school resource centre received a vegetable nursery tunnel with irrigation from donors, which had not been utilised at the time. The participants wished to enlarge the food garden by planting additional vegetables, with the aim of selling it to the community. This would also be a pre-vocational skill included in their curriculum as educators wanted to educate learners how to take care of themselves by planting more vegetables for personal use, and selling some to the community in order to become financially independent.

### **3.5.2 Implementation phase**

During the implementation phase, the participants mobilised identified assets and resources. I fulfilled the role of observer and supported participants in implementing the asset-based projects, where required (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006b). Participants could adjust their action plans and formulate ideas on how to manage the mobilised assets and resources in order to become a fully functional special school resource centre. Throughout, I observed the participants' views and experiences with regard to how the asset-based approach could be utilised to support more efficient inward functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre.

The duration of the implementation phase was four months, within which I visited the special school resource centre frequently to encourage the participants and to observe their progress. During this phase, the participants were implementing the chosen projects independently, against the background of their formulated action plans. During some visits we would informally discuss their progress made as well as the participants' frustrations. During all these discussions I gained insight and rich data were generated. I documented all observations in my research journal and photographs. Along the way, participants adjusted some of the plans they made at the beginning, while revisiting the asset maps.

The plans for the computer centre, for example, had to be revised. Each member had specific tasks to complete within a specific time frame. Educators collaborated with colleagues and learners, who were not participants of the study in order to reach their goals. As they shared ideas on assets and exchanged knowledge and experience, the asset-based approach was implemented (Ebersöhn & Elof, 2003; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Venter, 2013). At times I also contacted participants via e-mail, text-messages or telephone to encourage them or enquire about their progress. Throughout I had to remind myself of my role as researcher, not contributing to the projects, yet merely facilitating the process of implementing the asset-based approach.

### **3.5.3 Post-implementation phase**

During the post-implementation phase, participants had the opportunity to voice their experiences of implementing the asset-based approach. Through a focus group discussion and semi-structured individual interviews, participants reflected on what had worked, what had not worked and what could have been done differently. Each individual interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, while the focus group interview lasted around 90 minutes.

## **3.6 DATA GENERATION AND DOCUMENTATION**

I next discuss the data generation and documentation strategies I employed. Table 3.3 provides an overview of the different strategies I relied on, also indicating the participants involved as well as the approximate time spent on each strategy.

**Table 3.3:** Outline of data generation and documentation strategies

Data generation strategy	Purpose/Aim	Data documentation strategy	Participants	Time
Focus group	To determine the participating role-players' experiences regarding the implementation of the asset-based approach at the resource-constrained special school resource centre (group perspective)	Verbatim transcripts of audio recordings	A group of nine individuals, consisting of member/s of the school governing body (SGB), senior management team (SMT), district-based support team (DBST), institution learner support team (ILST), heads of department/s (HOD), therapist/s, educator/s, the principal, and the deputy chief educational specialist (DCES)	+/- 90 min
Individual semi-structured interviews	To determine the participating role-players' experiences regarding the implementation of the asset-based approach at the resource-constrained special school resource centre (individual perspectives)	Verbatim transcripts of audio recordings	Member/s of the school governing body (SGB), senior management team (SMT), district-based support team (DBST), institution learner support team (ILST), heads of department/s (HOD), therapist/s, educator/s, the principal, and the deputy chief educational specialist (DCES)	+/- 30 min per interview, 9 interviews in total
Observation	For the researcher to generate own views on the process of implementing the asset-based approach at the resource-constrained special school resource centre	Field notes in a research journal; photographs as visual data	Researcher	Throughout the research process

### 3.6.1 Focus group discussion

According to Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005) focus groups involve a diversity of people who may possess a variety of views and experiences, not necessarily

from the same age, gender, or similar educational access to resources; but who would most likely express different points of view. Such a variety of views could add richness of data to a research study. The role of the researcher during focus group interviews is that of facilitator rather than interviewer (Seabi, 2012; Maree, 2012).

Literature reports on the wide application of focus groups in qualitative research, which include on-site focus groups and discussions on websites (Chopra, 2006; Murgado-Armenteros, Torres-Ruiz & Vega-Zamora, 2012; Creswell, 2015). One of the key advantages of this data generation strategy is that it is both cost-effective and time-effective. Focus groups are relatively easy to administer within a limited time frame (Seabi, 2012; Babbie & Mouton, 2001) as the researcher can involve several participants at the same time. Another advantage of focus groups is that all participants do not have to be able to read or write, as information is obtained through verbal interaction (Seabi, 2012). Focus groups furthermore offer the opportunity to access non-verbal cues that may provide rich data. The researcher can also ensure that all questions are answered satisfactory (Seabi, 2012; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Furthermore, focus groups are viewed as a useful tool to expand existing knowledge and co-create new insights (Halcomb, Ghiacomo, Phillips, & Davidson, 2007; Mack et al., 2005). In the reported study, the focus group discussion (transcription included in Addendum H) allowed for a diversity of viewpoints and ideas being heard, as voiced by educators and different members from the Department of Education.

Another advantage of focus groups is that it can facilitate spontaneous interaction between participants, resulting in an increased understanding of a specific social phenomenon (Chopra, 2006; Murgado-Armenteros et al., 2012). In this regard, I relied on the interaction between the participants gaining insight into their experiences and perceptions of the implementation of the asset-based approach at the special school resource centre.

Morgan (1997), as cited in Babbie and Mouton (2001), however highlights some potential challenges related to focus group discussions. Firstly, it is important to involve a sufficient number of participants, so that the possible silence of one participant does not hamper the fluency of the discussion. On the other hand, it is also important not to have too many participants, as this could potentially effect the participation of all in the group (Creswell, 2015). To this end, I involved eight people to take part in the focus group discussion.

Lichtman (2006) cautions that the questions to be asked in a focus group need to be suitable, as the questions need to pave the way for the rest of the discussion. It is also important to leave more sensitive questions for later in the discussion when participants are

more at ease. Creswell (2015) and Mack et al. (2005) suggest the use of probing questions to draw participants into supplying sufficient information in instances where initial answers were not satisfactory. In the case of participants not understanding the questions, questions can be repeated, or the researcher can continue to the next question (Mack et al., 2005). In the reported study, I managed to build a sound relationship of trust with the participants prior to the focus group discussion (which took place after the implementation phase). I aimed to apply Lichtman's (2006) guidelines for researchers when conducting focus groups, namely to listen more and to speak less, to avoid questions which could lead to only one-word answers, to provide non-verbal cues and to create an inviting environment with encouraging words and comments (refer to Addendum C for the focus group schedule).

Mack et al. (2005) furthermore emphasise that confidentiality should be taken into account and explained to all participants of a focus group prior to the commencement of the discussion. I explained the purpose of the focus group, requested voluntary participation and discussed the importance of confidentiality before commencing with the discussion. I also used pseudonyms to protect participants' personal details and respect their anonymity.

### **3.6.2 Individual semi-structured interviews**

I conducted nine semi-structured interviews (transcriptions included in Addendum G) in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the different role-players' experiences of the implementation of the asset-based approach and how this supported (or not) the functioning of the resource-constrained special school resource centre. According to Mack et al. (2005), individual semi-structured interviews can allow the researcher to gain an in-depth, clear picture of participants' perspectives on a specific topic under investigation. During the individual semi-structured interviews, participants were thus given the opportunity to voice their views and opinions within a pre-determined framework of questions (refer to Addendum C to view the interview schedule).

One of the suggestions by Mack et al. (2005) that I adhered to relates to a third person assisting with the audio recording and technical aspects of an interview, so that the researcher can give full attention to the interview at hand. It was furthermore important to schedule interviews in a quiet place, which was secure and safe to share intimate and sensitive information (Mack et al. 2005). Due to the nature of the reported study, limited sensitive topics were discussed and the projects chosen to be developed did not include any sensitive elements, however, we conducted all interviews in a closed venue in order to limit outside noise. Creswell (2015) similarly emphasises the importance of choosing the right

location to conduct interviews, both for the sake of confidentiality and the quality of recordings. I thus made prior arrangements with the principal to use a venue at the special school resource centre which was secure, quiet and welcoming. I also tested the audio equipment prior to the interviews in order to ensure that it was in a working condition and that quality recordings could be obtained (Creswell, 2015).

Harris and Brown (2010) highlight the advantage that individual interviews can allow the researcher to clarify and elaborate on ideas. In the reported study, the use of individual interviews provided participants with the opportunity to share information that was maybe not shared in the focus group and furthermore enabled me to clarify and further explore ideas. During the individual interviews, the different role-players at the special school resource centre provided insight from different angles, as various role-players took part in the research.

One of the potential challenges of individual interviews relates to interviewees potentially answering what they think the researcher wants to hear rather than providing their real views (Harris & Brown, 2010). In an attempt to address this potential limitation, I informed participants beforehand that there was no right or wrong answer and that I valued their true experiences, opinions and views. By the time of the interviews, we had established sound relationships of trust, openness and transparency, which assisted the participants to voice their true views and experiences in an open manner. Creswell (2015) argues that not all participants are equally fluent and perceptive to an interview and may even be biased to responses in the presence of the researcher. To this end, I emphasised that all information would be handled according to the guidelines of anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell, 2015).

### **3.6.3 Observation**

Curry, Nembhard and Bradley (2009) define observation as a process of data collection that takes place over an extended time period when the researcher is in the participants' context. Creswell (2015) and Angrosino (2007) view observation as one of the key tools for qualitative research, involving a researcher using all senses. Observations support interviews and focus group discussions well, enabling the researcher to compare and add data where needed (Creswell, 2015). The goal of observation is to obtain a better understanding of participants' views, culture, activities, and social background in order to understand the setting from the participants' perspective (Hatch, 2002). Although the

researcher could be non-participative during observations, I played an interactive role as facilitator throughout the research study.

Observations should thus be executed at a site where the theme of the research can be observed through interactions, activities, and conversations (Creswell, 2015). An advantage of observation as data generation strategy is that any unusual aspects can be noted and recorded, sensitive topics can potentially be noted, and the researcher can gain first-hand experience working hand in hand with the participants on site (Creswell, 2007).

Quality observation is executed in such a way that the researcher considers the whole context, but focuses on one specific aspect in order to obtain a full understanding of the research question (Angrosino, 2007; Creswell, 2015). Creswell (2015) suggests documenting descriptive and reflective notes in two separate columns, adding the specific time, place, and observer, which could be valuable during the data analysis phase. My descriptive notes described the physical surroundings, events taking place at a certain time, gave account of particular activities which I observed, while my reflective notes were more personal thoughts, feelings, impressions, and speculations of how I observed the situation at a certain time and place. I wrote it up in my research journal, after leaving the site, marking it reflecting or descriptive notes (refer to Addendum E). Through observation I gained knowledge on the way in which the educators communicated with the learners, how the special school resource centre was managed, and what were regarded as assets at the special school resource centre as seen through the eyes of the participants. I made extended field notes throughout the time I spent at the special school resource centre, which were used as observational notes. By using observation, my experience of the research activities as well as the context in which the research took place was therefore documented. In addition to noting my observations in my research journal, I captured what I observed in the form of photographs (see Addendum D).

One potential challenge for a researcher during observation is related to the role of being both an observer and an interviewer (Creswell, 2015; Loots, 2011). In this regard, I relied on a third party to assist with the technical aspects of audio recording the interviews and focus group discussion. Another challenge concerns the question whether or not one can be truly objective during qualitative research (Loots, 2011; Ferreira, 2006). As a researcher I acknowledge that I have preconceived ideas and experiences which could have influenced the way in which I conducted the observation. However, I strived to remain objective throughout the research study and not to add my own experience to what the participants expressed. I used a research journal to document my experiences, observations, and

feelings, making regular and detailed field notes, which were used for interpretation during the data analysis phase (Creswell, 2015). Although I attempted to make detailed and extensive field notes, I sometimes found it difficult to give justice to a certain action at a specific time, for example when it could be seen as intrusive to observe participants' intimate conversations. During situations when different opinions or feelings were expressed by participants, I noted broad observations and afterwards, when I was on my own, noted these in finer detail (Creswell, 2007; 2015).

### **3.6.4 Research journal**

I followed the guidelines provided in existing literature on how to keep a successful research journal (Addendum E). More specifically, I aimed to keep documentations in my research journal up to date throughout the research (Loots, 2011), to remain as objective as possible (Creswell, 2015), to keep documentations concise and to the point, and to write it up directly after the observations (Loots, 2011; Creswell, 2015). I also made my notes in private at the research site before leaving the site, or as soon as possible thereafter (Loots, 2011). My research journal assisted me in documenting human activities and give meaning to the physical context in which the research took place.

Creswell (2015) argues that field notes literally reflect a researchers' own answers to the research questions, based on the representations of participants (Morgan, 2002; Creswell, 2015). I aimed to remain aware of and reflect on the possible changes, knowledge, and factors that could influence the study (Taylor, Rudolph & Foldy, 2008). I furthermore reflected on my learning process, as well as the themes that emerged from the research (Creswell, 2015; Loots, 2011). In this regard, Creswell (2015) suggests that the researcher should keep an observational protocol to ensure objective and chronological field notes. According to Creswell (2007) as well as Bogdan and Biklen (1992) descriptive notes, which entail the description of the physical setting, and activities of participants or particular events, should be kept separate from reflective notes, which entail the researcher's own feelings, thoughts, ideas, speculations or impressions of the study. I kept the field notes in my research journal in order to have all observations at hand in the same document (Addendum E).

### **3.6.5 Visual data documentation**

Rich visual data can enable a reader to gain access to a research journey. Observation is often documented in the form of visual data during interpretivist research (Creswell, 2015; Walsch, 2007). Photographs can for example illustrate the research site, and give visual

meaning to a study (Ebersöhn & Elof, 2007). Prosser (2011) argues that visual data documentation is a popular approach in qualitative research as it evokes participants' involvement, can document events, and can also document the strengths of a community (Prosser, 2011; Wang & Burris, 1997). For the purpose of the reported study, I used both visual data documentation in the form of photographs and audio recordings of both individual interviews and the focus group discussion.

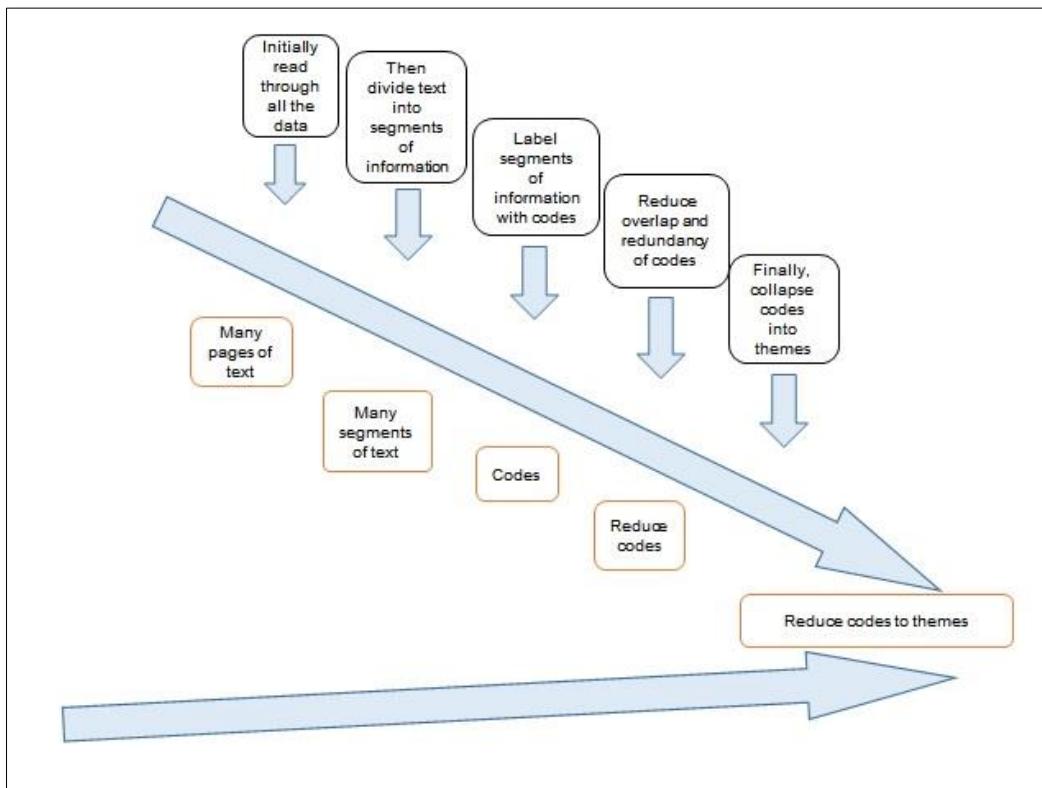
Babbie and Mouton (2001) provide useful guidelines for using photographs as a visual data documentation strategy. Accordingly, the researcher should set up a clear vision before visiting the site. As researcher, one cannot record everything, or take photographs of everything, but needs to attempt to cover the important and key matters of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Although it was initially difficult to know exactly what would be of importance to the study, I considered this guideline and remained cognisant of not taking random pictures, but rather be guided by the focus of the study, concentrating on inward change.

Creswell (2015) furthermore warns that it is important to store visual data in a useful manner, so that it can be easily retrieved during the data analysis process. I stored the data on more than one device and compiled various files to store specific photographs according to dates and themes. Babbie and Mouton (2001) emphasise that tape recorders and cameras cannot, however, capture everything, unless the observer makes accompanying field notes. I made field notes of the visual data to remind me about the data captured.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

I completed thematic inductive analysis and interpretation, which are regarded as useful methods for interpretative qualitative data analysis. During thematic analysis, the researcher builds patterns, categories and themes from the data that were generated, until a comprehensive set of themes are established (Creswell, 2015).

I applied Creswell's (2015) guidelines for data analysis in qualitative research, which is presented in Figure 3.4. Firstly, I read through all transcribed data in order to familiarise myself with the content. Secondly, I divided data into meaningful segments of information, which was followed by the labelling of segments of information with codes. Thereafter, I repeated the process with the aim of reducing any overlap any redundancy of codes. I made use of different colours to assist me in this process. Finally, I condensed the codes into final themes and sub-themes (refer to Addenda D, E and F to view examples of the data analysis).



**Figure 3.4:** Outline of the data analysis followed in this study (Creswell, 2015, p.188)

With the verbatim transcribed focus groups and semi-structured interviews, I relied on thematic content analysis to identify and categorise main themes, sub-themes and categories (Charmaz, 2000). In the same manner I analysed my research journal and field notes, as well as the visual data that were generated. Based on the data analysis I completed, data saturation was clear (Charmaz, 2000). I furthermore employed member checking in an attempt to eliminate my potential biases (Seale, 1999), and draw an over-all portrait of information (Loots, 2011).

### 3.8 QUALITY CRITERIA

Throughout the research process, I aimed to ensure quality and rigour. Table 3.4 provides a summary of the quality criteria I strived to adhere to, as well as the strategies I used to this end.

**Table 3.4:** Quality criteria of the study

Quality criteria	Definition of criteria	Strategies used to ensure rigour
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defined as the truth of a study (Golafshani, 2003).</li> <li>The significance of results and thus the credibility it holds for participants and the reader (Miles &amp; Huberman, 1994).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defend my claims and explanations by comparing it to existing literature (Patton, 2002).</li> <li>Search for negative cases and consider alternative explanations for findings (Seale, 1999).</li> <li>Make use of member checking (Merriam, 2009).</li> </ul>
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The objectivity of data, as derived from the participants and not the subjective opinion of the researcher, therefore being free of research errors (Di Fabio &amp; Maree, 2012).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an audit trail by presenting a clear and detailed account of the research process that was followed (Seale, 1999).</li> <li>Make use of member checking (Seale, 1999).</li> <li>Reflect on personal biases in a research journal (Merriam 2009; Patton, 2002).</li> </ul>
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ability to extend results in qualitative research to other contexts, with the same underlying methods of data collection and theoretical model (Di Fabio &amp; Maree, 2012).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present a deep description of the research process and the participating special school resource centre (Lincoln &amp; Guba, 2002).</li> </ul>
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which research findings is reliable over time given that the research process and methods are stable and consistent (Di Fabio &amp; Maree, 2012; Hoepfl, 1997).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an audit trail by presenting a clear and detailed account of the research process that was followed (Seale, 1999).</li> <li>Compare findings with current literature and search for negative instances (Ferreira, 2012).</li> <li>Make use of member checking (Seale, 1999).</li> </ul>
Authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The integrity of quality research, bringing forth the balanced views of people, events and places, which form the basis of qualitative research (Loots, 2011).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the findings in an accurate manner, so that it correlates with the views of participants (Seale, 1999; Mertens, 1998).</li> <li>Make use of member checking (Seale, 1999).</li> </ul>

### 3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility indicates that the perceptions of participants and the observations, interpretation, and conclusions to which a researcher has come are supported by the raw data (Ferreira, 2006). This implies that the findings of a study will be dependable and truthful (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Ferreira, 2006). Furthermore, credibility means that the findings of a study are

based on intellectual rigour, methodological capacity and the professional integrity of the researcher (Loots, 2011; Ferreira, 2006; Patton, 2002).

With a special interest in the phenomenon of special school resource centres, I faced the challenge of subjective interpretations. However, I defended my claims and explanations by comparing these to existing literature (Patton, 2002). I also searched for any negative instances and considered alternative explanations for the findings (Seale, 1999). To this end I attempted to present a credible study by making use of member checking and continuously reflecting on my own biases and background, guarding against interpretations being influenced by these (Merriam, 2009; Seale, 2000).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the process of ensuring credibility includes a specific theoretical orientation, an explanation of a researcher's rationale for exploring a particular study, and report on different factors which could have influenced a specific study. By reporting detail of a research process, external researchers and readers who did not take part in the study will have the opportunity to develop alternative interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, I include detailed descriptions of my study in this dissertation.

### **3.8.2 Confirmability**

Schwandt and Halpern (1988) define confirmability as the objectivity of a study, leading to findings without research errors and derived from the participants' rather than the researcher's subjective interpretations. Leavitt, Stacey and Biblarz (2001) warn that data collection, analysis and interpretation may be influenced by a researcher's own values and beliefs. As such, confirmability entails the degree to which the findings of a study reflect the focus of the inquiry and not the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). In this regard, Miles and Huberman (1994) agree that it is important that findings align with the analysis of collected data.

However, in qualitative research and interpretive inquiry it is important to acknowledge that the researcher plays a key role in the research inquiry. Thus, I adopted a position of critical subjectivity as one way of addressing the potential challenge of subjective interpretations. This position supported me to remain aware of and acknowledge my own experiences, understandings, perspectives, background, and prejudices that I brought into the research study, as reflected on in my research journal (Loots, 2011; Heron & Reason, 2008; Ladkin, 2005).

I furthermore aimed to increase confirmability by clearly presenting my own experiences, biases, beliefs and values to the reader (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002). I include an audit trail by presenting a clear and detailed account of the research process that was followed (Seale, 1999). In addition, I made use of member checking to ensure that I present the participants' experiences in my findings (Seale, 1999).

### **3.8.3 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be transferred to similar contexts, which may represent a wider population (Ferreira, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 2002). In order to assess the transferability of a qualitative study, the theoretical or conceptual framework, sampling methods, context, as well as data analysis and interpretation need to be considered (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Seale (1999) argues that as a result of different and unique viewpoints of human beings involved in qualitative research, it might be difficult to generalise findings. In this regard, Ferreira (2006) suggests the importance of in-depth descriptions which may assist other researchers to understand similar cases; whether it could be applied to other settings or not.

In order to enhance the transferability of the findings, I present the reader with in-depth and rich descriptions of the context of the specific special school resource centre as case study and the research process which was followed. I include visual and audio-visual data to assist the reader to obtain a better understanding of the research context (refer to Addendum F to view the audio-visual data). The onus thus rests on the reader to decide about the possible level of transferability of findings to other similar cases. However, it is important to note that the aim of the reported qualitative and interpretive study was not to generalise and be applied to other case studies, but rather to understand the specific special school resource centre as selected case (Ferreira, 2006).

### **3.8.4 Dependability**

Ferreira (2006) argues that although dependability implies that similar conclusions and findings would be reached when a number of researchers conduct a study, the reality in qualitative research as a social science is that the outcome changes constantly. As many different realities and interpretations of a social phenomenon exist, a duplication of a specific qualitative study will seldom produce precisely the same results (Loots, 2011). Rather, in qualitative research, it is more important to ask whether the results are consistent with the collected data (Merriam, 2002). Similarly, in the reported study, the specific special school

resource centre within the changing inclusive education system does not remain static and people's views and experiences may change over time.

In order to enhance the dependability of the reported study, I provide an audit trail by presenting a clear and detailed account of the research process which was followed. In addition, I present original audio recordings and in-depth field notes made during observations. The audit trail (Seale, 1999) assisted me in presenting research findings which are a true reflection of the research study conducted at the site (Loots, 2011; Hoepfl, 1997). I also compare my results with current literature in Chapter 4 and refer to correlations, contradictions, and silences in the data. I made use of member checking (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Ferreira, 2012) and encouraged participants to partake in data interpretation (Du Plessis, 2008).

### **3.8.5 Authenticity**

Authenticity is referred to as validity in quantitative research (Di Fabio, 2012), and aims to accurately describe a social phenomenon so that the description and findings are a true representation of participants' views (Loots, 2011). Authenticity refers to the importance for the researcher to equally present a balanced view of different participants' beliefs, values, and perspectives, which are equally represented (Ferreira, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In the reported study, I aimed to enhance the authenticity by describing the participants' views and experiences in an accurate manner (Seale, 1999; Mertens, 1998). I also aimed to present a balanced view of all participants' experiences and perspectives. Lastly, I made use of member checking to ensure that these experiences are accurately reflected in my findings (Seale, 1999).

## **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

I have aimed to produce a study characterised by high ethical standards. Table 3.5 provides an overview of the ethical guidelines I considered as well as the strategies that I employed to ensure ethical research.

**Table 3.5:** Ethical considerations and related strategies

Ethical considerations	Strategies to ensure ethical research
Access to research site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make appointments with participants when scheduling site visits.</li> <li>• Respect participants' time schedules and ensure that they are aware of the amount of time that each data collection activity will take (Loots, 2011).</li> </ul>
Voluntary participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform participants that participation is voluntary and explain the purpose of the research (Creswell, 2015).</li> <li>• Inform participants that they can withdraw from the research at any stage (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001; Loots, 2011).</li> </ul>
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain to participants before the onset of the research that information would be treated with confidentiality at all times and would only be used for the purpose of the research (Creswell, 2015).</li> <li>• Invest time in building and managing relationships (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001; Elias &amp; Theron, 2012).</li> </ul>
Anonymity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain to participants that their identity will remain anonymous and that all information shared will be treated as confidential (Creswell, 2015).</li> <li>• Inform participants that pseudonyms will be used to protect their identity where necessary (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001).</li> </ul>
Right of privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make use of a private place to conduct interviews and focus group, where privacy is guaranteed (Creswell, 2015).</li> <li>• Store data in a safe place (Elias &amp; Theron, 2012).</li> </ul>
Protection from harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform participants of the purpose of the research and that no exposure to harm is foreseen (Creswell, 2007).</li> <li>• Ensure participants that they will not be misled in any way, as mutual trust is important (Elias &amp; Theron, 2012).</li> </ul>
Recording of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect participants' privacy and their time, and be mindful of what should not be recorded.</li> <li>• Seek permission for all recordings prior to recordings to be done (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001; Ferreira, 2012).</li> </ul>
Reporting and writing up of research findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present the true voices of participants (Di Fabio, 2012).</li> <li>• Report on the limitations of the findings of the research (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001; Ferreira, 2012).</li> </ul>
Role of the researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider participants' culture, specific social phenomenon and context (Hatch, 2002).</li> <li>• Spend time to build relationships to gain in-depth insight into participants' way of thinking, planning and doing (Ferreira, 2006).</li> <li>• Display empathetic identification (Swandt, 2000).</li> </ul>
Expertise of the researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical experience and theoretical knowledge of special school resource centres and inclusive education.</li> <li>• Completed General BEd Honours degree.</li> <li>• Obtain guidance, supervision and support from supervisors.</li> </ul>
Cultural and language differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain cognisant of possible challenges related to culture and language (Patton, 2002; Sullivan, Bhuyan, Senturia, Siu-Thornton, &amp; Ciske, 2005)</li> <li>• Understand different African traditional beliefs of education within a Western educational school context (Loots, 2011).</li> <li>• Respect and embrace different views, backgrounds, and experiences (Loots, 2011; Ferreira, 2006).</li> <li>• Communicate in English as a common spoken language.</li> </ul>

### **3.9.1 Permission to do research and access to the research site**

Creswell (2015) mentions three stages for ethical clearance during research. The first stage involves permission from the institution where the qualification will be obtained or to which a researcher is affiliated. For the purpose of this study, I obtained permission from the University of Pretoria's ethical committee prior to commencing with my fieldwork. The second stage refers to gaining access to the research site where a study is conducted. In order to be able to conduct research at the specific site in North West, I had to gain permission from the North West Department of Education, Bojanala district (refer to Addendum A-1 to view the letter of permission from the North West Department of Education). The third stage entails informed consent from participants (refer to Addendum A-2 to view an example of the consent form). Before commencement of the reported research study, I obtained informed consent from participants, as already indicated. We discussed the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, possible benefits to participants, and dissemination of the research findings.

Dates and time slots for different research sessions were discussed and agreed upon by all parties, to not interfere with participants' teaching time. I made appointments with participants and scheduled site visits in advance. I respected participants' time schedules and ensured that they were aware of the purpose and duration of each of the data generation activities (Loots, 2011).

### **3.9.2 Voluntary participation**

Voluntary participation entails that participants should participate in a research study voluntarily, and may decide to withdraw at any point during the research process (University of Pretoria, 2016; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Elias & Theron, 2012). When gaining informed consent for the reported study I informed participants of the purpose of the study and explained the research process and their involvement (Maree, 2012). This occurred during our first meeting when participants could ask questions regarding the research. I also explained that they could withdraw from the study at any stage if they wished to do so, and that participation was thus voluntary.

### **3.9.3 Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy**

Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy are core ethical values in research. According to Elias and Theron (2012), participants' right to anonymity, confidentiality and privacy are interconnected, and should be respected at all times. Researchers should be aware of their participants' needs and vulnerability.

Before the onset of the research in the reported study I explained to participants that information would be treated with confidentiality at all times and would only be used for the purpose of the research (Creswell, 2015). I explained their right to anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy (Maree, 2012). I sought informed consent from participants to take photographs and make use of audio and video recordings for the purpose of documenting data (Creswell, 2015).

In order to create an atmosphere of trust, I invested time in building, maintaining and managing relationships of trust with the participants of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Elias & Theron, 2012). With regard to anonymity, I explained that their identity would remain anonymous and that all information would be treated as confidential (Creswell, 2015). I used pseudonyms to protect participants' identities (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Lareau; 2011; Palys & Lowman, 2002; Scarce, 2005). When I conducted the interviews and the focus group discussion I used a secure and private venue at the school (Creswell, 2015). All data are stored in a safe place and only my supervisors and I had access to the data during the study (Elias & Theron, 2012).

### **3.9.4 Protection from harm**

It is important to protect participants against any potential harm, as distress or harm to participants cannot be undone (Steven, 2013). A researcher needs to inform participants from the onset of a study of the purpose of the research, so that they can make informed decisions. If a conscious choice is not given to them, it can cause harm (Steven, 2013). Creswell (2015) emphasises that it is important not to let participants feel "used", but rather for participants to experience some sort of benefit from participating in a research study. In the reported study participants gained skills and experience in implementing the asset-based approach, and as a result also reported a more functional special school resource centre as an outcome of participating in the research.

The participants were informed of the purpose of the research during our first meeting. I did not foresee that they would be exposed to any harm by participating in the study. Mutual trust was important and I ensured that participants were not misled in any way (Elias & Theron, 2012). The study did not include any activities with minors or involve potentially sensitive research.

### **3.9.5 Reporting and writing up of research findings**

Babbie and Mouton (2001) emphasise the importance of reporting on research findings in an ethical manner, by presenting data without any amendments or changes. Creswell (2015) adds that although the qualitative researcher cannot amend any data, s/he can still use reflexivity to add experiences and observations in an ethical way. Researchers need to caution against disclosing only positive or only negative data to suit the researcher's hypotheses (Creswell, 2015). In the reported study I aimed to present the true voices of participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Ferreira, 2012) in an ethical manner. I acknowledged all sources consulted during my study throughout this process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

### **3.9.6 Expertise of the researcher**

Having been a principal of a special school resource centre for 18 years, I have attended many short courses in special school resource centres and successfully completed my Honours degree. This provided me with expertise on both practical and theoretical level to conduct the reported study. My supervisors, Dr Tilda Loots and Prof. Ronél Ferreira, have provided me with the necessary guidance, expertise and support throughout the study.

### **3.9.7 Cultural and language differences**

The participants and the researcher come from different cultural backgrounds, thus I needed to be cognisant of potential challenges that this could pose to the study (Patton, 2002; Sullivan et al. 2005). I had to understand traditional African customs and beliefs of education, although within a Western educational school (Loots, 2011). Culture is an integral part of any human being and therefore culture is likely to influence a person's behaviour in any given situation (Patton, 2002).

A challenge that I experienced during the course of the study was the concept of time perception. According to Burgers (1993) many Western people believe that time is money, while some people from traditional African cultures believe that the tempo of time is adjustable. On some occasions, scheduled appointments were not honoured, in the sense that I viewed it to be honoured. When I arrived for scheduled appointments I sometimes found that the principal was not at school or appointments had been postponed. At first I experienced this as a lack of interest on the participants' side, but then realised that this was based on cultural differences that I needed to respect and understand, as reflected in the following extract taken from my research journal:

*I felt so frustrated today, when I arrived at the site and found the principal to be in town. I had to wait for her, "if I wanted to". I was worried that they have all lost interest in the research! When she arrived after an hour, she only called the participants together as if nothing has happened. We started and all were enthusiastic. On discussing this phenomenon with my husband, who studied "Time perception and Productivity" (Burgers, 1993) amongst different cultures for his PhD, he could enlighten quite a few cultural differences, which I now see from a different perspective.*

(Research Journal, 26 February 2016).

I attempted to address this challenge by making an effort to understand participants as an integral part of their culture, and working from that specific community context and cultural background (Loots, 2011). I showed respect for the participants' culture through my non-verbal communication and displayed interest in their culture and their views (Ferreira, 2006). This idea is captured in the following reflection:

*I have developed a great respect for the participants' commitment. They would even meet me on a Friday afternoon until 17:00! I am not used to staff willing to stay easily on a Friday afternoon for meetings, etc. They are so enthusiastic and committed. Their willingness to stay for meetings with me on a Friday afternoon has changed my perception on participation and even time perception completely.*

(Research Journal, 11 March 2016).

Although English was the language in which the research was conducted, English is all of the participants' second, third or even fourth language. Temple (2002) warns against the potential loss of meaning of some concepts when attempting research in different languages. However, English was the only common language which all participants and I were comfortable to converse in. Temple (2002) and Shkclarov (2007) both emphasise that a researcher should remain aware and open when conducting cross-language research, assuring that the meaning of concepts do not get lost. Fortunately, all participants were proficient in English and therefore an interpreter was not necessary. Prior to the commencement of the research, I ensured that all participants were comfortable to conduct the research in English.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodologies and strategies of the reported study. I discussed qualitative research as selected methodological paradigm and interpretivism as meta-theoretical paradigm. I explained the case study design I utilised, the sampling of the specific special school resource centre as case and purposeful selection of participants. I explain data generation and documentation strategies as well as the process of data

analysis and interpretation, and I concluded by discussing quality criteria and ethical considerations.

In the next chapter I present the results of the study, in terms of three themes that emerged during thematic inductive data analysis. I also discuss the findings I obtained against the background of the literature review included in Chapter 2.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

THEME 1	THEME 2	THEME 3
Assets and resources available at the participating resource-constrained special school resource centre	Challenges experienced by role-players at a resource-constrained special school resource centre	Ways in which mobilised assets and resources supported the functioning of the resource-constrained special school resource centre
SUB-THEMES	SUB-THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1.1 Natural assets and resources 1.2 Human resources 1.3 Physical resources	2.1 Limited physical space 2.2 Challenges related to the use of technology 2.3 Additional and related time constraints 2.4 Participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre	3.1 Financial support for the special school resource centre 3.2 Supporting the National School Nutrition Programme 3.3 Strengthening partnerships that could support the functioning of the special school resource centre 3.4 Skills development as outcome of the two asset-based projects 3.5 Intra and interpersonal qualities as a result of implementing the asset-based approach

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

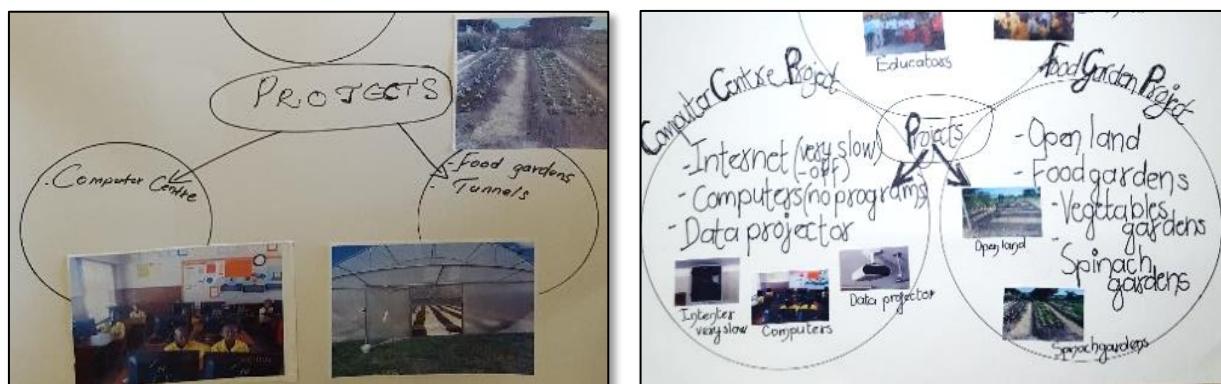
In Chapter 3, I discussed the research methodology and strategies I applied in undertaking this study. I discussed the methodological paradigm, meta-theoretical paradigm, research design, sampling, data collection and data documentation strategies. I also elaborated on the quality criteria and ethical considerations of the study.

In this chapter, I report on the results of the study. I discuss the three main themes that emerged following thematic analysis, and include extracts from the data in support of my discussions. As an introduction to the chapter, I describe the manner in which the participants implemented the asset-based approach in terms of the two projects they initiated.

## 4.2 PARTICIPANTS' IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

After identifying resources, assets and challenges of the resource-constrained special school resource centre (phase 1 of the asset-based approach), participants selected two projects to pursue (phase 2) in an attempt to address challenges by mobilising available resources and assets. In this section I describe the two projects they initiated in support of the functioning of the resource-constrained special school resource centre. Following their implementation, the next section reports on their experiences during the process of implementing the asset-based approach.

Participants identified two projects of asset mobilisation with the aim of addressing some of the challenges experienced by the special school resource centre, namely a food garden project and a computer centre project, as indicated in Photographs 4.1 and 4.2.



**Photographs 4.1 and 4.2:** Asset-based projects identified by the participants

#### **4.2.1 Asset-based project 1: Establish and upgrade a food garden**

Participants decided to establish and upgrade an existing food garden on the school premise. The existing food garden was small and not taken care of, nothing was growing in the food tunnel at the time, and the school did not have sufficient gardening tools. During school holidays, teachers faced challenges such as watering of the food garden and controlling pests while staff members were not at school.

With the food garden project, participants wanted to plant more vegetables in support of the National School Nutritional Programme which was reportedly neglected at that stage (see Photograph 4.3). Participants also wanted to revive an under-utilised food tunnel, which had been donated by mines in the area (see Photograph 4.4). They indicated that they would repurpose egg trays to use as planting trays for seedlings. Seedlings could then be planted directly into the soil without removing the bio-degradable trays (Photograph 4.5). For this purpose, participants requested nearby schools with hostels as well as the community to donate egg trays for their food garden project, and in the process, egg trays were recycled.



**Photograph 4.3:** Initial neglected food garden



**Photograph 4.4:** Initial under-utilised food tunnel



**Photograph 4.5:** Egg trays used as planting trays for seedlings

Participants also wished to expand the food garden to sell spinach to the community and to conduct fundraising to create a steady income for the school in order to buy learning and teaching support material and other materials for the special school resource centre. They aimed to involve the community in this project and also develop learners' gardening and entrepreneurial skills. The action plan compiled for initiating this project is included in Addendum A.

Initially participants only planted spinach for the school's own use. After two months the food garden was expanded and the participants managed to plant four kinds of vegetables. Participants also decided to expand the food garden and plant more spinach, which could then be sold to the community, as spinach was in high demand in the community.

Participants and non-participants, such as general assistants, educators, security guards, learners and administrative clerks thus worked together to establish a well-functioning food garden to overcome some of the challenges that the special school resource centre experienced. After two months of the implementation phase, participants had managed to upgrade the under-utilised food-tunnel (Photograph 4.6) and food garden (Photograph 4.7).



**Photograph 4.6:** One of the general assistants attending to seedlings in the food tunnel



**Photograph 4.7:** Under-utilised land at the back of the school grounds developed

In undertaking this project, participants thus managed to mobilise available human resources to assist them. Learners assisted in re-planting seedlings from egg trays, weeding and watering the garden, nursing seedlings in egg trays and some even started their own gardens on plots allocated to them on the school grounds or at home. Photograph 4.8 shows two learners with vegetables grown in their gardens at home.



**Photograph 4.8:** Learners with vegetables grown in their own food gardens at home

Guards were mobilised to assist in managing access control of visitors to the school, as community members came to the school to buy spinach on a daily basis. In addition, general assistants were mobilised to assist in the upgrading and expansion of the food garden. When it was not possible for the participants or learners to work in the gardens or food tunnels, general assistants assisted. The administrative assistant in the office was mobilised to assist with the selling of spinach to the community in order to raise funds for the special school resource centre.

The local community was another resource that was mobilised to assist with the establishment and upgrading of the food garden at the special school resource centre. One of the key functions of the local community was to raise funds with the selling of vegetables. Community members assisted in spreading the word when spinach was available for purchase.

The mines in the community were yet another resource that was mobilised to assist with the establishment and upgrade of the food garden at the special school resource centre. The mines assisted in providing transport for deliveries and monitoring learners' gardens at their homes. One of the mines assisted the special school resource centre by providing an advertising board at the gate to advertise the food garden and selling of spinach.

Some members of the area office were also mobilised to assist the special school resource centre with the food garden project. The area office manager and staff regularly contacted the school and placed orders for spinach, which was delivered to them. They also spread the word that spinach could be bought at the school.

Local businesses and organisations were also mobilised and the local supermarket as well as local food stalls assisted with the selling of the fresh produce provided by the special

school resource centre. On a regular basis staff at the local clinic and local police station also placed orders for spinach at the special school resource centre.

From observing the participants' planning and implementation of the food garden project it became clear that an increase in knowledge, cooperation, enthusiasm, perseverance, and determination contributed to the successful implementation of the project. The participants planned the food garden to supply for the National School Nutritional Programme of the school yet could eventually even supply to neighbouring schools, as they produced an abundance of spinach. As a result, they planned to expand their garden to be able to sell some of the produce to the community. They succeeded in involving the community to such an extent that they had to set times when the community could come to the school to buy spinach. Some of their skills training development were implemented through the home gardens project that were also successful. The educators ran this project with the cooperation of the mines.

The following extracts from my research journal describe my observations of the participants' implementation of the food garden project over a period of more than 2 months:

*During my visit today at the special school resource centre the participants lost heart, due to the high costs of the seed boxes; the problems perceived when planting the seeds directly into the ground as well as other problems, after initially being so excited about the garden project. The participants brainstormed and came up with the idea of planting the seeds in egg trays to germinate, before planting the plants with egg trays, which are bio-degradable, directly into the soil.*

(Research Journal, 8 March 2016)

*This would allow the participants to be able to give at least one tray at a time to learners who are able to grow their own gardens at home. Through this the learners could already have grown seeds to plant at home in their gardens. The miners could just monitor and assist, as members of the community assisting the special school resource centre.*

(Research Journal, 9 March 2016)

*I was so impressed to see how fast the garden project is progressing with the assistance of all the other human resources. The participants' enthusiasm and hard work is contagious! Not only did the other staff members want to work along side by side, willingly, as the principal testified, but all around the community took note of the garden project and either wanted to assist, or wanted to buy some of the fresh produce, during these two months.*

(Research Journal, 18 April 2016)

*My observation of the whole gardening project is that it became one big community project, through which the resource-constrained special school resource centre built a whole new reputation for their learners.*

(Research Journal, 20 May 2016)

*When I left the special school resource centre today, I was so excited about what the participants could achieve in four months! They were really working so hard to make the establishing and upgrading of the food garden a success!*

(Research Journal, 12 June 2016)

#### **4.2.2 Asset-based project 2: Establish and upgrade a computer centre**

Even though local mines had donated and installed computers at the special school resource centre, the school did not utilise the computer centre to its full potential at the time that my data collection commenced. Some educators and learners were also computer illiterate and did not know how to use computer programmes. Photographs 4.9 and 4.10 provide images of the under-utilised computer centre at the time that my study commenced.



**Photographs 4.9 and 4.10:** Under-utilised computer centre at the special school resource centre

With the second asset-based approach project, participants aimed to upgrade their computer centre, increase computer literacy amongst learners, obtain and install computer learning programmes, and expose learners to the use of the Internet. Refer to Addendum B for an outline of the action plans that the participants formulated in order to initiate this project.

When I started with the project at the special school resource centre, they experienced various problems with the computer centre. The computers were very slow and the installed programmes were outdated, et cetera. The staff at the centre were not computer literate and could thus not assist the learners with the computers. Furthermore, the special school resource centre was unable to identify a neighbouring special school resource centre to assist them with reviving the under-utilised computer centre. However, through a dedicated search the staff managed to identify a neighbouring special school resource centre that could assist them with solving the problems mentioned above. As a result, an educator from the neighbouring school assisted the resource-constrained special school resource centre to install the required computer programmes for Gr 1 to 12 learners on their computers and to provide guidelines for the use of these programmes. To this end, he provided the educators with a demonstration on a wide range of different assistive devices available for "learners with disabilities". Photograph 4.11 shows some educators who attended the training session and photograph 4.12 indicates some required computer programmes that were installed on the computers at the special school resource centre. One of the participants who possessed more advanced knowledge of computer programmes, volunteered to be of assistance to educators in the computer centre in teaching the learners. He also offered to assist when they experienced problems with programmes, computer connections or network connections, as he had received basic training in information technology.



**Photograph 4.11:** Educators attend the demonstration of computer programs



**Photograph 4.12:** Demonstration of the assistive devices on computers

The following extracts from my research journal are reflections on my observations of the computer project at the resource-constrained special school resource centre over a period of more than 2 months:

*With the computer centre it was not so easy to decide why, how and who and even with what. This is a little bit more complex than the garden project might be. But we all agreed: this is going to be a challenge we are going to tackle and go for, as it is such an important centre at a school for all learners and staff members! And if only a few learners could have achieved the advanced skills to be able to find a simple job, it would have been worthwhile.*

(Research Journal, 19 February 2016)

*The computer centre was struggling; they could not find a neighbouring school who was willing to spend some time, energy and knowledge with them to get theirs' up and running.*

(Research Journal, 11 March 2016)

*The special school resource centre found a neighbouring special school resource centre, better equipped with resources, a bit further away, very excited and willing to assist the special school resource centre in the upgrading of the computer centre. I am so excited! The participants will make an appointment with the special school resource centre and visit them to see what they all have and how they implement all the different programmes and assistive devices at their special school resource centre.*

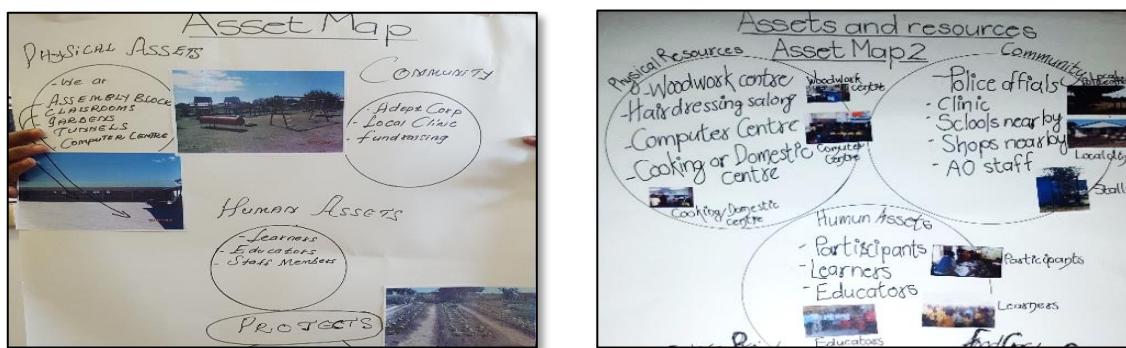
(Research Journal, 18 March 2016)

#### **4.3 RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

In terms of the participants' experiences of implementing the asset-based approach three themes emerged, each with rated sub-themes. As an introduction to my discussion of these themes and sub-themes I provide the inclusion and exclusion indicators I applied (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Charmaz, 2000; Merriam, 1998). I also substantiate and enrich my discussion of the results by including participants' verbatim responses (during individual interviews and focus groups); visual data; as well as extracts from my research journal.

#### 4.3.1 THEME 1<sup>5</sup>: Assets and resources at the resource-constrained special school resource centre

Participants used asset maps to identify assets and resources in their school and community. Photographs 4.13 and 4.14 show the two participant groups' asset maps. These assets and resources were grouped in the following way, which also indicates the related sub-themes: natural assets and resources; human resources; physical resources; and resources for gardening.



**Photograph 4.13 and 4.14:** Asset maps with identified assets and resources as well as chosen projects at the resource-constrained special school resource centre

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 1 are summarised in Table 4.1.

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

THEME 1: ASSETS AND RESOURCES AT THE RESOURCE-CONSTRAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRE		
Sub-themes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<b>Sub-theme 1.1 Natural assets and resources</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to any natural resource or asset evident at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, such as food gardens and open land.	This sub-theme excludes data which refer to human resources, physical resources or resources for gardening.
<b>Sub-theme 1.2 Human resources</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to any human resource or asset identified at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, including staff members, learners and the participants.	This sub-theme excludes data that relate to natural assets and resources, physical resources, and resources for gardening.

<sup>5</sup> I used the following abbreviations in presenting results in all themes: I: Individual interview; P: Participant; F: Facilitator; FG: Focus Group; L: Line; p (pp): Page/Pages

<b>Sub-theme 1.3 Physical resources</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to any classroom or centre which is used for teaching academic or practical skills to learners at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, or which has not been optimally utilised yet.	This sub-theme excludes data which relate to natural assets and resources, human resources, or resources for gardening.
<b>Sub-theme 1.4 Resources for gardening</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to any resource which is used for gardening at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, such as a vegetable tunnel with an irrigation system, water tanks, and gardening tools.	This sub-theme excludes data which refer to natural assets and resources, human resources, or physical resources.

#### **4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Natural assets and resources**

Participants indicated existing under-utilised food gardens and under-utilised open land as natural assets and resources at the resource-constrained special school resource centre. Even though the special school resource centre allegedly had food gardens in the past, these were reported as being under-utilised and under-developed at the time of data collection. The food gardens were identified by the participants as natural resources which held the potential to be used as fully functioning food gardens, to benefit the school, neighbouring schools and the community. Photograph 4.15 shows the under-utilised food garden the participants referred to.



**Photograph 4.15:** Under-utilised vegetable garden

The deputy chief education specialist explained: “Initially the school had a small garden of the ... ah ... the spinach only that was used for ... for feeding the children in the school,” (I2; P1; L20-22; p1); and another participant added “... gardens which gave us eh eh lots of eh vegetables for the learners” (I4; P3; L40- 41; p1). According to the participants, the gardens

were used for vegetables used for the NSNP (National Support Nutritional Programme) of the learners at the school on Fridays. However, the deputy chief educator specialist shared the view that these gardens could be utilised for more than that, saying: "... because it's not only about feeding, it's also about marketing skills, entrepreneurial skills that learners can, you know, they can develop ... because it can easily form part of their curriculum" (I2; P1; L142-145; p4). In this regard, educators agreed and indicated the desire to further develop the gardens not only to provide food, but also for skills development for their learners. One of the educators stated: "We give learners chance to ... to explore ... to show their talent how they can get out from the garden itself, maybe if we, each learner say this is your portion, do your gardening skills here and maybe see how this work ... differ from the other one due the experience and other understanding of whatever they will be doing" (I7; P6; L185-190; p4).

In my research journal I noted my observation that the educators seemed eager to further build on existing assets that were not optimally utilised at the time. I stated:

*What I have noticed before starting with the presentation, was their (the participants and other staff as a whole) lack of own initiative. But after the presentation and mapping of assets, the participants started giving excellent ideas. They looked with new eyes at their surrounding grounds and its potential. The participants got enthusiastic about the revival of the food gardens they once had, the potential of the existing, but under-utilised food gardens. (The participants got so excited after the identification of the assets and resources, that they already had set goals for the special school resource centre and the learners to develop skills once the food gardens were mobilised in fully functional food gardens.)*

(Research Journal, 19 February 2016)

In terms of the aim to further develop their food garden as identified asset, participants indicated the intention to plant spinach, saying that: "... like spinach it's easy to plant ... in ... a lot of it ... unlike the eh ... the ... the cabbage and the other vegetables you need some chemicals to so to control the bugs ad all but spinach is easy to control and you get a lot from it ... re-grows" (I5; P4; L193-196; p5). They furthermore voiced the potential of expanding existing gardens, saying that: "So I think if we can have a big space in the garden we can plant more" (FG10; P3; L121-123; p3).

The following extract from my research journal confirms participants' identification of food gardens as under-utilised asset at their school:

*All the participants in the group were very confident and enthusiastic about this project to be sustained and to be extended. The under-utilised vegetable and spinach gardens were identified during the first two visits, and immediately thereafter started being cultivated by the participants and other human resources, such as the learners. Spinach was not only grown in gardens outside, in the food gardens, but simultaneously in the tunnels, which were identified as physical resources, where the seedlings were grown. The young plants could be irrigated and grown into strong plants within a short time span.*

(Research Journal, 11 March 2016)

In addition to identifying under-utilised gardens as potential resource, participants seemingly viewed under-utilised open land as potential asset that could be mobilised for the purpose of food gardens. A participant namely said: “I do not know if it’s going to be possible, but I would love to ... to ... to ... to see to expand our vegetable garden so that we have more space so that we can plant more vegetables” (I7; P6; L187-189; p4), and another added: “So I think we need to get a bigger space where we can plant more vegetables” (I6; P5; L109-110; p3).

I captured examples of such under-utilised open land, some of which was reportedly donated by mines in the community (Photograph 4.16), in addition, Photograph 4.17 shows the available land on the school premises that could be used for a food garden. (At the back of the garden, the green arrow pointing towards the land).



**Photograph 4.16:** Under-utilised land for gardens donated by mines in the vicinity



**Photograph 4.17:** Under-utilised land at the back of the school grounds

#### **4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Human resources**

The participants identified human resources as another under-utilised resource at the resource-constrained special school resource centre. They referred to staff such as other educators, and non-teaching staff, including guards, general assistants and class assistants. They shared the view that additional staff members could potentially assist in initiating asset-based projects at the resource-constrained special school resource centre in support of more efficient functioning. In this regard, the principal referred to assistance with the computer centre project, stating that: “... who knows technology and we are utilising them,” (I9; P8; L63-64; p2). Participants furthermore indicated that additional human resources could assist with the food garden project in the following way: “... we utilised the people, our ... our gardeners, who look after our gardens, and when we are caught up with the learning in school, they do the watering and the weeding of the gardens” (I9; P8; L60-62; p2).

As this study progressed, I noted the ongoing need for additional human resources in my research journal, more specifically after the asset-based projects had commenced:

*The gardening project soon became a very big project, as the word spread that the resource-constrained special school resource centre was selling fresh spinach at a reasonable price. Due to the extension of the project, more human resources were needed to succeed. The participants needed more staff members to assist in the project to make a success of it. The participants are mostly educators and therefore need to be in their classes at times and due to the enormity of the project, the gardeners and the general assistants had to assist when they could not complete everything during the allocated practical time. The positive and enthusiastic attitude of all of staff members, the principal included, made it easy to identify other staff members - on the contrary, it was a matter of staff members who opted/requested to participate, rather than to be identified. In my experience, it is rare, when a researcher does research at a school. Normally, participants have to be identified.*

(Research Journal, 15 April 2016)

Existing and potential additional human resources furthermore included general assistants and gardeners, as evident in the following contributions: “There’s a group ... they were also there eh ... planting and the gardeners” (I4; P3; L78-79; p2); and “... even our GAs (general assistants)” (I7; P6; L91; p2). The principal added that gardeners could assist with projects while learners were taught in class, saying: “... and when we were caught up with the

learning in school, they do the watering and the weeding of the gardens” (I7; P8; L60-62; p2). In Photograph 4.18 a general assistant is attending to the plants in the food tunnel.



**Photograph 4.18:** One of the general assistants attending to seedlings in the food tunnel

The guards at the special school resource centre were also identified as human resources who assisted with access control for community members who came to the school to buy vegetables. They explained their view as follows: “To control the people to coming in and out of the school we requested the ... the ... school guards to not let the people in to the erf to interrupt the ... the school running” (I5; P4; L168-170; p4). In support, Photograph 4.19 captures the guard house at the main gate of the special school resource centre.



**Photograph 4.19:** Guard house at the main gate of the special school resource centre

In addition to staff members being viewed as human resources and potential resources, participants identified learners as human resources and potential role-players in the asset-based projects. I captured this view as follows:

*After commencing with the gardening project, different groups (levels) of learners at the resource-constrained special school resource centre were identified and given responsibilities or different tasks. The school learners are not divided in grades, but in levels, as it is a school for learners with severe intellectual impairment.*

(Research Journal, 17 March 2016)

Furthermore, the participating district-based support team was identified as a human resource important for driving the asset-based projects that were initiated. The following entry in my research journal reflects my observation in this regard:

*Each district has a district-based support team, therefore it was important to me to attempt including a member of the “district-based support team” as one of my participants. I was very fortunate that a therapist was available, as the districts are very vast, covering quite a number of schools, having quite a number of vacancies. Both the therapist and the deputy chief education specialist, as part of the participants, are very positive and enthusiastic about the research, promising full support.*

(Research Journal, 12 February 2016)

In this regard, the deputy chief educator specialist viewed the “district-based support team” as important for the sustainability of the initiated projects, saying: “... as the therapists ... they can also be ... be there and ... eh ... assist the learners with ... a ... with a number of programmes and ... ah ... to see themselves being better people of tomorrow” (I2; P1; L180-182; p4), referring to the skills programme for learners of the school. She also commented on the staff as assets in the following way: “... the attitudes again, because they are important and ... be ... willing to grow as they are working. It's ... it's ... they didn't grow academically, they also grew socially knowing very well that ... ah ... if one person is in this position I can always learn from this particular person. It's accepting new knowledge” (I2; P2; L151-157; p4).

#### **4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Physical resources**

Participants were able to identify several physical resources of the resource-constrained special school resource centre. They namely identified under-utilised classrooms and centres as resources reflecting on the importance of developing these resources. In this regard a participant commented: “... workshop for different skills in the school so that our school can be more developed and then we can pass the knowledge to the learners” (I3; P2;

L155-157; p4). In terms of existing physical resources, participants referred to the woodwork centre of the resource-constrained special school resource centre, the hairdressing salon, computer centre and the cooking or domestic centre.

Participants thus had the view that the woodwork centre was an under-utilised physical resource at the resource-constrained special school resource centre. The following extract from my research journal reflects my observation in confirmation of this result.

*The woodwork centre is a popular resource identified by many of the participants to mobilise in future as one of their next projects, however, more than an underdeveloped building, than an under-utilised structure. It was also identified as a possible resource during our first two meetings during the asset map phase. Currently the woodwork centre is already repairing school tables of schools in the vicinity on a small scale. The learners are making small objects such as magazine holders, candle holders, etc. as seen on Photograph 4.19 with the under-developed resources available to them.*

(Research Journal, 27 May 2016)

As such, even though the woodwork centre was a resource, participants seemingly held the view that more could be done. Photograph 4.20 illustrates the under-utilised woodwork centre with some machinery and desks from neighbouring schools that the special school resource centre was repairing at the time. Some woodwork articles made by learners in the woodwork centre are captured in Photograph 4.21.



**Photograph 4.20:** Woodwork machinery in the under-utilised woodwork centre



**Photograph 4.21:** Woodwork items made in the under-utilised woodwork centre

The principal voiced her goal for the woodwork centre once fully operational, as follows: “Maybe in future if we’ve ... we can get ... eh ... assistant we can open maybe a small

classroom where our learners can go and learn woodwork because there are many things they are doing in the community especially the school's furniture" (GR10; P2; L238-241; p5). In addition to the goal of training learners, another participant suggested that the school and its learners could also then assist neighbouring schools: "... to help the neighbouring schools with things for ... example little partitions between two learners writing exams" (I11; P9; L109, 110; p3). Some other participants made broader suggestions such as a shelter for over-aged learners (from the age of 18) at the special school resource centre for school leavers, saying: "What I think of our woodwork centre it's also going to help us and the learners to be able to face the world" (FG; P5; L228, 229; p5), and "We've got team workers out there, carpenters are big this days when knowing wood to building a table. They go there into the community building tables. So also if we could get enough work here and also materials to build that for them and making lovely tables ..." (FG; P5; L229-234; p5). In this way, participants identified human resources in the area that could potentially support the school and its learners.

Next, participants identified the hairdressing salon as an under-utilised physical resource at the resource-constrained special school resource centre. One of the participants explained her ideas of mobilising human resources in support of the functioning of the hairdressing salon in the following way: "I think we need to use our ... we've got an educator who likes doing hairdressing and ... ah ... manicure so we just need to improve, they are still doing it in an ordinary classroom so we want to ... to ... to do the correct furniture for the hairdressing and the manicure so that ... ah, because I have realised that the learners like it mostly" (I9; P8; L192-197; p5).

The following entry in my research journal reflects how, I as outsider, observed this reported under-utilised physical resource:

*The hairdressing salon is currently a classroom where learners are taught some of the basic hairdressing skills and manicure skills. It is in one of the ordinary classrooms, which the resource-constrained special school resource centre would prefer to replace with all the necessary fittings needed for a hairdressing salon. The principal informed me of the basic equipment the school has, but also still needs to be able to function as a hairdressing salon, being able to train the learners. The entrepreneurial skills could be extended, if the salon was equipped with the correct equipment. What restricts learners and educators alike, is working space, which could result in an under-utilised salon. Therefore the participants chose this physical resource on the asset map for future mobilisation.*

(Research Journal, 27 May 2016)

Participants furthermore regarded the computer centre as an underdeveloped and underutilised physical resource at the school. Photograph 4.22 shows the computer centre, with no activity taking place.



**Photograph 4.22:** Computer centre

Participants showed insight in terms of the potential of the computer centre. One of the participants voiced ideas for the centre to assist staff with computer literacy skills, saying: "... some of our staff members are not computer literate whereby you will have, we will have to give them support so that they become skilled ..." (I7; P6; L126-128; p3). Another participant reflected on the potential value for helping learners to become computer literate. She explained: "The computer centre I think it is going to help our learners a lot ... we didn't know what programmes can we start teaching our learners, but really I hoped that maybe if we could have started we will be able to teach our learners to become computer literate so that they can be able to access the computer union and also ... eh ... they can be able to ... to ...

to ... access internet when we teach them I just wish that we can start with the programmes as soon as possible" (I6; P5; L28-35; p1). The principal agreed on the importance of upgrading the computer centre with "... discs and other technological things that have information that we use to teach our learners" and "... things like discs and CDs and cameras" (I9; P8; L71-72; 74; p2). Closely related, the potential of the computer centre was linked to the "... schools' exit plan for their learners when they leave school and for ... for ... to assist them with ... eh ... with their employment, because we know that our learners struggle when they leave school so it is something that ... that ... that the learners can take with them to ... to be able to get a job" (I2; P1; L133-136; p3).

I documented my observation of the computer centre as follows:

*From the identification of the computer centre as a project, the participants' goal were to teach computer skills to the learners which will enable them to do the most basic programmes and might enable them to have a simple job like "a lady at a till in a small shop" nearby? They had a data projector installed as an assistive device to assist them in the presentation of more visual lessons and training in the computer centre. All participants who participated in project two shared the vision that their computer centre should be upgraded to a higher standard; where the educators and learners could both benefit alike.*

(Research Journal, 15 April 2016)

Participants confirmed that the computer centre had many assistive devices, which they viewed as resources not being optimally utilised. The data projector, as an example, can be seen in Photograph 4.23.



**Photograph 4.23:** An under-utilised data projector in the computer centre

Finally, participants identified the cooking or domestic classroom (Photograph 4.24) as a physical resource at the resource-constrained special school resource centre that could be utilised more optimally.



**Photograph 4.24:** Under-developed cooking or domestic classroom

At the time when the participants identified the cooking or domestic classroom as an under-developed resource, the limited space in the classroom only allowed for a small number of sewing machines, stoves and other equipment. In addition, the learners' desks took up a lot of space in the room. I noted the following in my observations in this regard:

*The resource-constrained special school resource centre has a basic domestic or cooking classroom, where the learners are taught very basic cooking skills. It is not very well equipped. It is also utilised as an ordinary classroom with desks, which take a lot of working space. The under-developed cooking class did not provide in all the needs for the educators to train the learners in entrepreneurial skills - which was the goal.*

(Research Journal, 27 May 2016)

One of the participants elaborated on my observations in the following way: "We need to have the relevant equipment and relevant staff, so that our learners can get the learning ... eh ... for informed decisions when they start using especially the domestic stuff; the stove, the kettle" (FG10; P2; L215-218; p5). Another participant added: "... so we want to train them with simple things that they are using at home" (FG10; P2; L224-225; p5). Another goal that participants voiced for mobilising the cooking and domestic classroom was to cater for the over-aged learners in a centre at the school when leaving school. They explained: "If we can get a kitchen, a big one with ... with stoves inside there 'cause those learners are also girls in there in the domestic class. They do ironing, washing, cooking; the basic stuff that girls do at home cause blacks in our culture girls can work in the house. So if we could get a

ki ... ki ... kitchen the big one, with equipment in there. Wow, we are going to produce woman and men will be able to stand for themselves" (I8; P7; L216-222; p5).

#### **4.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Resources for gardening**

Within this sub-theme participants identified vegetable tunnels with an irrigation system, water tanks, and gardening tools as potential resources for gardening. These resources, which they viewed as under-utilised at the time, are captured in Photographs 4.25 and 4.26.



**Photograph 4.25:** Vegetable tunnel with irrigation system



**Photograph 4.26:** Water tanks as potential resource for gardening

As stated, participants regarded the vegetable tunnels as a physical resource for gardening. One of the participants indicated the worth of the irrigation system as follows: "... so we don't need to water the tunnels so we (only) went to check if it's working and if it's ... if it's not" (I5; P4; L94, 95; p3). Another participant confirmed the perceived value of this resource, saying that: "As we all know, water is a scarce resource, but because they have the irrigation, they don't have a problem with water" (I4: 2; P1; L160, 161; p4). My entry in my research journal confirms this result. I noted the following:

*The participants were eager to start using the tunnels again. It was one of the assets which they mapped down almost immediately under physical resources. The participants could realise the worth of the tunnels, but could not immediately decide how to mobilise it, until the garden project was identified. The tunnels have irrigation systems which make the watering of the plants and seedlings grown inside the tunnels easy throughout all seasons and during holidays. Although the irrigation system in the tunnels are set on a automatic timing system, they do have to be supervised at given times.*

(Research Journal, 19 February 2016)

Participants also identified water tanks (four in total, donated to the school) as a physical resource for gardening, as it could be utilised to water the gardens at the resource-constrained special school resource centre. They referred to the value and possibility of water tanks as a resource combatting the challenge of possible drought during school holidays. In this regard, one of the participants indicated that “... sometimes during school holidays when we have closed ... we find that ... the watering the gardens the ... the gardens the ... the vegetables when we open are dry, the pests they eat you know” (I6; P5; L103-106; p3). In my research journal I noted:

*There are two different points on the premises where the resource-constrained special school resource centre has its own water tanks to water the vegetable gardens. The water tanks were immediately identified as resources which could be utilised for the gardening project. The principal informed me that the biggest value of the water tanks they perceive, are during times when water is scarce. Then there would be enough water in the tanks to be utilised to water the gardens. It would not be difficult to water the vegetables during school terms to ensure healthy growth of all vegetables. The problem comes during school holidays when nobody is at school to take care of the gardens, as nobody stays in close vicinity of the school.*

(Research Journal, 15 April 2016)

Closely related, participants identified gardening tools as physical resources that could be utilised for gardening. Gardening tools included spades and rakes, which the staff and learners at the resource-constrained special school resource centre used during the gardening project. However a participant explained that these resources were not utilised optimally, saying: “Some of the equipment that we are having now, are not being used, because we didn’t consider the learners ... so they are not utilised. We realised and notified ... we need to dispose them” (I9; P8; L146-150; p4). The following entry in my research journal reflects my observation of the gardening tools being available yet not being optimally used at the school:

*The resource-constrained special school resource centre had garden tools, which they could utilise when starting with the gardening project. They thus did not have to buy on the off-set of the project any tools. Whilst we were on the premises, taking photos and video clips of the progression of the gardens, the economical utilisation of the tools were mentioned. They were somewhat overwhelmed by the community's reaction to the gardening project, therefore had to buy more tools to fit the enlargement of the gardens and their project.*

(Research Journal, 27 May 2016)

#### 4.3.2 THEME 2: Challenges at the resource-constrained special school resource centre

Participants identified challenges related to limited physical space, the use of technology, additional responsibilities and related time constraints, and the location of participants in relation to the special school resource centre. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the inclusion and exclusion criteria I applied for Theme 2.

**Table 4.2:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme 2

THEME 2: CHALLENGES AT THE RESOURCE- CONSTRAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRE		
Sub-themes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<b>Sub-theme 2.1 Limited physical space</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to the challenge of limited physical space and fertile land.	This sub-theme excludes data which refer to challenges related to the use of technology, additional responsibilities and related time constraints, and participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre.
<b>Sub-theme 2.2 Challenges related to the use of technology</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to the use of technology as skills and competencies, and systemic support for using technology.	This sub-theme excludes data which relate to limited physical space, additional responsibilities and related time constraints, or participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre.
<b>Sub-theme 2.3 Additional</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to educators'	This sub-theme excludes data which refer to limited physical

<b>responsibilities and related time constraints</b>	additional responsibilities due to the asset-based projects they initiated, and the related time constraints they experienced.	space, challenges related to the use of technology, or participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre.
<b>Sub-theme 2.4 Participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to participants living far from the special school resource centre, with the implied challenge of attending to asset-based projects after school hours.	This sub-theme excludes data which refer to limited physical space, challenges associated with the use of technology, or additional responsibilities and related time constraints.

#### **4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Limited physical space**

Participants indicated limited physical space as a challenge experienced at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, in terms of insufficient garden space; limited storage space for gardening tools and chemicals; and limited space to accommodate information technology activities. With regards to limited garden space they specifically referred to spaces with fertilised soil, which could support the growing of vegetables at the resource-constrained special school resource centre. My own observations confirm the view of the participants, as captured in the following extract taken from my research journal:

*The special school resource centre does have much more open land to their disposal, but it will have to be well prepared by having it ploughed and prepared with compost and fertilizer, before they would be able to start planting spinach. Until such time, the participants have limited space for gardening. This open land is also not next to the current gardens and tunnels.*

(Research Journal, 18 February 2016)

Although the participants managed to extend the initial small vegetable gardens on the special school resource centres premises as the project progressed, they kept voicing a need for additional open land with fertilised soil which would be suitable for food gardens: “I do not know if it’s going to be possible, but I would love to … to … to … to see to expand our vegetable garden so that we have more space so that we can plant more vegetables” (I6; P5; L187-189; p4). Photograph 4.27 captures an extended vegetable garden, indicating limited fertilised open space available to plant additional seedlings.



**Photograph 4.27:** Limited open fertilised garden space to plant seedlings

Participants elaborated on the reasons for their need to expand the vegetable gardens. They namely indicated the need to provide more spinach to the community in order to raise funds, as explained in the following contributions: “Sometimes we run out of stock. It comes to a point where we have to stop selling now to the community and to the shops around and wait for the vegetables to grow” (I6; P5; L107-109; p3); and “... the spinach that you’re selling in the gardening, it’s ... it’s we’re out of stock. Let me say that, so we have to stop people from the community from buying so that it grows up and then ... then we sell them. So I think we can have a big space in the garden we can plant more” (FG10; P3; L118-122; p3).

Another participant added that they also used the vegetables for their National School Nutritional Programme, and therefore, required more space to be able to accommodate the demand for spinach. She said: “So I think we need to get a bigger space where we can plant more vegetables ... because even our learners they use this vegetables for NSNP ... we cook for them and we sell them outside I think our yard, our vegetable yard is too small” (I6; P5; L109; 112; p3). In this regard I noted the following:

*It is not only because there is such a high demand for the spinach, the ground for vegetables at this moment is just not enough to serve their purposes. The resource-constrained special school resource centre is still growing vegetables such as onions, beetroot, carrots, lettuce and cabbage for their own needs, but spinach is grown on large scale to be sold to the public. The vegetables are picked on Fridays for the National School Nutritional Programme.*

(Research Journal, 27 May 2016)

In addition to the challenge of not having sufficient fertile ground to plant vegetables, the participants indicated the challenge of not having sufficient physical space to accommodate Information Technology activities. Photograph 4.28 shows the computer centre situated in a standard classroom, resulting in the computers being very close to each other and not

providing sufficient space to resume computer activities for “learners with disabilities”. Furthermore, as a result of limited space, all learners could not be accommodated in this classroom. I noted the following observation in my research journal, thereby capturing the challenge related to limited space in the computer room:

*The resource-constrained special school resource centre has an average-sized classroom, which they have equipped with computers donated by a company. Being an average sized classroom, equipped with computers, not many learners could be accommodated in the classroom. Furthermore, the special school resource centre has grown from 12-15 to 13-20 learners per class, as most other special schools have, to accommodate learners with different disabilities to include in the schools.*

(Research Journal, 19 February 2016)



**Photograph 4.28:** The computer centre of the school

Participants confirmed this by making the following comments when they discussed the physical space in the computer room: “We’ve got the small room for computers” (FG10; P7; L109-110; p3). “One class of computer lab will next to the office take like 12 to 15 learners and we have 13/18/20 learners per class” (FG4: 5; P: 4; L149-151; p4); “... so ... um ... physically it was the classes that was a bit too small for the bigger classes (I11; P9; L66, 67-70; p2); and: “The challenge with the computer lab will be we’ve got the small room for the computer lab and ... ah ... our classes are growing too big” (I5; P4; L148-149; p4).

Participants furthermore voiced some practical challenges related to the small computer room. They said: “So that’s the challenge that we’re facing. That we cannot put one class per period in the computer lab. We have to divide them. That will be another time, we will need another timeslot then it will take another timeslot for other classes” (I5; P4; L154; 158; p4); and: “... so if ... if we have a large number we cannot put all of them in the same time in ... in ... in ... in the computer lab, we have to divide the ... the classes into two. Which also

causes a problem of ... we have to look ... re-look at our time table to fit them in there, so it's another challenge that we are facing" (FG10; P7; L110-114; p3).

#### **4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Challenges related to the use of technology**

Challenges related to the use of technology concerned limited skills and competencies, as well as limited systemic support for technology use. In reflecting on their computer skills and competencies, a participant stated that "... some of our staff members are not computer literate whereby you will have, we will have to support them" (I7; P6; L126-127; p3), which was confirmed by another participant saying that many of the educators and learners were computer illiterate: "... as compared to the computer one, (project one) as the computer is a new program that the learners and educators have still start to learn about it (I3; P2; L139-141; p4). The following extract from my research journal confirms this challenge of staff members not possessing a sufficient level of computer literacy:

*Some staff members are not computer literate, therefore the principal decided that she wanted to develop the skills of educators and other staff in the computer centre. The computer centre could be utilised to accommodate these staff members after hours to develop themselves. They have received basic programmes on a level staff could follow to educate themselves in computer literacy. It is a goal of the principal to have all staff members computer literate. The staff could then all be able to write their own reports, fill in school reports of the learners, etc. on computers in the computer centre, if they do not have computers. The staff could also do some research for lessons during preparations for lessons.*

(Research Journal, 19 February 2016)

In addition to some educators' limited level of computer literacy, they seemingly also struggled with some of the computer programmes available. Educators allegedly found it difficult to differentiate between learners according to the learners' computer competency levels, as reflected in my research journal:

*During my visit today at the special school resource centre, I noticed that the educators had difficulty dividing the learners in groups to visit the computer centre. The educator in charge of the computer centre complained about the problems perceived with the time table and the groups of learners visiting the computer centre who are more or less on the same level. He told me that the educators found moving to the next level with programmes, without differentiation, difficult, as the classes were so big and learners not all on the same level. It was also difficult to differentiate, as they as educators did not have the skills to use the computer programmes in such a way that they could differentiate within one class on the computer programmes where all learners are on different levels. All the educators still needed training in the computer programmes on how to use the computer programmes efficiently, so that they will be able to differentiate with one group of learners.*

(Research Journal, 27 May, 2016)

One of the participants reflected on the difficulty to differentiate between learners' skills and competency levels in the following way: “**The other one will be on the next level; the other level and then they will be on different levels**” (I5; P4; L153-154; p4). In addition to limited computer skills and challenges associated with differentiation, participants indicated limited functionality and support for the use of technology as an additional challenge. For example, living in the rural areas of North West, it is common to experience regular power failures, which typically resulted in frustration to all involved. One participant commented that: “**Sometimes there is no electricity at all**” (I3; P2; L105; p3).

During two of my visits at the special school resource centre, this report was confirmed, as the school did not have any power for the duration of these visits. The following extract taken from my research journal reflects my observation of the regular power failures at the resource-constrained special school resource centre:

*While I was at the special school resource centre today, the special school resource centre didn't have power for the whole day. Not only was it very dark in the classrooms, it was also very hot, being at the end of the summer in North West, where temperatures raise up to 40 °C. The staff could not print any documents which were necessary for the day; learners got behind with the computer programmes as they could not utilise the computers or the internet. This influences connection with the internet as well, on a regular basis; no power; no internet!*

(Research Journal, 18 March, 2016)

In confirmation of my observations, one of the participants noted: “Sometimes we ... we would like to go into the internet and then we'll find that the internet connection is like slow. It's like not functioning at all” (I7; P6; L112-114; p3). The following extract from my research journal furthermore reflects this challenge I experienced:

*The bad internet connection was experienced as a huge challenge. The very slow, or sometimes even completely no internet connection for long periods of time, was a great frustration and a big challenge to the management and educators. It was a big frustration not being able to be linked to the internet when needed. When the internet is too slow, the whole process has to start all over! This is a very time consuming process!*

(Research Journal, 25 April 2016)

#### **4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Additional responsibilities and related time constraints**

As a result of the additional responsibilities related to the asset-based projects the participants initiated, they reported time constraints as a challenge. Participants seemingly found it difficult to balance their time in order to implement asset-based projects and attending to their daily schedules. One of the participants explained: “I will say maybe time, because most of the time we were in the class so time, we didn't have enough time to concentrate all on that (the planting of spinach)” (I4; P3; L117-119; p3). Similarly, another participant said: “I also found time; found it time-consuming, because most of the time we were not available for to meet with other members for ... for ... for the presentation of doing the other things that doing that going to the ... the garden when they came to install the ... the ... the software. So I think, ye... time” (FG; P7; L98-101; p3). Other participants agreed, and shared the following views: “My challenges will be time. It was time-consuming, because I have to see to it” (I5; P4; L132-133; p3); “I think the challenges were nearly the same as

I've mentioned that time constraints" (I9; P8; L77; 91-92; pp2, 3); and "Our challenges is at most of the time the school have so many events to become so and everyone became so committed and but the little moment, the little time we have, we shall utilise it for the project for the assets project map" (I3; P2; L114-117; p3).

Both the principal and head of department repeatedly needed to take time off their daily schedules in order to remain involved in the asset-based projects. The principal indicated that she had to: "... make sure that ... I go to the garden and with the learners so that the learners can take this initiative and this knowledge to their homes and to their homes" (I9; P8; L53-55; p2). The head of department took on a supervisory role in the garden project, which she too experienced as time consuming. She remarked: "It was time-consuming, because I ... we have to see to it ... I'm not involved in that the gardening ... I have to take time off out of class to see to it that those things are running and like the schedule of the ... the school" (I5; P4; L132-135; p3). The head of department furthermore explained how she sometimes struggled to adopt to her supervisory role: "There was lack of time to check on ... on those things if the computer program is working, if the kids are following it and then if the gardening is still, you know, if they're still getting enough spinach to sell and to cook for the kids" (I5; P4; L140-143; pp3-4). She reflected on her busy schedule and the difficulty to balance her responsibilities, saying: "We attend meetings sometimes when they are busy with those things we're not here. Ah ... like ... the past two weeks we're bu ... busy with the cultural competitions in Rustenburg ... so I spent a lot of time out of school so then ... there was lack of time to check on ... on those things" (I5; P4; L134-141; p3).

These contributions clearly indicate the participants' dedication to the asset-based projects they initiated, yet also point to distinct challenges in practically fulfilling their objectives. During an individual interview with a participant from the "district-based support team", she indicated the same: "It is so sad that there is never enough time ... there being on the DBST it is not the only school (the special school resource centre) that we have to look after or the whole "district-based support team" have to take care after. So, yes, time is a very, very serious concern" (I11; P9; L56-58; p2). She continued by saying: "Also time constraints ... and then another thing, I don't think they thought how big it (the garden project) will grow, because they (the participants) didn't have enough spinach when the community started buying. So that was another hindering point" (I11; P9; L70-72; p2).

An entry in my research journal reflects my observation of the district-based support teams challenge related to time constraints in visiting and supporting the resource-constrained special school resource centre. I noted:

*The district-based support team was very excited about the asset-based approach projects, but disappointed that they as a team could not visit the special school resource centre more often to monitor the progress. One of the district-based support team members was also one of my participants. The main purpose of a district-based support team member is to monitor and support, which the district-based support team could not do on a regular basis during the whole process of implementing the asset-based approach. It is thus due to limited human resources that the resource-constrained special school resource centre could not receive the moral support from the district-based support team as it should have done. Time constraints was not only the educators' challenge, but also those of the other participants not part of the staff. These contributions clearly indicate the participants' dedication to the asset-based project they initiated, yet also point to distinct challenges in practically fulfilling these objectives.*

(Research Journal, 15 April 2016)

#### **4.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre**

As a result of participants residing far from the resource-constrained special school resource centre, they were not always available after school hours to assist with the asset-based projects they initiated. They, for example, indicated that it was a challenge to maintain their food garden during school holidays: “.....because we don't stay around next to the school so we find that the watering is a problem....” (I6; P: 5; L104-105; p3). They seemingly found it hard to come to school frequently enough to water the plants, as indicated in the following excerpts: “... as we go off during school holidays there our seedlings they get neglected they need more water there's no one to water them and when we come back and try to regenerate it again just to give it life again” (I3; P2; L95-98; p3); “Sometimes during school holidays when we have closed because we don't stay around next to the school so we find that the watering ... the watering of the gardens the ... the vegetables when we open are dry” (I5; P5; L103-106; p3); and “... when the school closes the learners and educators they are not here to give our seedlings more water” (I3; P2; L98-100; p3).

### **4.3.3 THEME 3: Ways in which mobilised assets and resources supported the functioning of the resource-constrained special school resource centre**

The third theme that emerged relates to the manner in which the implementation of the asset-based approach supported the functioning of the resource-constrained special school resource centre. Sub-themes concern financial support, supporting the national school nutrition programme, strengthening partnerships, skills development and interpersonal and intrapersonal qualities. A summary of the sub-themes and related inclusion and exclusion criteria is included in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3

<b>THEME 3: WAYS IN WHICH MOBILISED ASSETS AND RESOURCES SUPPORT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE RESOURCE-CONSTRAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRE</b>		
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
<b>Sub-theme 3.1 Financial support for the special school resource centre</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to financial benefits resulting from the food garden project that was initiated at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	This sub-theme excludes data that refer to benefits of asset mobilisation at the resource constrained special school resource centre in terms of the National School Nutritional Programme, partnerships, skills development or intra and interpersonal qualities.
<b>Sub-theme 3.2 Supporting the National School Nutrition Programme</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to the National School Nutritional Programme that benefited as a result of the mobilisation of the food garden project at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	This sub-theme excludes data that refer to benefits of asset mobilisation at the resource-constrained special school resource centre in terms of financial support, partnerships, skills development, or intra or interpersonal development of qualities.
<b>Sub-theme 3.3 Strengthening partnerships that could support the functioning of the special school resource centre</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to the establishment and/or management of partnerships with the “district-based support team” and area office, the	This sub-theme excludes data that refer to benefits of asset mobilisation in terms of financial support, at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, the

	community, and local business as a result of asset mobilisation at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	National School Nutritional School Programme, skills development, or intra and interpersonal qualities.
<b>Sub-theme 3.4 Skills development as outcome of the two asset-based projects</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to skills development of both learners and staff members as a result of asset mobilisation at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	This sub-theme excludes data that refer to benefits of asset mobilisation at the resource-constrained special school resource centre in terms of financial support, the National School Nutritional School Programme, partnerships, or intra and interpersonal qualities.
<b>Sub-theme 3.5 Intra and interpersonal qualities as a result of implementing the asset-based approach</b>	This sub-theme includes data which refer to participants' demonstrated inter and intrapersonal qualities during the mobilisation of assets and resources at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, in terms of teamwork and collaboration, motivation and commitment, positive attitudes, ownership and leadership, pride and a sense of accomplishment, and following a future orientation.	This sub-theme excludes data that refer to benefits of asset mobilisation at the resource-constrained special school resource centre in terms of financial support, the National School Nutritional Programme, partnerships, or skills development.

#### **4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Financial support for the special school resource centre**

Participants managed to successfully expand and upgrade their food garden. They planted a variety of vegetables and sold some, which resulted in financial gain for the resource-constrained special school resource centre. The participants explained:

“....the selling part of it went very well. Yes, we make ... we are fundraising; we are making a lot of money out of the gardens. Fundraising, yes” (I6; P5; L166-168; p4). Participants explained that they sell vegetable produce from their food garden to the community: “We expanded the garden which gave us eh ... eh ... lots of ... uh vegetables for the learners

and in and in return again we sold to the community which was part eh ... eh as form of fundraising. I think it was very good project" (I4; P3; L40-42; p1); "So most of the time we find we do have lots of orders to deliver to the community" (I6; P5; L162; 163; p4); "We have made a good partnership with the community in terms of fundraising" (I6; P5; L24-25; p1); "So most of the time we find we do have lots of orders to deliver to the community" (I6; P5; L162; 163; p4).

In addition to selling to the community, the school also sold vegetables to nearby shops. In this regard, participants reported as follows: "Shops around in the community they also come to buy our ... our vegetables here at school" (I6; P5; L73-74; p2); and "Then that's where the community comes in, that's where the ... the ... eh ... the ... the ... the shops that we have some small shops around in the community they also come and buy our ... our vegetables here at school" (I6; P5; L72-74; p2). As a result of the demand of especially spinach and also some other vegetables, the school could sometimes not provide enough. A participant remarked: "... that sometimes we run out of stock. It comes to a point where we have to stop selling to the community" (I6; P5; L107-108; p3).

The financial gain from selling vegetables to the community and nearby shops reportedly assisted the school to buy learning and teaching support materials for the special school resource centre. A participant explained: "Like the selling of the spinach from our own garden ... it ... the money we make there is like a fundraising event. We ... it helps to buy the LTSM things and the books that we need and like if they need something we use that money from the gardening to ... to ... to buy the things" (I5; P4; L181-184; p4). Some participants commented on the selling of vegetables to other schools, explaining that it was not always to be sold: "They (*the gardens*) also feed our learners. And our neighbouring schools also. They support our neighbouring schools also" (FG; P6; L164-166; p4). In reflecting on the financial gain stemming from the school's implementation of the asset-based approach, I noted the following:

*While we were busy with the mapping of assets, and the participants have decided on the gardening project, they have already seen all the benefits the garden projects hold for the special school resource centre. What they did not foresee, was that the project will grow so big so fast, that they will even be in a position to sell especially spinach, to other schools for their National School Nutrition Program programmes. They could even sell to the businesses, vegetable stalls and community in the vicinity, much more than they have ever foreseen during the action plan. Due to their enthusiasm, it grew far bigger than planned. Their finances now are sound.*

(Research Journal, 2 June, 2016)

*Though fundraising was not one of their goals at the beginning, once they saw that they could achieve the planting of so much spinach and the interest of the community in their product, their self-esteem grew. They started to plant more and more, working hard together with all staff, who were just as enthusiastic about the garden as themselves. The fact that they now could raise funds and become independent of the subsidy of the North West Department of Education in certain areas, was a drive to work together, to establish and upgrade the food garden.*

(Research Journal, 12 June 2016)

#### **4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Supporting the National School Nutrition Programme**

The food garden project assisted the participants to support the National School Nutrition Programme at the resource-constrained special school resource centre. They specifically used some of the vegetables they harvested to enrich the food provided as part of the National School Support Programme, thereby addressing nutrient-related needs of the learners. According to one of the participants: “The vegetables are helping our gardening our National School Nutrition Programme (I9; P8; L45-47; p2), and “... we’ve got the lettuce, that ... um ... the lady whose cooking food on Fridays is picking the lettuce from the garden” (I5; P5; L108-109; p3), while another participant commented: “... and then the new storage for the learners’ foods. I think those are what we’ve mobilised here at school” (I3; P2; L55-56; p2) as they allegedly could be in the fortunate position to have enough food to have to mobilise new storage rooms for all the food. Another participant added to this comment, saying: “We started with ... ah ... very little ... it was a very little garden, and then we

expanded more. We ... we only had spinach and then we ... we grew onion, carrots, beetroot and other vegetables, which I think was very good" (I4; P3; L44-47; p2).

The following entry in my research journal reflects my experiences after observing some learners at the special school resource centre enjoying their meals as part of the National School Nutrition Programme:

*The National School Nutrition Programme is very important at most schools, but at the SSS it seems to be more important; as if more learners with socio-economic barriers are admitted to the schools. I had the privilege to be at the school today, while it was time to have their lunch of the week! Just before lunch, some of the bigger ones assisted the lady who is in charge of the National School Nutrition Programme to pick fresh lettuce from the garden. She could dish up fresh salad with lunch from their own garden; with all the other freshly prepared vegetables! The learners had a nutritionally prepared plate of food. What impressed me, was the role the learners played in the process, and how proud they were! They dished up the vegetables with so much pride and afterwards they divided into groups - washed up the plates and cleaned the area so that learning could take place again - with smiles on their faces! They did it with so much enjoyment!*

(Research Journal, 11 May, 2016)

Participants indicated that they furthermore sold some of their vegetables to neighbouring schools in support of their implementation of the National School Nutrition Programme. Participants explained: "The freshest we sell them ... eh like the spinach, we do sell ... School Nutrition Programme, they do buy nice spinach from us as we just want it from our own garden" (I7; P6; L149-152; p4); and: "They (spinach and other vegetables) also feed our learners ... and our neighbouring schools also. They support our neighbouring schools also" (FG; P6; L164-166; p4).

In addition to selling vegetables to neighbouring schools, the participating school also donated vegetables to other schools when they could not afford to buy any. I reflected on this in the following manner:

*The participants were very proud being able to feed their learners once again out of their own gardens on Fridays (National School Nutrition Programme). Though schools do receive an amount from the North West Department of Education for the National School Nutrition Programme, it is not much. They only grow spinach to sell for an additional income to their school fees but for the learners' National School Nutrition Programme on Fridays, they grow beetroot, onions, cabbage, carrots and lettuce. They (the participants) are so proud that they could sometimes donate to less fortunate neighbouring schools some of the leftover vegetables, which they have picked and could not use for that Friday. This also taught the learners to take care of their neighbours, and not always make money.*

(Research Journal, 11 March 2016)

#### **4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Strengthening partnerships that could support the functioning of the special school resource centre**

As a result of the process of asset mobilisation at the resource-constrained special school resource centre, participants established and managed several partnerships in their community, including partnerships with the district-based support team and area office, local businesses and neighbouring schools. The special school resource centre for example provided the district-based support team and area office with regular updates on their asset-based projects, after initiating the projects. As a result, they received lots of support from the district-based support team and area office, who visited the school with other officials who all bought spinach from the school, advertising the selling of spinach during meetings and at their offices. As a result of their interest in the project, the image of the school was improved in the district, as reflected in my research journal:

*I met with the district-based support team frequently, over and above my meetings with the special school resource centre. The district-based support team was very keen on supporting the program, encouragement of the participants and networking with other institutions about the projects at the resource-constrained special school resource centre to the benefit of the school. Today, one of the members of the district-based support team told me how proud they were of having the school in their area, how they were networking outside the school on behalf of the school to have other institutions to be known to the school.*

(Research Journal 14 March 2016)

As a result of the district-based support team's experience and positive response, they visited the special school resource centre on a regular basis to discuss the progress of the asset-based projects and provide support where possible. The district-based support team and area office furthermore assisted with the monitoring and supervision of learners' gardens at home. A member of the district-based support team commented as follows in this regard: "We visit them quite often and so it is more moral support and we make sure that they're using the assets ... and support in working in the computer centre" (I11; P9; L33-35; p1) and "We had a management meeting as so the whole DBST came to the school and they saw for themselves what was going on and it was also interesting to them to see and they realised it is not a school that needs to sit in the corner. So they saw what could be done" (I11; P9; L38-42; p2).

The acknowledgment from the district-based support team and the area office allegedly formed part of the school's moral support, as it felt good to be recognised. Other participants commented on the therapists from the district-based support team, who got involved at the school, assisting learners with language and speech problems, utilising the computer centre's software, saying: "I would say the human resources was ... that as available ... was more of the therapists we have that worked closely with the school and they have assisted the school" (I2; P1; L62-64; p1). Photograph 4.29 provides supportive evidence of the district-based support team and area office visiting the special school resource centre.



**Photograph 4.29:** Visit by the district-based support team and area office

My entry in my research journal confirms the positive input of the district-based support team and the area office, as perceived by the special school resource centre.

*During visits from the district-based support team at the special school resource centre, it became evident that the team members were just as excited about the projects as the educators, and gave valuable inputs towards the projects. They have even invited the area office members to visit the school with them to visit both projects to take note of the excellent work which was put into the projects. The district-based support team member, who was also a participant, was very proud of what was achieved in 4 months. The area office bought spinach from the school, and was aware of the project, before visiting the school. They were committing themselves to further support after the visit.*

(Research Journal 9 June, 2016)

In addition, as a result of asset mobilisation, several partnerships within the community were seemingly established and managed, as indicated in the following contributions: “The school mobilised the whole community. Community members, they made them ... pr ... ah ... buy ... um ... buy ... um ... buy the spinach. And in the end everybody was so involved ... also it lead to community awareness of the school” (I11; P 9; L45-50; p 2); “The gardens that’s where I can see ... we have made a good partnership with the community in terms of fundraising” (I6; P5; L23-25; p1); “Ah ... we involved the community ... we involved the community, because they came in and they bought the spinach from our garden and the learners and the educators” (I 8; P 7; L86-88; p3).

Besides the community purchasing vegetables, local shops allegedly also supported the special school resource centre in buying vegetables from the school. One of the participants explained: “Then that’s where the community comes in, that’s where the ... the ... eh ... the

... the ... the shops that we have some small shops around in the community they also come and buy our ... our vegetables here at school" (I6; P5; L72-74; p2).

The following extract taken from my research journal confirms the supporting partnership between the special school resource centre and different role-players in their local community:

*During my visit to the school, I was surprised to understand from the participants how much support they receive from the local community. They have been receiving support even from their area office, the district-based support team, neighbouring special school resource centre and other neighbouring schools, the local police station and the clinic. But what was really astonishing, more than anything else, was the local supermarket and the vegetable stalls, supporting them. Instead of seeing them as competition, the shops supported the school, buying spinach from them and even spreading the word that the spinach at the school is very fresh and cheap! This is really extraordinary! This shows me that the participants have really succeeded in their goal to reach out to the community; to include the community in their project establishing and upgrading the food garden. I have the greatest of respect for the enthusiasm of the participants who succeeded in including a whole community!*

(Research Journal, 19 April 2016)

The special school resource centre furthermore managed to build a valuable partnership with a mining group in the community, mentioning that: "The mines were involved. They are usually very much involved, but they were more involved" (I11; P9; L45-47; p2); and "We've got the ... eh ... the ... someone from the mines who are supporting our gardens" (I9; P8; L130-131; p4). The mines reportedly also assisted with the monitoring and supervision of the learners' gardens at home as captured in the following contribution: "And we are doing the follow-up. We've got the ... eh ... eh someone from the mines who are supporting our gardens so when he's around because he's got vehicles and time they take our learners whom we have opened the garden started the garden for and then they are they ... eh take them around to ... to and monitor and support them at homes. And the parents are appreciating them" (I9; P8; L130-134; p4). In addition, I observed that delegates from the mine assisted the special school resource centre to advertise their vegetables. In this regard, I noted:

*I have observed from my first visit the huge advertisement boards of the mines, outside the school premises, advertising the support of the local mine/s. This is of tremendous help to any school, when the school is supported by the community by way of these advertising boards. The mine/s not only advertised through these boards, at this school, they also advertised by word of mouth, when assisting with the delivering of the spinach. My observation of the whole gardening project is that it became one big community project, through which the school built a whole new reputation for their learners.*

(Research Journal, 20 May 2016)

#### **4.3.3.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Skills development as outcome of the two “asset-based projects”**

As a result of the “asset-based projects”, both staff and learners managed to develop and acquire new skills. Firstly, learners developed skills such as entrepreneurial skills, gardening skills, and basic computer skills as a result of the implementation of the asset-based approach.

Learners developed entrepreneurial skills in starting their own vegetable gardens at home. Participants shared the following views: “They start their own small gardens and sell to the community, they make money; they learn entrepreneurial skills. That’s why we identified those” (I4: 5; P4; L70-72; p2); and “It (the garden project) can, because it ... it ... it’s not only about feeding, it’s also about marketing skills, entre ... entrepreneurship skills that learners can, you know, they can develop as ... as ... because it ... it can easily form part of their curriculum” (I2; P1; L144-147; p4). In the process, learners repeatedly also developed their gardening skills. A participant noted as follows: “We work with the learners, we are teaching them the skills in the garden so that when they exit (the school) they will be able to know what to do at their different homes” (I6; P5; L68-70; p2). Photograph 4.30 provides supportive evidence of this claim, showing how one of the participants assisted learners to plant seeds in seed boxes for the food tunnel.



**Photograph 4.30:** Participant assisting learners with planting of seeds in boxes for the food tunnel

As a result, participants provided learners with the opportunity to start their own vegetable gardens at home, and motivated them to apply their newly acquired gardening skills in these gardens. Participants reported that: "... and the gardens we have started food gardens for some of our learners at home so that they cannot only do the gardening here at school, they also do it at home. We do the seedlings here and then they (the learners who are capable of growing their own gardens) take them home to plant. And we do the follow-up" (I9; P8; L127-130; p4); "We taught the learners to have gardens at home, they must not only do gardening here and then some of our learners were ... eh offered opportunity to have gardens at home and given seedlings" (FG; P2; L144-146; p4); and also "Now, when we turn to the gardens, they establish gardens at home. They now asking for ... for plants like the seedlings to plant at home ... so ... it ... it ... it really shows that through my expe ... the experience that a ... a ... I saw here at school that ... that they have really developed a lot and was so fruitful to us" (I9; P8; L26-30; p1).

Participants furthermore indicated the potential advantages of learners' newly acquired gardening skills: "Now if I chose gardening there are many ways that we can help them with that gardening. We can teach them the skill at school, but when they leave the school at home they can start the garden which will help them to feed the family; they can start opening businesses, they can start their own small gardens ... gardens and sell to the community, they make money, they learn entrepreneurial skills" (I5; P4; L67-72; p2); and also: "It can be part of their ... the school's exit plan for their learners when they leave school and for ... for to assist them with ... eh ... with their employment, because we know that our learners struggle when they leave school so it is something that ... that ... that the learners can take with for them to ... to be able to get a job (or even start a small business at home) and ... eh ... also knowing that you don't starve as long as you have a small plot where you can have your vegetables so that you eat healthy food" (I2; P1; L134-140; p3). Contributions such as these attest to the long-term value of the project, as experienced by the participants.

One of the outcomes of the second asset-based project was that learners reportedly also developed basic computer skills. Participants reflected on the advantage of being computer literate for learners' future: "Our learners learn differently. Even if it's not going to be 100%, but some, and I do believe they can take the skill home and then explore more; when they are home with their computers, with parents and everything. Yes" (I7; P6; L178-182; p4); "... for the benefit of the learners, whereby they will be ... like being developed in ... eh ... using the computers, their skills will be involved there as well" (I7; P6; L45-47; p2); "... 'cause when our learners are over 21 years, the ... the ... the system, they go out of school, but they start at the village without ... without work; without payment. And they've started work for other people, fetch them water, and clean their yard and stuff. So now that we have computer programmes, our learners can now learn and ... and get ... a ... a better job and ultimate they can work as cashiers and at the ultimate end when a cashier is standing there what would they say he or she is from RB (the name of the school) and this special school developed, it is getting recognised by that learner who is working now with a computer because of the resources that we started" (I8; P7; L154-162; p4).

Participants' realisation of the value of the project for the learners' future once again emphasises their commitment to support learners in entering a future that holds potential. Participants also reflected on the learners' sense of pride and enhanced self-esteem as a result of their newly acquired skills. Learners were apparently proud that they could apply basic computer skills, as captured in the following example: "With the computer centre ... yes ... it ... it ... it is also easy to sustain that (the computer centre project) because learners are ... they ... are proud of being able to ... to use the keyboard" (I2; P1; L167-169; p4). Learners were seemingly also proud of their vegetable gardens at home, as reported by participants: "Some of them also bring their ... ah their ... their products to come and show. If they planted the ... the spinach they'll always bring something here" (I9; P8; L135-136; p4). During a visit from the area office officials, they too seemed interested in the learners' newly acquired computer skills, as evident in Photograph 4.31.



**Photograph 4.31:** A visiting official from the area office observing a learner's newly acquired computer skills

In addition to learners benefitting from the asset-based approach projects, staff members seemingly also gained, and reported skills development specifically with regard to computer literacy and marketing. One of the participants indicated how staff members at the special school resource centre developed their computer skills: “I think by developing also the skills of our educators and by that I think we have a computer centre that will be there for the upcoming generation that will still come to RB (The name of the school)” (I8; P7; L192-194; p5). Another participant referred to the value of their weekly practical training sessions in the computer centre: “After … eh … after this people we … we made our internal eh … workshop on how to, whereby the educators were like coming in on weekly basis to … to extend what they were taught about, give themselves their own practical eh … eh lessons there on the computers so that just to refresh what they got from the people who came in to them these lessons” (I7; P6; L138-143; p3,4). According to the principal, training sessions improved staff members’ computer literacy skills and made them proficient in typing up reports. She said: “I had most of my educators were illiterate. We are using the computer centre to train other staff members who doesn’t … eh … have … eh … the literate … eh … IT literacy and they have improved and then we have agreed that no educators is going to submit whatever is supposed to be submitted without being typed. So, in the afternoon they all stay in the computer centre and they are stu.... learning how to use technology” (I9; P8; L120-125; pp3-4).

In this regard I noted the following in my research journal:

*Even the staff who was computer illiterate, could now use these programmes to become computer literate, as was the wish of the principal, during the initial identification of assets and resources.*

(Research Journal, 23 May 2016)

Participants furthermore demonstrated marketing skills in selling their vegetables to neighbouring schools and the community. They stated: “And our neighbouring schools also. They (the garden project) support our neighbouring schools also. So we just market our self” (FG; P3; P4; L64-166; p4); “Our learners they use this vegetables for National School Nutrition Programme. Yes we cook for them and we also sell them outside” (I6; P5; L110-111; p: 3); and “For the tunnels we have planted the vegetables and the vegetables are helping our National School Nutrition Programme. And we also sell those vegetables for fundraising (National School Nutrition Programme to neighbouring schools on Fridays)” (I9; P8; L45-47; p2).

#### **4.3.3.5 Sub-theme 3.5: Intra and interpersonal qualities as a result of implementing the asset-based approach**

Participants reflected on the advantages that resulted from the “asset-based” projects on an intra and interpersonal level, referring to the value of teamwork and group cohesion as well as motivation and commitment. Participants seemed willing to pull their weight in their team. They explained: “I think what worked ... worked well is ah ... ah ... having people who are willing to work,” (I2; P1; L151-152; p4); and “...people who are willing to ... to work with the ... with the researcher and also develop their school” (I2; P1; L152; p4). They seemingly shared their knowledge with others to the benefit of the group. In this regard, participants reported: “... we share whatever we have whatever assets we have we shared amongst the entire staff” (FG; P2; L83-84; p2). Other participants explained that they were willing to share their computer knowledge with others: “I do computers in school so whenever they need me in the computer lab I always, I’m always there, helping out” (I4; P3; L142-143; p4); and “... in the case of where the educator don’t know what to do I take my time and do that (assists the educators with their computer skills) and also taking one on one time with the educator since I don’t teach ... and show them how to operate those programmes” (I8; P7; L67-71; p2).

Group cohesion seemed apparent in the team as they grew closer to each other. One of the participants shared some views on this, saying: “The attitudes again because they ... eh ... they are important and ... eh ... ye ... and be willing to ... to grow as they are working to grow. It’s ... it’s ... they didn’t grow academically, they also grew socially. I also knowing very well that ... ah ... if one person is in this position I can always learn from this particular person. It’s a ... it’s accepting new knowledge” (I2; P1; L153-157; p4).

I reflected on the participants’ teamwork and group cohesion in my research journal:

*What I have observed over the time I have been working in close relationship with the participants, is their possibility to involve all the other staff members and the learners to work enthusiastically towards the same goal. Every time I visited the resource-constrained special school resource centre, everybody had the same enthusiasm, and showed how they could work together as a team. Today, while I visited the special school resource centre, participants, learners and other staff, were all working in the gardens.*

(Research Journal, 27 April, 2016)

Participants demonstrated motivation and commitment to the projects they had initiated as reflected by the following comment: “We had at times when others were free, others were occupied but the ... the ... the good thing about it everyone was: no one was forced to do this thing. Everyone did it willingly” (I9; P8; L94; p3). Participants seemed to motivate and inspire each other during the process of asset mobilisation, as observed by the member of the “district-based support team”: “They were so inspired that they are looking forward to continuing with the process, and it’s almost as if they’re ... eh fighting each other to carry on with the process; so it’s not really fighting ... but yes, they are inspiring each other to continue with the process. I think it’s a good sustainability” (I11; P9; L102-105; p3).

The participants’ enthusiasm and motivation is evident in quotations such as the following: “In the garden ... I’m always there ... when ... um when if they ... when they plant something new, I always go there and check and take pictures with the learners” (I4; P3; L140-142; p4). Another participant reflected on their commitment towards their “asset-based projects”: “So we can run with four or five projects and develop them and get done with it and then we can start all over again and develop others. We were not aware of we can “mos” develop this thing without going to the SGBs, (school governing body) and everything. So if we would have now ... now that we enlightened that now ... that now we can go get to the other projects...” (I8; P7; L179-184; p5). Another participant elaborated and explained that they were committed towards their school and enjoyed being part of the development of the learners and the community: “To me it has been a ... ah ... um I have learnt a lot. And I have enjoyed everything up to so far and especially that ... uh this project it’s ... it’s doing something to the RC (special school resource centre) and even to the community and even the learners here at school” (I6; P5; L79-83; p2). Despite the time constraints they experienced, participants remained committed: “... everyone became so committed and but the little moment, the little time we have we shall utilise it for the project for the assets project map” (I3; P2; L115-117; p3). Participants’ high levels of motivation and commitment were furthermore evident in the way in which they came up with new ideas. I noted the following in this regard:

*Today had me excited about the research project, as the participants surprisingly came up with the suggestions of vocational skills added to the two projects chosen as assets for the asset-based approach. Their enthusiasm about the project, however, was amazing! Even my very first day of the research project made me enthusiastic, as I could see the participants' sheer enjoyment and enthusiasm for the project! They stayed long beyond the time set aside for the project, because they wanted to know more!*

(Research Journal, 12 February 2016)

In terms of the intrapersonal qualities developed and displayed by the participants to their involvement in the project, they reported on their positive attitudes, ability to take ownership and lead, feelings of pride and sense of accomplishment, and fostering a future perspective. Participants reflected a positive attitude towards each other and their "asset-based projects". One of the participants referred to the positive attitude of the school, staff and garden project leader: "I would say, the attitude of ... of the ... of the school ... of the staff, for them being able to ... to open up, to ... to work with the researcher and also be open to ... to take ideas and ... ah ... more importantly the positive attitude of the lady who do ... who ... who ... who leads the gardening project ... and ... ah she has been really helpful" (I2; P1; L53-57; p2).

In taking ownership in "mobilising and managing the asset-based projects", participants demonstrated leadership abilities. One of the participants indicated how she took responsibility: "What I did was to go and check at ... the ... the ... what you call it ... tunnels and check if the ... if the things they have planted are ready to be picked and sold" (I5; P4; L87-89; p2). Another participant reflected on the way in which she took ownership in monitoring the food garden saying: "... to monitor if ... if the ... the ... the plants are growing. If they're ready; if there's no worms eating the vegetables" (I5; P4; L98-99; p3). As indicated previously, participants took it upon themselves to initiate the identified projects. They reported as follows: "So when she (the principal) comes they saw we already started and said OK it's fine, we can go ahead. We were a bit pro-active. (I8; P7; L142-146; p4).

As a result of their successes, participants experienced pride and feelings of accomplishment. One of the participants commented: "...even when we go to other institutions, they still know RB (pseudonym for school) by our gardening" (I8; P7; L167-168; p4) and when referred to the computer centre project, similarly said: "We were a bit proactive! We were a step ahead; before we could start, we were ready!" (I8; P7; L145-146; p5). The participant from the district-based support teams' sense of pride is similarly reflected in

the following comment: "It was quite interesting. We had a management meeting and so the whole "district-based support team" came to the school and they saw for themselves what was going on at the school and that was quite interesting and it was also interesting to them to see and they realised that it is not just a school that needs to sit in the corner. So they saw what could be done" (I11; P9; L33-35; 38-42; pp1, 2).

I also noted the participants' feelings of accomplishment as evident in the following extract taken from my research journal:

*The participant who took me to the gardens was very proud of what they have achieved. They are grateful to be able to not only sell some of the vegetables, especially the spinach, but to be in the position to give away to the less fortunate. She mentioned to me that they are using this to teach the learners how to take care of your neighbour. Other participants were all as proud as she was on their accomplishments. The garden project has put them on the map, as they have described it to me. They were now a special school resource centre in the vicinity who could accomplish special projects; who could feed the neighbouring schools; could sell a good project and maintain projects suitable for their learners to grow up as learners who can take care of themselves as grown-ups! This was, as I spoke to different participants, their greatest sense of accomplishment: creating job opportunities for their learners through skills training!*

(Research Journal, 27 April 2016)

As the study progressed it became clear that the participants held a future orientation regarding their asset-based projects. Participants indicated that they wanted to assist the learners at the special school resource centre with future job creation through the food garden project, saying: "I think I would like to ... link with the ... with the nursery close by so that ah ... you know, with the assistance of making sure that ah ... the whole programme is ... sustained ... for that if they have learners who would go to the nursery that is close to the school at least once a week for them to see the importance of gardening" (I2; P1; L177-181; p4). Some participants commented on the possibility of involving parents in the food garden project: "What we further need to do is to involve parents to work together with the school so the whole ... the whole gardening programme is sustained" (I2; P1; L165-167; p4). Another participant added: "I think to keep looking after the garden. To keep it going. To put the word out there for people to come and buy, and selling it to nearby schools encouraging the community to come and buy so that we can raise funds from that" (I5; P4; L209-212; p5). One of the other participants highlighted the planting of more vegetables in the food garden

in order to sustain the project: "And then with the garden they will also keep the garden going by after planting spinach they will maybe plant tomatoes. It's a continuous ... eh project as well" (I7; P6; L200-202; p5).

Participants similarly reflected on possible future outcomes and advantages of the computer centre project for their learners. They said: "Who knows, tomorrow they might end up getting jobs in the shops and being able to ... to operate the ... the tills and ... be employable" (I2; P1; L170-171; p4); "When they leave school they can go and find simple jobs like working at tills and all that as they are not that ... um ... eh how can I put this? (I5; P4; L62- 67; p2); and "I do believe they can take the skill home and then explore more; when they are home with their computers, with parents and everything. Yes" (I7; P6; L178-182; p4).

Finally, participants identified possible future asset-based projects that could be investigated. As the special school resource centre already had large woodwork machines, they contemplated how they could expand their woodwork centre for out-of-school learners. They said: "... we could get resources like ... eh the this wood ... this wood that ... eh ... can get even ... even that ... the ... that the community or we can communicate with one or ... ah company that is working with planks that ... eh ... the wood and stuff they would give us old wood and we start building out of that we do stuff of that so the learners can practice more and more to have a skill, you know what I mean. And if we could be lucky and be expanded a shelter that where the learners can work, you know, and get more machines so that learners can utilise them to ... to ... to do wooden stuff and good wooden stuff with wood" (I8; P7; L206-215; p5). Participants also reflected on the possibility of expanding and upgrading their domestic centre in the near future, with the aim of guiding female learners to become independent women. They explained: "... ironing, washing, cooking, the basic stuff that girls do at home 'cause blacks in our culture gir ... girls can work in the house. Are the one cleaning, wash dishes, clothes, iron and cook. So if we could get a kitchen ... we are going to produce woman and men who will be able to stand up for themselves" (I8; P7; L218-222; p5).

I also reflected on the participants' future orientation and highlighted the participants' focus on creating future opportunities for the learners in the following extract from my research journal.

*I have observed that all participants dreamt of better workshops for the learners; which included the woodwork centre and the domestic centre. During my tour around the school today, the participant who took me through the school, as well as each educator at the different classrooms and centres, all had dreams, visions and goals for their learners for the future. They wanted to better the centres in order to improve the lives, the training and the future of the learners. They all had the well-being of their learners at heart. It was such a pleasure walking around, seeing what had already been done with the little they had.*

(Research Journal, 27 April 2016)

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

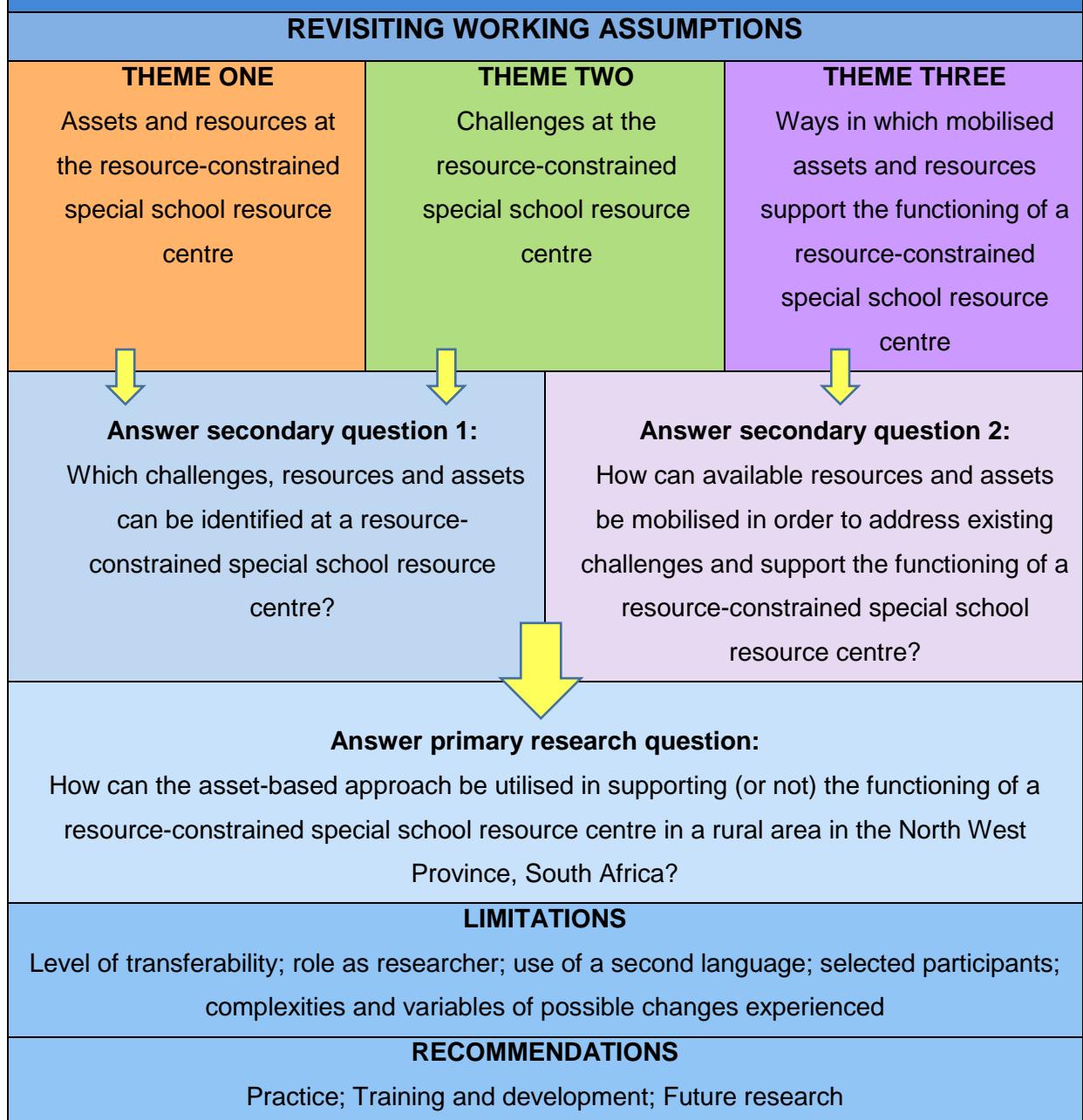
In this chapter, I reported on the results on the study. After describing the way in which the participants implemented the asset-based approach in the form of two school-based projects, I presented the three themes that emerged in terms of the participants' experiences of this process of implementation. I discussed the themes in terms of the related sub-themes, and provided supportive evidence in my discussions.

In the next and final chapter I interpret the results of the study by relating them to existing literature. I present the findings by revisiting the secondary research questions and then come to final conclusions in terms of the primary question that guided the study. I discuss the limitations of the study and conclude the chapter with recommendations for training, practice and further research.

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# CHAPTER FIVE

## FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS



## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the results of the three main themes and sub-themes which emerged during the analysis of my observations, interviews, research journal, field notes and visual data obtained during my study, were reported. In this final chapter, I revisit my working assumptions and interpret the results in terms of existing literature. I address the research questions and discuss the limitations of the study. I conclude the chapter with recommendations based on the findings of the reported study.

## **5.2 REVISITING WORKING ASSUMPTIONS**

Based on my initial review of existing literature as well as my personal experience and perspectives, I formulated some working assumptions prior to undertaking the study. In this section, in accordance with the findings, these initial assumptions are discussed.

### **5.2.1 Assumption 1: A resource-constrained special school resource centre will function as an interconnected system consisting of different sub-systems which will influence each other**

The resource-constrained special school resource centre functioned as an interconnected system and consisted of different sub-systems. The microsystem consisted of different individual role-players, both participants and non-participants, which influenced each other directly and indirectly. Participants portrayed a positive attitude, sense of commitment and motivation which was a contributing factor in the success of their asset-based projects (Tudge et al., 2009). These individuals acted as smaller sub-systems within the special school resource centre as mesosystem. Local businesses, the community clinic and police station formed part of the exosystem. The exosystem influenced and was influenced by the implementation of the asset-based approach at the resource-constrained special school resource centre”, as this system became involved in the selling and marketing of vegetables. The involvement and support of the exosystem contributed to the success of the asset-based projects at the special school resource centre.

### **5.2.2 Assumption 2: Both assets and challenges are present in a resource-constrained special school resource centre**

Literature confirms the presence of both resources and barriers in different systems and subsystems (Ebersöhn & Elof, 2006b; Loots, 2011; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Both assets and challenges were present in the resource-constrained special school resource centre.

### **5.2.3 Assumption 3: Role-players will be able to identify assets and challenges in their special school resource centre**

Participants identified assets and resources present in the participating resource-constrained special school resource centre during the phase of asset mapping, which included natural assets and resources (food gardens and open land); human resources (staff members, learners and participants); physical resources (classrooms or centres which are used for teaching academic or practical skill); and resources for gardening.

Participants also identified challenges present at the special school resource centre, which included limited physical space; technological challenges related to the use of technology; additional responsibilities and related time constraints; and participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre, with the implied challenge of attending to asset-based projects after school hours.

### **5.2.4 Assumption 4: The identification of existing assets and challenges can enable role-players (involved in a special school resource centre) to mobilise identified assets in support of a more efficient functioning centre**

Role-players involved in the special school resource centre were able to mobilise identified assets and resources, through two asset-based projects, namely the upgrade of an under-utilised food garden and under-developed computer centre. The outcomes of these two asset-based projects supported the functioning of the special school resource centre, focusing on inward change.

## **5.3 POSITIONING THE RESULTS WITHIN EXISTING LITERATURE**

In order to determine the findings of the study, results were collated with those of the relevant existing literature. Data appeared to correspond predominantly to findings in the literature. I next present the three themes in relation to existing literature in table format.

The results of Theme 1 are positioned within existing literature and new insights are formulated, as depicted in Table 5.1. This is followed by Table 5.2, reflecting the result of Theme 2, and Table 5.3, focusing on Theme 3.

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

THEME 1: ASSETS AND RESOURCES AT THE RESOURCE-CONSTRAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRE		
CORRELATING FINDINGS		
Results	Existing literature	Findings / New Insights
<b>Sub-theme 1.1: Natural assets and resources</b>		
Participants identified natural assets and resources such as food gardens and open land, when implementing the asset-based approach at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	Kretzman and McKnight (1993) identified five main categories for identification of assets, which include physical resources such as gardens. Similarly, literature also refers to environmental capital (Roos & Temane, 2007) and natural capital (Green & Haines, 2002), which is in line with natural assets and resources identified in the reported study.	When the asset-based approach is implemented in a resource-constrained special school resource centre, natural resources may be expected to be present.
<b>Sub-theme 1.2: Human resources</b>		
Participants identified human resources including staff members, learners and participants, when implementing the asset-based approach at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	Kretzman and McKnight (1993) identified main categories for identification of assets. One of these categories relates to human resources, including individuals, assets amongst a group of people, and relationships in the community. Green and Haines (2002) refer to human capital as an asset, which is defined as individuals with abilities, skills, and competencies.  The potential value of human resources such as additional specialist educators, therapists, professional nursing sisters, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, hostel staff, class assistants, drivers and additional administrative staff at special school resource centres is evident in existing literature (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2013; DoE, 2002b).  In line with the results from the reported study, literature (Benson, 2006; Benson & Pittman,	When the asset-based approach is implemented in a resource-constrained special school resource centre, human resources may be expected to be present.

	<p>2001) reports on the importance of identifying learners as human resources to potentially assist with various school projects.</p> <p>Eloff and Ebersöhn (2001) argue that although all individuals are potential human resources, they may not always be aware of it. Therefore, the identification of human resources is important.</p>	
<b>Sub-theme 1.3: Physical resources</b>		
Participants identified physical resources, including classrooms or centres used for teaching academic or practical skills at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	<p>Choksi (2004) refers to the importance of identifying physical resources, such as abandoned buildings, to be used as community service resources. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006b) refer to physical resources as possible resources to be identified. Similarly, Kretzman and McKnight (1993) identified physical resources (such as buildings and centres) as one of the main categories of assets and resources.</p> <p>According to Education White Paper 6, special school resource centres should include physical resources such as special facilities and assistive devices to assist the educators and learners in learning and teaching (DBE, 2013).</p>	When the asset-based approach is implemented in a resource-constrained special school resource centre, physical resources may be expected to be present.
<b>Sub-theme 1.4: Physical resources</b>		
Participants identified resources for gardening, including a vegetable tunnel with an irrigation system, water tanks, and gardening tools at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	<p>In line with the gardening tools identified in the reported study, Green and Haines (2002) refer to infrastructural resources in their asset-based community development approach.</p>	When the asset-based approach is implemented in a resource-constrained special school resource centre, resources for gardening may be expected to be present.
<b>SILENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS</b>		
No silences and contradictions were identified.		

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

THEME 2: CHALLENGES AT THE RESOURCE-CONSTRAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRE		
CORRELATING FINDINGS		
Results	Existing literature	Findings/New insights
<b>Sub-theme 2.1: Limited physical space</b>		
Participants experienced challenges related to limited physical space and fertilised land when implementing the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre.	<p>The Department of Basic Education (2013) undertook to upgrade the infrastructure (including classrooms and natural resources) at special schools when turned into special school resource centres. However, as a result of financial constraints these upgrades remain a challenge and barrier to overcome (Sprang, 2009).</p> <p>In line with limited physical space identified as challenge in the reported study, Loots (2011) also refers to limited physical space for classrooms as a challenge in schools who participated in her study.</p> <p>Similar to the limited fertilised land as identified challenge in the reported study, Holmer and Drescher (2005) report on financial constraints related to the capital needed to fertilise land for food gardens.</p>	When the asset-based approach is implemented at a resource-constrained special school resource centre, limited physical space and fertilised land may be a challenge experienced by role-players.
<b>Sub-theme 2.2: Technological challenges related to the use of technology</b>		
Participants experienced challenges related to the use of technology including limited skills and competencies, as well as limited systemic support for technological use when implementing the asset-based approach at the resource-constrained special school resource centre.	<p>One of the key challenges in many special school resource centres in rural areas is related to technological challenges. In order for these schools to be fully functional in assisting learners with disabilities and special needs, they need to have the necessary technological resources to successfully implement special facilities and utilise assistive devices (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2013, DBE, 2015). The assistive devices include special</p>	When the asset-based approach is implemented at a resource-constrained special school resource centre, technological challenges related to the use of technology may be experienced by role-players.

	<p>adapted technological devices for learners with special needs. However, in line with the results of the reported study, Sprang (2009) argues that due to financial constraints the challenge remains that special school resource centres do not always have the necessary computer programmes and technological skills to optimally teach learners. Furthermore, Wood et al. (2007) found that educators are not always comfortable with technology and need support to assist them in successfully integrating technology and teaching in their classrooms. In this regard, the Department of Basic Education (2010, 2013) refers to the need of in-service training for educators on all levels to equip them to teach learners with special needs.</p> <p>In line with the results of the reported study, literature refers to the challenges related to educators' lack of training in special needs education (Hodkison, 2005; Mbelu, 2011; Friend &amp; Bursuck, 2002, Sand, et. al. 2000). Ferguson (2008) argues that the demands of the inclusive education system necessitate training of educators in technology to assist learners with assistive devices. In this regard, Spellings and Justesen (2008) took part in developing a programme to support educators to teach learners with special needs and disabilities. Part of this programme aimed at equipping educators with the necessary skills to be proficient in working with computers and assistive devices.</p>	
<b>Sub: theme 2.3: Additional responsibilities and related time constraints</b>		
Participants experienced challenges regarding additional	In Loots' (2011) study, participating teachers also	When the asset-based approach is implemented at a

responsibilities and related time constraints due to the asset-based projects they initiated at a resource-constrained special school resource centre.	reported on the challenge related to time constraints and additional responsibilities when implementing the asset-based approach in schools.	resource-constrained special school resource centre, role-players may experience challenges related to additional responsibilities and related time constraints.
<b>Sub-theme 2.4: Participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre</b>		
Participants reported that they lived far from the special school resource centre, which implied the challenge of attending to asset-based projects after school hours.	In line with the results from the reported study, existing literature indicates that the distance between schools and homes is a potential contextual barrier for teachers participating in long-term higher education community engagement partnerships (Ebersöhn et al, 2015). Balfour et. al. (2008) also refer to difficulties of access in rural communities, as a result of long distances, transport barriers and time spent travelling.	When the asset-based approach is implemented at a resource-constrained special school resource centre, role-players may experience challenges related to participants' location in relation to the school, implying the challenge of attending to asset-based projects after school hours.
<b>SILENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS</b>		
No silences and contradictions were identified.		

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

THEME 3: WAYS IN WHICH MOBILISED ASSETS AND RESOURCES SUPPORT THE FUNCTIONING OF A RESOURCE-CONSTRAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRE		
CORRELATING FINDINGS		
Results	Existing literature	Findings/New insights
<b>Sub-theme 3.1: Financial support for the special school resource centre</b>		
The mobilisation of the food garden project that was initiated at the resource-constrained special school resource centre resulted in financial benefits, which supported the inward functioning of the school.	In line with the results from the reported study, Benenson and Stagg (2015) agree on the financial benefits for low-income communities when mobilising assets and resources effectively. Similarly, Holmer and Drescher (2005) found that the establishment of vegetable gardens in communities could assist with income generation. Loots (2011) also found that the mobilisation of vegetable gardens could assist schools and communities to generate income.	The mobilisation of assets and resources at a resource-constrained special school resource centre could result in financial benefits in support of the inward functioning of the school.
<b>Sub-theme 3.2: Supporting the National School Nutritional Programme</b>		
The mobilisation of the food garden project that was initiated at the resource-constrained special school resource centre resulted in benefits for the National School Nutritional Programme, which supported the inward functioning of the school.	As South Africa is one of the countries with the highest instances of malnutrition among children, the National School Nutritional Programme was introduced to reduce consequences of malnutrition such as reduced mental capacity, fatigue, dizziness and poor physical development of learners (DBE, 2011). According to the 2013/14 annual report of the “Department of Basic Education”, the National School Nutrition Programme strives to promote healthy lifestyles and sound eating habits, to provide resource materials to educators to support the curriculum, encourage the establishment of food gardens to obtain fresh vegetables, providing learners with skills to grow their own gardens to contribute to	The mobilisation of assets and resources (such as a food garden project) at resource-constrained special school resource centre could benefit nutritional programmes in support of the inward functioning of the school.

	<p>their own life-long food security (Motshekga, 2015). Feeding programmes seem common in schools around the world (Fernandes et al., 2014; Souza, 2016), which has many benefits for school children. However, no literature was found where similar asset-based programmes assisted existing feeding programmes.</p>	
<b>Sub-theme 3.3: Strengthening partnerships that could support the functioning of the special school resource centre</b>		
Asset mobilisation at the resource-constrained special school resource centre resulted in the establishment and/or management of partnerships, with the district-based support team and area office, the community, and local business, which supported the inward functioning of the school.	<p>The Department of Education (2001, 2013) and the Department of Basic Education (2010) emphasise the important role of partnerships among district-based support teams, special schools, special school resource centres, full-service schools and main stream schools in the effective functioning of schools.</p> <p>Other literature also refers to the important role that partnerships play in the effective functioning of schools and communities (Lightfoot et al., 2014; Liberato et al., 2011).</p> <p>Studies within the context of the asset-based approach also refer to the important role of school-community partnerships in the effective functioning of schools (Loots, 2011, Olivier, 2009; Ferreira, 2006).</p>	<p>The mobilisation of assets and resources at a resource-constrained special school resource centre could result in strengthening partnerships with various role-players in support of the inward functioning of the school.</p>
<b>Sub-theme 3.4: Skills development as outcome of the two asset-based projects</b>		
The mobilisation of assets and resources at a resource-constrained special school resource centre resulted in skills development of both learners and staff members, which supported the inward functioning of the school.	<p>As with the results of the reported study, existing literature within the context of the asset-based approach highlight the skills development as a key outcome of asset mobilisation (Ebersöhn &amp; Elof, 2006; Kretzmann &amp; McKnight, 1996).</p>	<p>The mobilisation of assets and resources at the resource-constrained special school resource centre could result in skills development of both learners and staff members, which may support the inward functioning of the school.</p>

<b>Sub-theme 3.5: Intra- and interpersonal qualities as a result of implementing the asset-based approach</b>		
Participants' demonstrated inter- and intrapersonal qualities during the "mobilisation of assets and resources at the resource-constrained special school resource centre", in terms of teamwork and collaboration, motivation and commitment, positive attitudes, ownership and leadership, pride and a sense of accomplishment, and following a future orientation. The demonstration of these qualities implied to support the inward functioning of the school.	Similar to the results of the reported study, literature refers to the demonstration of intra- and interpersonal qualities as a result of various interventions conducted. Findings from the Danida research project (DoE, 2002b) indicate that educators' reported a positive attitude towards diversity and disability after they received the necessary guidance and support. In other studies, participants reported enhanced social relationships and group cohesion after group interventions took place (Green & Haines, 2002; Roos & Temane, 2007; Holmer & Drescher, 2005; Olivier, 2009). Loots (2011) also report on participating teachers' asset-based competencies as a result of implementing the asset-based approach in their school-contexts.	The mobilisation of assets and resources at a resource-constrained special school resource centre could result in participants demonstrating intra and interpersonal qualities which may support the inward functioning of the school.
<b>SILENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS</b>		
No silences and contradictions were identified.		

## **5.4 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 I discussed the three themes in relation to existing literature. I next present the findings of my study by answering the research question of the reported study.

### **5.4.1 Secondary research question 1: *Which challenges, resources and assets can be identified at a resource-constrained special school resource centre?***

When the asset-based approach is implemented at a resource-constrained special school resource centre, assets and resources as well as challenges are expected to be present. Typical assets and resources that may be expected to be present when implementing the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre are natural resources (such as food gardens and open land); human resources (such as staff members, learners and participants); and physical resources (such as classrooms or centres which are used for teaching learners academic or practical skills); and resources for gardening (such as a vegetable tunnel with an irrigation system, water tanks, and gardening tools).

Typical challenges and barriers that may be expected to be present when implementing the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre are limited physical space (such as limited physical open areas and fertile land); technological challenges related to the use of technology (such as the use of technology as skills and competencies, and systemic support for using technology); additional responsibilities and related time constraints (referring to educators' additional responsibilities due to the asset-based projects they initiated, and the related time constraints they experience); participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre (referring to participants living far from the special school resource centre, implying the challenge of attending to asset-based projects after school hours).

### **5.4.2 Secondary research question 2: *How can available resources and assets be mobilised in order to address existing challenges and support the functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre?***

When implementing the asset-based approach, assets and resources are identified and mobilised. Mobilised assets and resources could be used to address challenges experienced at a resource-constrained special school resource centre. Participants in the reported study selected two asset-based projects (namely the establishment and upgrade of a food garden and a computer centre) in an attempt to address challenges experienced at their school.

Technological challenges were addressed by the upgrade of the computer centre. Both teachers' and learners' computer skills and competencies were developed. Although participants reported that the additional responsibilities and related time constraints of the asset-based projects was a challenge, they mobilised learners and other staff members to assist with the mobilisation of their asset-based projects. The challenge related to participants' living far from the special school resource centre was also addressed by the assistance that they received from learners, staff members and the community who assisted with the asset-based projects. Thus, challenges and barriers experienced can therefore be addressed by the mobilisation of identified assets and resources in a system.

Outcomes of asset mobilisation could result in supporting the inward functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre. Potential outcomes of asset-based projects may include financial support, supporting nutritional programmes at schools, strengthening of partnerships, skills development of learners and staff, and intra and interpersonal qualities (such as teamwork and collaboration, motivation and commitment, positive attitudes, ownership and leadership, pride and a sense of accomplishment, and following a future orientation).

#### **5.4.3 Main research question: *How can the asset-based approach be utilised in supporting (or not) the more efficient functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre in the North West Province, South Africa?***

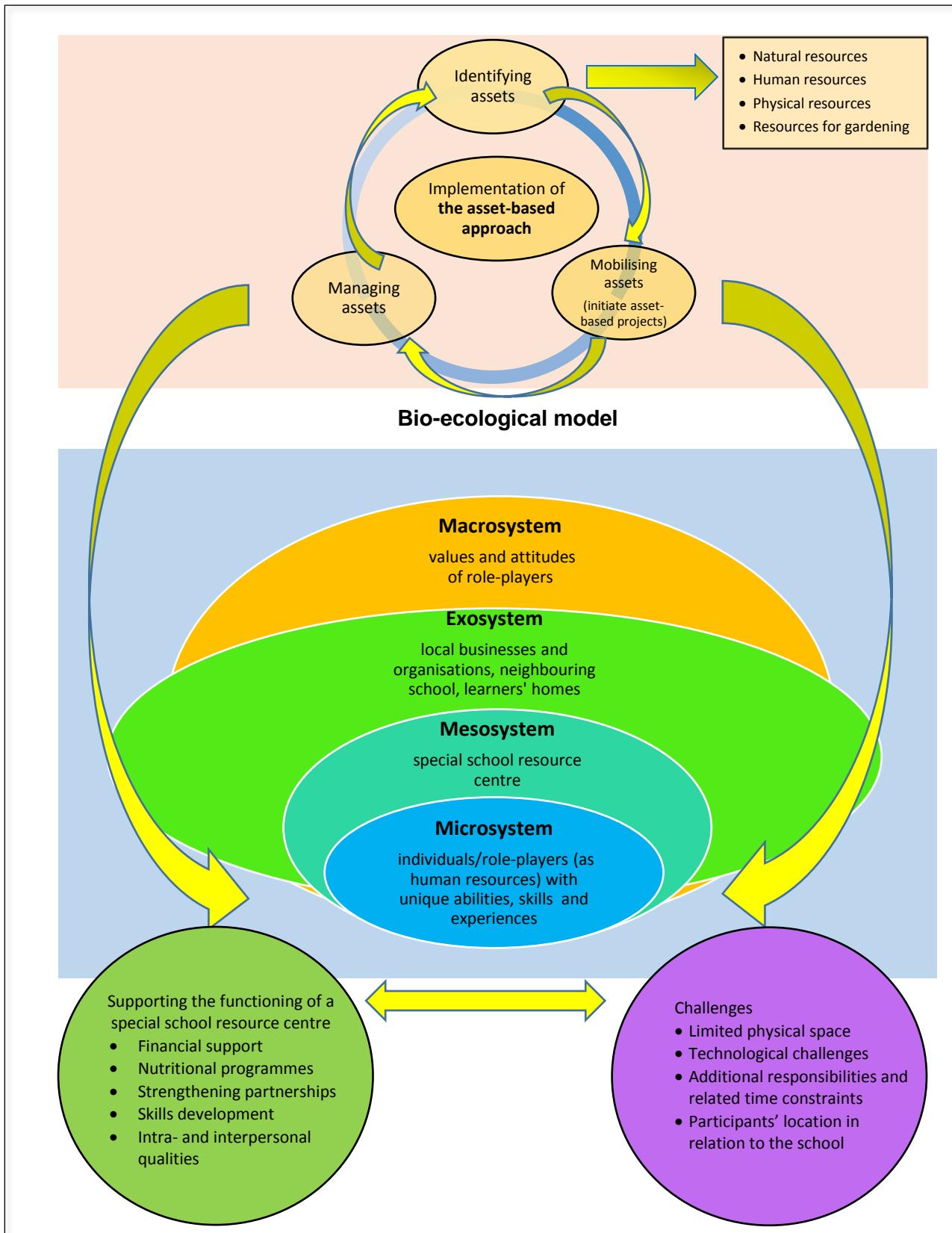
Within the context of the bio-ecological approach, it is argued that every system and every sub-system have assets and resources as well as challenges. Typical assets and resources that may be expected to be present at a resource-constrained special school resource centre as mesosystem are natural resources, human resources, physical resources, and resources for gardening. Challenges that may be expected are limited physical space, technological challenges related to the use of technology, additional responsibilities and related time constraints, and participants' location in relation to the special school resource centre.

When role-players (microsystem) at a resource-constrained special school resource centre (nested in the mesosystem) are introduced to the asset-based approach they are likely to focus on, and identify assets and resources within a system or systems. Role-players are individuals with different but unique abilities, skills, views and experiences who are involved at the centre. When role-players implement the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained special school resource centre, they are likely to be able to identify and mobilise

assets and resources, which could in turn address challenges, and ultimately support the functioning of the resource-constrained special school resource centre.

Typical expected outcomes of asset mobilisation at a resource-constrained special school resource centre that could support the inward functioning of the school are financial benefits, supporting of nutritional programmes, strengthening of partnerships in different systems, skills development, and demonstration of intra and interpersonal qualities. Supporting the functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre could have a direct and indirect impact on other systems, such as local businesses and organisations as well as neighbouring schools (nested in the exosystem).

In the reported study, various community members, local businesses and neighbouring schools assisted with the asset-based projects by means of marketing and selling of vegetables. The financial gain from the selling of vegetables had a positive effect on all systems, including individuals, the community, households and local businesses. In addition, gardening skills training and computer skills training assisted individuals to extend their skills to the broader community. Learners demonstrated their gardening skills both at the special school resource centre as well as their homes. Nutritional programmes also benefitted from the establishment and upgrade of their food garden. As a result of asset mobilisation various relationships between and within various systems were strengthened. Role-players demonstrated positive intra and interpersonal qualities, which further assisted in the building and maintenance of relationships between the school and the community as systems. Figure 5.1 illustrates how the asset-based approach could be utilised in supporting the inward functioning of a resource-constrained special school resource centre.



**Figure 5.1:** The implementation of the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS**

I next discuss the limitations of my study by referring to the level of transferability, my role as researcher, the use of a second language, selected participants, and complexities and variables of possible changes experienced.

### **5.5.1 Level of transferability of the study**

The reported study was conducted at only one rural resource-constrained special school resource centre in North West. My findings can therefore not be transferred to all special school resource centres in South Africa or globally. The same results may therefore not be found with different participants, resources, assets and challenges, or at a different time.

However, the aim of the reported qualitative interpretivist study was to gain in-depth understanding of one site in order to understand the implementation of the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre and not to compare with any other sites. Although the findings could be transferrable to other similar contexts, it cannot be generalised, or applied to other case studies. It was rather aimed to understand the implementation of the asset-based approach at a specific selected case, the resource-constrained special school resource centre. The importance of the in-depth descriptions found in the study, suggests in-depth descriptions for other researchers to understand other similar cases and then decide on the level of transferability of findings.

### **5.5.2 Role as researcher**

Although I aimed to remain objective at all times, it was not always possible, as I take special interest in special school resource centres, being a principal of a special school resource centre myself. I needed to guard against becoming personally involved in the school, their daily challenges and successes. I constantly needed to remind myself to remain an objective researcher and not to become involved as a participant with special experience and advice. Although I wanted to support the principal at the participating special school resource centre as a colleague, I had to remain the researcher in order to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. I aimed to address this limitation by making use of member checking, reflecting in my research journal and through regular discussions with my supervisors.

### **5.5.3 The use of a second language**

For both myself as researcher and the participants, English was our second language of communication. For some of the participants, English was even their third or fourth

language. Although we managed to communicate quite fluently in English as our second language, I sometimes needed to explain some of the specific terminology related to the asset-based approach in a clearer manner. In this regard, some of the participants assisted me to explain it to their colleagues in their first language.

#### **5.5.4 Selected participants**

The participants were selected purposefully, with the aim to represent different role-players involved at the selected special school resource centre as case. Although I aimed to select participants who could provide different views and input, there was only one male participant and therefore the sample was not representative in terms of gender. Furthermore, the one parent-participant also wished not to further participate in the reported study, and therefore the sample did not represent any views of parents.

#### **5.5.5 Complexities and variables of possible changes experienced**

The reported study was influenced by different variables located in various systems and sub-systems. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that one cannot quantify the outcomes of the reported study as a direct consequence of the implementation of the asset-based approach. Literature agrees that a variety of factors present in the broader context could have influenced observed changes and one cannot, therefore, attribute change to a specific intervention that was implemented (Minkler et al., 2006; Loots, 2011). I aimed to address this limitation by providing comprehensive descriptions of observed and reported behaviour during the implementation of the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre (Loots, 2011).

### **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

With this section I attempt to provide recommendations for further practice, training and development, and future research.

#### **5.6.1 Recommendations for practice**

Based on the findings of the reported study, I argue that the implementation of the asset-based approach at a resource-constrained special school resource centre could enable teachers on a practical level to identify and mobilise under-utilised assets and resources to support the functioning of the school, resulting in inward change. I recommend that other resource-constrained special school resource centres are also introduced to the asset-based approach, which could possibly result in similar outcomes.

### **5.6.2 Recommendations for training and development**

It is recommended that training programmes for both prospective and practicing teachers include content on the implementation of the asset-based approach. It could be beneficial for teachers in all schools, and not only teachers involved in special school resource centres. Role-players involved with schools such as district-based support teams, NGOs, other staff members as well as learners could also potentially benefit from training on the implementation of the asset-based approach.

Training could make individuals and groups aware of potential assets and resources in systems, but also on possible challenges and barriers that could be expected to be present in their school contexts. Mobilising identified assets and resources could assist role-players in school contexts to support the inward functioning of the school.

### **5.6.3 Recommendations for further research**

Based on my findings, the following recommendations could be made for future research:

- A follow-up study at the same resource-constrained special school resource centre identifying and mobilising other assets and resources to support the school, involving other participants.
- A follow-up study identifying more than two projects at the same resource-constrained special school resource centre, involving the community as well.
- A follow-up study at the selected resource-constrained special school resource centre to investigate the sustainability and effect of the asset-based projects that were implemented.
- A follow-up study at the selected resource-constrained special school resource centre to investigate outward change.
- A comparative case study to compare the implementation of the asset-based approach at different special school resource centres in different provinces.

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## ADDENDUM A1

# CONSENT FORM: ETHICAL CLEARANCE AND PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

### RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: <b>EP 14 03 01</b>
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd Implementing the asset-based approach in a resource-constrained Special School Resource Centre
INVESTIGATORS	Ms HM Burgers
DEPARTMENT	Educational Psychology
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	01 January 2013
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	5 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

CC  
Ms Bronwynne Swarts  
Dr Tilda Loots  
Prof Ronel Ferreira

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.



**Education and Sport Development**  
Department of Education and Sport Development  
Departement van Onderwys en Sportontwikkeling  
Gesigana le Thuto le Thaboloza ya Molebholoza  
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**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: BOJANALA DISTRICT**

From Dr P. Mokhutle

To : Ms. H. M. Burgers  
University of Pretoria – Pretoria  
  
From : Ms. M. P. Mokhutle  
District Director – Bojanala District  
  
Date : 05 October 2015

**Subject: Permission to access schools for purpose of conducting Research**

Reference is made to your letter dated the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015 regarding the above matter. The content is noted and accordingly, approval is granted for your kind self to visit schools as requested for the purpose of conducting a research in sampled Special schools in the Bojanala District, subject to the following provisions:-

- That you notify Area and Circuit Managers about your request and this subsequent letter of approval;
- That the onus to notify principals of your target schools about your intended visit and the purpose thereof rests with your good self;
- That participation in your research project will be voluntary;
- That as far as possible the general academic programme of the schools should not be interfered with; and
- That upon completion of your research, a report is send to my Office detailing the major findings and recommendations of your research and/or a final copy of your Thesis.

With my best wishes

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
M. P. Mokhutle – District Director

cc : Mr. Nakedi Thema – Area Manager Madibeng AO

## **ADDENDUM A2**

### **CONSENT FORMS: TEACHERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

#### **Principal Consent Form**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education  
Department of Educational Psychology  
5 February 2016

The principal: Mrs XXX,

#### **REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY AT XXX SPECIAL SCHOOL**

You, your staff, parents and School Governing Body are invited to participate in an action research study on how a Special School Resource Centre can utilise the asset-based approach to support the functioning of your school. The focus of the study will be to identify, mobilise and manage assets and resources at XXX Special School, XXX, North West Province. The aim of the study is to gather your experiences on the utilisation of the asset-based approach.

The fieldwork for the study will take place during the time period February to April 2016. Data for the study will be collected through individual interviews, focus-group and observation.

**Time:** The individual interviews and focus-group discussion will take place at a time convenient for you. It is therefore anticipated that the interviews and focus-group will take place after the school day, in order to prevent this research project from interfering with your administrative and teaching duties at your school. It will not interfere with the other participants at your school's normal duties.

**Place:** The interviews and focus-groups will take place at a place suitable for you.

**Duration:** It is anticipated that the duration of each individual interview will be approximately 30 minutes and the duration of the focus-group will be approximately 60-90 minutes. The exact duration will, however, depend on the amount of information you disclose and the extent to which discussions become detailed.

Your school's participation in this research project is voluntary and confidential. The participants may decide to withdraw at any stage. If you are willing for your school to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that your school is participating in this research project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. The outcome of the research will be disclosed to the participants.

You are more than welcome to contact me should you have any further questions with regards to this study.

Principal's signature: 

Date: 05/02/2016

Kind regards

H M Burgers  
082 416 0830

## **ADDENDUM B**

## **SHORT PRESENTATION**

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## **ADDENDUM C**

# **PRE-DETERMINED FRAMEWORK OF QUESTIONS: INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

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### **INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

#### **Introduction**

- Provide a short summary of the research
- Discuss the purpose of the focus group
- Discuss confidentiality
- Discuss consent for and purpose of audio recordings
- Inform participants on the length of the interview
- Discuss cell phone etiquette
- Answer any questions
- Thank participants for their participation

#### **Individual interview questions**

1. Reflect on your experience in utilising the asset-based approach in supporting the functioning of your SSRC.
2. What are the assets and resources that you have identified to support the functioning of your SSRC?
3. In which ways (if any) did the asset maps assist you to identify assets and resources?
4. What are the assets and resources that you have mobilised to support the functioning of your SSRC?
5. What are the individual strengths that you have utilised during this process? (See question 4).
6. What other human resources were mobilised in the process of supporting the functioning of your SSRC?
7. What other resources were mobilised in the process of supporting the functioning of your SSRC?

8. Reflect on the challenges that you (as an individual) have encountered in the process of utilising the asset-based approach to support the functioning of your SSRC.
9. According to your observation throughout this process, what were the specific challenges that the different role-players experienced in implementing the asset-based approach to support the functioning of the SSRC?
10. In which ways were the assets and the resources mobilised to address these challenges? (see questions 9 and 10).
11. In which ways did you use the identified or mobilised assets to support the functioning of your SSRC?
12. If you think back on the process of implementing the asset-based approach, what worked well?
13. If you think back on the process of implementing the asset-based approach, what would you have done differently?
14. Reflect on the sustainability of the assets and resources that were mobilised?
15. What other assets and resources would you still like to mobilise to further improve your SSRC?

## **FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **Introduction**

- Provide a short summary of the research
- Discuss the purpose of the focus group
- Discuss confidentiality
- Discuss consent for and purpose of audio recordings
- Inform participants on the length of the interview
- Discuss cell phone etiquette
- Answer any questions
- Thank participants for their participation

### **Focus group interview questions**

16. Reflect on your experience in utilising the asset-based approach in supporting the functioning of your SSRC.
17. What are the assets and resources that you have identified to support the functioning of your SSRC?
18. In which ways (if any) did the asset maps assist you to identify assets and resources?

19. What are the assets and resources that you have mobilised to support the functioning of your SSRC?
20. What other human resources were mobilised in the process of supporting the functioning of your SSRC?
21. Reflect on the strengths of the team as a whole. In which ways did these strengths assist you in supporting the functioning of your SSRC?
22. What other resources were mobilised in the process of supporting the functioning of your SSRC?
23. Reflect on the challenges that you (as a team) have encountered in the process of utilising the asset-based approach to support the functioning of your SSRC.
24. According to your observation throughout this process, what were the specific challenges that the different role-players experienced in implementing the asset-based approach to support the functioning of the SSRC?
25. In which ways were the assets and the resources mobilised to address these challenges? (Refer to questions 9 and 10).
26. In which ways did you use the identified or mobilised assets to support (or improve) the functioning of your SSRC?
27. If you think back on the process of implementing the asset-based approach to support the functioning of your SSRC, what worked well?
28. If you think back on the process of implementing the asset-based approach to support the functioning of your SSRC, what would you have done differently?
29. Reflect on the sustainability of the assets and resources that were mobilised?
30. What other assets and resources would you still like to mobilise to further support the functioning of your SSRC?

## **ADDENDUM D**

## **PHOTOGRAPHS OF OBSERVATIONS**

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### **PROJECT 1: VEGETABLE GARDEN**



Neglected food garden tunnel



Initial under-utilised food



Egg trays used as planting trays for seedlings

## PROJECT 2: COMPUTER CENTRE



Under-utilised computer centre at the special school resource centre.



Demonstration of program



Demonstration of the assistive devices on computers

# ADDENDUM E

## TRANSCRIPTIONS OF RESEARCH JOURNALS

### EXTRACTS FROM RESEARCH JOURNAL : 26 FEBRUARY-11 MARCH 2016

26 February 2016

I felt so frustrated today, when I arrived at the site and found the principal to be in town. I had to wait for her, "if I wanted to". I was worried that they have all lost interest in the research! When she arrived after an hour, she only called the participants together as if nothing has happened. We started and all were enthusiastic. On discussing this phenomenon with my husband, who studied "Time perception and Productivity" (Burgers, 1993) amongst different cultures for his PhD. he could enlighten quite a few cultural differences, which I now see from a different perspective

Comment [RB1]: Asset-based project 2: Establish and upgrade a computer centre: the projects might take longer than perceived due to time constraints from the time perceptions from the participants' side?

8 March 2016:

During my visit today at the special school resource centre the participants lost heart, due to the high costs of the seed boxes; the problems perceived when planting the seeds directly into the ground as well as other problems, after initially being so excited about the garden project. The participants brainstormed and came up with the idea of planting the seeds in egg trays to germinate, before planting the plants with egg trays, which are bio-degradable, directly into the soil

Comment [RB2]: PARTICIPANT S' IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH  
I have observed the participants' over a time period of 2 months

9 March 2016:

This would allow the participants to be able to give at least one tray at a time to learners who are able to grow their own gardens at home. Through this the learners could already have grown seeds to plant at home in their gardens. The miners could just monitor and assist, as members of the community assisting the special school resource centre

Comment [RB3]: Implementation of the projects ...with the ABA

11 March 2016:

I have developed a great respect for the participants' commitment. They would even meet me on a Friday afternoon until 17:00! I am not used to staff willing to stay easily on a Friday afternoon for meetings, etc. They are so enthusiastic and committed. Their willingness to stay for meetings with me on a Friday afternoon has changed my perception on participation and even time perception completely

Comment [RB4]: 4.2 Participants' participation: I showed respect for the participants' culture through my non-verbal communication and displayed interest in their culture and their views (Ferreira, 2006).

All the participants in the group were very confident and enthusiastic about this project to be sustained and to be extended. The under-utilised vegetable and spinach gardens were identified during the first two visits, and immediately thereafter started being cultivated by the participants and other human resources, such as the learners. Spinach was not only grown in gardens outside, in the food gardens, but simultaneously in the tunnels, which were identified as physical resources, where the seedlings were grown.

Comment [RB5]: Sub-theme 1.1: Natural assets and resources This confirms participants' identification of food gardens as an under-utilised asset at their school

The young plants could be irrigated and grown into strong plants within a short time span

The participants were very proud being able to feed their learners once again out of their own gardens on Fridays (National School Nutrition Programme). Though schools do receive an amount from the North West Department of Education for the National School Nutrition Programme, it is not much. They only grow spinach to sell for an additional income to their school fees but for the learners' National School Nutrition Programme on Fridays, they grow beetroot, onions, cabbage, carrots and lettuce. They (the participants) are so proud that they could sometimes donate to less fortunate neighbouring schools some of the leftover vegetables, which they have picked and could not use for that Friday. This also taught the learners to take care of their neighbours, and not always make money

During the visit, I also met some of the non-participants who assisted in the garden project. Some of the learners and general assistants were working hand in hand in the garden with one participant. While the learners were busy with the re-planting of seedlings from seed boxes into the ground at the gardens, some general assistants were assisting with the enlargement of the garden for the planting of more spinach to provide in the need from the community to buy their spinach

The computer centre was struggling; they could not find a neighbouring school who was willing to spend some time, energy and knowledge with them to get theirs' up and running

**Comment [RB6]:** Sub-theme 3.2: Supporting the National School Nutrition Programme  
In addition to selling vegetables to neighbouring schools, the participating school also donated vegetables to other schools when they could not afford to buy any.

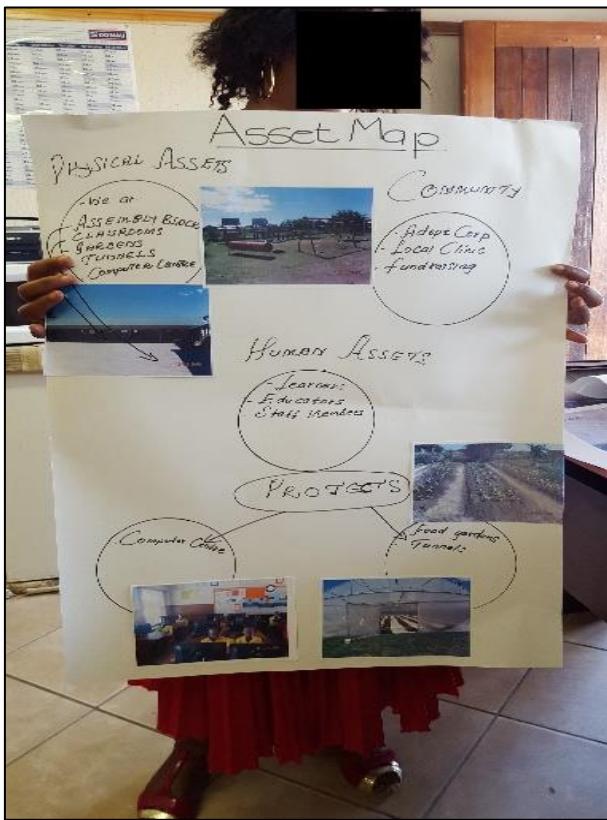
**Comment [RB7]:** 4.2 PARTICIPANTS' IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH  
The learners are so excited!!!

**Comment [RB8]:** Asset-based project 2: Establish and upgrade a computer centre- I am happy for them that the school could assist them

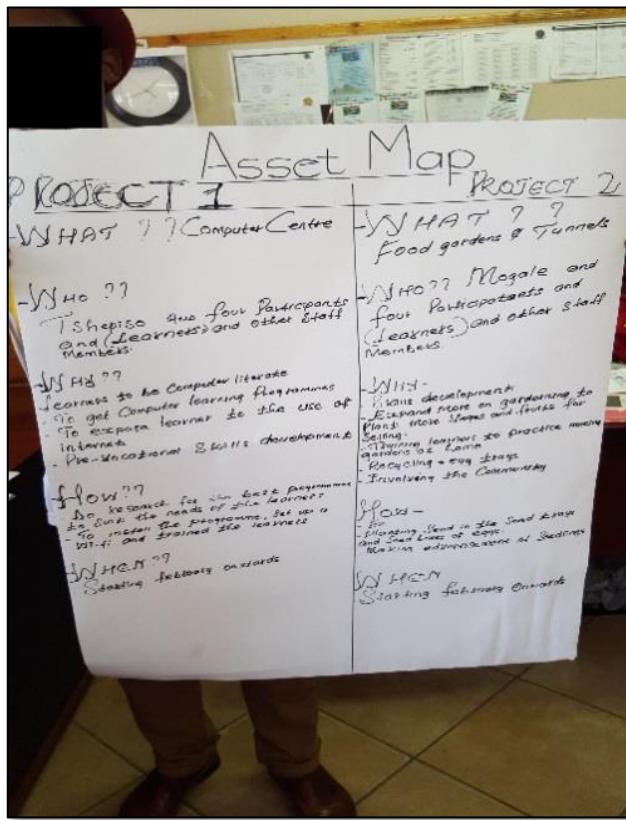
## ADDENDUM F

### VISUAL AND AUDIO-VISUAL DATA (PRA POSTERS)

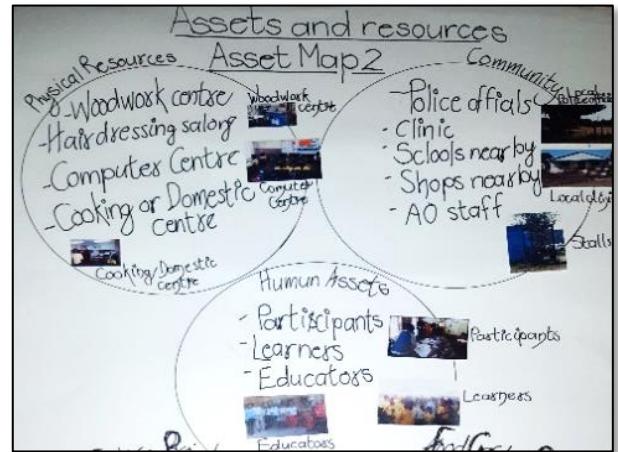
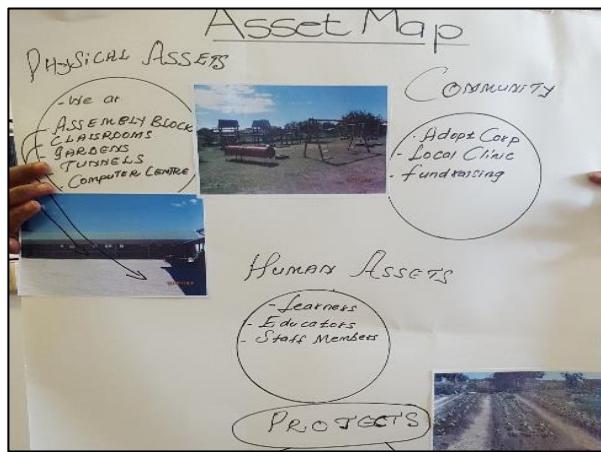
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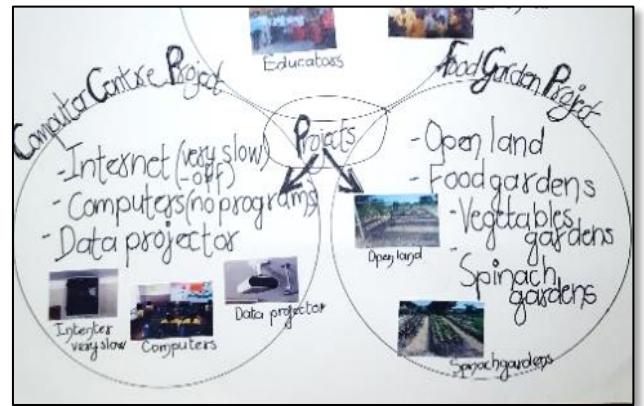
Asset map constructed during pre-implementation phase



Action plans for asset-based projects



Asset maps with identified assets and resources as well as chosen projects at the resource-constrained special school resource centre



Asset-based projects identified by the participants