

***School-based initiatives in support of the wellbeing of at-risk
primary school learners***

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of and in
accordance with the requirements for the degree of

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Acknowledgements

This journey started with a dream I dared to dream – to align my calling and God-given talents with a way of living and the legacy I wish to leave behind. Although I regard this dissertation of limited scope and the subsequent completion of my qualification as a huge achievement, I found this journey to be humbling and remain cognisant of the fact that it signifies merely the beginning of a life that still needs to be lived. Apart from the personal sacrifices I made in order to complete this study, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people:

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Declaration

I, Lambertus Petrus Johannes Louw, student number 143 253 82, hereby declare that this dissertation, "*School-based initiatives in support of the wellbeing of at-risk primary school learners*", submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Magister Educationis (Educational Psychology) degree at the University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this dissertation of limited scope are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

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LPJ Louw

7 December 2017

Approval: Research Ethics Committee



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RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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CC

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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,
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This letter serves to confirm that I have performed the English language editing on the dissertation of limited scope to be submitted by Mr Lambertus Petrus Johannes Louw in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology and entitled:

School-based initiatives in support of the wellbeing of at-risk primary school learners

While I am a permanent employee of the Directorate: Language Services at the University of South Africa in Pretoria – where I serve as an editor and translator – the editing of Mr Louw’s dissertation was undertaken in my personal capacity.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CE Baudin', with a horizontal line underneath.

CE Baudin

Abstract

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The growing number of challenges related to cumulative risk, such as poverty, unemployment, hunger and HIV/AIDS, has distressing consequences for communities, schools, families, as well as individuals. As a result, there is a mounting need for psycho-social support provision to vulnerable youth in the South African context. In this country, the focus has increasingly moved towards communities taking responsibility themselves to address the challenges they face. Community-based coping (Ferreira, 2006) inevitably implies a prominent role by schools and teachers, who are key figures in any community.

Against this background, the current study set out to explore school-based support initiatives that exist in South African primary schools in at-risk contexts. More specifically, this study aimed to gain insight into how primary schools (teachers) can support the physical, emotional and psychosocial wellbeing of children. The following research question guided the investigation: How do school-based initiatives support the wellbeing of at-risk learners in South African primary schools?

Research was undertaken in eight schools situated in the Eastern Cape province, which have been involved in the STAR (Supportive Teachers Assets and Resilience) and FIRST-GATE (Food Intake and Resilience Support: Gardens as Taught by Educators) projects over recent years. I utilised interpretivism as meta-theory and followed a qualitative methodological approach applying participatory reflection and action (PRA) principles. I implemented, a case study research design, and generated and documented data by means of PRA-based activities and discussions, observation-as-context-of-interaction, field notes, a research journal and audio-visual techniques.

Following thematic inductive data analysis, I identified four themes with related sub-themes. Firstly, participants indicated the aims of school-based support in terms of raising awareness and preventing social problems; addressing problems and the manifestation of challenges; and early the identification of problems, referrals and providing support for accessing external help.

Secondly, participants identified broad strategies for providing support which relate to collaboration and networking; establishing structures and committees at school; identifying and perusing fundraising opportunities; and encouraging parent/caregiver involvement at school. The third theme discuss additional role-players in the provision of school-based support, namely national government; local organisations, community members and volunteers; and people in helping professions. Finally, participants indicated specific areas of school-based support which relate to addressing the needs of learners; providing academic support; encouraging cultural awareness and creating recreational opportunities; and maintaining school infrastructure in support of healthy functioning.

Based on the findings I obtained, I can conclude that schools in South Africa strive to support learners by, for example, forming partnerships with parents, the local community and government in order to mobilise available support. In so doing, schools seek to create awareness of problems, identify learners who are at risk, make referrals, employ fundraising initiatives, establish committees and structures and promote programmes to address, and possibly prevent, social problems.

Key Terms:

- At-risk learners
- Child development
- FIRST-GATE project
- Resilience
- School-based support
- Schools as nodes of care and support
- STAR project
- Wellbeing

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

Despite various examples of supportive interventions having been documented (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Skovdal & Campbell, 2015; Tucker, Trotman & Martyn, 2015), ongoing research on instances in which teachers take a prominent role in supporting at-risk learners remains important. This study forms part of a broader research project, the FIRST-GATE¹ project, that commenced in 2015 and that focuses on supporting the resilience of vulnerable school-communities through establishing school-based vegetable gardens. The FIRST-GATE project follows on the STAR² and SHEBA³ projects, led by Professor Ronél Ferreira and Professor Liesel Ebersöhn of the University of Pretoria. Within the context of the three broader research projects, this study aimed to investigate how school-based support initiatives can support the wellbeing of learners and their families in at-risk school contexts.

From a personal point of view, this study gave me the opportunity to undertake research as part of a broader research project, thus allowing me – as a novice researcher – to acquire valuable knowledge, skills and experience. Working alongside leaders with years of research experience in the field of resilience and wellbeing amongst youth in South Africa created an opportunity for me for both personal and professional growth.

My personal interest in the topic is linked to my experiences as a child who faced a number of challenges and who was supported by systems available at the school I attended. Based on the positive impact of such support on my own development, I remain interested in the ways in which schools can support at-risk learners and communities as I believe that, in many cases, various support systems are already in place, even though these may not have been formalised. As I can partially relate to the vulnerability of youth in South Africa, I also understand the impact that environmental factors may have on supporting the wellbeing and development of those at risk. In addition, the findings of this study may provide me, as a future educational psychologist, with a platform from which to reach out to vulnerable children, thus enabling me to give back some of what life has given me.

¹ Food Intake and Resilience Support: Gardens as Taught by Educators

² Supportive Teachers, Assets and Resilience

³ Supporting Home Environments in Beating Adversity

1.1.1 Challenges often faced by children in South Africa

Many children in South Africa face mounting psychosocial challenges due to a weakening economy, high levels of poverty, HIV/AIDS and a range of other risk factors, thus putting strain on the social, psychological, physical and financial wellbeing of communities (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011). According to Statistics South Africa (2015b), the total number of AIDS orphans has seen a marked increase over the last couple of years, with predictions estimating the number of orphaned youth due to HIV/AIDS at around 2.3 million by 2020 (Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2007). Furthermore, there has been a marked increase in the number of HIV deaths since 2012 (Stats SA, 2015b). In addition, the South-African economy displayed a decrease in its average growth rate for the period 2008 to 2012 (Stats SA, 2015b), and saw more people affected by unemployment during 2015. South-Africa's dysfunctional health system has also had a negative effect on the psychosocial wellbeing of the country's population (Coovadia, Jewkes, Barron, Sanders & McIntyre, 2009).

According to Faber, Laurie, Maduna, Magudulela and Muehlhoff (2014), a great number of South Africans suffer from malnutrition and underfeeding, with studies indicating the prevalence of stunting amongst South African children as being alarmingly high (Said-Mohamed, Micklesfield, Pettifor & Norris, 2015). Child abuse, which can be explicated as any form of maltreatment that threatens a child's physical, emotional, psychological or cognitive wellbeing, is yet another widespread pandemic in South Africa, with more than 64% of youth being affected in the broader Africa region (Meinck, Cluver, Boyes & Mhlongo, 2015; UNICEF, 2016). The South African educational system is furthermore also characterised as being under-resourced and overstrained, resulting in a poor teaching and learning environment for many children (Setlhare, Wood & Meyer, 2016). Current research indicates that teachers are often not adequately trained or supported, thereby highlighting a fragile and substandard educational setting (Setlhare, Wood & Meyer, 2016).

The growing number of challenges related to cumulative risk, such as poverty, unemployment, malnutrition/hunger, child abuse, poor education and HIV/AIDS, have distressing consequences for individuals, families and schools, as well as for communities at large. As a result, there is a mounting need for psychosocial support to at-risk youth in South Africa, more specifically in resource-constrained and rural communities (Meintjies, Halla, Marera & Boulle, 2009).

Apart from being affected by multiple factors related to poverty and HIV/AIDS, exposure to direct and secondary violence on political, familial and communal level has also proven to be a common phenomenon experienced by South-African youth. Of these, ambient community violence is currently regarded as a strong influencer of children's psychosocial functioning and wellbeing (Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001). The familiar home environment is often altered due to these challenges, crippling the traditional role of parents and families in

supporting at-risk children (Deverell & Ross, 2004). In response, the South-African Department of Basic Education (Department of Education, 2006) emphasises the pastoral role that teachers increasingly need to fulfil in providing psychosocial support (Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson & Pillay, 2000). Against this background, Ferreira and Ebersöhn (2011) argue that schools and teachers are well positioned to provide support to at-risk learners and their families.

1.1.2 Potential role of schools and teachers in supporting the optimal development of children

In South Africa, the focus has increasingly shifted towards communities taking responsibility for addressing the challenges they face. Community-based coping (Ferreira, 2006) inevitably implies a prominent role being played by schools and teachers, both key figures in any community. Teachers have, in recent times and as a result, become increasingly involved in initiatives that focus on the provision of protective resources in at-risk communities (Barolsky, 2003). In this regard, research conducted by Dass-Brailsford (2005), illustrates how relationships with teachers and other role models can serve as a protective resource in at-risk contexts, specifically as regards the academic achievement of learners. Consequently, the changed role of teachers requires not only that they provide physical and academic support to learners, but also psychosocial care (Meintjies, 2009).

As children spend a great deal of their time at school, schools are well placed to provide support in communities facing cumulative risk (Loots, Ebersöhn, Ferreira & Eloff, 2012). School-based support initiatives, however, largely depend on the ability of teachers or related stakeholders such as volunteers to successfully implement support programmes and initiatives. Known school-based support programmes include teachers optimally utilising school resources; forming partnerships; and providing school-based support to learners and their families. School resources can include systems such as identification and referral procedures as well as the ability to access health and social development services to provide support to at-risk learners. Partnerships that may be utilised to provide support include teachers partnering with learners, families, community volunteers and community organisations in order to offer family-centred support and to facilitate, for example, feeding schemes. To this end, school-based initiatives may include vegetable gardens that can provide nutritional support and encourage awareness of healthy dietary practises; access to health and emotional support services; and developing capacity amongst parents (through educative programmes) and learners (through extramural activities) (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011).

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Against the background of the previous section, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into school-based support initiatives already being undertaken in South African primary schools in at-risk contexts. More specifically, I set out to explore and describe how primary schools (teachers and/or other related stakeholders) may support the physical, emotional and psychosocial wellbeing of children by means of school-based support initiatives.

As such, this study may build on existing theory related to schools as nodes of care and support. The study may furthermore provide guidelines for developing and refining potential school-based supportive initiatives, with the purpose of providing multiple level support and promoting the wellbeing of at-risk youth.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In undertaking this study, I was guided by the following primary research question: *How do school-based initiatives support the wellbeing of at-risk learners in South African primary schools?*

The following secondary research questions apply:

- How do teachers in resource-constrained school settings conceptualise South African at-risk learners and their needs?
- What is expected of schools and teachers in South Africa in terms of addressing the needs of at-risk learners?
- How do primary school teachers view the school's role as node of care and support?

1.4 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

Based on my initial literature review, and against the background of the broader STAR, SHEBA and FIRST-GATE projects, I made the following assumptions when undertaking this study:

- Teachers, as well as schools and communities that function as systems, possess innate resources. This assumption is situated in the principles of positive psychology (Lopez & Snyder 2009).
- Through the utilisation of such resources (within individuals as well as schools and communities), individuals and communities will be able to make positive changes to their wellbeing, living circumstances and the capacity to function resiliently.
- Schools in South Africa can support at-risk learners and their families on multiple levels, thereby promoting resilience and the general wellbeing of learners.

Through the PRA-based (participatory reflection and action) activities I facilitated, I was able to identify such innate resources amongst participants. By assuming the existence of these innate resources, I was able to justify my choice of the asset-based approach as theoretical framework – in other words, the utilisation of existing assets, resources, skills and abilities, forming part of the asset-based approach, made sense in light of existing resources which may be found within individuals. As such, by relying on positive psychology, I could justify the implementation of PRA-based methodology, where participants were required to actively contribute to the research process.

1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In this section, I clarify the key concepts that guided my study.

1.5.1 School-based support initiatives

An initiative generally refers to the first action or event in a series of actions or events. It may also be described as taking charge of something in the hope that it will endure, or as a new plan or process to achieve something or solve a problem (Cambridge University Press, 2016; Jewell & Abate, 2010). Furthermore, support refers to any action of holding up, aiding, or serving as a foundation (Dictionary.com LLC, 2017).

As such, school-based support initiatives, as referred to in the context of this study, can be explained as the actions, plans or programmes developed, instigated and managed by school personnel and managing bodies, independently or in collaboration with others such as community members. These initiatives can take any form, as long as they stem from the actions of teachers or related stakeholders and are aimed at strengthening, uplifting, enriching, advancing or providing help to learners, their families or the community where the school is based.

1.5.2 Wellbeing

Wellbeing refers to a person's state of happiness, as well as to levels of physical health and prosperity (Jewell & Abate, 2010). It may, furthermore, indicate a satisfactory condition of existence, characterised by welfare (Dictionary.com LLC, 2016). However, conventional wisdom has come to understand that the absence of somatic or psychological symptoms is not necessarily a determinant for a high level of wellbeing. Similarly, the presence of somatic or psychological symptoms is not a sufficient pre-condition for wellbeing or the lack thereof (Bos, Snippe, De Jonge & Jeronimus, 2016).

In general, literature differentiates between three aspects that may be used to define subjective wellbeing (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). These include momentary fluctuations of positive moods and emotions; domain satisfactions (work, social relations or personal autonomy); and global judgements of life satisfaction or happiness (Diener *et al.*, 1999; Kahneman, 2003).

In terms of this study, the concept “wellbeing” defines the condition of at-risk learners’ psychological, physical and environmental states, which may be addressed by school-based supportive initiatives. As such, wellbeing is conceptualised in terms of its internal and temporary characteristics (emotions), its more permanent domains (global judgements), its external variables (domain satisfactions), and how these may be promoted through school-based support initiatives.

1.5.3 Resilience

According to Schoon and Bynner (2003: 21), resilience refers to the capacity for “positive adaption in the face of adversity”. This description alludes to two important aspects of resilience. Firstly, resilience implies a context of difficulty and, secondly, the ability of a person to respond to adverse circumstances in a positive manner so as to advance personal or collective wellbeing (Goldstein & Brooks, 2013).

Within the context of this study, the conceptualisation of resilience is furthermore supplemented by the Afrocentric perspective proposed by Theron, Theron and Malindi (2013, p. 71), indicating that concepts such as a “resilient personality, acceptance of current challenges, educational progress, the capacity to dream, and value-driven behaviour, all of which was encouraged by active support systems”, should also be included in the understanding of resilience. In applying this view to my study, I regard resilience as the ability to respond positively to adverse circumstances in order to grow and move forward, based on an optimistic approach and perspective towards challenges.

1.5.4 At-risk learners in South African primary schools

The concept “at-risk learners” is often used in social sciences when referring to young people or children who are more likely than others to find the transitioning through the various developmental phases of life difficult, due to exposure to various factors that may negatively influence their ability to cope with life’s challenges (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Moore, 2006). According to a study done by Suh, Suh and Houston (2007), adverse factors that can be associated with increased school dropout rates and a lack of wellbeing, can be categorised into behavioural, familial, and school-related variables impacting young children. Other factors related to at-risk circumstances may include parental control, individual traits, negative socio-economic

conditions, family structure and health (Ingul, Klöckner, Silverman & Nordahl, 2012; Moreland, Felton, Hanson, Jackson & Dumas, 2016).

In this study, and against the background of the current South African context, the term “at-risk learners in South African primary schools” refers to youth (6 to 13 years of age) exposed to challenges such as the loss of parent/s, changes in caregivers, chronic illnesses of family members and adversity as a result of poverty (Barolsky, 2003). More specifically, an at-risk learner is often less likely to successfully transition through the various developmental life stages and maintain a certain level of wellbeing, as a result of various internal (psychological, behavioural, etc.) and external (familial, socio-economic, etc.) factors that may impede the individual’s capacity to respond with the required resilience.

1.6 INTRODUCING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

I relied on the asset-based approach as theoretical framework. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), the asset-based approach describes the underlying theory of utilising existing assets, resources, skills and abilities in order to address the challenges faced by individuals and communities. According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006), the asset-based approach can be linked to sustainability, which should form an integral part of any support programme.

These authors associate aspects such as community-based participation; building and strengthening internal capacities; community resource mobilisation; networking and establishing links; advocacy; using local beliefs, structures, knowledge and practices; and information sharing for the sake of supporting at-risk children, to sustainable programmes following the asset-based approach. Additionally, the authors highlight similarities between the view of schools as nodes of care and support and the asset-based approach, which confirms this theory’s significance for the current study. Accordingly, knowledge related to practices of the asset-based approach can be passed on to families, thereby and in turn potentially strengthening the capacities of schools, families and communities to support at-risk youth (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

The asset-based approach adopts the principles of empowerment and ownership (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1999). Fundamentally, this entails a shift from addressing stress and challenges through external resources, to addressing these issues internally, through self-empowerment and by taking ownership. As such, this theory emphasises the need for individuals and communities to actively deal with challenges in order to ensure positive longitudinal outcomes. It is opposed to the needs-based approach, which primarily interprets communities in terms of their needs (Alison & Gord, 2005). Even though the asset-based approach does not deny problems, it chooses to start with what communities possess, instead of with which deficiencies exist.

My reason for selecting the asset-based approach as theoretical framework is based on the underlying belief that individuals and communities are capable of changing and improving undesired conditions through the identification and utilisation of community assets (Boyd, Hayes, Wilson & Bearsley-Smith, 2008). This approach therefore situates community members and teachers as key role-players who can take ownership of support initiatives (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1999). The relevance of the asset-based approach is furthermore based on the current socio-economic background of South-Africa, and the fact that external support to at-risk communities is typically limited. In support of this point, the importance of teachers and schools in finding ways in which to address cumulative risk on various levels is increasingly highlighted (Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001; Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2007; Petersena, Bhanaab, Myezac, Aliceadef, Johnc, Holstc, McKayd & Mellinsef, 2010). I discuss my selected theoretical framework in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.7 SELECTED PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

In this section, I introduce the epistemological and methodological paradigms I selected for this study. I discuss these choices more comprehensively in Chapter 3.

1.7.1 Epistemological paradigm

For this study, I utilised an interpretivist paradigm. According to Weber (2004), interpretivism implies a subjective epistemology, which assumes that reality cannot be separated from the knowledge associated with it. As such, reality is seen to be created through the interaction between individuals, their social experiences and the meaning they attach to these (Hovorka & Lee, 2010).

My rationale for selecting interpretivism is based on the possibility that this choice implied – that is to conduct research with teachers and understand their views on and experiences of the way in which schools can support at-risk learners. As Maree (2012) states, one of the strengths of this paradigm is that it yields descriptions that are in-depth and information rich. Challenges commonly associated with interpretivism include the possibility of researcher bias and questions of validity, reliability and generalisability, collectively referred to as legitimisation (Kelliher, 2005). I allude in Chapter 3 to the strategies I relied on in addressing these challenges, where I include a more comprehensive discussion of the selected epistemology.

1.7.2 Methodological approach

In line with the broader research project of which this study forms part, I followed a qualitative approach, applying participatory reflection and action (PRA) principles. Qualitative research developed from the need in social sciences to answer “why” questions, accommodating people’s perceptions (Maree, 2012). In support, PRA implies the active participation of participants taking ownership of development initiatives so as to promote self-efficacy (Ferreira, 2006; Narayanasamy, 2009). As such, a qualitative approach allowed me to gain insight into teachers’ perceptions, by listening to their words, reports and explanations and actively involving them in reflecting on their experiences and participating in the research.

This advantage of qualitative research applying PRA principles is that it implies both the possibility of obtaining rich descriptive data and of understanding and explaining phenomena (Maree, 2012). In terms of my study, this approach thus enabled me to report on school-based support initiatives that already exist and, more importantly, to explain and understand the complexities and subtleties within schools that make these initiatives work, or not. Potential challenges of qualitative studies include the lack of generalisable findings, the potential for researcher bias, the time-consuming nature of qualitative research (Kothari, 1985), and its dependence on aspects such as collaboration and ownership-taking by participants (Chambers, 1992; Ferreira, 2006; Narayanasamy, 2009).

1.8 BROAD OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS AND RELATED CHOICES

This section introduces my selected research design, strategies for selecting participants, methods for generating and documenting data, as well as how I analysed and interpreted the data. More detail on these strategies follows in Chapter 3.

1.8.1 Research design

I utilised a case study design in order to gain an understanding of school-based initiatives implemented by teachers or other related role-players in support of the wellbeing of at-risk learners. A case study design is typically used when aiming to obtain a rich and comprehensive understanding of systems, groups or individuals (Yin, 1984). This design allows for close collaboration between the researcher, the research team, and the participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008). More specifically, I implemented an instrumental case study design as this choice allowed me to fulfil the purpose of my study by gaining in-depth information on school-based support initiatives and the contexts in which they occur, as well as detailed descriptions of the related activities (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Case study research is often critiqued due to the inability to provide generalisable conclusions. However, case study research intends to provide local truths, which may be used to understand specific phenomena rather than providing generalisable findings (Maree, 2012). Furthermore, case study research may be critiqued in terms of validity and reliability issues, due to the subjective nature of the methods generally used. To address this potential challenge and obtain trustworthy findings, I used multiple sources of data, as also proposed by the interpretivist paradigm. I furthermore include detailed descriptions of the study and research procedures I employed in this dissertation of limited scope. In addition, I strove to ensure trustworthiness by relying on theoretical relationships when interpreting and presenting the findings of the study (Yin, 2003).

1.8.2 Selection of participants

I relied on convenience sampling in selecting eight participating schools, based on their participation in the broader research project of which this study forms part. Essentially, convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method, where participants or cases are selected due to being conveniently accessible (Maree, 2012). The selected schools were initially selected purposefully for the broader FIRST-GATE project, as they are situated in communities characterised by risks associated with poverty, HIV/AIDS and related challenges, all of which may have a negative effect on the physical, intellectual, emotional and psychological wellbeing of learners attending these schools.

In selecting 33 participants, I relied on purposeful sampling. This selection strategy implies that certain individuals or groups of individuals are identified and selected based on their knowledge or experience regarding a specific area of interest (Creswell, 2013; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). I thus selected participants (teachers) who could assist me in obtaining rich information on the phenomenon I set out to explore, based on their experience in the field. In addition, participant availability and willingness, as well as the ability to communicate their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes in English, were instrumentally important as selection criteria (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). I discuss the specific criteria I applied in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.8.3 Data generation and documentation

I utilised PRA-based activities and discussions, observation-as-context-of-interaction, a research journal containing field notes and reflective thoughts, as well as audio-visual strategies (audio-recordings, PRA posters and photographs) for data generation and documentation. In this section, I introduce the reader to these strategies, however more detailed discussions follow in Chapter 3.

I made use of *PRA-based activities and discussions* (Chambers, 2002) during two rounds of data generation, initially at a colloquium in the Eastern Cape where the eight participating schools were represented by a number of teachers, and then five months later at each of the participating schools. In keeping with PRA principles, the data generation strategies involved open-ended, visual, creative and flexible activities (Ferreira, 2006), encouraging active participation and reflection by the participants (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011; Chambers, 2012). Following the creation of PRA-posters at the colloquium, I discussed the ideas captured on the posters with one teacher from each school, in order to clarify uncertainties and gain an understanding of the teacher's viewpoint. For the follow-up PRA-based sessions five months later, small group discussions were followed by presentations by small groups to the larger group of participants at each school.

I also relied on *observation-as-context-of-interaction* (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000), following an observer as participant approach, throughout the research process. This enabled me to better understand the strategies employed by schools in supporting the wellbeing of children within the school context, as explained by the participants.

For data documentation I kept a *research journal*. *Field notes* were generated by compiling detailed records of the PRA-sessions and observations I made while in the field (Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001). In addition, my *reflective thoughts* were recorded as personal interpretations, ideas and insights, as well as reflections on my personal experiences and emotions elicited during interactions (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001). I furthermore transcribed all audio-recordings of the PRA-based discussions verbatim in order to facilitate analysis. The PRA-posters that were created by the participants provided visual data and documented their ideas. In addition, I relied on photographs of the sessions, research context and support initiatives that I observed at the participating schools, as documented data.

1.8.4 Data analysis and interpretation

For my study, I conducted thematic inductive analysis, which implies a systematic approach to analysing and interpreting qualitative data (Maree, 2012). Data analysis as applied method permitted me to identify recurring phrases and themes with regard to the topic of my study, thereby enabling me to develop an in-depth understanding of ways in which school-based initiatives may support the wellbeing of learners in at-risk contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maree, 2012).

Thematic inductive analysis can be described as the method of identifying, analysing and reporting themes in research data. Essentially, this entails more than merely a passive process of giving an account of the themes that "emerge" from data, as it involves the researcher fulfilling an active role in identifying themes of interest and

importance. However, this does not entail a naïve realist approach whereby the researcher merely assigns personal meanings to data, as it is also important that the theoretical framework and methods match the intentions of the research, and that these acknowledge the various decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As a framework for conducting thematic inductive analysis, I followed an essentialist/realist approach, with my interpretations being led by the unique experiences, realities and perceptions of the participants. I identified themes and patterns inductively, following a “bottom up” approach whereby themes were dependent on the data provided. According to such a “bottom up” approach, coding was led by recurring themes in the data and not by fitting the data into a pre-determined coding frame (Tashakkori, 2006). Furthermore, themes were identified on a semantic level, as I did not look for underlying meanings in the data, but rather aimed to identify explicitly expressed themes. Essentially, coding at the semantic level entailed the organisation of data to facilitate the identification of patterns in semantic content. The data were subsequently summarised in order for me to interpret potentially significant patterns and their relevance to established literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

My analysis was guided according to six primary phases, namely to familiarise myself with the data; to generate initial codes; search for themes; review themes; define and name themes; and produce a research report. The first phase implied the reading and re-reading of all transcriptions of data and noting my initial ideas. Next, I generated possible codes by noting interesting features across the data and linking relevant data to the identified codes. After generating potential codes, I searched for more specific themes by organising initial codes into potential themes. In the subsequent phase I reviewed these themes by checking whether or not they matched the coded excerpts as well as the data as a whole, and by compiling a thematic map. This was followed by the defining and naming of themes and, as part of this phase, I endeavoured to understand the identified themes more comprehensively. Throughout the process of analysis, I was supported by my supervisor who fulfilled the role of second analyst. Additionally, I also shared the identified themes with the participants during a member checking session in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings and facilitate ownership amongst the participants. To conclude, I produced a report (this dissertation of limited scope) in which I explain the significance of my interpretations in terms of the research questions as well as existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout my research, I respected the ethical guidelines for studies involving human participants. I thus followed the guidelines related to permission to conduct research, informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity, protection from harm and deception, and accuracy in report writing. I introduce the way in which I respected ethical considerations in this section, and then elaborate on this in Chapter 3.

Essentially, permission to conduct research entails the attaining of approval from the relevant authorities. Informed consent refers to gaining permission from participants prior to their involvement, while voluntary participation can be described as the wilful and unforced involvement of participants (Maree, 2007). To this end, authorisation to conduct this study was obtained from the Department of Education (Eastern Cape), as well as from the principals of the participating schools, as part of the broader FIRST-GATE project. When entering the research field, I provided teachers with information regarding my study and its purpose, prior to obtaining their voluntary and informed consent. I made it clear that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so (Maree, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Next, confidentiality and anonymity relate to the privacy and concealment of any personal information that is disclosed during contact sessions (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013). Protection from harm involves the deliberate actions and precautions taken to ensure the physical and emotional safety of participants, while lack of deception implies openness and transparency with regard to the purpose of the study and the methods used (Maree, 2007; Patton, 2002). I respected the aspects related to confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study by explaining what it entailed; relating the relevance thereof to the data obtained and other co-participants; as well as by omitting identifiable information and securing the safe storage thereof. Additionally, I protected the wellbeing of the participants by not exposing them to any physical risks during the data generation sessions. In terms of deception, I did not withhold any information from them related to the study, the research processes or what their participation implied (Patton, 2002; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

Lastly, accuracy in report writing involves the documentation of findings in a manner that is truthful and free from manipulation (Maree, 2007; Patton, 2002). I adhered to the principle of accuracy by truthfully reporting on the data that were generated in the field (Patton, 2002; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

1.10 QUALITY CRITERIA

The use of rigorous methods is imperative for realising qualitative research, due to the possibility of being influenced by subjective perspectives. Accordingly, rigorous methods are required to establish a high level of trustworthiness able to convince the research audience that the findings are consistent and representative of the participants' views (Patton, 2002). In order to add rigour to my study, I attempted to adhere to the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity (Morse, 2015; Patton, 2002; Seale & Silverman, 1997).

By achieving a high level of *credibility*, the researcher will be able to explain the degree to which interpretations represent the raw data and mirror the perceptions of the participants. For this purpose, I employed strategies such as prolonged engagement in the field; clarifying aspects of and guarding against researcher bias; providing intellectual audit trails; keeping a research journal; including extensive descriptions of the context, data and findings; and discussing the various research processes and progress with my supervisor. Finally, as mentioned earlier, I also made use of member checking to confirm the credibility of the data and my interpretations thereof (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013; Woods, 2006).

Dependability is a qualitative term that refers to the possibility of findings being replicated in another study – much the same as reliability in quantitative studies. In an attempt to establish dependability, I provide detailed records of my data, methods and decisions in this research report, thereby providing an audit trail. I also identify potential changes that can be considered for future attempts to replicate this study (Seale, 1999).

Confirmability requires findings to be free from researcher bias. As such, confirmable findings are situated within the data, and not in the interaction of the data with the researcher. To meet the criterion of confirmability, I acknowledged my interaction with the data during qualitative analysis and the subsequent influence that my personal values and perceptions could potentially have had on the findings. To this end, I relied on reflexivity; regular discussions with my supervisor and co-researchers during data-generation, analysis and interpretation; as well as a detailed record of the processes I followed in doing interpretations and reaching conclusions. I employed these strategies in order to ensure that all findings are supported by the data (Patton, 2002; Seale, 1999).

In general, *transferability* entails the possibility of research findings being transferred to other settings and, thus, whether or not findings can be used to represent the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the wider population. As indicated previously, the qualitative and interpretivist nature of this study did not ask for generalisable findings. However, based on the detailed descriptions and trail of evidence included in this dissertation of limited scope, the reader may decide to what extent the findings of this study hold value and can be transferred to other contexts, or to what extent they may add to a better understanding of the phenomenon as presented in another context (Cho & Trent, 2006; Ferreira, 2006; Patton, 2001; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). Throughout, I endeavoured to offer a thick and rich description of the study and the processes it involved, for this purpose.

According to Seale (2002), *authenticity* will be achieved when the researcher is able to exhibit a range of different realities (fairness). By doing so, the researcher will be able to establish a balanced view of the various

perspectives available. Authenticity can thus be defined in terms of fairness, which includes ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity (Seale, 2002). I attempted to maintain authenticity by including a wide range of perspectives gained through data generation, and I also report on contradictions and conflicting values in this dissertation of limited scope. I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3 the strategies I followed to add rigour to my qualitative study.

1.11 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In this section I provide an outline of the chapters of this dissertation of limited scope.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In Chapter 1, I provide the necessary background to my study, as well as a general overview and my motivation for conducting research in this area of interest. I discuss the research purpose and formulate research questions. I explain the underlying key concepts and then provide a brief overview of the selected paradigm, research design and methodological approach. After introducing the data generation and documentation techniques I utilised, I refer to the quality criteria and ethical considerations I aimed to adhere to.

CHAPTER 2: EXPLORING EXISTING LITERATURE AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In Chapter 2, I discuss literature that relates to the focus of this study. I explore typical challenges faced by children in South Africa and foreground the need to support learners in at-risk school-community contexts. Against this background, I specifically contemplate the role of schools and teachers in supporting the healthy development of children and provide examples of how schools can support learners, as evident in existing studies. I conclude by explaining my selected theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3: DEFINING AND CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

In Chapter 3, I discuss the research process. I attend to aspects of the selected paradigmatic perspectives and research design. I explain the methods of data generation, documentation, analysis and interpretation, and justify the choices I made against the purpose of this investigation. Throughout, I highlight strengths and potential challenges related to the methodological choices I made. I conclude by discussing the role of the researcher, ethical considerations and quality criteria pertinent to this study, and how I aimed to respect and address these.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In Chapter 4, I present the results following the thematic inductive data analysis I completed. I report the results in terms of the four themes and related sub-themes that I identified. I include verbatim quotations and excerpts from the raw data in support of my discussions.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter 5 I situate the results obtained in terms of existing literature, thereby presenting the findings of the study. I foreground confirmations and highlight silences and new insights. I then address the research questions as I come to final conclusions, based on the findings of the study. Next, I highlight the potential contributions of the study, and reflect on the challenges I faced and the potential limitations I identified. I conclude with recommendations for training, practice and future research.

1.12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I introduced the study I conducted. I explained my rationale for undertaking this study against the backdrop of the South African context, the study forming part of a broader research initiative, as well as my personal interest in this focus area. I formulated research questions, stated my working assumptions and clarified the key concepts that guided me. I introduced the asset-based approach as theoretical framework, as well as the paradigmatic and methodological choices I made. I also briefly discussed the quality criteria and ethical considerations that relate to the study.

In the following chapter, I explore existing literature on at-risk circumstances often faced by children in South Africa. I discuss ways of supporting children in addressing the challenges and risks they face on a daily basis, and specifically investigate the potential value of school-based support initiatives. I also explain my selected theoretical framework in more detail.

CHAPTER 2: EXPLORING EXISTING LITERATURE AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I discussed the research purpose and presented my research questions. I explained the underlying key concepts and then introduced my selected paradigm, research design and methodological approach. I concluded Chapter 1 with an overview of the data generation and documentation techniques I used, as well as the quality criteria and ethical considerations to which I aimed to adhere.

In this chapter, I provide context to the study in terms of existing literature. I explore various sources explicating ways in which the wellbeing of at-risk youth can be supported, more specifically through school-based initiatives. Whilst exploring existing literature, I was led by the specific focus of this study in terms of the research questions and purpose. To conclude the chapter, I explain the asset-based approach as selected theoretical framework.

2.2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In this section, I provide an overview of the literature I reviewed in preparation for undertaking this study. I conceptualise the wider context in which South African learners often find themselves and contemplate potential avenues for supporting at-risk learners in the school context.

2.2.1 South African context as context of risk and adversity

Citizens of South Africa face mounting psychosocial adversities attributable to aspects such as a weakening economy, high levels of poverty, HIV/AIDS and a range of other risk factors, putting strain on the social, psychological, physical and financial wellbeing of communities (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011). The average growth rate of the South-African economy decreased from approximately 5% in real terms for the period 2004-2007, to just above 2% for 2008-2012 (Stats SA, 2015b). Furthermore, unemployment rates have increased in recent years, with the unemployment rate in South-Africa averaging 25% between 2000 and 2015 (Stats SA, 2015a). According to Wanberg (2012), unemployment will negatively affect both the psychological and physical health of individuals, and also correlates with increased incidences of suicide. Unemployed parents may furthermore be regarded as a potential risk factor in terms of preserving the mental, emotional and behavioural health of their children (Yoshikawa, Aber & Beardslee, 2012).

According to Landsberg, Krüger and Swart (2016), the weak economy and high levels of unemployment have established a culture of poverty amongst many South Africans. Within the South African context, poverty manifests in the form of ill health, malnutrition, deprivation of privileges, limited or inadequate education, unsupportive environments (a lack of basic resources such as water and sanitation), limited social status and citizens having a negative view of the future. Consequently, many young South Africans remain caught up in the grip of poverty due to insufficient educational opportunities and poor parenting.

Poverty-stricken communities are often characterised by weak communal structures, vandalism, negative peer groups, unstimulating environments and violence. Moral confusion can, furthermore, contribute to a range of adversities of the kind being faced by the South African populace. These include a high divorce rate, sexual promiscuity, child abuse and trafficking, as well as crime and drug and alcohol abuse (Landsberg *et al.*, 2016). Such factors may, in turn, facilitate a negative view towards education and intensify the challenges youth face when wanting to rise above poverty (Landsberg *et al.*, 2016).

In search of work opportunities, many people have moved to larger city areas over the past years (Landsberg *et al.*, 2016). The rate at which people in South Africa have been moving to cities has, however, caused a further decline in human living conditions due to insufficient employment opportunities, health services, educational facilities, transport services, and water and electricity provision (Fonteyn & Davie, 2014). With a reduced standard of living for many of the middle to lower economic class, adverse factors such as insecurity, fear, hunger, stress and increased criminal activity have caused mounting intrapersonal, ethnic and racial tensions. As such, unplanned urbanisation remains a problem in South Africa and situates the wellbeing of youth within a pool of vulnerability (Landsberg *et al.*, 2016).

Atmore (2012) confirms that the most significant challenges that youth and their families, as well as teachers, communities and the South African government, are currently confronted with include poverty, sub-standard education, health-related challenges and HIV/AIDS. In 2014, around 63% of all South African children were living in households classified as income-poor, calculated as less than R923⁴ per person per month (Hall & Sambu, 2016). In terms of education, much has been done since 1994 to improve access to and the quality of early learning programmes and education. Nonetheless, much remains to be done in terms of the provision of learning materials and resources, funding, qualified teachers, physical safety and basic facilities to make quality education a reality (DoBE, DoSD & UNICEF, 2010).

⁴ R923 ZAR = ± \$68.52 USD

Universally, a country's health status and socio-economic development are gauged by measuring infant mortality rates. In this regard, the South African Child Gauge (Delany, Jehoma & Lake, 2016) found an overall decline in the infant mortality rate from 52 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2000, to 34 in 2010, suggesting some improvement in the overall health of the South African population. However, despite this improvement and the provision of support for Early Childhood Development (ECD), Atmore (2012) concludes that the need to provide for the basic needs of young people and children remains a priority, as many South Africans still face adverse circumstances.

In addition to high levels of unemployment, poverty and poor health care provision, the absence of healthy lifestyles further amplifies individual and communal vulnerability (Boutayeb, 2006). South Africans are often faced with diseases of lifestyle, termed non-communicable diseases (Mayosi, Flisher, Lalloo, Sitas, Tollman & Bradshaw, 2009). Non-communicable diseases, in turn, relate to sickness and infections that are non-transmissible, such as strokes, cancer and the like.

Whilst the percentage of South African households suffering from hunger and malnutrition may have halved between 2002 and 2012 (Stats SA, 2012), many of these households are at-risk of experiencing "hidden hunger" or micro-nutrient deficiencies due to deficits in dietary quality and variety, which is essential for physical wellbeing (Hendriks, 2014). One in four individuals faces hunger and 26.5% of youth in South Africa are stunted (Fleming, Robinson, Thomson, Graetz, Margono & Abraham, 2014). These are some of the direct outcomes of poverty which lead to many at-risk children depending on schools for nutritional support (Faber, Laurie, Maduna, Magudulela & Muehlhoff, 2014). The majority of learners who are at-risk of hunger and malnutrition reside in communities that are poor, and attend so-called quintile 1 to 3 schools, which are classified as such due to their dependence on government funding. Therefore, these learners rely on programmes such as the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), which is managed by the Department of Basic Education, for nutritional provision (South African Schools Act, 1996).

The ailing public health system in South Africa furthermore contributes to the crippling effect of poverty-associated challenges on the psychosocial wellbeing of its population (Coovadia, Jewkes, Barron, Sanders & McIntyre, 2009). As access to health services and well-defined health policies are instrumental in supporting the wellbeing of all citizens, this remains a priority in the country (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011; Stewart, Sun, Patterson, Lemerle & Hardie, 2004). To this end, the supportive role that schools and communities themselves may fulfil – that is, where available resources are utilised to address the challenges faced by such schools and communities – is continually emphasised.

2.2.2 Effect of contextual challenges on South African children

According to Landsberg *et al.* (2016), the family as a unit forms the foundation for societal stability. Unfortunately, the growing number of orphaned youth, the effect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the incidence of single parent households, violence, and moral confusion all serve as warning signs for the wellbeing of families. As the basic needs of South African families are often not fulfilled, the cognitive and learning capacity of young people may be negatively affected. Furthermore, due to the disintegration of family life, youth are often left vulnerable, unloved and in need of acceptance, interpersonal contact and belongingness which will, in turn, threaten their physical, social, psychological and normative development (Sewpaul, 2014).

The high number of HIV-related deaths and orphans is especially concerning in light of the growing body of research indicating a high incidence of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression amongst HIV/AIDS-orphaned youth (Cluver, Orkin, Gardner & Boyes, 2012). In this regard, Boyes and Cluver (2013) conclude that psychological challenges such as depression and anxiety are related to indirect factors such as stigma, which is typically higher amongst HIV/AIDS-orphaned youth when compared to their peers. In addition, the study by Cluver *et al.* (2012) indicates that children living with HIV/AIDS-infected caregivers generally also display high levels of psychological distress, indicated by symptoms of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. These authors furthermore established that children affected by HIV/AIDS-infected caregivers and HIV/AIDS-orphanhood simultaneously will, as a result, experience cumulative negative effects (Cluver *et al.*, 2012).

The ability of youth affected by HIV/AIDS to cope with socio-emotional challenges may be further reduced by factors such as the late roll-out of antiretrovirals (ARVs), challenges in terms of caregiving, poverty, stigmatisation and minimally supportive foster care arrangements. As a result, the need for mental health programmes framed within an ecological approach, and that can strengthen protective resources at individual, community and policy levels, is continually emphasised (Petersena, Bhanaab, Myezac, Aliceadef, Johnc, Holstc, McKayd & Mellinsef, 2010).

Apart from HIV/AIDS-related challenges, youth orphaned due to other risk factors and child-headed households define the living circumstances of many South African children (Chuong & Operario, 2012). Traditionally, parentless families were taken in by extended family, yet the availability of this safety net to orphans in South Africa has declined in recent years (Mturi, 2012). Challenges faced by child-headed households include psychosocial and economic challenges such as hunger, starvation, early school dropout, trauma and stress, exploitation, and susceptibility to multiple forms of abuse (Pillay, 2012; Shava, Gunhidzirai & Shava, 2016).

According to Meinck, Cluver, Boyes, and Mhlongo (2015), potential risk factors for child abuse can be found on community level (bullying and sexual violence), household level (poverty, household violence, and non-nuclear families), caregiver level (caregiver illness, psychological problems, the misuse of alcohol and other substances, transactional patterns, and parenting styles), and child level (age, gender, personality, health, disability, and behaviour). While there are no accurate statistics on child abuse in South Africa, sexual abuse and exposure to other forms of non-sexual maltreatment such as physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and family violence, has become a widespread pandemic (UNICEF, 2016), with the prevalence estimated to be as high as 64% in Africa (Meinck *et al.*, 2015). Typically, abuse will result in low self-esteem, self-blame, violence, brain and other physical deficiencies, emotional complications, suicidal behaviour and various psychological problems such as depression and anxiety (Souverein, Ward, Visser & Burton, 2016).

Furthermore, exposure to direct or secondary violence on political, familial and communal level is a common phenomenon experienced by the youth of South Africa. Of these, ambient community violence is currently regarded as a strong influencer of children's psychosocial functioning and wellbeing. In this regard, research confirms (Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001) that the influence of ambient and vicarious violence on the psychological wellbeing of youth is similar to that of direct violence and victimisation.

According to Carter, Briggs-Gowan and Davis (2004), evidence suggests that a substantial number of young children display psychopathological complications, and that these may continue into adulthood. Literature furthermore indicates that many children experiencing mental health challenges are not assessed and identified at an early stage and do not always receive the necessary psychological care (McKay & Bannon, 2004). Many children in early adolescence face multiple risk factors related to self-concept and self-awareness, physical development and so on. These may be intensified by incongruences between the psychological needs they experience and the social-environmental resources available to them (Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan & Mac Iver, 1993).

2.3 DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES AND NEEDS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

Healthy holistic development during the early years can promote the overall wellbeing of an individual throughout the lifespan (Keenan, Evans & Crowley, 2016). As such, an understanding of the primary school child's development and the factors that may support or limit healthy development can enable role-players to promote healthy child functioning. In this section, the focus falls on the central developmental needs of primary school children, based on the specific focus and demarcation of this investigation.

2.3.1 Biological development and physical needs of the primary school child

Biological development includes aspects of physical growth, sexual maturation, motor skills and brain development. According to Keenan *et al.* (2016), environmental factors have an important effect on children's physical growth. Factors such as nutritional intake will, for example, affect a child's height and weight, and can even lead to conditions such as delayed menarche (onset of menstruation) and anaemia (low levels of iron in the bloodstream). Psychosocial dwarfism is yet another disorder that can be linked to environmental factors, including physical and emotional deprivation or extreme abuse and neglect, and is typically observed as immature skeletal development and a short stature. In terms of sexual maturation, research similarly indicates that pubertal timing can be delayed by nutritional limitations as well as family conflict (Keenan *et al.*, 2016). In addition, findings by Allsworth, Weitzen and Boardman (2005) link the income status of a family to pubertal onset.

Motor development relates to fine motor (small movement sequences) and gross motor (moving around in the environment) skills. As motor development is regarded as being a result of the interaction between nature and nurture, such development can be supported by an environment that invites and encourages both fine and gross motor movements and healthy development (Lerner & Johns, 2011). In the same way, brain development, which forms the basis for overall human functioning, can be influenced by multiple factors including prenatal circumstances, nutrition, and psychosocial circumstances (Lerner & Johns, 2011). Malnutrition may lead to underdevelopment of the brain and neurological connections. In addition to physical deprivation, Lerner and Johns (2011) elaborate on the effect that psychosocial circumstances may have on brain development in terms of expediting or impeding the development of neurological connections, and the establishment of experience-expectant and experience-dependent neural circuits.

It follows that primary school children have certain physical needs – needs that must be met in order for them to develop and function optimally. In this regard, Shonkoff, Garner, Siegel, Dobbins, Earls and McGuinn (2012) highlight the importance of healthy environmental factors during early childhood for preventing genetic predispositions, as well as learning and behavioural problems and psychological and physical limitations. Accordingly, these authors propose stable and responsive relationships that are nurturing and protective as prerequisite for healthy child development. Such supportive environments can provide both physical and emotional security to the child, and foster a healthy dietary lifestyle. In this way, if a child's needs for nutritious meals and physical and emotional care are met, the probability of healthy biological development is enhanced. However, children growing up in at-risk communities are often faced with the challenge of a home environment not fulfilling their basic needs. This results in biological development being hampered which, in turn, will affect school performance and emotional wellbeing.

2.3.2 Cognitive development and related needs of the primary school child

The early to middle childhood phase marks important cognitive milestones for children as they move towards mental maturation. The cognitive development theory of Piaget (1952)⁵, the social cultural theory of Vygotsky (1980)⁵ and information processing systems theory (Simon, 1962)⁵ all contribute to the contextualisation of cognitive development. According to Piaget (1952), the concrete operational (7–11 years) and formal operational (11 years and older) stages apply to the primary school child. Within the concrete operational phase, a child develops the ability to think, using mental operations such as conversation, classification hierarchies and transitive inferencing. During the formal operational phase, the child starts to implement propositional, abstract and hypothetico-deductive reasoning. The implications of these mental stages necessitate both formal (academic) and informal (everyday exposure) accommodations in order to facilitate and encourage the development of a child's cognitive potential (Keenan *et al.*, 2016).

Vygotsky's social cultural theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1980) highlights the cultural and social environment as key to understanding mental maturation. Cognitive potential and mental functioning are, accordingly, seen as the result of an individual's interaction with the social context – an interaction that relies on mediation tools such as language and numbers. Vygotsky (1980) emphasises the zone of proximal development (ZPD), as well as the importance of play (offering a social plane for learning) and language (the use of egocentric and private speech), as additional important denominators for contextualising cognitive development. These concepts highlight the use of teaching methods such as reciprocal, vicarious and cooperative learning, as well as scaffolding strategies when teaching children (Lerner & Johns, 2011).

Finally, information processing systems theory (Simon, 1962) emphasises the flow of information within a person's mind and memory system. It relates to how humans attend to, recognise, transform, store and retrieve information. Accordingly, learning is viewed as a result of the interaction between a stimulus in the environment and the learner. An important assumption is that information is processed in stages as it moves through the multistore memory system, consisting of the sensory register, short-term memory (STM), working memory and long-term memory (Sperling, 1960)⁵. No limits are indicated as to how much information can be processed at the various stages. The implications for teaching and learning are thus that meaningful learning will occur when a learner relates new information to prior knowledge and experiences, and that visual imagery is easier to recall than abstract concepts. Furthermore, information processing systems theory postulates that rehearsal can prevent the quick disappearance of information from the STM and that the process of organising information

⁵ Older resources were utilised in order to access original theory and ideas.

into manageable chunks will make it easier to remember information. In addition, learning is propagated to be structured in such a way that it can build on existing knowledge (Keenan *et al.*, 2016; Lerner & Johns, 2011).

Based on the principles of the proximal process, which is situated in Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory, learning will be most effective when located in multiple contexts, over an extended period of time, and occurring regularly (Bronfenbrenner, 1989⁵; Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2000). As such, the primary school learner's development hinges on learning opportunities that extend beyond the school environment and include all areas of living, such as the home environment, social opportunities and day-to-day activities (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2000). This implies that children living in at-risk contexts often face the challenge of physical, learning and social environments that are not conducive to cognitive development and that may cultivate learning backlogs. The lack of opportunities to develop cognitively and to learn effectively may then manifest in learning difficulties and challenges in meeting academic requirements, thus putting learners' wellbeing at-risk.

2.3.3 Language development and related needs of the primary school child

Language is learned from birth and grows in complexity as the individual grows older, enabling him or her to function academically, socially and vocationally (Lerner & Johns, 2011). Up to this point, language development forms an integral part of the primary school child's milestones.

Several theories on language development exist, such as learning theories (Skinner, 1957)⁵, the nativist theory (Chomsky, 2002) and interactionist theory (Bloom, 1998)⁵. Learning theory, propagated by theorists such as B.F. Skinner (1957)⁵ and Albert Bandura (1989)⁵, views language as a construct that is learned through environmental factors, such as reinforcement and punishment, as well as an individual's social environment (for example observational learning and imitation). According to the nativist theory (Chomsky, 2002), certain grammatical concepts are universal to all languages and are therefore innate. As such, the nativist perspective conceptualises language as an innate biological predisposition, which all individuals possess (Keenan *et al.*, 2016). Interactionist theory proposes language as a construct that contains a strong biological predisposition yet that also relies on the supportive role that parents and the social context can play in helping an individual acquire a language (Keenan *et al.*, 2016).

In addition to the importance of language for communication for academic, social and vocational purposes, the multilingual context of South Africa merits special attention (Landsberg *et al.*, 2005). Whilst South Africa is regarded as multilingual and has 11 official languages, only a limited percentage of learners receive schooling in their mother tongue. The majority of the South African populace speaks an African language as a first

language and use English as second or third language. However, schooling and tertiary education is mostly offered in English, due to multiple factors such as a shortage of non-English speaking teachers and the notion that English will pave the way for a successful future. Consequently, many South African learners are regarded as English Second Language (ESL) learners, which implies challenges to not only the South African Education system, but also to the psycho-economical future of the country (Landsberg *et al.*, 2005).

According to Landsberg *et al.* (2005), education in a language other than one's mother tongue poses distinct challenges to learners who may not even have mastered the basic interpersonal communication skills of their own mother tongues due to unsupportive psychosocial and economic circumstances. This is also a phenomenon characteristic of the South African context, which, according to Landsberg *et al.* (2005) is problematic, as cognitive academic language proficiency in the language of learning and teaching is necessary for learners to succeed academically. However, the authors argue that before a learner can achieve cognitive academic language proficiency in the language of learning and teaching, he or she must master the basic interpersonal communication skills of that language. Set against the aforementioned background, the importance of addressing language barriers to learning, within the South African context, remains a priority (Landsberg *et al.*, 2005).

A low socio-economic status is, furthermore, associated with poor language development amongst youth (Pungello, Iruka, Dotterer, Mills-Koonce & Reznick, 2009). This can be explained by familial and external factors such as nutritional deprivation, parentless families, parents who work far from home, as well as substance, physical and emotional abuse, which may limit opportunities to develop language proficiency during childhood (Landsberg, Krüger & Swart, 2016). As such, and in order to sufficiently develop early language and literacy, the primary school learner is characterised by distinct needs. As parenting factors play an important role, sensitive parenting that is characterised as responsive, stimulating, rewarding, caring, and that invites reciprocal verbal and nonverbal exchanges, is important (Pungello *et al.*, 2009). Niklas and Schneider (2013) highlight the importance of a rich Home Literacy Environment (HLE), consisting of books, posters and games that may offer opportunities to develop letter knowledge, phonological awareness (PA), vocabulary, and cognitive abilities, all of which are required for reading and writing.

In addition, Otto (2014) proposes some factors that may influence language development in the primary grades, namely the way in which a curriculum is implemented by teachers (task centred, or learner centred), and the critical role of talk, which can invite learners to "connect with others, to understand their world, and to reveal themselves within it" (Lindfors in Otto, 2014, p31). Otto (2014) furthermore suggests exploratory discovery-centred activities to promote higher order mental processes and inquiry learning that can enhance language development. In terms of the language development of children functioning in at-risk contexts, factors necessary

for language development, such as a favourable home, social and learning environment, are often absent or unsupportive. This leaves learners ill-equipped and unable to use language as a tool for academic progress. Challenges in coping with academic requirements, due to language barriers, can in this way add to the stress on the wellbeing of at-risk youth and should be considered when providing support.

2.3.4 Psychosocial development and related needs of the primary school learners

Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (Erikson, 1950, 1968)⁵ assumes eight psychosocial crises phases throughout the lifespan, which are influenced by the support and counsel (or lack thereof) of significant others. How an individual adapts to these phases determines the normative outcome of the individual's psychological and social development (Erikson, 1950, 1968)⁵. The stages of Erikson's Psychosocial Theory that apply to primary school children are the initiative vs. guilt (ages 3 to 6 years), industry vs. inferiority (ages 6 to 11 years), and identity vs. role confusion (ages 11 to 18 years) stages.

In terms of the emotional development of young children, cognitive constructions such as self-concept (self-knowledge), self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to have mastery over one's environment) and self-competence (what one can do), as well as self-esteem and self-worth, are core affective constructs that will determine the young individual's wellbeing (Zembar & Blume, 2009). Accordingly, these constructs will merge to form an individual's emotional competence (Saarni, 1998) and emotional intelligence (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler & Mayer, 2000). In short, emotional competence entails the capacity to manage and control the self in relation to the environment. It follows that emotional intelligence implies the ability to understand and use emotions to promote emotional growth.

In addition to using emotional or personality theories to understand psychosocial development, perspectives on social development that stem from a social cognitive approach may explain how social interactions and behaviour can be used to better understand social relations. These perspectives include social theories of the mind (Flavell & Miller, 1998), social learning theory (Bandura, 1971)⁵, and social information processing theory (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Essentially, social theories of the mind foreground the process of theorising about others' mental conditions in order to understand and predict social behaviour (Flavell & Miller, 1998). Social learning theory maintains that social behaviour and development will result from observations of the social world through principles such as vicarious reinforcement (Bandura, 1971)⁵. Lastly, social information processing theory highlights specific cognitive mechanisms that a child may use to process social information in order to determine his/her behaviour, namely encoding, interpreting, clarifying, response construction, deciding on a response, and response enactment (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

Up to this point, certain factors within the home, school and community context will co-determine the primary school child's psychosocial development. In terms of the home environment, high levels of parent responsiveness, sensitivity to child distress, as well as appropriate emotional display by the parent/s, and support of the child's emotions (assisting in identifying, managing and expressing emotions appropriately), may enhance social competence and promote secure attachments (Rispoli, McGoey, Koziol & Schreiber, 2013). Within the school context, a positive social climate amongst learners and teachers, where open communication, a sense of belonging (cooperative horizontal relationships) and fairness are promoted, is important (Karcher, 2002; Ross, 2015). Finally, in the community context, a child's psychosocial development may be promoted through enriched civic and political knowledge, and the promotion of civic engagement in community, school and neighbourhood projects (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003; Zembar & Blume, 2009).

Regrettably, at-risk learners are often surrounded by social circumstances that are unsupportive, and may limit opportunities for social constructions such as a positive self-concept, self-efficacy, self-competence, high self-esteem, emotional competence and emotional intelligence, which are essential for a learner's wellbeing in order to develop normatively. The implication of the aforementioned to this study relates to the development of the at-risk learner's psychosocial wellbeing being regarded as an integral part of school-based support initiatives.

2.3.5 Normative development and related needs of the primary school child

Normative development entails the acquisition of a norms-system, which will guide the individual's behaviour. Normative development stems from the integration of personality, emotions, culture and society (Kohlberg, 1963)⁵, with a child's intellectual development fulfilling an additional role in explaining moral reasoning and normative decision-making. According to Kohlberg (1969)⁵, the primary school child finds him/herself in the pre-conventional stage, which itself is divided into two stages, namely the orientation to punishment and obedience stage, and the naive hedonistic and instrumental orientation stage. During the orientation to punishment and obedience stage, the child discerns behaviour based on its consequences and will therefore direct behaviour in terms of the anticipated reward or punishment. The naive hedonistic and instrumental orientation stage is characterised by a child's awareness of others' points of view and will therefore comply with rules based on the child's own interests or the perceived interests of someone else.

The moral-religious development of primary school children is furthermore characterised by an inner moral sense phase, when God is perceived as omnipotent, with human characteristics, and as an entity that needs to be obeyed. Finally, the genuine conscience phase can be explained as the development of a child's moral judgement and reasoning due to the development of abstract reasoning. During this phase, the child may start

to question religious beliefs and rituals. A child's approach towards spirituality is greatly affected by the examples modelled by significant others at this time (Du Toit, 1991).

The implications of the aforementioned theory for the normative and moral-religious development of primary school children are that children at this stage need direct instruction in terms of rules and limits. Reward should align with obedient behaviour, and behaviour modelling can be regarded as an important factor for a child's normative wellbeing (Du Toit, 1991). The moral-religious development of at-risk children, which is important in guiding behaviour and supporting a state of wellbeing, are typically challenged due to increased levels of moral confusion characteristic of the South African populace (Landsberg *et al.*, 2016). Set against the aforementioned background, the importance of addressing the normative development of at-risk children is highlighted.

2.4 POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN SUPPORTING AT-RISK LEARNERS

From available literature it is evident that the physical, emotional and psychosocial wellbeing of children are often placed in jeopardy due to the challenges they face (Ferreira & Ebersöhn 2011), resulting in schools facing increased demands to support learners and even their families on multiple levels (Meintjies, Halla, Marera & Boule 2009). With many parents spending little time with their children, schools are often viewed as nodes of care and support that should provide ongoing and long-term support to children (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2012). However, South African teachers are not always adequately trained to provide the necessary support to learners, or may be under-resourced and overburdened with administrative responsibilities and overcrowded classrooms (Setlhare, Wood & Meyer, 2016), making it hard for them to fulfil this expectation.

Whilst schools may therefore be favourably positioned to offer the necessary support to at-risk youth (Khanare, 2012), ill-equipped and overburdened schools can, on the other hand, also negatively impact both the teaching and learning environment, resulting in a failure to meet the psychosocial and learning needs of children (Setlhare *et al.*, 2016). Set against the potential of schools to support at-risk youth and help shape their futures, the functioning of the South African schooling system can be regarded as a significant factor determining the overall welfare of youth.

In this regard, the Department of Education has initiated several programmes that may equip schools and teachers to promote the wellbeing of at-risk youth, such as abstinence-based intervention programmes, peer education, guidelines for Health Advisory Committees, and training in terms of lay counselling skills. While some intervention programmes are primarily informative, with the aim of fostering favourable values and responsible behaviour amongst youth, some other programmes aim to train teachers and selected learners (grade 7 to 11) to act as role models for other learners. Health Advisory Committee (HAC) programmes focus on effective

policies and the establishment of committees that may safeguard the welfare of the school and learners, while lay counselling programmes can equip teachers with basic skills to support learners and other teachers who may need support (Skovdal & Campbell, 2015).

2.4.1 Schools as nodes of care and support

Several South African policies advocate the expanded role of schools in providing supportive care to learners (Hoadley, 2008). For example, the *National Education on HIV/AIDS for Learners and Educators* (Department of Education, 1999) and the *HIV/AIDS Emergency: Department of Education Guidelines for Educators* (Department of Education, 2000a) documents outline the responsibilities of schools to establish HIV/AIDS policies and health advisory committees to support learners at-risk of HIV/AIDS-related challenges. Similarly, the *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (Department of Education, 2001a) document defines the school's role in supporting learner needs that may arise from physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental disabilities, or that may stem from psychosocial challenges and socio-economic distress. This document furthermore advances the importance of site-based support teams in schools, that may manage institutional, teacher and learner support by mobilising expertise from within communities, district support teams and higher education institutions.

Next, the *National School Health Policy and Implementation Guidelines* (Department of Education, 2002) document outlines the responsibility of schools to establish school-based support teams that can support children at-risk of health, emotional and physical needs, and includes guidelines for school feeding schemes, school vegetable gardens, and healthy nutritional behaviours and lifestyles. In addition, the *Tirisano Plan of Action (2003-2005)* (Department of Education, 2003), advocates the role of schools in identifying and registering learners who may be in need of child support grants, or who face HIV/AIDS-related challenges. Finally, the *Education Laws Amendment Bill* (Department of Education, 2005) makes provision for legislation that allows for *no-fee schools* located in poverty-stricken areas, and stipulates guidelines for increased financial support from national government.

Literature provides ample support (Dowdy, Furlong, Raines, Boverly, Kauffman, Kamphaus & Murdock, 2015; Greenberg *et al.*, 2003; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017) for the potential value of school-based support initiatives for at-risk learners, school-based interventions, and youth development programmes that can assist learners to become knowledgeable, responsible, socially skilled, healthy, caring, and contributing citizens. As children spend a great deal of their time at school, schools are well placed to support communities facing cumulative risk (Loots *et al.*, 2012). In this regard, Paternite, Weist, Axelrod, Anderson-Butcher and Weston (2006) found that schools imply several inherited benefits as nodes of care and support, such as the possibility

of schools reducing the stigma related to receiving professional psychological support, or of schools creating opportunities for preventative measures. In this manner, existing literature (Ogina, 2010) illustrates the importance of schools in supporting learners who are exposed to cumulative risk factors and challenges, as is often the case in South Africa.

Widespread application of effective intervention programmes, however, requires comprehensive school reform models, supportive and feasible educational policies and the professional development of teachers to effectively implement intervention programmes (Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik & Elias, 2003). An intraorganisational, interprofessional approach, where collaboration between schools and available assets within the community are utilised, can further strengthen school-based support programmes (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004). In this regard Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) are of the view that effective collaboration and networking hinges on the ability of teachers and schools to partner with other stakeholders in support of at-risk learners (Ebersöhn *et al.*, 2011).

In terms of the exact role of schools, however, conflicting perceptions seemingly exist. Some scholars question schools' ability to shield learners from social problems that are a result of factors beyond the control of teachers and school-based interventions, whereas other researchers view school-based initiatives as a possible avenue not only to support learners, but also to contribute to society's health and wellbeing (Skovdal & Campbell, 2015).

The idea of expanding the role of schools to provide support and alleviate the adverse circumstances faced by children in South Africa therefore remains an area for further research. Thus far, research in this field, has often been limited and conducted on a small scale (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011; Khanare, 2012). As such, ongoing research aimed at better understanding the factors that may threaten the wellbeing of youth on a holistic level is required in order to define the roles of schools more clearly and drive relevant and effective policy development (Skovdal & Campbell, 2015).

2.4.2 Role of the teacher in providing school-based support to at-risk learners

According to the *Norms and Standards for Teacher Education* document of the Department of Basic Education (Committee on Teacher Education Policy, 1996), every teacher was expected to fulfil seven roles at the time of implementation of this policy. The more recent *Norms and Standards for Educators* (Department of Education, 2000b) signifies a subtle shift in focus away from teacher agency towards bureaucratic structure accountability. As a result, local conditions and challenges are expected to be solved through global imperatives, moving from practicality towards normalisation and standardisation, in an attempt to unify educational practices (Hill, 2003).

In terms of the initially formulated seven roles required of South African teachers (Department of Education, 2000b), specific competencies were implied that may result in the provision of emotional, physical and educational support to learners as well as to fellow colleagues, the establishment of a positive learning environment, and the demonstration of community involvement and citizenship. These roles are:

- **Teachers being learning mediators, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials**, whereby teachers will incorporate and pace relevant visual and textual resources according to the needs of learners, as well as to curriculum requirements.
- **Teachers being good leaders** who can effectively manage learning within the classroom, administrative duties and decision-making functions (Department of Education, 2000b).
- **Teachers being scholars, researchers and lifelong learners**, thereby steering their own on-going personal, academic, occupational and professional development.
- **Teachers fulfilling a pastoral role within the community**, in addition to acting as teaching agents, thus empowering learners holistically.
- **Teachers being good assessors**, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of learning programmes, the needs of learners, track learners' progress and reflect on their own effectiveness (Department of Education, 2000b).
- **Teachers being learning area or subject specialists**, and being well-grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods and procedures relevant to their specific fields of expertise (Department of Education, 2000b).

In my study, the focus fell primarily on the expected pastoral role of teachers as I investigated how schools and teachers support learners at various levels, by providing care, guidance and support. School-based support initiatives depend largely on the ability of teachers or related stakeholders such as volunteers to successfully implement supportive programmes. Within the field of education, students' overall achievements (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013), as well as their self-efficacy beliefs, play a contributing role in facilitating teacher efficacy (Kleinsasser, 2014). In this regard, a study by Day, Stobart, Sammons, Kington, Gu, Smees and Mujtaba (2006) associates teachers' professional identities with teacher efficacy, which in turn relates to levels of work satisfaction, occupational commitment, and motivation as experienced by teachers (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink & Hofman, 2012). Gu and Day (2007) furthermore suggest that teacher resilience also forms an integral part of teacher efficacy, which includes psychological, behavioural and cognitive functioning, as well as emotional regulation, and can be influenced by the dimensions of time and context.

Within at-risk contexts, where social service systems are generally weak, teachers may act as “foot soldiers of care” by providing food and clothes to at-risk learners, financed at their expense (Bhana, 2015). School policies that endorse healthy food and eating habits have furthermore also proved to promote learners’ physical wellbeing. In this regard, schools that encourage the sale of healthy eating products such as fruit and vegetables at tuck-shops, are associated with healthier eating habits both at school and at home (Ishdorj, Crepinsek & Jensen, 2012).

Furthermore, examples of subsequent strategies that teachers may use at ground level when learners face grief include memorials in class (personalised notes, cards, poems, posters, stuffed animals etc.), implementing relaxation techniques and the acknowledgment of common responses to adverse experiences. Bibliography, which entails the use of fables, metaphors and parables, can also be used to encourage learners to deal with negative feelings in a constructive way (Heath & Cole, 2012). Additionally, multiple other structured school-based programmes exist to attend to the physical wellbeing of learners by providing food to hungry children – such as the School Pantry Programmes which operate in the United States (Stats SA, 2016).

In support of learners’ emotional needs, a study by Ferreira, Eloff, Loots, and Ebersöhn (2012) indicates that teachers can utilise several strategies to support at-risk learners. These strategies may, for example, include home visits to children and their families in order to offer emotional support through encouragement and prayer. Teachers may also collaborate with local churches, arrange for counselling by pastors or participate in programmes that may provide social activities, food, homework support, and opportunities to worship. Despite various of these examples of supportive interventions being documented, ongoing research on the way in which teachers can take a leading role to support at-risk learners remains important.

2.4.3 Examples of school/community-based interventions in support of children’s health and wellbeing

The importance of attending to the physical and emotional needs of at-risk children has increasingly been emphasised in research in recent years (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2012). Internationally, programmes aimed at improving and supporting the psychological wellbeing of at-risk children usually involve multiple aspects. Such programmes include interventions that focus on parenting and discipline; family communication; problem-solving skills within families; being sensitive to emotional expression; and impulse control (Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Scalia & Coover, 2009).

Within the South-African context, community-based support initiatives in support of the holistic wellbeing of individuals also stand central to ongoing research (Nattrass, 2004). Effective support often rests on the

implementation of collaborative, strength-based approaches. Effective collaboration, in turn, often depends on the involvement of children and their families, community volunteers, community organisations, businesses and national government in support initiatives that are undertaken. Within such a framework, support can be provided through, for example, vegetable gardens, emotional and health support initiatives, capacity development opportunities, as well as financial support efforts in the form of grants and sponsorships (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011).

As part of the growing responsibility of schools to attend to complex social problems (Skovdal & Campbell, 2015), the Department of Basic Education also aims to support the learning potential of at-risk learners through the provision of healthy meals. In addition to the goal of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), to equip learners mentally and physically for learning activities, the programme aims to encourage self-supportive initiatives such as food gardens in order to mobilise teachers, parents and communities as key role-players, for them to work collaboratively in realising sustainable support, and promoting household food security. Lastly, the programme intends to promote healthy eating and lifestyle habits by providing nutrition education (Department of Education, 2008; Department of Education, 2009).

As such, school-communities that face risks associated with poverty and hunger and that fall within quintile one, two or three⁶ can apply for support from the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) which forms part of the national Integrated Food security strategy (Faber *et al.*, 2014). It is then the responsibility of the school principal (as accounting officer) and the NSNP school coordinator (elected teacher/administrator), to supervise and manage the programme and to ensure its success. The NSNP school coordinator is furthermore responsible for establishing a nutrition committee, for receiving and recording stock, invoicing, keeping record of learners being fed per day, and providing updated reports to the district office (Department of Education, 2009).

Research done within the Supportive Teachers, Assets and Resilience (STAR) project provides an example of a study which aimed to understand teachers' role in facilitating resilience, indicating that teachers can utilise available resources, form partnerships and offer school-based support, to reach this goal. Resources that teachers may utilise include neighbourhood health and social development services, all of which can be used to recognise or refer at-risk youth. Partnerships can include affiliations with families, community volunteers, organisations, businesses and government. Finally, school-based initiatives can take the form of vegetable gardens, emotional and health support projects, and skills development programmes.

⁶ The quintile category of a school is based on the income, unemployment and literacy levels of its surrounding community and ranges from one to five. Quintile one schools are situated within the poorest communities of South Africa, and quintile five within affluent communities (Department of Education, 2000a).

The STAR and SHEBA projects furthermore offer examples of how teachers and community volunteers can attend to HIV/AIDS-related challenges in schools and at-risk communities. Initiatives include HIV/AIDS awareness programmes and HIV/AIDS-related care on both material and emotional levels. Awareness programmes can be implemented through curriculum integration (Life Orientation); by introducing learners to appropriate role models; or by inviting experts in the field of HIV/AIDS to address learners or community members. Material support may entail the provision of medication, supplies and food parcels (which can be produced from school-based food schemes and vegetable gardens). Lastly, emotional and spiritual support can be offered during teacher visits at the homes of at-risk learners, families and community members (Loots, Ebersöhn, Ferreira & Eloff, 2012), in support of health and wellbeing. As the STAR and SHEBA projects implied a specific focus, this study aimed to build on the findings of these projects, by further exploring potential ways of school-based support in additional schools.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

I relied on the asset-based approach as theoretical framework in undertaking this study. The asset-based approach guides individuals to develop and mobilise unused or underused resources and opportunities (Egan, 2014). The asset-based approach does not disregard the challenges an individual faces, but focuses on the assets available to overcome challenges and risks (Ebersöhn, 2008). It highlights strengths and virtues, and nurtures what is best (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In this regard, the identification of resources and assets may contribute to an individual's resilience and enhance his or her functioning and general wellbeing (Louw & Louw, 2007).

As a theory, the asset-based approach suggests that outside resources can become more beneficial once a community has identified and utilised its own resources. As such, the asset-based approach is "internally focused", as it endeavours to first facilitate local problem-solving capacities in order to encourage empowerment, creativity and hope. This means that the asset-based approach can be perceived as a "bottom-up approach", shifting the focus from a service perspective, towards an empowerment perspective (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). By exploring how schools have been supporting at-risk learners in the form of school-based initiatives, this study thus aimed to foreground existing assets and resources in schools in at-risk contexts.

In addition to resources as assets, assets can be conceptualised as "a natural capacity for behaving, thinking or feeling in a way that allows for optimal functioning" (Linley, 2006: 315). Access to and the use of available assets has been associated with the ability to function well and contribute to society. Intrapersonal assets include a positive identity, sense of purpose, and positive view of the future. Effective communication and decision-making skills are examples of such interpersonal assets. Developmental assets on the other hand may

include family support, a caring community, and a safe school environment (Eloff *et al.*, 2007), such as those explored as part of this study.

When utilising the asset-based approach, a sense of ownership, empowerment, and shared responsibility may be enhanced amongst individuals or groups of people (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1999) and this, in turn, may be generalised to other areas of their lives. This can be useful in identifying appropriate solutions, increasing self-determination, and building support networks (Eloff, 2006), moving away from addressing stress and challenges through external resources, to addressing these internally, through self-empowerment and by taking ownership. Subsequently, individuals and communities are seen as key role-players in initiating and sustaining support initiatives, as opposed to depending on external resources for help (Alison & Gord, 2005). In undertaking this study, I was guided by this underlying assumption.

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) link the asset-based approach to sustainability, which should form an essential component of supportive school-based programmes. According to these authors, aspects that are associated with sustainable programmes, such as community-based participation; building and strengthening internal capacities; community resource mobilisation; networking and the establishment of links; advocacy; using local beliefs, structures, knowledge and practices; and information sharing to provide support to at-risk children, can all be associated with the asset-based approach. Moreover, similarities between discourses concerning schools that act as nodes of care and support and the asset-based approach furthermore emphasise the theory's significance for this study. Against the aforementioned background, knowledge related to practices of the asset-based approach can be passed on to families, thereby strengthening the capacity of schools, families and communities to support at-risk youth (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

The asset-based approach has also been linked to resilience theory (Ferreira, 2013), as it will encourage an individual to not only focus on coping in order to re-establish subjective wellbeing, but also on potential protective factors (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011). In emphasising the importance of strengths, Ferreira (2006) refers to an individual's efforts to deal with adversity through his/her own beliefs, choices and behaviours, as "asset-based coping". Against the aforementioned background, the asset-based approach operates from the working assumption that individuals are aware of and able to identify internal and external risk factors as well as protective factors in the process of mitigating individual wellbeing. In support of this point, an asset-based view on resilience and wellbeing identifies individuals as driven to accomplish and maintain a state of happiness by utilising techniques such as reflexivity, as well as the identification, accessing, mobilisation and sustaining of available resources and strengths.

In adapting an asset-based approach for this research, I therefore assumed that teacher strengths are crucial for implementing successful school-based support initiatives in at-risk contexts. I further assumed that individuals and communities are capable of changing and improving undesired conditions, through the identification and utilisation of personal and community assets (Boyd, Hayes, Wilson & Bearsley-Smith, 2008). As such, I viewed community members and teachers as key role-players in advancing the efficacy of supportive school-based initiatives (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1999). I also viewed teachers as well-placed to facilitate change, new beliefs and adapted behaviour amongst children, families and communities facing adverse circumstances. Additionally, I considered the significance of employing the asset-based approach against the current South-African socio-economic landscape which is characterised by many communities being deprived of external support. The importance for teachers and schools of finding ways in which to address cumulative risk on various levels are highlighted in this manner (Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001; Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2007; Petersena, Bhanaab, Myezac, Aliceadef, Johnc, Holstc, McKayd & Mellinsef, 2010;).

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I provided some context for understanding the potential contribution of this study by exploring school-based support initiatives that are aimed at promoting the wellbeing of at-risk youth, and the potential value that such initiatives may hold. I discussed typical challenges faced by youth within the South African landscape and presented examples of supportive programmes and strategies. In concluding the chapter, I explained the asset-based approach I selected as theoretical framework in order to guide my empirical study and to provide a lens for conceptualising the findings of the study.

In the next chapter I discuss the methodological choices I made. I explain the selected epistemological and methodological paradigms, research design and data generation, documentation and analysis strategies I employed. I also report on the way I aimed to secure rigour, and reflect on ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 3: DEFINING AND CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I reviewed existing literature on the topic under investigation in order to provide conceptual context for my study. Set against this background, and guided by my supervisor, I planned and conducted an empirical study to explore how the wellbeing of at-risk learners can be supported through school-based initiatives in South African primary schools.

In this chapter I present my methodological choices, and elucidate their significance for this study. I discuss the selected epistemological and methodological paradigms, research design, data generation and documentation strategies, and data analysis and interpretation procedures I employed. To conclude the chapter, I describe how I followed ethical guidelines and then explain the strategies I employed to enhance the rigour of the study.

3.2 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

I utilised the interpretivist paradigm as meta-theory, and followed a qualitative methodological approach, to guide my research and the interpretations of the results I obtained.

3.2.1 Interpretivism as epistemology

According to Weber (2004), interpretivism implies a subjective epistemology, which assumes that reality cannot be separated from knowledge. As such, reality is seen as created through interaction between individuals, by means of social experiences and the meaning people attach to these (Hovorka & Lee, 2010).

My rationale for selecting the interpretivist paradigm is that this choice allowed me to conduct research with teachers and learn how schools have been supporting at-risk learners. As such, I could report on the participating teachers' opinions and experiences regarding effective school-based support initiatives in vulnerable contexts (Hovorka & Lee, 2010). As Maree (2012) states, one of the strengths of this paradigm is that it can yield in-depth descriptions that are also information rich. The value of developing an understanding of teacher experiences furthermore finds support against the background of the natural environment participants live in, depicted as a shared ecological and social commonality by Lehman (2011). In this manner, the importance of seeking to understand people's environments as integrated social and value-laden systems, may enable society to better provide support in vulnerable contexts.

Interpretivism is often associated with challenges relating to the possibility of researcher bias and questions about validity, reliability and generalisability, collectively referred to as legitimisation (Kelliher, 2005). By positing that reality depends on existing knowledge and people's understanding of it, the interpretivist paradigm situates itself as one that is inherently value-laden, stating that reality is conveyed through dialogue and the negotiation of conflicting interpretations. In this context, questions related to subjectivity and bias, which may cloud the validity of findings, are a common discourse. I strove to ensure trustworthiness by involving participants in a member checking session. In addition, I continuously reflected on my perceptions and assumptions, guarding against the possible effect of researcher bias (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011).

Another potential challenge associated with interpretivism relates to the possibility of subjectivity, highlighting specific cultural values and potentially limiting the generalisability of findings (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011). Payne and Williams (2005) however argue that, while interpretivism may be limited in terms of generalisation, transferability to other settings may be possible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer a set of guidelines that can be applied in support of obtaining general truths in qualitative research. According to these authors, this can be accomplished through extensive descriptions of a study and its procedures, which can enable readers to decide whether or not the findings can be transferred to other settings. As such, a detailed description of the participants in this study, their social settings, methods of data generation, my theoretical orientation and how my status as researcher could have influenced the findings, are provided in this dissertation of limited scope. Lastly, I implemented multiple data generation and documentation strategies in support of trustworthiness, namely PRA-based activities and discussions, observation-as-context-of-interaction, a research journal consisting of field notes and reflective thoughts, as well as visual data and transcribed audio-recordings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Kelliher, 2005).

3.2.2 Qualitative methodological approach

In line with the broader research project of which this study forms part, I followed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research developed from a need in the social sciences to answer "why" questions, so as to accommodate people's perceptions. As such, qualitative research implies an understanding of the context and processes underlying behavioural patterns, and typically seeks to interpret, understand and describe phenomena within their natural environments. In this manner, qualitative research seeks to understand and describe phenomena as they are experienced and perceived by participants (Maree, 2012), and to discover underlying motives and desires (Kothari, 1985).

By conducting qualitative research, I was able to obtain rich descriptive data, which supported my understanding of the phenomenon under study (Maree, 2012). This approach enabled me to report on school-based support initiatives that exist in schools and, more importantly, to explain and understand the complexities and subtleties within schools that may make these work. Additionally, teachers' participation in concrete data generation activities resulted in rich generated data, raising an awareness of successful support initiatives amongst the participants, and alerting them of potential follow-up initiatives that may be explored. To this point, further development of school-based support initiatives could occur as a result of this study.

Challenges typically associated with qualitative studies include restrictions in terms of generalisable findings, the possibility of researcher bias (Atieno, 2009), as well as the time-consuming nature of related data generation and analysis processes (Kothari, 1985). In line with the interpretivist paradigm I selected, I employed strategies of reflexivity, rich descriptions, member checking and regular discussions with my supervisor in an attempt to address these challenges. I furthermore did not aim to obtain generalisable findings but to rather gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon I set out to explore.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I utilised a case study research design, and relied on convenience sampling to select the participating schools and purposeful sampling to select participants. For data generation, I employed PRA-based activities and discussions, and observation-as-context-of-interaction, which was documented by means of a research journal and audio-visual techniques. Finally, I analysed the data by doing thematic inductive analysis. In the following sub-sections I discuss these strategies.

3.3.1 Research design: Case study design applying PRA principles

I implemented an instrumental case study design, as this choice enabled me to expand on my insight into the topic of this study. The case under study can accordingly be regarded as secondary, acting as catalyst for establishing a better understanding of certain patterns in behaviour. As such, an instrumental case study design applying PRA principles allowed me to gain information regarding the selected cases (schools), their contexts, as well as detailed descriptions of the activities practised in each school (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

According to Stake (1995) and Yin (2003), the philosophical underpinnings of a case study design argue that truth is relative and depends on individual meaning-making processes, which are based on social constructions of reality (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case study research allows for close collaboration between the researcher and participants, enabling the participants to tell their stories and the researcher to form a conceptualisation of their

realities (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Closely aligned to this, PRA research encourages the active participation of participants, for them to take ownership of development initiatives, with the possibility of promoting self-efficacy. This approach allows for collaborative reflections between the researcher and participants, which can raise awareness of an existing situation, as well as local resources and abilities that may be used when solving problems (Ferreira, 2006; Narayanasamy, 2009).

Utilising a case study design applying PRA principles therefore allowed me to gain a teacher perspective on school-based initiatives aimed at supporting primary school learners' wellbeing. I deem this choice as suitable as the participating teachers are favourably positioned to offer opinions that are contextually relevant against the purpose of this study. In applying PRA-principles, I was furthermore able to acknowledge and incorporate multiple realities, methodologies and strategies. According to Chambers (1998), PRA-based research reorientates perceptions and analytic approaches away from eclectic pluralism, towards democratic inquiry and collaborative research, with the intention of modifying behaviour, enhancing repertoires (of both the researcher and participants) and fostering creativity (Chambers, 2008). In this regard, PRA-based research can be viewed as forward looking where the participation of individuals who are directly affected by conditions associated with a case, are encouraged (Chambers, 2012). The researcher takes a secondary role, as participants are perceived as knowledgeable and capable of contributing to their own learning when discussing challenges and possible solutions (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011).

Advantages of a case study design applying PRA principles include the possibility of following a more holistic approach to knowledge construction, which may enhance an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). In support, Merriam (1988) defines case study research as investigating a bounded system, wherein the use of multi-perspective analysis is generally applied. As such, this design not only considers the voice of individual participants, but also the role of other "relevant groups of actors" and how they interact (Maree, 2012), thereby enabling a rich and comprehensive understanding of systems, groups or individuals (Yin, 1984).

Case study research thus involves the "systematic enquiry into an event or a set of related events" in order to "describe and explain the phenomenon of interest" (Bromley, 1990: 302). Employing a case study design while applying PRA principles meant that I formed an integral part of the research process together with the research participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). As such, I was able to obtain a first-hand account of the perceptions and experiences held by teachers. Set against the aforementioned background, a case study design applying PRA principles allowed for the utilisation of multiple data generation and documentation techniques (discussed in Section 3.3.3) (Nieuwenhuis, 2007) so as to furnish detailed and multiple views on school-based support efforts (Maree, 2012; Merriam, 1988).

Case study research applying PRA principles is, however, often criticised for its inability to provide generalisable findings because of limited cases. However, generalisability is not the purpose of case study research, which rather intends to provide local truths and can, in turn, be used to understand global phenomena (Maree, 2012). Case study research applying PRA principles can furthermore be criticised for the lack of validity and reliability, due to the subjective nature of the methods used. As proposed by the interpretivist paradigm, I used multiple sources of evidence in support of trustworthiness, and provide a detailed description of the study. This may enable readers to determine whether the findings of this study will be of value for similar settings, and can thus be regarded as transferable. Furthermore, I strived to meet the criterium of trustworthiness by using theoretical relationships in formulating conclusions (Yin, 2003).

As the effectiveness of PRA depends heavily on principles such as collaboration and ownership-taking, relationship building between the research team and the participants was very important. I implemented several methods in support of sound, trusting relationships. Firstly, I showed respect and interest towards participants at all times. Secondly, I strove to facilitate activities that were relevant, interesting and culturally sensitive. Finally, I encouraged participants to take ownership of support initiatives and further develop these (Chambers, 1992; Ferreira, 2006; Narayanasamy, 2009).

3.3.2 Selection of participants

I conducted research in eight schools in the Eastern Cape province, all of which have been involved in the FIRST-GATE project in recent years. These schools were purposefully selected for the broader project as they are associated with contexts of risk as well as poverty and related challenges, factors which may impede on the physical, intellectual, emotional and psychological wellbeing of youth.

In doing research within the broader FIRST-GATE project, I relied on convenience sampling to select the participating schools as cases for my study, based on their existing participation in the broader research project. Essentially, convenience sampling implies a non-probability sampling method, where participants are selected due to their being conveniently accessible (Maree, 2012). Patton (2002: 241) defines this as a form of sampling that is “neither purposeful nor strategic”. A main advantage of this sampling method is the time and cost effectiveness it implies, due to the simplicity of application (Creswell, 2013).

However, as convenience sampling relies on the principles of convenience and non-probability, it is also associated with the possibility of selection bias, as well as potential limitations in terms of trustworthiness (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Selection bias does not apply to this study though, as the participating schools were initially

selected purposefully. I aimed to address limitations related to trustworthiness by providing a rich description of the research process and strategies, and also through continuous reflective practices.

In selecting the participants, I relied on purposeful sampling (Patton, 2005), which entails a process whereby certain individuals or groups of individuals are identified and selected based on their levels of knowledge or experience in a certain area of interest. Accordingly, participant availability and willingness, as well as the ability to communicate perceptions, beliefs and attitudes, are instrumentally important (Mertens, 2014).

The following selection criteria (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015) applied:

- Participants needed to be familiar with or have participated in the broader FIRST-GATE project.
- Participants had to be involved in school-based support initiatives at their schools.
- Participants had to be able to communicate in English.
- Participants had to provide informed consent for their participation.

In Table 3.1, I provide an overview of the participating schools and the participants associated with each school.

Table 3.1: Cases and participants

CASE	GEN- DER	AGE	ROLE	SUBJECT
School A	F	50	Teacher (Grade 6)	Natural Science Xhosa
	F	55	Teacher (Grade 5)	Life Skills Xhosa
	F	53	Remedial teacher (all grades)	N/A
	F	50	Teacher (Grades 6 & 7) and Head of Department	English Life Orientation Life Skills
School B	M	76	Parent (Garden support)	N/A
	F	60	Parent (Garden support)	N/A
	F	46	Parent (Garden support)	N/A
	F	44	Parent and School Governing Body	N/A
	F	52	Teacher (Grades 4 & 5)	Natural Science Technology
	F	61	Teacher (Grade 6)	English
School C	M	48	Teacher (Grade 4)	Social Science Natural Science Xhosa
	F	52	Acting Principal (Grade 2)	English Xhosa Mathematics Life Skills
	F	36	Teacher (Grade R)	Xhosa

				Mathematics Life Skills
	F	36	Teacher (Grade R)	Life Skills Xhosa Mathematics
School D	F	44	Teacher (Grade 2)	All
	F	48	Parent	N/A
	F	50	Parent	N/A
School E	M	52	Principal (Grade 6)	N/A
	F	47	Deputy Principal (Grade 4)	Life Skills
	F	56	Teacher (Grade 7)	English Social Science Technology
School F	F	46	Principal (Grade 7)	N/A
	F	48	Teacher (Grade 2) and Head of Department	All
	F	51	Teacher (Grade 2)	All
	F	50	Teacher (Grades 5-7)	English Social Science
	F	50	Teacher (Grade 3)	All
School G	F	55	Teacher (Grade 5-7)	English Life Skills Social Science Arts
	F	52	Teacher (Grade 4 & 7)	Xhosa Social Science
School H	F		Principal	N/A
	F		Volunteer	N/A
	M		Volunteer	N/A

Advantages of implementing purposeful sampling relate to the range of sampling techniques implied, which makes this sampling method easy to use in qualitative studies because of its dynamic nature (Suri, 2011). Purposeful sampling may furthermore provide researchers with a potential way of making certain generalisations when data represent the knowledge and experiences of a specific population (Creswell, 2013). This, however, was not the purpose of this study.

On the other hand, challenges associated with purposeful sampling include the possibility of researcher bias and limited generalisability when samples are chosen according to very specific criteria, which can result in limited heterogeneity. The aforementioned were circumvented by providing detailed descriptions of the purposes and methods utilised for this research (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and by reflecting critically on criteria that can support methodological rigour (Patton, 2002).

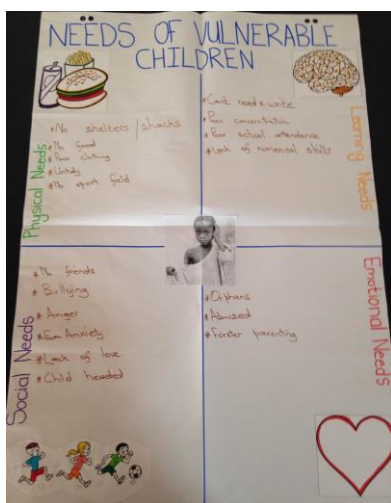
3.3.3 Data generation and documentation

I utilised PRA-based activities and discussions, observation-as-context-of-interaction, a research journal consisting of field notes and reflective thoughts, as well as visual data (posters and photographs) and audio recordings.

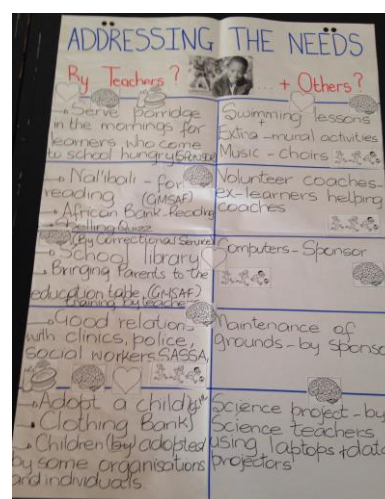
3.3.3.1 PRA-based activities and discussions

PRA-based research typically relies on visual and concrete data generation methods which may include photographs, posters, diagrams and mind-maps (Chambers, 2008). In this study, I selected PRA-posters in order for teachers to document their thoughts and experiences regarding existing school-based support initiatives for at-risk learners. I facilitated two rounds of PRA-based activities and discussions for data generation, and a third for member checking purposes.

The first session was implemented at a colloquium in the Eastern Cape in March 2016, attended by seven of the eight participating schools. During this session, separate schools worked in small groups to discuss and document school-based support initiatives that had been employed at their schools. For this purpose, teachers compiled two posters – one on the needs of at-risk learners, with physical, social, learning and emotional needs as prompts (see Photograph 3.1) and one on existing strategies employed by teachers and “others” (referring to external agencies) in support of these needs (Photograph 3.2). Teachers were encouraged to illustrate their ideas in a way that made sense to them and to use pictures (which I provided) to compliment these ideas visually. After the small-group activities and discussions, each group reported back to the larger group. I then discussed the content of the posters with one participant from each school in order to clarify uncertainties and gain a deeper understanding where required. I audio-recorded all sessions which were transcribed verbatim, for data analysis purposes (refer to Appendix C).



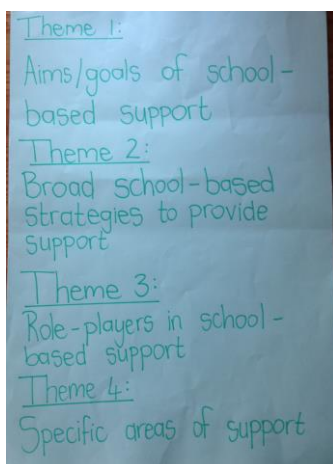
Photograph 3.1: PRA-based activity on the needs of at-risk learners



Photograph 3.2: PRA-based activity on schools addressing the needs of at-risk learners

Five months later, I facilitated a second series of data generation activities and discussions, during individual visits to each of the eight participating schools. For these sessions, I used posters to visually summarise the data that were generated during the first PRA-session in March 2016, and then invited participants to discuss my summaries and expand, change or remove ideas. School visits were scheduled over four days during August 2016 (refer to Appendix B for the programme). All discussions were audio-taped and transcribed, for data analysis purposes (see Appendix D for the transcripts).

During my third field visit (member checking) in April 2017, I used posters to visually present the main themes and sub themes that had been identified following the data generation phase (Photograph 3.3). Three school visits were scheduled for this purpose (see Appendix B for the programme), during which a number of schools were clustered together for each session. The themes and sub-themes I presented were subsequently accepted by the participants.



Photograph 3.3: Poster used during member checking to represent identified themes

I conducted member checking for a few reasons. Firstly, it enriched the data, as teachers had the opportunity to add, clarify and discuss supportive initiatives in more depth (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Next, member checking served to facilitate group synergy, empowerment and enriched teacher knowledge and attitudes that may advance and revolutionise school-based initiatives aimed at supporting the wellbeing of at-risk learners (Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011;). Lastly, member checking added rigour to my study by enhancing aspects of credibility, confirmability and authenticity (Chambers, 2008; Chambers, 2012).

In conducting PRA-based activities, all data generation sessions involved open-ended, as well as visual, creative and flexible strategies (Ferreira, 2006), so as to encourage active participation, reflection and ownership taking during the description of support initiatives. The nature of the interactive PRA-based

discussions lent itself to the use of unplanned and unstructured questions in following a flexible approach. In these cases, I posed so-called “grand tour” questions to initiate discussions, yet then followed a non-judgemental approach, and used active listening skills while allowing for the natural flow of conversation without interrupting participants (Munhall, 2010).

Such interactive discussions may run the risk of being formless and unplanned. Furthermore, because of the informal style of these discussions, the richness of data will heavily rely on the interview skills and ability of the researcher to build rapport with participants. Together with this, the flexibility of this data generation strategy may impede on aspects of trustworthiness (Doody & Noonan, 2013), while also running the risk of causing emotional distress (Corbin & Morse, 2003).

I guarded against the aforementioned risks by being aware of, and constantly reflecting on, my own expectations, perceptions and beliefs with regard to the possible outcomes of my study. This enabled me to remain aware of the potential for questions which could lead the participants. For interactive discussions, I found it helpful to prepare several examples of open ended, non-leading questions which could be used to initiate conversations and explore the phenomenon at hand. Aspects of trustworthiness were provided for by acknowledging potential limitations and providing verbatim records of all data generation sessions, so as to offer a reflection of the research team’s experiences, thoughts and beliefs from the participants’ points of view (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

3.3.3.2 *Observation-as-context-of-interaction*

Throughout the data generation process, I relied on observation-as-context-of-interaction, following an observer-as-participant approach. Angrosino and Rosenberg (2011) are of the opinion that observation forms an integral part of data generation, as the context wherein qualitative research is conducted typically includes aspects of collaboration and interaction between the researcher (in the role as observer) and the participants. Angrosino and May de Pérez (2000) furthermore maintain that the observation of human interaction can be meaningful only when done in the context or setting in which such interaction transpires as this will put verbal expressions and non-verbal actions in perspective.

Accordingly, I made observations during all formal and informal interactions that occurred, noting the dynamics and non-verbal communication between participants as well as between participants and the research team members. During observations I focussed on interactions, body language and non-verbal facial expressions of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). I also observed and documented the environmental context

surrounding the participating schools in order to gain more insight into the physical resources and challenges they face and the support initiatives they reported on.

All my observations were documented in the form of field notes, in my research diary, or as photographs (refer to Photographs 3.4 and 3.5 as examples), enabling me to record non-verbal indicators such as tone of voice and facial expressions. In this manner, I was able to gain a holistic understanding of the perceptions that the participants voiced (Kawulich, 2005), against the background of contextual information I observed. I could thus better understand the strategies employed by schools in supporting the wellbeing of youth within the school-based contexts I observed. In addition, the use of observation-as-context-of-interaction also strengthened the trustworthiness and rigour of my study (Angrosino & May de Pérez, 2000; Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011).



Photograph 3.4: School library, in support of reading (School H, August 2016)



Photograph 3.5: School committee structures, in support of effective functioning (School C, August 2016)

A potential drawback of observation as method of data generation relates to the risk of researcher bias, which can affect the interpretations that are made (Kawulich, 2005). In this regard, I relied on reflexivity and regular discussions with my supervisor in an attempt to limit the risk of researcher bias. Throughout, I remained aware of my own background and how this could potentially influence my observations. I also used member checking in order to confirm my observations and interpretations of the data.

3.3.3.3 Research journal

Throughout, I made use of both descriptive and reflective field notes (Patton, 2001). I compiled field notes (Appendix G) during the PRA-based activities and discussions, the member checking session, and in informal encounters with participants. Descriptive field notes involve detailed and accurate descriptions of what a researcher observes and experiences during field work (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013; Patton, 2001;). As such, I strove to make accurate notes of what I saw, heard and experienced, focusing on the verbal and non-

verbal communication of the participants. These records consist of rich descriptions of what I observed, noting information on aspects such as dates, locations, intended objectives, social contexts and key phrases, which could potentially be used during interpretation of the results (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001).

The purpose of reflective field notes is to supplement descriptive notes by documenting the researcher's subjective meaning-making processes (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Reflective field notes include the analysis and synthesis (therefore speculations, identification of emerging themes and connections between experiences and personal hypotheses) of observations made, as well as the researcher's frame of mind and feelings (preconceptions, beliefs and attitudes) regarding these observations. Accordingly, I recorded reflective thoughts as personal interpretations, ideas and insights, as well as reflections on personal experiences and emotions elicited during interactions. Personal reflections were supplemented with my thoughts on accomplishments and areas for improvement. These reflections implied the potential benefit of enabling me to track progress and determine whether or not interactions and data generation were being steered in the right direction, according to the purpose of the study. Reflections on the field work (captured in my research journal, refer to Appendix F) furthermore assisted me in limiting aspects of researcher bias, which is a common challenge when conducting qualitative research (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001).

Concerns often associated with descriptive field notes relate to the trustworthiness and usefulness thereof. Researchers may for example miss valuable information due to their bias toward certain information. As such, I endeavoured to note experiences in the field as if I was experiencing them for the first time, in an attempt to capture detail which may perhaps seem inconsequential. Another concern related to field notes, more specifically when doing participatory data generation, concerns the ability to make extensive notes during interactions (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001). To this end, I requested other members of the research team to share their field notes with me following the PRA-sessions I facilitated (refer to Appendix H).

In addition, I attempted to write down my experiences and observations as soon as possible after interactions. I also audio-taped my observations directly after the completion of sessions, as opportunities for writing notes could at times be delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. As all PRA-based discussions were audio-taped, I was able to revisit the interactions that occurred at a later stage (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001).

Finally, compiling reflective notes also implied certain difficulties, since I was at times able to write my reflections only quite some time after sessions had been completed, potentially reducing the accuracy thereof. As in the case of my descriptive field notes, I addressed these concerns by acknowledging potential limitations, trying to limit time lapses before doing reflections, and using audio-taped data when available, all in order to be able to elaborate when I compiled my notes (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001).

3.3.3.4 Audio-visual data

All audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim (refer to Appendices C, D and E) and PRA-based data were captured in the form of posters and photographs (Appendix I). Photographs are used in this dissertation of limited scope to provide readers with the necessary context of the participants and the research settings, and to reflect on the social and cultural context where this research was undertaken, as well as on the PRA-based sessions. Transcribing audio-data implies the possibility of enriched interpretations as the loss of meaning and interpretation bias commonly associated with real-life interactions and transcriptions may in this way be limited. As such, audio-recordings might have improved aspects of trustworthiness, and in so doing promoted the authenticity of the participants' reflections, allowing for a better understanding of the research findings (Markle, West & Rich, 2011).

However, these strategies also implied certain potential challenges. The use of technology may, for example, be associated with challenges related to limited knowledge on the use of technology, how to transfer data to a computer or compact disk/flash disk for storage purposes, and technical problems that may prevent proper recordings from occurring (Markle, West & Rich, 2011). I made provision for these potential pitfalls by ensuring that I was fully briefed in using the technology concerned. I also had replacement batteries at hand during the research activities in order to limit the possibility of recordings not being possible. In terms of ethics, I obtained consent from the participants before making any audio-recordings or taking photographs. I protected the privacy of the participants by keeping recorded material in a locked cabinet and using password protected files when saving data. Furthermore, no identifiable information has been disclosed in this dissertation of limited scope (Markle, West & Rich, 2011).

3.3.4 Data analysis and interpretation

I completed thematic inductive analysis, which essentially implies a systematic approach to analysing qualitative data. According to Maree (2012), this involves an "inductive and iterative" process aimed at identifying similarities, patterns and contradictions which may support the development of suppositions and a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. Cohen *et al.*, (2013) add to this notion by describing thematic inductive analysis as the method of identifying, analysing and reporting the themes presented in research data. According to these authors, the process of analysis entails more than a passive process of giving account of themes that "emerge" from data, as it requires the researcher to be actively involved in identifying themes of interest and importance, by assigning personal meanings to the data. It is important that the intentions for

research match the theoretical framework and methods of a study, and that the researcher acknowledges these decisions whilst also recognising them as decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

In conducting thematic inductive analysis, I followed an essentialist/realist approach, which implies that my interpretations were led by the participants' unique experiences, realities and perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, themes and patterns were identified inductively, which entails a "bottom up" approach whereby themes primarily follow from data. Such an approach implies that interpretations are facilitated by processes which allow for coding to be led by recurring themes in the data and not by fitting data into a pre-determined coding frame. Additionally, I identified themes on a semantic level, not seeking underlying meanings in the data, but rather striving to identify explicitly expressed themes. In essence, coding at semantic level entails the organisation of data in a way that may facilitate the identification of patterns, which is then summarised to enable the interpretation of potentially significant patterns and the relevance of these for existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In conducting my analysis, I followed the six phases proposed by Creswell and Poth (2017). As such, I familiarised myself with the data; then generated initial codes; searched for themes; reviewed themes; defined and named themes; and lastly produced a research report. More specifically, the first phase involved the transcription of data, reading and re-reading of all transcripts and capturing of my initial ideas. Next, I generated initial codes by noting interesting features across the data and linking relevant data to the identified codes. Following the process of generating codes, I started searching for themes by organising codes into potential themes. In the subsequent phase I reviewed these themes by checking if they matched the coded excerpts and by compiling a thematic map. I then set out to define and name the final potential themes whilst attempting to better understand these. Throughout this process I was supported by my supervisor, who fulfilled the role of secondary data analyst. I then shared the identified themes and sub themes with the participants during a member checking session. As a final step, I produced an account of my interpretations and findings by explaining the significance thereof to my research questions against the background of existing literature (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Advantages of thematic inductive analysis include its flexibility, suitability for participatory research and the possibility to summarise large sets of data and provide detailed descriptions (Maree, 2012). Thematic inductive analysis may furthermore lead to unexpected insights. Nonetheless, thematic inductive analysis also implies potential challenges, of which I remained aware. Even though the flexibility of thematic inductive analysis allows for a range of analytic approaches, this advantage can potentially paralyse researchers, who may find it hard to choose themes and develop guidelines for higher-phase analysis. The interpretive potential of data may furthermore be limited when the analysis is not grounded in a clearly defined theoretical framework to anchor

assertions. Furthermore, because of potentially poorly defined parameters, researchers may confuse thematic inductive analysis with other methods, potentially making claims that cannot be deduced through the use of thematic inductive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To this end, and to circumvent these challenges, I constantly reflected on my theoretical framework during the analysis process in order to reach trustworthy conclusions. Furthermore, through preparation and a study on the application of thematic inductive analysis, as well as frequent discussions with my supervisor, I was able to minimise the potential drawbacks associated with this form of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006).

3.4 MY ROLE AS RESEARCHER

My role as researcher primarily entailed the identification and exploration of existing school-based support initiatives aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of at-risk youth. A secondary role involved the facilitation of awareness and further capacity-building amongst participants, due to their involvement, which in turn supported the sustainability and effectiveness of already implemented support initiatives (Kelly, 1999).

Coming from a background different than that of the participants, I had to remain conscious of my own attitudes, values and beliefs, how these differed from those of the participants, and how this might consequently influence my interpretations and the findings of the study. In order to avoid the findings from being influenced by my “own voice”, I relied on continuous reflexivity, through the use of a research journal (Appendix F), as well as regular discussions with my supervisor (Kelly, 1999).

My methodological choices allowed for a dual interpretive perspective, which I had to remain aware of. To this end, I strived to obtain an emic (insider) approach, in order to understand and present a truthful account of the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the participants. I am aware that my interpretations may, however, carry my personal voice, and that the differences in backgrounds, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, culture and language between me as researcher on the one hand, and the participants on the other hand, may have affected my interpretations. Moreover, I am also cognisant of the fact that I relied only on the data generated during field visits and that this may entail limitations in terms of my interpretations as an outsider (May, 1996; Kelly, 1999). To this end, I regularly reflected and engaged in debriefing discussions with my supervisor so as to guard against interpretations not being authentic. I also employed member checking, in order to allow the participants to confirm and/or rectify my initial interpretation of the data.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this section I explain how I respected ethical guidelines during the study I conducted.

3.5.1 Permission to conduct research and informed consent for voluntary participation

I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria to conduct my research, prior to commencing with any field work. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education (Eastern Cape) as part of the broader project. Permission was similarly gained from the school principals of the participating schools as part of the broader FIRST-GATE project, for the involvement of their schools and teachers as participants in this study.

Next, I obtained written informed consent from the participants prior to their involvement. In obtaining their consent, I explained voluntary participation as the wilful and unforced involvement of participants (Maree, 2007; Patton, 2002), and indicated to them that they could withdraw whenever they wished to do so (refer to Appendix A for the relevant permissions and informed consent form). In obtaining informed consent, I provided participating teachers with information about the nature of the study prior to obtaining their voluntary and informed consent. During the initial briefing session, I ensured that all participants understood what their involvement would entail, and which data collection and analysis strategies I would utilise (Ferreira, 2006; Oliver, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

3.5.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity describes the degree of disclosure allowed in terms of the personal information of participants gathered as part of a study (Maree, 2007; Patton, 2002). Participants have the right to be protected against intrusion – in other words, the right to be left alone. Whilst audio-taping may be regarded as possibly encroaching on clients' privacy, participants in this study were informed of the recordings prior to commencing with discussion sessions, and consent was obtained for this purpose (Allan, 2011). I thus respected the relevant aspects of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity by explaining these to the participants and referring to the relevance in terms of the data obtained, while also stressing the importance of participants respecting the privacy and confidentiality of their co-participants.

Privacy and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study by omitting any identifiable information of the participants and the schools that contributed to the study, by changing the names in the raw data and when reporting on the results. Furthermore, recordings have been safely locked away at the University of Pretoria, and data have been saved using password protected files (Ferreira, 2006; Oliver, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

3.5.3 Nonmaleficence and trust

Protection from harm involves deliberate actions and precautions to ensure the physical and emotional safety of participants. Closely related to this, lack of deception implies openness and transparency with regard to the purpose of a study and the methods used (Maree, 2007; Patton, 2002). I protected the wellbeing of the participants by not exposing them to any physical risks during the study. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of discussions about youth who are exposed to a range of risk factors, I was observant of the participants in order to ensure that they were not harmed or distraught. I employed active listening skills and empathy to protect and support participants whenever the need arose (Ferreira, 2006; Miller, Birch, Mauthner & Jessop, 2012; Oliver, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). I was also prepared to refer any participants who required debriefing or counselling, yet no such incidences occurred.

In terms of deception, I did not withhold any information from the participants about the study, the research process or what their participation entailed. I kept them informed during the initial briefing session as well as all other interactions and visits that I participated in (Ferreira, 2006; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Throughout, I encouraged participants to ask questions or make requests when they experienced the need to do so. Teachers' participation in a member checking session furthermore allowed me to assist them in clarifying their own thoughts and uncertainties (Ferreira, 2006; Miller, Birch, Mauthner & Jessop, 2012; Oliver, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

Finally, I attended to accuracy in this research report, presenting findings that are truthful and free from manipulation (Maree, 2007; Patton, 2002). Accordingly, I refrained from providing falsified and fabricated data, which may have supported certain expectations I might have had in terms of the findings. This was achieved by constantly reflecting on my own beliefs, perceptions and attitudes, and how these might have affected my involvement or interpretation of the results (Ferreira, 2006; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

3.6 QUALITY CRITERIA

By using rigorous methods during the research process, I was able to strive for quality in this qualitative study. Rigorous methods of data generation enabled me to establish a high level of trustworthiness, indicating that the data are consistent and representative of the participants' views (Patton, 2002). I describe the quality criteria I strived to adhere to in the following sub-sections.

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility can be related to internal validity in quantitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). A high level of credibility implies that interpretations represent the raw data and mirror the perceptions of participants. As such, credibility refers to the “fit” between participants’ experiences and the researcher’s representation thereof. As such, credibility indicates a level of integrity, rigour and methodological capability in terms of presented data and conclusions being internally valid (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999).

A potential challenge when aiming to ensure credibility relates to the degree to which findings and interpretations can be influenced by a researcher’s values, beliefs, previous knowledge and pre-suppositions. In order to promote credibility, I employed crystallisation of the data by relying on a variety of data generation and documentation strategies. Essentially, comparative methods are satisfied when themes appear repeatedly, thereby reaching data saturation (Janesick, 2000).

I furthermore employed strategies such as prolonged engagement in the field; clarifying aspects of and reflecting on researcher bias; providing an audit trail; using field journals and providing extensive descriptions of the context, data and findings; and discussing the various research processes with my supervisor throughout the study. Finally, as mentioned earlier, I also made use of member checking to confirm the validity of the data and my interpretations thereof (Ferreira, 2006; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2001; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013; Woods, 2006).

3.6.2 Transferability

Transferability is the qualitative equivalent of external validity, which is used in quantitative studies (Cho & Trent, 2006; Ferreira, 2006). In general, transferability refers to the possibility of transferring findings to multiple settings, and to what extent data can be used to represent the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the wider population (Patton, 2001; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013).

This study focused on a limited number of primary schools in the Eastern Cape. As such, the opinions of the participants as reflected in the findings of the study do not represent those of the wider community and cannot necessarily be applied to all settings. As discussed, the qualitative and interpretivist nature of the study also did not lend itself to providing generalisable findings. In line with the interpretivist epistemology, the purpose was rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, for the reader to decide whether the findings of the study hold value and may be transferred to other contexts, or add to a better understanding thereof (Cho & Trent, 2006; Ferreira, 2006; Patton, 2001; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013).

To this end, I endeavoured to offer thick and rich descriptions of the study and the processes it involved. This includes detail about the research context; the community's background, culture and language; chronological factors; and research strategies and decisions related to the study, which is presented through detailed report writing, the inclusion of visual data (photographs taken during the field visits) and by including an audit trail. Whilst I strove to offer an accurate and truthful account of the research context, the responsibility of determining whether findings can be transferred to similar settings lies externally, with other researchers (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Patton, 2001).

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability is a qualitative term that refers to the possibility of replicating findings in another study, similar to reliability in quantitative studies (Seale, 1999). To meet the criterion of dependability, consistency in terms of the measuring instrument, which is the researcher in qualitative studies, is required. Qualitative research, however, embraces a naturalistic paradigm. Therefore, achieving the same results with different researchers cannot be guaranteed due to the researcher's personal involvement and interactions that take place and are difficult to reproduce. Apart from the influence that my personal participation might have had, adopting a naturalistic perspective implies that changes in social settings can be assumed, which may complicate the possibility of a study to yield similar results when replicated by other researchers (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Seale, 1999).

According to Williams and Morrow (2009), in order to support dependability, researchers should provide evidence that the quality and quantity of data is adequate. The quality of data may be secured by integrating multiple perspectives through a diverse range of methods, whilst quantity of data can be ensured by reaching theoretical saturation in an attempt to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Lastly, integrity can be established by illustrating how interpretations were made from the data (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

In an attempt to meet the criterion of dependability, I include detailed records of the data, methods and decisions, and my reflexive research journal in this dissertation of limited scope, so as to offer rich descriptions of the research process. Integrity was attended to by including direct quotations to reflect my own understanding of the data and also by providing appropriate in-text referencing where the findings of the study are discussed (refer to Chapter 4). Furthermore, I aimed to provide a dependability-audit, which includes the identification of potential limitations that can be addressed in future attempts to replicate the study (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Seale, 1999).

3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability requires findings that are free from researcher bias. Confirmable findings are thus situated within data sources, as opposed to being found in the interaction that occurs between the researcher and the data (Seale, 1999). This emphasises the importance of maintaining a balance between the meanings participants intended to convey and the understanding that the interpreter presents. Balance ultimately depends on the levels of subjectivity and reflexivity present in a study. This means that researchers should acknowledge the subjective nature of studies and utilise reflexivity so as to better discriminate between the perceptions and beliefs held by themselves and the perceptions and beliefs held by the participants.

Reflexivity implies an awareness of the self (Rennie, 2004), which can be achieved through methods such as “bracketing” (grouping perceptions, beliefs and attitudes) and self-reflective journals. Member checking can also be used to ensure that interpretations reflect the meanings they were intended for. Finally, confirmability can be improved by including a research team and at least one external auditor (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

In this study, I thus strove to continuously acknowledge the limits of subjectivity. I utilised strategies such as reflexivity; bracketing; a self-reflective journal; working with co-researchers during data generation; involving participants during analysis through member checking; and providing extensive detail regarding the processes of reaching conclusions and making interpretations. Lastly, I engaged in regular reflective and guiding discussions with my supervisor (Patton, 2002; Seale, 1999).

3.6.5 Authenticity

According to Seale (2002), authenticity can be achieved when the researcher is able to exhibit a range of different realities, as this promotes the level of fairness pertaining to the data provided and the subsequent conclusions made. By providing a wide range of realities, the researcher is able to establish a balanced view of the various perspectives available. In order to present fairness, the researcher is encouraged to include evidence for establishing ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity. Ontological authenticity can be defined as the process whereby participants have been assisted to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study; while educative authenticity entails the process of encouraging participants to appreciate viewpoints different from their own. Catalytic authenticity is met when participants are moved towards taking action; and tactical authenticity implies the empowerment of participants to act (Seale, 2002).

If multiple sources are used to come to conclusions, a greater level of authenticity can be achieved. Furthermore, Carcary (2009) argues for the importance of a comprehensive audit trail, allowing readers to follow the development and progression of a study, in order to be able to assess whether or not findings can be

trusted, and can be achieved through providing both physical and intellectual evidence and examples. Physical audit trails include a description of the various stages of research and the methodological decisions made, whereas an intellectual audit trail provides an account of the researcher's thought processes as they evolve over the course of a study.

I tried to reach authenticity by including a wide range of perspectives gained through data generation, and by also reporting contradictions and conflicting values which I identified. In addition, I include an audit trail and relied on a range of data sources. Throughout, I strived to offer evidence of ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity.

3.7 Conclusion

Against the background of the existing literature discussed in Chapter 2, I planned and conducted an empirical study in eight schools in the Eastern Cape, which formed part of the broader FIRST-GATE project. Within the context of the FIRST-GATE project, this study aimed to investigate which school-based support initiatives have been undertaken in at-risk contexts in order to support the wellbeing of learners and their families.

In this chapter, I discussed the research processes I followed. In Chapter 4, I present the results of the study. I then interpret these against the discussions I included in Chapter 2, when presenting the findings in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, I discussed my methodological choices and my reasons for utilising the selected strategies. I explained my epistemological and methodological paradigms and the research design I implemented. I elaborated on how I conducted data generation and documentation, and described the data analysis and interpretation process I completed. I discussed the ethical considerations pertinent to this study and presented the quality criteria I strove to adhere to.

In this chapter, I present the results of the study in terms of four themes and related sub-themes that I identified during data analysis. Subsequently, I relate the results to existing literature in Chapter 5, where I indicate confirmations, silences and new insights.

4.2 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Following inductive thematic analysis, four main themes emerged, related to the aims of school-based support; broad strategies for providing support; role-players in providing school-based support; and specific areas of school-based support.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Aims of school-based support

For this theme, the following three sub-themes (or aims of school-based support) apply: raising awareness and preventing social problems; addressing problems and the manifestation of challenges; and early identification of problems, referrals and providing support for accessing external help. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the sub-themes are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 1

THEME 1		
Aims of school-based support		
SUB-THEMES	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Sub-theme 1.1: Raising awareness and preventing social problems	Any reference to school-based initiatives that may promote and facilitate awareness and prevention of social problems amongst learners.	Any reference to school-based initiatives and interventions that aim to address existing learner problems and challenges, identify and refer learners for professional support, or support learners and their families to access external help.
Sub-theme 1.2: Addressing problems and the manifestation of challenges	Any reference to schools initiating supportive interventions that can address existing learner problems and potential challenges.	Any reference to school-based initiatives that aim to promote and facilitate awareness and prevention of social problems, identify and refer learners for professional support, or support learners and their families to access external help
Sub-theme 1.3: Early identification of problems, referrals and accessing support	Any reference to the early identification of problems, referrals by schools, and support to learners for accessing external help.	Any reference to school-based initiatives that aim to promote and facilitate awareness and prevention of social problems, or address existing learner problems and the manifestation of challenges.

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Raising awareness and preventing social problems

The first aim of school-based support, as identified by the participants, relates to the role that teachers and schools may play in raising awareness of healthy lifestyles and preventing social problems amongst learners. Such deliberate efforts can reportedly equip and prepare learners for life. They include initiatives aimed at advocating life skills and at creating an awareness of issues relating to safety, the environment, cultural differences and personal health.

During individual interviews, some of the teachers explained how they involved external stakeholders to reach this goal:

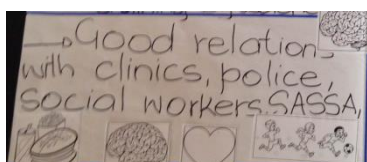
- “We had programmes like police, we invited the police to our school so that they can talk with the learners, when the learner has a problem or a challenge being abused, how they can report this to the police...” (ID⁷, School B, p4, lines 85-89).
- “... the police, they come to the school to show learners the drugs that are used so that learners are aware of what they take” (ID, School C, p3, lines 41-43).

⁷ Henceforth, the following abbreviations apply:

PRA-G = Group discussions during PRA-activity (March 2016); ID = Individual discussion (March 2016); PRA-G2 = Group discussions during PRA-activity (August 2016); RTFN = Research team field notes (August 2016); FN-1 = Field notes (March 2016); FN-2 = Field notes (August 2016); FN-3 = Field notes (April 2017); RJ = Research journal

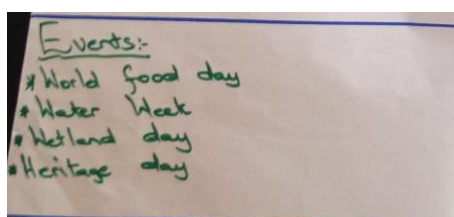
- “...we said okay let us organise a motivational speaker to come and talk to us about crime from Correctional Services, and then they speak to them and motivate them, they also tell them that some of us were criminals and realised that in the end it does not work out, it is not good for your future so stay away, you are still kids, focus on education, and forget about being a thug and making fast cash it can be dangerous for you” (ID, School G, p3, lines 49-55).

Efforts at preventative initiatives were similarly evident in a PRA poster captured in Photograph 4.1, where teachers cited relationships with clinics, police and social workers in the local community as strategies to support learner wellbeing. In further support, one of the researchers noted the following on learners being educated in life skills: “Love Life. They come into the classroom. If dealing with Grade 6s use hall or classroom and work with learners to give life skills lessons. Abstinence. HIV. Real life situations. Teenage pregnancies” (RTFN, School F, 10/8/2016).



Photograph 4.1:
PRA poster, School C,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

In addition to involving external stakeholders in pursuing this aim, several schools reported that they incorporate focused events into their school programme to foster awareness amongst learners for issues of safety, the environment and cultural diversity. Such programmes are claimed to foster an appreciation for the environment and cultural diversity. Examples include initiatives taken during World Food Day, Water Week, Wetland Day and Heritage Day, as depicted by Photograph 4.2.

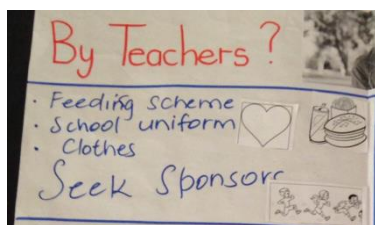


Photograph 4.2:
PRA poster, School F,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

4.2.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Addressing problems and the manifestation of challenges

In addition to schools indicating efforts to raise awareness and prevent social problems, other school-based support initiatives apparently aim at addressing existing problems and the manifestation of potential challenges. According to the participants, these efforts may focus on any kind of challenges at social, physical, academic or emotional level.

By way of example, the following was shared during a PRA-based activity in terms of learners facing social challenges: “We called the police, we called everyone that we could get to assist, because this learner we could see that she is not being loved not cared for” (PRA-G, p7, lines 214-216). Teachers furthermore explained how specific school structures, such as a disciplinary committee, can be utilised to address the behavioural difficulties of learners, saying that: “In terms of the discipline, we do discipline them because there’s a lot of bullying, they like to fight, they break things, they even break the school. The school has a Disciplinary Committee which deals with their problems and other issues” (ID, School D, p3, lines 42-45). Efforts to address physical needs (nutritional and material needs such as clothing, school uniforms, and school stationery) are reportedly attended to through sponsorship-seeking initiatives, as captured in Photograph 4.3. Apart from attending to learners’ nutritional needs *via* sponsors, schools allegedly also implement initiatives such as vegetable garden programmes in aiming to support learners, as illustrated in Photograph 4.4.



Photograph 4.3:
PRA poster, School D, 23/3/2016
(colloquium)



Photograph 4.4:
School H's vegetable garden,
23/3/2016

According to the participants, learning and related needs are generally addressed through remedial and additional classes conducted at schools, as explained in the following contributions: “Okay, so we’ve been paying one of our retired teachers to do remedial education” (PRA-G2, School B, p 21, lines 716-717); and “... extra classes – after school – by NMU students who volunteer as part of their practical” (FN-2, School G, 10/8/2016). These explanations furthermore indicate that teachers do not necessarily provide such support themselves, yet access available resources to this end. Lastly, in terms of emotional support, a participant explained how individual learners are identified and assisted, saying that: “Another support that we give to the children are the seeds of peace, whereby we deal with the learner individually. We call the learner, the learner must talk, then we find out what it is that the learner is making this thing ...” (ID, School A, p2, lines 21-24).

4.2.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Early identification of problems, referrals and accessing support

From the data, it seems clear that early identification of problems and referrals for professional help, are also regarded as an important aim of school-based support, and can be grouped according to internal (school personnel) and external (social workers and psychologists) role-players that participate in such support.

Internally, school-based committees and individuals, such as Health Advisory Committees (HAC) or Tender Loving Care (TLC) committees, can reportedly take the lead in identifying problems and referring learners for professional help. Several schools explained this effort by saying:

- “Firstly, as teachers we identify a child in class who is sick or who is having that trauma. And then from there, we will send a learner support agent to go the learner’s home and find out what is the problem. When the learner support agent comes back he will tell us the problem and then we will refer the child where ever the child will get help. It can be either a clinic or with the doctor” (ID, School A, p2, lines 8-13).
- “The class teacher would have to take it to the health advisory committee and the lady that is working with vulnerable children ...” (PRA-G2, School G, p10, lines 310-311).
- “From the time when the teacher picks that programme, they take the child to the committee – the TLC” (PRA-G2, School F, p2, lines 28-29).

Schools, however, would seemingly first investigate further, before making a referral as evident in the following excerpt: “Grade R teacher came to the office and reported the matter” (PRA-G, p7, lines 213-214).

According to the participants, teachers fulfil an incremental role in referring learners to external supportive agents. Teachers reported that they make referrals to psychologists: “Usually, those learners who we think we need to refer to a psychologist, we ask the consultants that they must refer to the parent ...” (PRA-G2, School F, p2, lines 33-35); doctors: “The doctors yes, where the teacher would just go to the doctors and you know we just present the case and then help us where they can, like here we have children that are yearly visited by the eye doctor specialist where they, all of them will be examined and given spectacles and frames.” (PRA-G2, School G, p12, lines 370-373); as well as special schools: “... we as the school together with the parents, must look for places where we can take learners who cannot go to a normal high school” (PRA-G2, School F, p3, lines 57-59), based on the needs they identify. I similarly noted an example of teachers referring learners to social workers when required: “Teacher notice & talk involve social worker...” (FN-2, School G, 10/8/2016).

Reasons for making such referrals apparently vary, as captured in the following excerpts: “We had a psychologist who was paid by the school to come and help these learners ...” (ID, School B, p4, lines 92-93); “Identifying learning needs – psychological testing” (FN-2, School C, 5/8/2016) (referral for psychological assessment); and: “Also refer serious cases – social workers when parents don’t cooperate” (FN-2, School F, 10/8/2016) (referral of a family). Furthermore, learners are reportedly referred to special schools for learning difficulties: “And then after 6 months we are going to review and see whether those kids need to be in special schools or not” (PRA-G2, School B, p5, lines 143-144); or in cases where emotional, social and material needs

seem evident, as captured in the following contribution:

“What they do is that they organise your middle-class people to come in and adopt a learner. It’s an “adopt a child” programme. So, they adopt a learner to provide, not only their physical that is their school stationery and everything else, but also, their emotional wellbeing” (PRA-G2, School B, p22, lines 763-767).

Finally, participants referred to efforts by schools to assist parents and caregivers in accessing external socio-economic support which, for example, can include assistance to acquire birth certificates for children. They said: “Often the school does help learners who don’t have birth certificates ... we organise the Home Affairs people to come to the school ...” (PRA-G2, School C, p7, lines 188-190); and in terms of child support grants: “And also we work closely with SASSA, when those children are not getting child support grants, we approach SASSA and the parents are helped” (ID, School C, p3, lines 54-55).

4.2.2 Theme 2: Broad strategies for providing support

For this theme, four sub-themes apply, which relate to collaboration and networking; establishing structures and committees at school; identifying and perusing fundraising opportunities; and encouraging parent/caregiver involvement at school. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 2 are summarised in Table 4.2.

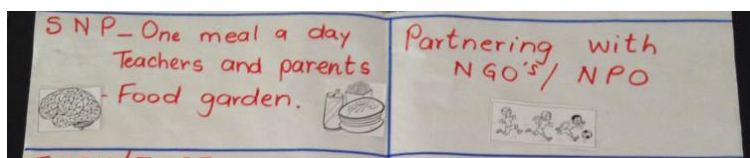
Table 4.2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 2

THEME 2		
Broad strategies for providing support		
SUB-THEMES	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Sub-theme 2.1: Seeking collaboration and networking opportunities	Any reference to schools seeking external collaboration and networking opportunities in order to provide learner support.	Any reference to strategies of school-based structures or committees, ongoing initiatives aimed at raising funds, or efforts to involve parents or caregivers, in order to support learners.
Sub-theme 2.2: Establishing structures and committees at school	Any reference to school-based structures or committees aimed at supporting learners and their families.	Any reference to strategies of schools seeking external collaboration and networking opportunities, ongoing initiatives aimed at raising funds, or efforts to involve parents or caregivers, in order to support learners.
Sub-theme 2.3: Pursuing ongoing fundraising initiatives	Any reference to ongoing school initiatives aimed at raising funds in support of learner needs.	Any reference to strategies of schools seeking external collaboration and networking opportunities, school-based structures or committees, or efforts to involve parents or caregivers, in order to support learners
Sub-theme 2.4: Encouraging parent/caregiver involvement	Any reference to schools encouraging parents or caregivers to support learner needs.	Any reference to strategies of schools seeking external collaboration and networking opportunities, school-based structures or committees, or ongoing initiatives aimed at raising funds, in order to support learners.

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Seeking collaboration and networking opportunities

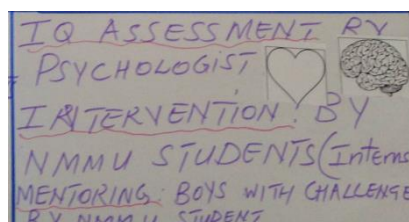
From the data, it seems clear that broad school-based strategies to provide support firstly imply constant efforts by schools to seek collaboration and networking opportunities with various stakeholders. Such efforts involve role-players from local, district and provincial levels, parent volunteers, community members/organisations, as well as private and government institutions (refer to Theme 3 for more detail).

In addition to collaborating with parents (Sub-theme 2.4), schools apparently partner with community members and organisations such as churches, universities and correctional services, in order to support learners. Participants mentioned several examples of support for learners' material needs, stating that: "... the community are providing us with toiletries, Vaseline etc. ..." (ID, School F, p3, lines 56-57); "... churches are donating uniforms and shoes" (ID, School F, p3, line 37); and "... we go to the NGO's and get support, sponsors from the NGO's like shoes, food, uniforms, etc." (ID, School A, p3, lines 65-66). In addition, NGOs can seemingly also offer nutritional support, as demonstrated in Photograph 4.5.

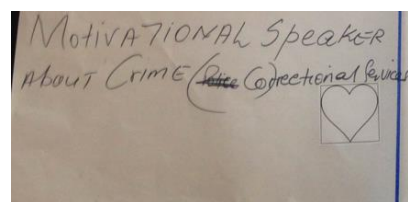


Photograph 4.5:
PRA poster, School E,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

Reportedly, external agencies may furthermore assist schools by providing teaching material, which may in turn have a positive effect on learning. Examples include the following: "... the teaching aids, we get the teaching aids sometimes from Pick 'n Pay, they give us and also with the Department" (PRA-G2, School C, p11, lines 345-346). In addition, schools may also partner with external stakeholders in order to support learners emotionally and socially, according to the participants. Evidence of such initiatives were captured during PRA-based discussions (see Photographs 4.6 and 4.7), also indicating the involvement of university students and correctional services, in providing social and emotional support to at-risk learners.



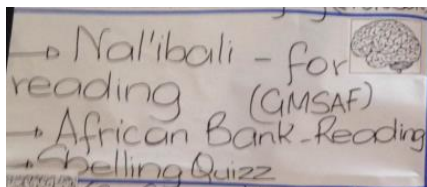
Photograph 4.6:
PRA poster, School B, 23/3/2016
(colloquium)



Photograph 4.7:
PRA poster, School G,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

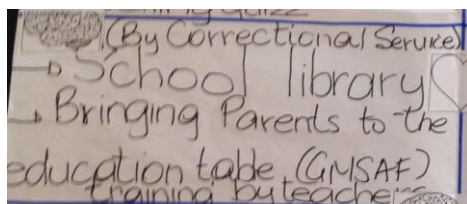
For academic learner support, schools reportedly also rely on local universities, as is apparent in the following contribution: "... NMU, students that come in on Mondays ... just plain reading with the kids – and storytelling –

so that kids can learn to read, and also be able to comprehend what they are reading” (PRA-G2, School B, p16, lines 515 and 517-519). In support, Photograph 4.8 captures a poster compiled during a PRA-based activity, indicating some efforts by NGOs to support learning needs by hosting competitions that may encourage academic development.



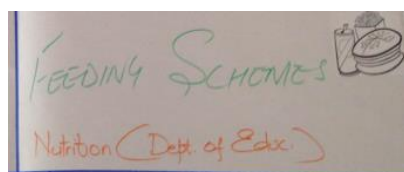
Photograph 4.8:
PRA poster, School C,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

In order to maintain school infrastructure development, schools reportedly once again often rely on the support of community volunteers and external agencies such as correctional services. The following excerpts taken from individual interviews attest to this result: “... in terms of maintaining the grounds, you have volunteers that comes to look at the grounds and keep the area tidy and everything ...” (PRA-G2, School C, p7 lines 185-186); and: “... we were fortunate enough to have Correctional Services to help us out and then they built our school library cupboards” (ID, School C, p2, lines 30-32). Collaboration with and support by the correctional services was furthermore confirmed during a PRA-discussion, as depicted in Photograph 4.9.



Photograph 4.9:
PRA poster, School C,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

On a broader basis, generated data suggest support by the national Department of Basic Education (DBE). Such support seemingly includes efforts to address learning and nutritional needs, as evident in the following excerpts: “The Science educators they have opened a Science Club assisted by the Department of Education” (ID, School G, p2, lines 14-16); and: “... the food that is being given to them by the department, so they all eat at school, they get their you know, the lunch, the breakfast” (PRA-G2, School G, p10, lines 298-300). These explanations are confirmed by PRA-generated data, as captured in Photograph 4.10.



Photograph 4.10:
PRA poster, School A,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

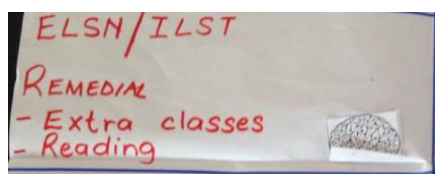
4.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Establishing structures and committees at school

Schools allegedly rely on fixed structures and committees at schools to drive and direct learner support, as depicted in Photograph 4.11. According to the participants, such structures and committees aim at addressing the academic, nutritional, behavioural, emotional and social needs of at-risk learners. Additionally, the data provide evidence of specific committees targeting the development of parenting and literacy skills amongst parents/caregivers, in support of learner wellbeing.



Photograph 4.11:
School C, school visit,
5/8/2016

The participants explained that academic support for learners who face barriers to learning are often provided by Learner Support Agents (LSA) and Institution Level Support Teams (ILST). The role of a LSA appears to be that of supporting teachers in class by assisting learners who face difficulties. I captured this trend in my field notes during a teacher interview, stating that: “Learner support agents also give support for teachers in class” (FN-1, School F, 23/3/2016). Additionally, ILSTs seemingly fulfil the role of school-based committees, that aim to support learners academically, as documented in the following field notes: “ILST – dealing with barriers that some learners may experience. They give support during break, after school and also on weekends” (FN-1, School E, 23/3/2016). Some examples of support provided through ILSTs are captured in Photograph 4.12.

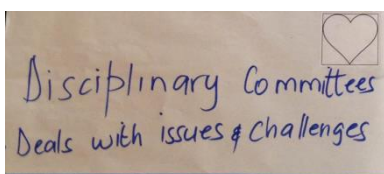


Photograph 4.12:
PRA poster, School E,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

As indicated in Theme 1, learners facing psychosocial challenges are reportedly assisted by school-based committees such as Health Advisory Committees (HAC) and Tender Loving Care (TLC) committees. Teachers explained this as follows: “The first thing that we are doing as teachers, we have HAC, that is a health support agent of learners that will help support learners and parents from classes to home with their challenges” (ID, School A, p2, lines 5-8). Additionally, the following contribution provides an example of emotional support in the form of counselling provided by a TLC committee:

“We also have, for the minors, in the TLC; we have teachers that we have trained at... And then we did some work on minor problems, whereby the child is – maybe the house is burnt, and then she might be in shock. We as the TLC group, does minor counselling for that child” (PRA-G2, School F, p5, lines119-123).

Closely related to this, participants shared ideas of dealing with behavioural problems at school through disciplinary committees, as illustrated by Photograph 4.13.



Photograph 4.13:
PRA poster, School D,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

Other supportive strategies reported by the participants include school-based structures specifically aimed at enabling parents to better support their children. In the following examples, evidence is provided of how parenting and literacy skills have been addressed by schools in an attempt to enhance parental support:

- “And also you can see here on the social, Parent Development Project ... Like for example the first topic that I know, the parents need to know, to understand the term parenting. What is parenting? Because they give us different ideas of what they think parenting is about, share with them what we think parenting is about. And then we had different topics on how to love your kids, to secure them, let them live in a healthy environment, healthy eating and all that” (PRA-G2, School C, p5, lines 126 and 132-140).
- “... trying to help parents to help their children with homework ... So, there’s going to be a new project called The Parents, they are going to teach them maths and English, it will be a new. First, we going to call the parents, they are going to do it during weekends” (PRA-G2, School C, p6, lines 158 and 162-164).

4.2.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Pursuing ongoing fundraising initiatives

Efforts to identify and seek potential fundraising opportunities seemingly represent a crucial strategy to provide school-based support to at-risk learners. Such fundraising opportunities may entail initiatives by schools to generate funds internally, as well as efforts to pursue external funds through e.g. sponsorships. In addition to pursuing fundraising opportunities to strengthen schools’ own supportive capacities, funds are reportedly also raised to directly support at-risk learners and their families.

Various strategies implemented by the participating schools in order to raise funds internally were identified, with teachers in these schools either seeking sponsors or making donations from their own pockets. Efforts by teachers to obtain sponsors are captured in the following contributions:

- “But what we have done is we have applied for funds to Lotto and we’ve received fifty thousand. Now we are busy with quotations now. And then it’s solely for sports” (PRA-G2, School B, p13, lines 411-413).
- “Regular fund raising ..., that’s where we get the money and sometimes the concert or sometimes Mr and Ms A, sometimes you know things like Ms B (name concealed for confidentiality purposes), all those kind of things ...” (PRA-G2, School G, p12, lines 382-384).

Similarly, some teachers explained how fundraising amongst teachers can be used to support learners, saying that:

- “Sometimes we do something like “*Incest*”, we collect money from all the teachers and we put it together and buy shoes or a shirt, because we have competitions, concerts and then we don’t want to go with shabby kids, and then we make it smart” (ID, School F, p2, lines 31-34).
- “... or sometimes the teachers themselves they will go and buy full school uniform for a particular child if she sees the need and sometimes the teachers will collect some money of their pocket to buy the sanitary pads for you know the girls ...” (PRA-G2, School G, p11, lines 357-360).

Another example relates to school-based vegetable-garden projects utilised as fundraising opportunities for both learners and their families in order to financially support them and also to teach learners how to save earnings. Examples are captured in the following contributions:

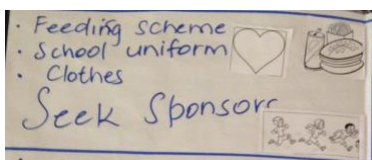
- “... more especially vegetables instead of meat because most of the time that’s what they need you know ... so also, if there’s a surplus we also teach them to sell so that they can make money ...” (PRA-G2, School D, p2, lines 5-8).
- “The vegetable garden is not only for the parent; it’s for the learners. Now, what we’ve introduced with the teachers now is, as the kids are selling their stuff – and I told them they should use 2 litre coke bottles as saving tins ...” (PRA-G2, School B, p24, lines 841-834).

In addition to internal fundraising initiatives, data indicate that the participating schools strongly rely on external stakeholders to raise funds, as contributions by parents and the community are often limited due to prevailing socio-economic challenges. I noted this initiative as follows in my reflective dairy: “While walking through one of the schools, one of the teachers noted that they find it difficult to raise funds in the school due to poverty in the community and therefore mainly seek funds and sponsors from NGO’s” (RJ, 5/8/2016). In support of my observation, the following examples relate to external assistance to learners in terms of school supplies: “And

also the NGOs from our area donated stationery to the learners, so the need for resources was covered” (ID, School B, p4, lines 75-76); and contributions made by sponsors to promote sports development:

“From sponsors ja because the ones that we have now, we had a sponsor from VW, they gave us about R25 000 for sports equipment, so our netball team has got very beautiful uniform and tekkies, they even bought tekkies for them because we don’t want them to play barefooted.” (PRA-G2, School H, p13, lines 409-412).

Furthermore, the provision of school uniforms and healthy meals by sponsors is captured in Photograph 4.14.



Photograph 4.14:
PRA poster, School D,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

Schools seemingly also support learners’ academic development through sponsorships, for example by obtaining school libraries and books (Photograph 4.15), and by means of competitions that may promote learners’ interest in educational domains. The following examples provide evidence of this initiative: “Also we have a Spelling Quiz from Pick ‘n Pay ...” (ID, School C, p2, line 26); and: “We went as far as asking for sponsors for the school library ...” (ID, School C, p2, line 30).

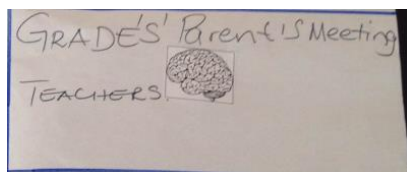


Photograph 4.15:
School C’s library,
school visit, 4/8/2016

4.2.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Encouraging parent/caregiver involvement

The last identified broad strategy employed by schools to support at-risk learners relates to the promotion of parent/caregiver involvement. In support of learners’ emotional wellbeing, schools reportedly tend to guide parents/caregivers, and may attempt to form supportive alliances with parents. Efforts by schools to involve parents/caregivers for emotional support are demonstrated by the following example: “So the first thing that I do, I’d like to have a talk with the child ... involve the parent as well and then will talk with the parent” (PRA-G2, School G, p2, lines 30-31 and 36). This initiative is supported by my observations captured in my field notes as follows: “Learner Support Agent communicates with parents” (FN-2, School A, 4/8/2016); and: “Seeds of peace – trains parents to help emotionally” (FN-2, School A, 4/8/2016).

In addition to the focus on emotional support, schools reportedly also aim to involve parents/caregivers in supporting learners' academic development, as highlighted in Photograph 4.16.

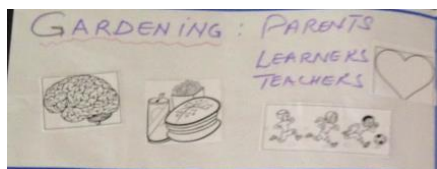


Photograph 4.16:
PRA poster, School G,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

In support of this indication during the PRA-based activity, the following excerpts elaborate on the manner in which schools may guide parents and involve them in supporting learners with their school work:

- “To bring in parents because our parents are young and then they don’t take their kid’s education seriously, so we decided to make grade meetings, so we called parents in our grades and we talked to them, one on one. Now we are bringing them on board, we are able to discuss the new approach on CAPS yes. We educate them about the curriculum ...” (ID, School G, p3, lines 57-61).
- “Yes because they don’t know this new curriculum, so for us we decided to make the grades meetings, we are able to interact with them and assist them, and motivate them ... so that they are able to help their kids” (ID, School G, p3, lines 66-68).

Closely related to this, schools allegedly also focus on parent development by, for example, initiating programmes in support of literacy and numeracy skills development amongst parents/caregivers and in order to augment their ability to assist learners academically. In terms of parent/caregiver involvement in meeting the physical needs of learners, parents/caregivers reportedly tend to assist in maintaining school-based vegetable gardens (Photograph 4.17) and cooking food for hungry learners (Photograph 4.18). A participant explained this as follows: “Our principal organised pap from NGO and we had to ask the parents to cook porridge for the kids that’s how we met the need for food for our learners” (ID, School B, p2, lines 22-24).



Photograph 4.17:
PRA poster, School B,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

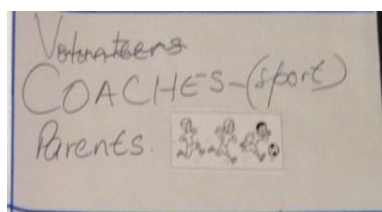


Photograph 4.18:
School C’s school kitchen,
school visit, 23/3/2016

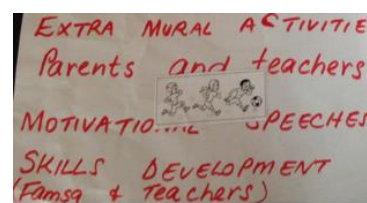
Parent/caregiver involvement in support of learners' physical needs are similarly evident in the following explanation:

“And the also for clothing, we started off by adopting a child, there are learners who come to school untidy, with no proper school uniform, as teachers we started asking around the other learners who are exiting the school and some parents who are kind enough to buy for those learners and others were from churches” (ID, School C, p2, line 10-14).

Finally, participating schools evidently also partner with parents/caregivers to support learners socially, through their involvement in extramural activities, as documented in the following field notes I made: “Principal involves parents to help with sports coaching” (FN-2, School G, 10/8/2016). In support of my field notes, data generated by teachers during a PRA-based activity also indicate parent/caregiver involvement in extramural activities at schools, as captured in Photographs 4.19 and 4.20.



Photograph 4.19:
PRA poster, School G,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)



Photograph 4.20:
PRA poster, School E,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

4.2.3 Theme 3: Additional role-players in the provision of school-based support

Three sub-themes apply to this theme, indicating the various role-players (in addition to teachers) involved in providing school-based support to at-risk learners, as identified by the participants. These are the national government; local organisations, community members and volunteers; and people in helping professions. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3 are summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3

THEME 3 Additional role-players in providing school-based support		
SUB-THEMES	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Sub-theme 3.1: National government	Any reference to support provided by the national government.	Any reference to local organisations, community members, volunteers, or people in helping professions, who provide assistance or support to at-risk learners.
Sub-theme 3.2: Local organisations, community members and volunteers	Any reference to local organisations, community members, or volunteers, providing assistance or support to at-risk learners.	Any reference to support provision by the government or by people in helping professions, aimed at addressing learner needs in schools.
Sub-theme 3.3: People in helping professions	Any reference to people in helping professions who are involved in schools supporting at-risk learners.	Any reference to support provision by the government, local organisations, community members or volunteers, who provide assistance in supporting at-risk learners.

4.2.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: National government

Participants firstly indicated support by the South African Government in the form of resource provision in support of learners who face cumulative risk. Participants more specifically elaborated on support provided by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). In this regard, learners' academic development is allegedly supported by the DBE through programmes that aim to encourage learners' interest and skills in scholastic domains, and by the provision of learning material. A participant explained such provision in the following way: "So we get everything from the Department, even the stationery ..." (PRA-G2, School H, p9, lines 286-287). In terms of initiatives that may promote learners' academic interest and skills, participants referred to DBE-introduced competitions as example, stating that: "And then with Spelling Quiz, it's the Department of Education that's doing that ..." (PRA-G2, School C, p11, lines 341-342). In addition, some other programmes that can encourage learners' academic development are reportedly offered by the DBE in partnership with other agencies, as captured below:

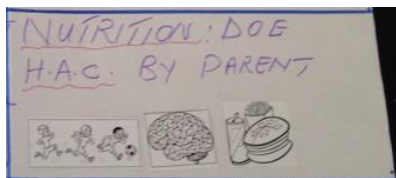
- "Now, Zenex is in partnership with the Department of Education. They have taken six schools within the province – where they are trying to improve literacy" (PRA-G2, School B, p15, lines 498-500).
- "Science Club assisted by the Department of Education" (ID, School G, p2, lines 14-16).

In addition to providing supportive material and encouraging learners' academic development, the DBE also attends to training and skills development of teachers, as captured in the following excerpt: "Department of Education is doing its level best to support whether through workshops, all that stuff, the material tutorial for the teachers ..." (ID, School E, p2, lines 25-26). Furthermore, participants regarded the DBE's mere appointment of teachers (provision of human resources) as supportive of learners and their development, as captured in the following words: "... my principal left, Mr M, he took an early pension so I was left all by myself. So I contacted the department. They said I must look around for a teacher ..." (PRA-G2, School H, p2, lines 6-7).

As indicated earlier, participants furthermore emphasised the way in which local government provides support for learners' physical needs to be met, by means of, for example, funds provision, appointment of staff who can cook meals, and guidelines for attending to learners' nutritional needs. One of the teachers explained how funds to buy food and guidelines for dietary menus have been provided by the DBE at their school, saying that:

"The menus, like on Monday they have to eat this, Tuesday this, and all those things you know, like a balanced diet, they are trying to like we buy according to the Department of Education, what they want us to buy, but it's money from the Department of Education" (PRA-G2, School D, p2, lines 30-33).

Cooking personnel who prepare meals for learners are generally also funded by the DBE, as is evident from the following contribution: “The school has to buy food, there are cooking ladies that are employed by the department as well, ja” (PRA-G2, School H, p4, lines 105-106). Similar information was mapped by teachers during a PRA-based activity (see Photograph 4.21), once again indicating the DBE’s involvement in addressing learners’ nutritional needs.



Photograph 4.21:
PRA poster, School B,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

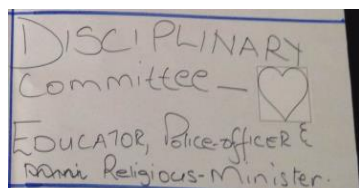
Finally, government support also entails emotional and social support, as highlighted by the participants, by means of training. The following explanation provides supportive evidence: “Soul buddy. They talk their language, they were trained learners, they were trained by the Department of Education with the teacher” (ID, School A, p3, lines 43-44). Emotional support furthermore includes access to professional help, as explained by one of the teachers: “And then we as the committee, we sit with the child, we assess; there are forms that we use. We assess whether or not the child needs to be taken to the child psychologist, the departmental psychologist ...” (PRA-G2, School F, p2, lines 29-32). I further noted in my field notes reported efforts by the DBE to emotionally support learners, stating that: “Learner Support Agent (LSA) – by the Department of Education – work with social worker – communicate with parents” (FN-2, School A, 4/8/2016).

4.2.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Local organisations, community members and volunteers

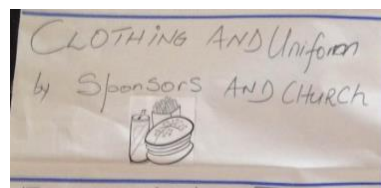
Schools seemingly collaborate with local organisations and institutions to maintain resources and attend to school-specific needs. As an example, schools may utilise the support of Correctional Services to help maintain resources such as school-based vegetable gardens. A participant explained that: “And then Correctional Services is the one who is helping us in the school garden to prepare, because we are all women there ...” (ID, School F, p4, lines 119-120). Local clinics were mentioned as another example of addressing learners’ physical needs by, for example, visiting schools in order to support learners who are infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS. One of the participants explained: “We have good relations with clinics. When our kids are sick, some are taking the HIV and Aids treatment, they would come to our school to supply us with the treatment for all the learners that are on treatment so that we give them the treatment” (ID, School C, p3, lines 37-40).

Furthermore, participants referred to the supportive role of the national power supply company: “And also there’s a science project whereby learners they do science projects and they go do the competition at Eskom” (PRA-G2, School C, p10, line 318-319). Closely related, such support by external agencies is confirmed by my

field notes, once again demonstrating how competitions (by, for example, a local bank) are used to facilitate learning: “African Bank holds reading competitions” (FN-1, School F, 23/3/2016). Additionally, participants emphasised the support provided by the local Police (Photograph 4.22) and local churches (Photograph 4.23), as community partners and agencies.



Photograph 4.22:
PRA poster, School G,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

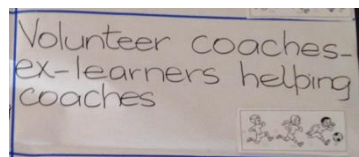


Photograph 4.23:
PRA poster, School G,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

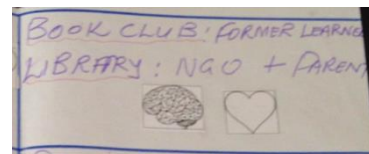
Following a PRA-based discussion, a teacher referred to a previous learner volunteering his services as an optometrist to the school, by testing learners' vision and sponsoring reading glasses. The teacher said:

“I didn't mention that there was a learner who was at our school, he now works at the pharmacy, at the optometrist. So we have learners who are getting spectacles because you find that one of the things that is a learning barrier is sight, so they are getting spectacles free of charge, they get the spectacles and school bags” (ID, School C, p3-4, line 70-74).

This idea is confirmed by my field notes where I stated: “Ex-learners provide certain services to school children. These include optometrist, coaching and also helping out with the choirs” (FN-1, School C, 23/3/2016). It is further confirmed by the following references to previous learners supporting learners' social development by contributing to extra-mural activities and skills development: “There are ex-learners who are volunteer coaches now, the learners who were at our school when they get employed somewhere or maybe there's coaches they come back to the school to help us out, they know the problems” (ID, School C, p3, lines 65-68); and: “We've got like our, who is our ex-learner, he coaches music” (PRA-G2, School C, p9, lines 279-280). Likewise, support from previous learners is evident in Photographs 4.25 and 4.26, indicating support in the form of coaching and reading support.



Photograph 4.24:
PRA poster, School C, 23/3/2016
(colloquium)



Photograph 4.25:
PRA poster, School B, 23/3/2016
(colloquium)

Closely related, schools reportedly typically partner with individuals from their communities for support in terms of sponsorship and voluntary service provision. The following examples capture some examples of such community-based support initiatives that address various needs of learners:

- “We are very fortunate in this area because most of the people here are very supportive, they sometimes do come and bring some old clothes you know for those needy learners ...” (PRA-G2, School H, p6, line 157-159).
- “Let ordinary members of the community just take one child. Pay for their school fees, their stationery, their uniform and anything else that they want to do. So, some it’s solely school things. Some go over and do, like, the birthday parties, you know, for the kids” (“Adopt a child” project) (PRA-G2, School B, p23, lines 788-792).
- “We do include other people like parents for coaching, if for instance we have a parent who is good in soccer, we invite that parent and then the parent takes part” (PRA-G2, School G, p5, lines 143-145).
- “We happen to have a good Samaritan who contributed computers, we have this new system that is SAPS, initially the sponsor was meant to cater for the kids but we have a big number of learners in our school, instead we use these computers to help us with this SAPS, that is with the capturing of marks and everything. We capture the marks on computer, at least we are able to do work in a short space of time” (ID, School C, p4, lines 76-81).

Volunteers from the community apparently also assist schools in maintaining school grounds, as captured in the following contribution: “We have another good Samaritan who is maintaining our grounds, we have a very neat school. He comes every month to maintain our grounds” (ID, School C, p4, lines 83-84). In support, I noted that: “Voluntary workers such as parents, help look at the school grounds and gardens” (FN-1, School C, 23/3/2016). In addition to maintenance support, community volunteers seemingly contribute to infrastructure development at schools, as illustrated by Photograph 4.26, showing a classroom constructed from a container, which was sponsored by people from the local community. In this manner, local people and volunteers contribute to the creation of a learning environment that may benefit learners from at-risk environments.



Photograph 4.26:
School H’s container classrooms, school visit, 11/8/2016

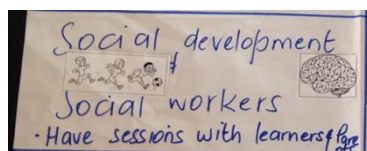
4.2.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: People in helping professions

Finally, role-players in school-based support provision include external stakeholders such as social workers, psychologists, and students from universities, who may provide valuable services in supporting at-risk learners. For example, a teacher explained how external psychologists have been supporting learners with learning difficulties at their school, saying that:

“It’s not an easy thing; it’s not a quick thing. You’ll notice that a child will be identified in Grade 3, and only be taken in by the Educational Support Centre while the child is doing Grade 5 or Grade 7. It’s only this year where we got a psychologist who said, okay, we will only help you with the Grade 7s – provided that the child is less than sixteen and provided that the child is more than 14 years” (PRA-G2, School F, p2, lines 37-44).

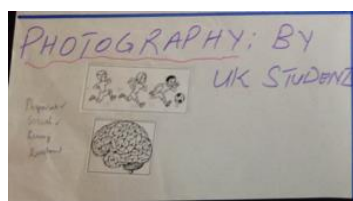
Similarly, students from the Nelson Mandela University (NMU) reportedly contribute to learners’ academic development, as “when the NMU students come in, they borrow books from the library, to read with the kids, and they bring them back – up until it’s functional” (PRA-G2, School B, p26, lines 887-889).

In terms of learners’ emotional and social wellbeing, teachers mapped evidence of contributions by social workers in support of at-risk learners and their families, as captured in Photograph 4.27.



Photograph 4.27:
PRA poster, School D,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

Closely related, teachers also reported partnerships with international students as an avenue of supporting learners, as captured in Photograph 4.28. One of my co-researchers confirmed such involvement of international students, by noting that: “But there is a programme going on United Through Sport organisation using college kids from UK. They take time off. Introduce hockey. Played two tournaments” (RTFN, School B, 10/8/2016).



Photograph 4.28:
PRA poster, School B,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

4.2.4 Theme 4: Specific areas of school-based support

In this theme, four sub-themes represent the specific areas of support provided by the participating schools to at-risk learners, as reported by the participants. These relate to addressing the needs of learners; providing academic support; encouraging cultural awareness and creating recreational opportunities; and maintaining

school infrastructure in support of healthy functioning. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 4 are summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 4

THEME 4		
Specific areas of support		
SUB-THEMES	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Sub-theme 4.1: Addressing the needs of learners	Any reference to school-based initiatives that support learners in terms of nutritional, material, emotional, psychological and social needs.	Any reference to schools providing academic support, recreational opportunities, preparing learners for the future, raising cultural awareness, or maintaining the necessary school infrastructure in support of learners' wellbeing.
Sub-theme 4.2: Providing academic support	Any reference to schools promoting learners' academic development or providing academic support to learners.	Any reference to school-based initiatives that support learners' nutritional, material, emotional, psychological and social needs, as well as efforts to provide recreational opportunities, prepare learners for the future, raise cultural awareness, or maintain the necessary school infrastructure.
Sub-theme 4.3: Encouraging cultural awareness and preparing learners for life	Any reference to schools providing recreational opportunities, preparing learners for the future, and raising cultural awareness.	Any reference to school-based initiatives in support of learners' nutritional, material, emotional, psychological and social needs, academic development, or maintaining the necessary school infrastructure.
Sub-theme 4.4: Maintaining school infrastructure in support of healthy functioning	Any reference to initiatives aimed at maintaining the necessary school infrastructure in support of healthy functioning.	Any reference to school-based initiatives in support of learners' nutritional, material, emotional, psychological and social needs, academic development, recreational opportunities, preparing learners for the future or raising cultural awareness.

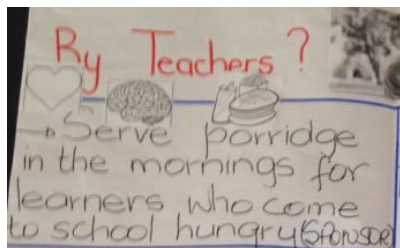
4.2.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Addressing the needs of learners

From the data I analysed, it seems clear that the participating schools endeavour to support the wellbeing of at-risk youth by addressing specific areas of need. These include learners' basic needs for clothing, nutrition, and material support, as well as support to address their emotional, psychological and social needs. In terms of such support, I noted the following: "Clothing is bought for children with needs" (FN-1, School C, 23/3/2016); and also: "Supporting children who do not have school uniforms through teachers and other learners who bring extra clothes from home" (FN-1, School F, 23/3/2016).

With regard to learners' nutritional needs, teachers explained how they take responsibility to identify hungry learners and see to it that such learners are provided with meals, stating that:

“... but then as a class teacher, it’s your duty, if you see that there’s a child that comes home without food because they always say that “I didn’t food there was no food for two days at home”, then you would take that case, you deal with it where the child is given a food parcel every day after school maybe a loaf of bread, or sometimes peanut butter kind of thing” (PRA-G2, School G, p10, line 300-305).

In support of their explanations, teachers’ role in directing food intake at schools, is illustrated in Photograph 4.29, depicting data generated during a PRA-based activity.



Photograph 4.29:
PRA poster, School C,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

In order to help augment the provision of healthy meals to learners, schools reportedly utilise school-based vegetable gardens, as explained in the following excerpt: “That’s how we started out because we saw a need to add more food on the table for the learners because you know the money was not always enough, so we started a vegetable garden” (PRA-G2, School H, p5, lines 130-133). Teachers allegedly also rely on vegetable gardens to teach learners how to become self-supportive, as captured in the following contribution: “And another thing I wanted my learners to learn now to do gardening themselves. I wanted them to have a skill so that they can take it home you know, they can make their own vegetable gardens at home to feed their families” (PRA-G2, School H, p5, lines 133-137).

Other specific areas of support that participants reported on include efforts by schools to enhance the emotional, psychological and social functioning of at-risk learners. Teachers seemingly focused on being available to listen, give advice to learners, guide and support, as well as to make referrals and facilitate access to other professionals when required. During a discussion following a PRA-based activity, the following contributions were transcribed, illustrating ways in which teachers support learners emotionally and psycho-socially:

- “They need friends because they were always isolated from other kids because of their problems and challenges. They always need people or teachers to speak out, to talk with them, to discuss their problems with” (ID, School B, p3, lines 46-49).
- “One of the teachers who was a very sympathetic to those learners used to speak with those learners and listen to their challenges and help them by only talking with them. In this part they only needed somebody to

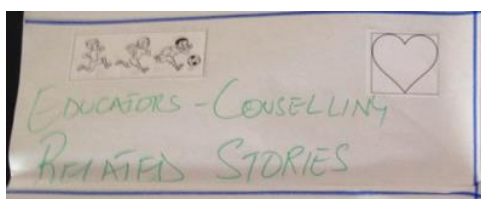
listen to them, they needed somebody to have empathy with them and most of the teachers did that with these kids” (ID, School B, p3, lines 53-58).

- “Sometimes as educators, when the learners come, we call the parents, when the parents arrive we sit with them in a room and counsel them according to their story” (ID, School A, p2, lines 13-15).

I reflected on teachers’ efforts to support learners emotionally in the following way:

“Furthermore, I was also touched by the level of care teachers expressed towards learners, especially the responsibility they take on themselves to genuinely care for learners. From the discussions, its apparent that teachers often go the extra mile to support learners emotionally by praying with them and talking with them” (RJ, 5/8/2016).

Teachers supporting learners emotionally and psychosocially was also confirmed during PRA-based activities, as depicted by Photograph 4.30:



Photograph 4.30:
PRA poster, School A,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

As further supportive evidence, participants specifically referred to psycho-social support during interventions, saying that: “psychology students and social workers who came to school to help these kids with their challenges” (ID, School B, p4, lines 100-102), thereby indicating schools’ efforts to arrange for suitable support for at-risk learners. Additionally, one teacher mentioned how referrals were made in order to support at-risk learners, stating that: “And then, for those problems which are bigger than us, we refer to the psychologist because there are lots of problems around” (PRA-G2, School F, p5, lines 123-125). Similarly, schools allegedly contribute to learners’ social development through extramural activities, as I noted in my field notes: “Music, soccer, rugby, cricket, choir – teacher.” (FN-2, School D, 5/8/2016).

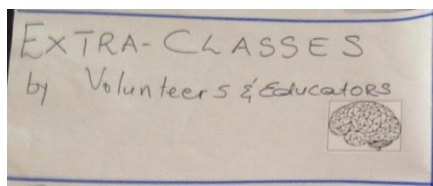
4.2.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Providing academic support

According to the participants, schools support learners academically through learner support initiatives and homework programmes. Examples of learner support initiatives include remedial and additional classes for learners in need of these. Whilst discussing this option, a participant clarified the role of a remedial teacher in the following way:

“Another thing, there’s a remedial teacher, because when the learner needs support we give support to the learner. Some of the work that the learner is supposed to do in class lacks, so we would ask the remedial teacher to go and support the learner so that he cannot be behind with their school work” (ID, School A, p3, lines 50-54).

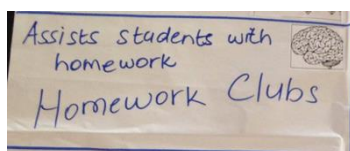
Likewise, I noted the potential value of additional classes for learners’ academic development, stating that: “Extra classes are held on weekends to support learners struggling with school work” (FN-1, School G,

23/3/2016). In further support, teacher participants mapped these classes as a means of supporting learners during a PRA-based activity (Photograph 4.31).



Photograph 4.31:
PRA poster, School G,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

As alluded to previously, data furthermore suggest that schools often use competitions to encourage learners' interest and involvement in learning. This is illustrated in the following transcription: "and we have competitions at the end of the week, even with Number Sense we are having a competition around June, we will be having a competition" (ID, School F, p7, lines 193-195). Finally, schools reported providing homework support in order to supplement learners' academic development, as depicted in Photograph 4.32.



Photograph 4.32:
PRA poster, School D,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

4.2.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Encouraging cultural awareness and preparing learners for life

Further areas of support by schools reportedly include planned events to expose and prepare learners for their future and develop cultural awareness amongst them. In preparing learners for life, teachers allegedly focus on life skills and practical expertise amongst learners, whilst the purpose of cultural awareness is aimed at creating an appreciation and sensitivity for cultural diversity. As part of a PRA-based discussion, the following example of how schools strive to cultivate cultural diversity amongst learners, was provided:

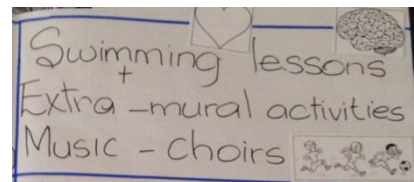
"Heritage Day, what we do, we want to sensitise our learners about different types of cultures, then we wear traditional clothes and do different activities for different cultures ... We also bring traditional foods, we cook the foods like mxushu, mphokoshos and all that day ..." (PRA-G2, School C, p3, lines 59-64).

Efforts to create an awareness of human rights are similarly explicated in the following contribution: "... on Human Rights Day, we have a legend here who helped us, maybe she can talk more on this. On Human Rights Day she did a talk, we have pictures to this effect. She gave a talk to the learners there, awareness on their rights and all that ..." (PRA-G2, School C, p4, lines 98-102).

In addition, schools offer recreational opportunities to learners in the form of extramural activities in the areas of arts, culture and sport in order to support learners to have a balanced life. In this regard, the PRA-based posters indicate various cultural and sport-related activities offered by schools, as captured in Photographs 4.33 and 4.34.



Photograph 4.33:
PRA poster, School D,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)



Photograph 4.34:
PRA poster, School C,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

The providing of recreational opportunities for learners is furthermore evident in the data generated during follow-up discussions, as captured in the following transcript: “We’ve got soccer, it’s only soccer and netball and Rushka also helps our learners, she teaches them Zumba dance, they also do Zumba dance” (PRA-G2, School H, p12, lines 381-382). In further support of the notion that recreational opportunities are provided, Photograph 4.35 captures an extract from a newspaper article that a school principal showed the research team. The article features the school’s March and Drill team, indicating how the school creates recreational opportunities for learners. Similarly, I used my research journal as follows to reflect on ways in which schools use extramural activities to support learners’ wellbeing: “I found it interesting to note how much teachers did to support learners emotionally. Teachers counsel learners when necessary and one of the teachers mentioned how they also use sport to support learners by keeping them off the streets” (RJ, 23/3/2016).



Photograph 4.35:
School B’s March and Drill team in the newspaper, school visit, 10/8/2016

4.2.4.4 Sub-theme 4.4: Maintaining infrastructure in support of healthy functioning

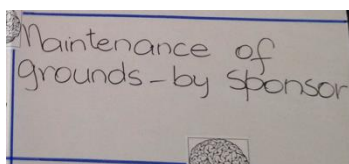
Finally, data indicate that participants regard the provision and maintenance of school infrastructure as part of indirect school-based support to learners as such efforts ultimately contribute to the way in which schools function and are able to address learners’ basic and learning needs which, in turn, support healthy functioning.

One such an example of maintaining infrastructure in support of addressing learners’ basic needs, is captured in the following extract:

“Yes, and the very first people who helped us with our toilets here were the police officers from Woma, they bought us some toilets for the little ones and the bigger ones and they came and installed them, they painted the

classrooms, they gave us some pigeon holes to put the bags for the little ones you know” (PRA-G2, School H, p7, line201-205).

Such efforts to maintain infrastructure is furthermore supported by visual data, such as the extract captured in Photograph 4.36, showing information obtained during a PRA-based activity.



Photograph 4.36:
PRA poster, School C,
23/3/2016 (colloquium)

In support of the wellbeing and functioning of at-risk learners, a school principal explained how her school obtained a sponsor to build a kitchen in order to prepare healthy meals for learners. She said:

“Because, obviously, they are saying introduce school nutrition, ... So we have elicited the head of Woolworths. So they came in, they donated R 44 000 before – and they were happy with how we used the money. Now they are giving us R 121 000. So if you go to the kitchen... Now, it’s something different. It’s coming along” (PRA-G2, School B, p26, line 937-942).

Further efforts to provide in learners’ basic needs is demonstrated in Photograph 4.37, exemplifying efforts to strengthen water supply at School G.



Photograph 4.37:
School G's water-tanks,
school visit,23/3/2016

Additionally, learners’ academic development is supported in the form of, for example, schools’ efforts to build additional classrooms. A participant explained:

“Those things were done from 2014, two classes were built in 2014 because our school was growing, so we saw a need for more classrooms, hence we tried to organise those two classes to be made and we also use them as our school hall because there’s a partition inside, so is also used as a school hall when we’ve got year end functions and ... for the little ones, for the grade R’s. And then the other new classroom that we recently built, I think last year, I will show you now now, we had two big containers, 12m containers and then they were brought together to make two beautiful classrooms, beautiful, you won’t believe when I go and show you now now” (PRA-G2, School H, p8, lines 240-249).

Lastly, a teacher explained how their school was supported by a NGO to develop better facilities and infrastructure for sport participation: She said: “Everything they need, like you see, we’ve got a soccer field that was a sponsor from the Barry College from the UK, but we don’t have soccer coaches, but we will be looking into those. And the netball court was a sponsor from Reeds College ...” (PRA-G2, School B, p13, lines 413-417).

All these provide an indication of school-based efforts to create and maintain an environment where learners can function optimally, and where needs can be met.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results of the study, by explicating the four main themes and related sub-themes that I identified following inductive thematic analysis. Throughout, I included excerpts from the data in order to enrich my discussions.

In the next and final chapter, I compare the results with current literature in order to highlight confirmations, silences and new insights following this study. I come to conclusions when addressing the research questions, and reflect on the challenges I experienced and potential limitations of the study. I conclude by formulating recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I presented the results of the study in terms of the four main themes and sub-themes I identified through the inductive data analysis process. Throughout, I included extracts from the generated data, as supporting evidence.

In this chapter, I first offer an overview of the preceding chapters and then present the findings by situating the results within existing literature, as discussed in Chapter 2. As I did not identify any contradictions between the findings of this and related studies, I focus on confirmations, silences identified in the data, and new insights stemming from this study. Next, I come to conclusions by addressing the research questions I formulated in Chapter 1. I discuss possible contributions of the study, and reflect on the challenges I experienced while conducting research. I conclude this dissertation of limited scope by making recommendations for future training, practice and research.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

In **Chapter 1** I introduced the study by explicating the rationale for undertaking this research, based on the challenges often faced by at-risk learners in South Africa and the potential role of schools and teachers in supporting their optimal development. I discussed the purpose of this study, which focused on gaining insight into school-based initiatives undertaken by primary schools in support of the wellbeing of children in at-risk contexts as part of the broader FIRST-GATE project. I formulated the research questions, stated my working assumptions, and clarified the key concepts related to this study. Next, I presented my theoretical framework and explained the selected epistemological paradigm, methodological approach and research design I employed during data generation, documentation and analysis. I concluded the chapter by briefly introducing the ethical considerations and quality criteria to which I strove to adhere.

In **Chapter 2** I explored existing literature in order to provide context and insight into school-based initiatives aimed at supporting the wellbeing of at-risk learners. I focused on the South African context, the effect of contextual challenges on South African children, developmental milestones and needs of primary school children, and the potential role of schools in supporting at-risk learners. I concluded the chapter by explaining how I utilised the asset-based approach as theoretical framework to guide the study and interpret the results I obtained.

In **Chapter 3** I explained the choices I made to conduct empirical research in order to address the formulated research questions. I discussed the interpretivist paradigm and case study design I utilised, applying PRA principles when generating data through PRA-based activities and discussions, observation-as-context-of-interaction, and visual strategies. Data were documented by means of field notes and a research journal, as well as audio-visual techniques. I then explained the thematic inductive analysis I completed, reflected on my role as researcher, and described how I respected ethical guidelines and aimed to secure rigour.

In Chapter 4 I presented the results of the study by discussing the four main themes and associated sub-themes I identified through the process of thematic inductive analysis. To this end, I focused on aims of school-based support, broad strategies, additional role-players, and specific areas of support. Throughout, I included excerpts from the data to elucidate my discussions.

5.3 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this section I present the findings of the study, by situating the results within existing literature. I indicate confirmations, silences identified in the data, and new insights stemming from the study. No contradictions could be identified. As an introduction, Table 5.3 provides an overview of the findings, structured according to the themes I discussed in Chapter 4.

Table 5.3: Summary of findings of the study

Theme	Main finding	Existing literature	Relation with existing literature
Theme 1: Aims of school-based support	School-based support initiatives aim to raise awareness of social problems in order to prevent these from occurring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education (2002) • Greenberg <i>et al.</i> (2003) • Kratochwilla <i>et al.</i> (2009) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Paternite <i>et al.</i> (2006) • Skovdal and Campbell (2015) 	Support existing literature
	School-based support initiatives aim to address challenges that manifest as social problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brendtro and Brokenleg (2012) • Department of Education (2000b, 2002) • Greenberg <i>et al.</i> (2003) • Heath and Cole (2012) 	Support existing literature

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Meintjies <i>et al.</i> (2009) • Paternite <i>et al.</i> (2006) 	
	School-based support initiatives aim to address behavioural difficulties amongst learners.		New insight
	School-based support initiatives aim to identify problems at an early stage, refer children when required, and assist people to access support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education (2003, 2009) • Ferreira <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) 	Support existing literature
Theme 2: Broad strategies for providing support	Actively pursuing collaboration and networking opportunities can be employed as strategy to provide school-based support to at-risk learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anderson-Butcher and Ashton (2004) • Department of Education (2000b, 2001a, 2008, 2009) • Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) • Ferreira <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) 	Support existing literature
	By establishing structures and committees at school, support can be provided to at-risk learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education (1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2009) • Greenberg <i>et al.</i> (2003) • Skovdal and Campbell (2015) 	Support existing literature
	Schools often focus on fundraising initiatives in order to provide school-based support to at-risk learners and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhana (2015) • Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) 	Support existing literature
	Schools can provide support by focusing on greater parent/caregiver involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anderson-Butcher and Ashton (2004) • Department of Education (2008, 2009) • Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) • Ferreira <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Kratochwill <i>et al.</i> (2009) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) 	Support existing literature
Theme 3: Additional role-players in providing school-based support	National government often assists schools in providing support to at-risk learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education (2005, 2008, 2009) • Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) • Faber <i>et al.</i> (2014) 	Support existing literature

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) 	
	Local organisations, community members and volunteers can assist schools in providing support to at-risk learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anderson-Butcher and Ashton (2004) • Department of Education (2000b, 2008, 2009) • Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) • Ferreira <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) 	Support existing literature
	Previous learners can support the needs of at-risk learners through sponsorships, voluntary services and their involvement in recreational activities.		New insight
	People in helping professions play a significant role in providing school-based support to at-risk learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anderson-Butcher and Ashton (2004) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Paternite <i>et al.</i> (2006) 	Support existing literature
Theme 4: Specific areas of support	School-based support initiatives often focus on the needs of learners and addressing these.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee on Teacher Education Policy (1996) • Department of Education (2000b, 2001a, 2002, 2008, 2009) • Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) • Faber <i>et al.</i> (2014) • Ferreira <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Heath and Cole (2012) • Ishdorj <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Meintjies <i>et al.</i> (2009) • Paternite <i>et al.</i> (2006) 	Support existing literature
	Teacher resilience forms an integral part of teacher efficacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gu and Day (2007) 	Silence in the data
	School-based support often includes academic support to learners in promoting their performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education (2000b, 2008, 2009) • Ferreira <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Greenberg <i>et al.</i> (2003) 	Support existing literature
	The establishment of a positive learning environment is regarded as prerequisite for supporting learners academically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education (2000b) 	Silence in the data
	Cultural awareness can be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of 	Support existing

	encouraged and recreational opportunities provided as part of school-based support initiatives.	Education (2000b) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) • Ferreira <i>et al.</i> (2012) • Loots <i>et al.</i> (2012) 	literature
	School-based support implies the maintenance of infrastructure at school, as this can support the healthy functioning of learners.		New insight

5.3.1 Why do schools provide holistic support to at-risk learners?

This study indicates that schools provide multi-level support to learners in order to both prevent and address problems, so as to facilitate wellbeing. School-based supportive efforts include the early identification of learners who face emotional, social, learning and material difficulties, making referrals where needed, and assisting learners and their families to access external professional support when required. In support of this finding, the national government encourages the role of South African schools in identifying children in need of, for example, child support grants, or support for being affected by HIV/AIDS (Department of Education, 2003). Referrals made by the participating schools include recommendations to social workers, psychologists and schools for learners with special needs. This finding correlates with the work of Ferreira *et al.* (2012) who elaborate on ways in which teachers can support learners with emotional needs by referring them for counselling. The finding furthermore supports the *Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education* (Department of Education, 2001a) which advocates site-based support teams at schools to manage, support and make relevant referrals.

I further found that schools generally strive to support learners emotionally, by for example, providing teacher counselling in addition to making referrals; and by addressing material needs such as hunger through, for example, vegetable garden programmes and the provision of sponsored clothes. This finding aligns with the guidelines proposed by the *National School Health Policy and Implementation Guidelines* document (Department of Education, 2002) as well as with various other sources (Department of Education, 2001a, 2008, 2009; Ferreira & Ebersöhn, 2011; Ferreira *et al.*, 2012; Heath and Cole, 2012; Loots *et al.*, 2012; Skovdal & Campbell, 2015), highlighting the responsibility of schools to provide emotional and physical support to learners through initiatives such as feeding schemes and school-based vegetable gardens. In addition to these avenues of support, my study indicates additional and remedial classes to learners who face academic challenges as other possible support initiatives. This finding once again supports government policy guidelines, indicating several roles that teachers may fulfil in being responsive to the educational needs of learners (Department of Education, 2000b).

Additionally, this study indicates that preventative measures are often employed by schools to foster awareness and knowledge of social problems and in order to support the social wellbeing of learners by, as far as possible, preventing problems from occurring. Such initiatives highlighted by this study include life skills training in the form of abstinence-based intervention programmes and peer education (confirmed by Skovdal & Campbell, 2015), as well as efforts to foster an appreciation for the environment and of cultural differences. Several authors support this finding, including Greenberg *et al.* (2003), Kratochwilla *et al.* (2009), Loots *et al.* (2012), and Paternite *et al.* (2006). The finding furthermore relates to the implied role of teachers to encourage community involvement and citizenship (Department of Education, 2000b), as well as strategies that may promote healthy lifestyles, as outlined by the *National School Health Policy and Implementation Guidelines* document (Department of Education, 2002).

Finally, I found that schools generally regard the management of behavioural difficulties amongst learners as a significant support measure. In this way, schools support learners by managing problems that occur, usually through school disciplinary committees or by referring serious cases to the police for external support. As I did not find any reference to addressing behavioural issues when studying literature on school-based support, this finding indicates new insight stemming from the study in terms of addressing the wellbeing of at-risk learners. To this end, support of this kind implies that schools regard the management of problems as a supportive measure in the sense that such intervention may prevent further problems from occurring or that it may allow learners to access professional support services when required. Whereas the management of behavioural problems may be viewed as part of normal disciplinary measures, schools participating in this study regard such intervention as a support initiative.

5.3.2 How do schools provide support to at-risk learners and who do they involve?

According to the findings of this study, schools provide support by implementing certain broad strategies, related to collaborative and fundraising initiatives, as well as the establishment of school-based committees and structures. Within these broad strategies, school-based support can take the form of teacher/school efforts to attend to learner needs, encouraging environmental and cultural awareness; supporting recreational activities; and maintaining school infrastructure in order to provide an environment that can support the healthy functioning of learners.

The findings of this study highlight the following possible collaborative initiatives by schools: working together with parents/caregivers, community volunteers, and local organisations; and networking with district, provincial and national government for support provision. Through such collaborative efforts, learners can be supported in

terms of material needs, by focussing on sponsors, voluntary services (e.g. to maintain vegetable gardens), feeding schemes, access to local clinics, and the development of healthy lifestyle habits. Emotional support can be augmented by partnering with social workers and psychologists; and social support by involving community volunteers or parents, for motivation, guidance and recreational opportunities. Learning support can be offered through competitions, as well as remedial and additional classes provided by external agencies.

In addition to these measures of support, I found that schools can offer knowledge and skills training to parents/caregivers in order to strengthen learner support and access to infrastructure, and to encourage the self-supportive capacity of community members. This can be achieved through, for example, parenting or literacy workshops, by having community volunteers run tuck shops at schools, or by allowing them to sell produce from the school vegetable gardens. This finding supports national government policy (Department of Education, 2000b, 2002, 2008, 2009), more specifically the *Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education* (Department of Education, 2001a), which describes the role of teachers as including the mobilising of support from the community, district and higher education institutions in support of learner wellbeing. This finding furthermore confirms the work of Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011), Anderson-Butcher and Ashton (2004), Ferreira *et al.* (2012) and Loots *et al.* (2012), who all posit that effective support initiatives often depend on schools partnering with other role-players who may contribute by being involved in recreational activities, providing voluntary services and sponsorships, or offering competitions aimed at developing learners academically.

Even though this finding confirms existing literature, no reference could be found to the potential role that previous learners may fulfil in providing support to at-risk learners, as indicated by the current study. As such, new insight stemming from this study includes this finding on potential role-players in support provision. More specifically, new insight relates to the role of previous learners who may share their skills and expertise in building the capacity of schools to offer, for example, recreational activities to at-risk learners, thereby broadening their horizons and attending to learners' needs on multiple levels. Additionally, specific services and resources that may augment the wellbeing of learners can be provided by previous learners, such as testing learners' vision, and sponsoring reading glasses for those who need them.

This study furthermore indicates that schools in at-risk contexts strongly rely on fundraising and sponsorship initiatives in order to support learners and their families. This can be achieved when teachers raise funds amongst themselves, or by schools asking for the help of the community and local businesses. Existing literature (e.g. Bhana, 2015; Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011), confirms this trend in at-risk school-communities, indicating constant efforts by teachers and sometimes parents/caregivers to raise funds or seek sponsors for,

for example, food and clothes for needy learners, both out of their own pockets or by accessing external resources.

Establishing relevant school committees and structures can serve as yet another catalyst for support provision by schools, based on the findings of the current study. Participants foregrounded committees to address the academic needs (Individual Level Support Teams), behavioural problems (Disciplinary Committees), nutritional needs (School Based Support Teams), and socio-emotional challenges (Health Advisory Committees) of learners. Likewise, Greenberg *et al.* (2003), as well as Skovdal and Campbell (2015), explain the role of committees and structured programmes in supporting learners facing social and emotional challenges. In further support, policy guidelines define the role of school-based committees as one of addressing learners' nutritional (Department of Education, 2009), health-related (Department of Education 1999, 2000a), educational (Department of Education, 2000b) and psychological needs (Department of Education, 2002).

In this regard, I found that schools and teachers often focus on supportive efforts that may address learners' needs on various levels. As such, teachers will typically aim to meet the physical, social, emotional and educational needs of learners. As already indicated, schools may attend to the physical needs of learners by, for example, providing nutritional and material support in the form of food and clothes through sponsors, vegetable garden programmes and school feeding schemes; and/or by advocating awareness of healthy lifestyle habits. This can be achieved by attending to life skills training, healthy eating habits and increased knowledge of the environment. Support of this nature is also suggested by government policy (Department of Education, 2001a) as well as Bhana (2015), Ishdorj *et al.* (2012), Ferreira *et al.* (2012), Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011), and Faber *et al.* (2014).

Emotional support efforts may include teachers providing lay counselling, as confirmed by Loots *et al.* (2012); school support team initiatives, as confirmed by Skovdal and Campbell (2015); and referrals to relevant helping professionals, as proposed by Ferreira *et al.* (2012). Next, schools can address the social needs of learners by encouraging parent/caregiver involvement, collaborating with social workers, and providing recreational opportunities to learners – a finding which is once again supported by Ferreira *et al.* (2012) who indicate supportive strategies focussing on home visits to learners and their families, the inclusion of parents/caregivers as key role-players in securing sustainable support, and through social activities at school. Likewise, my finding on collaborations between schools and, for example, social workers, correlate with the findings of Loots *et al.* (2012) and Paternite *et al.* (2006), signifying the utilisation of social development services to identify or refer at-risk learners. Finally, supportive strategies for academic performance, such as remedial classes, additional classes and competitions that may encourage academic development, are also implied by educational policy. According to South African national policy (Committee on Teacher Education Policy, 1996; Department of

Education, 2000b) the roles and expected competencies of teachers are expected to include learning support. This finding is furthermore confirmed by Ferreira *et al.* (2012), who foreground the role of teachers in supporting learners who face academic challenges, more specifically in at-risk contexts.

Finally, according to Gu and Day (2007), teacher resilience forms an integral part of teachers' ability to successfully implement and maintain supportive strategies. However, as I did not obtain any data on this a silence in the data is indicated. A potential reason for the participants of the current study not indicating their own resilience and competence as potential tool for addressing the challenges faced by at-risk learners, relates to the primary research question of the study which guided participant discussions and emphasised the kinds of support generally provided to learners. As such, the possibility exists that teachers may indeed value their own resilience, yet did not necessarily perceive this as relevant to the context of the study. This may have resulted in their not mentioning the matter during data generation activities. A last insight that emerged from the findings of this study, when compared to current literature, relates to the importance that the participating schools place on maintaining infrastructure. Schools regard the development and maintenance of infrastructure as an important factor for maintaining a positive learning environment in support of learners' academic development (Department of Education, 2000b).

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

In this section I revisit the research questions. Firstly, I discuss the secondary questions and then draw conclusions in answering the primary research question that guided this study.

5.4.1 Secondary research question 1: How do teachers in resource-constrained school settings conceptualise South African at-risk learners and their needs?

Within the South African context, at-risk learners can be defined as school-going children whose normative development and individual wellbeing are threatened due to the cumulative risks they face. As indicated by the findings of this study, challenges that learners typically face in South Africa include poverty, sub-standard education, various health-related challenges and HIV/AIDS. These challenges can have direct or indirect debilitating implications for the emotional, social, physical and educational wellbeing of learners, compromising their capacity to rise above the challenges they face and achieve their potential.

Poverty remains a pressing challenge that affects a great number of South Africans. Based on the findings indicated by this study, I argue that poverty-stricken households are characterised by environments that are generally unsupportive of emotional and social wellbeing, as parents/caregivers may be absent, or experience

high levels of anxiety due to their employment circumstances and physical health challenges they may face. I furthermore propose that poverty implies limitations in terms of the educational environment children may find themselves in, and the possibility of nutritional and health-related challenges being met at home.

According to the findings I obtained, government-driven health-related services in South Africa are currently under-resourced and are overburdened by the needs of the population who face multiple risks due to socio-economic challenges related to poverty, undernourishment, disintegrated family life, abuse, crime and a lack of basic resources such as water and sanitation as well as diseases of lifestyle and HIV/AIDS that may threaten their health. HIV/AIDS, in turn, implies additional social-economic challenges as it may threaten family unity, quality of life, supportive social and emotional environments, and the capacity to provide educational development.

Finally, based on the findings of my study, I contend that the wellbeing of children is further exposed by limited resources that may facilitate their educational development. Classes are often overcrowded, and schools overburdened, by the effects of poverty, ill health of learners, and other learning-associated challenges. Set against this background, the at-risk learner in South Africa can be defined as one whose ability to develop to the full potential and live a happy and fulfilling life is placed at risk due to environmental limitations.

5.4.2 Secondary research question 2: What is expected of schools and teachers in South Africa in terms of addressing the needs of at-risk learners?

Findings from the current study suggest that schools and teachers in South Africa are expected to be mediators of learning, in line with the prescribed guidelines of the national curriculum policy document. This implies that schools, in collaboration with the DBE, should provide the necessary learning material, infrastructure and qualified school personnel. Based on the findings I obtained, I posit that academic development and progress can be supported by means of early identification of learners who face barriers to learning, providing learners with learning and remedial support, and making the necessary referrals and recommendations to special schools in a timely manner. Schools can furthermore facilitate academic development through competitions that can potentially encourage learners' interest, participation and involvement with learning content.

In addition to supporting the academic development of learners, I found that schools are furthermore expected to support the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of learners. As such, I argue that a learner's wellbeing and capacity to reach his/her potential will depend on support on multiple levels of development, implicating the importance of holistic support by schools and teachers, more specifically in at-risk contexts, where the environment may not necessarily address this need.

In terms of the physical wellbeing of learners, schools and teachers are expected to identify and support learners who face nutritional and/or health-related challenges. Such supportive efforts can include financial support, food provision through, for example, school-based vegetable gardens, implementation and enrichment of the National School Nutritional Programme of the DBE, partnering with local health services in obtaining external support, and informing learners of healthy lifestyle habits. Emotional support to at-risk learners entails the early identification of problems and lay counselling by teachers, training peers as supportive agents (soul buddies), and making referrals to relevant helping professionals (e.g. psychologists and social workers). Even though such support provision talks to the stipulation that teachers should fulfil a pastoral role, teachers may gain insight when obtaining knowledge of policy guidelines and the relevant skills implied by what is expected of them.

Finally, based on the study I completed, I can conclude that schools and teachers are furthermore expected to contribute to the social wellbeing of learners. This is possible through initiatives focussing on life skills, lifestyle habits, a sensitivity towards cultural differences and citizenship and the importance and offering of recreational opportunities. In this regard, schools can become centres of support for learners and their families, by facilitating access to grants, providing practical skills training, and arranging welfare, health and safety-related services offered by local organisations, institutions and the government. This conclusion furthermore emphasises the important role of schools and teachers in terms of networking and collaboration, as well as fundraising and sponsorships.

5.4.3 Secondary research question 3: How do primary school teachers view the school's role as node of care and support?

Set against the findings and knowledge I gained from this study, I posit that teachers perceive the primary supportive role of schools and teachers as that of being mediators, collaborators and facilitators of support provision. This can be achieved by, for example, offering knowledge and skills training to learners and their parents/caregivers (through parenting and literacy workshops), or by facilitating access to infrastructure (encouraging the self-supportive capacities of community members by, for example, involving them in vegetable garden programmes or tuck shops), or arranging for external support (sponsors and external services).

Whilst schools are typically perceived as having the primary responsibility for developing learners academically, the findings of this study suggest that schools are equally, or sometimes even more so, perceived as nodes for offering social, emotional and physical support, due to the array of challenges that at-risk learners often face – more specifically in the South African context. Based on the findings I obtained, I thus reason that South African

teachers may view the social, emotional and physical needs of learners as more immediate and in need of support than their academic needs. Following such an approach may result in support on multiple levels, enabling schools to support learners' wellbeing and holistic functioning.

5.4.4 Conclusions in terms of the primary research question

This study was guided by the following primary research question: *How do school-based initiatives support the wellbeing of at-risk learners in South African primary schools?* Based on the findings I obtained I can conclude that primary schools and teachers in South Africa can support the wellbeing of at-risk learners by implementing several broad strategies and focussing supportive efforts on specific areas of child development. Broad strategies that can drive and direct school-based support initiatives include collaboration with parents and other stakeholders, establishing committees that can steer and oversee support efforts, raising funds, and obtaining sponsorships. In terms of specific efforts that can support learner wellbeing, schools and teachers can provide opportunities for recreational activities, create awareness for diversity and cultural celebration, and develop and maintain school infrastructure. As already indicated, these strategies and initiatives are ultimately implemented to address the social, emotional, physical and learning-related needs of at-risk learners.

However, set against the contextual background of this study, wherein 8 schools were purposefully selected based on their participation in the broader FIRST-GATE project and the earlier STAR and SHEBA projects which encouraged numerous support initiatives throughout the years, I posit that potential gains resulting from their participation to these projects may account for some of the school-based initiatives discovered in the results of this study. This assumption was however not explicitly confirmed in the data.

According to the findings I obtained, it can be argued that schools can facilitate learning support and academic development internally, through specialised and school-based committees. Specialised personnel include remedial teachers who can provide classes specifically aimed at addressing learning needs and identified learning barriers. School-based committees, such as Individual Level Support Teams and School-Based Support Teams, may furthermore oversee the implementation of structured planned support and refer learners to special schools when necessary. Schools can furthermore support academic development and performance externally by partnering with higher education institutions, for example, remedial and homework support, and obtaining sponsors from the community to assist with the provision of learning material, stationery, infrastructure (more classes) and competitions, all of which may encourage the academic development of learners.

Next, evidence that supports ways in which schools can address learners' physical needs indicate initiatives focussing on awareness of healthy lifestyle habits through life skills (HIV/AIDS) and nutritional (vegetable

garden) programmes, the involvement of motivational speakers that may prevent social problems from occurring, and initiating informal discussions with learners. Partnerships with local clinics, in order for learners to access the necessary health-related services (e.g. vaccinations), should also be maintained in support of learners' physical needs. Additionally, committees such as Health Advisory Committees, can help identify learners who are at risk of hunger and malnutrition and address these needs by implementing school feeding schemes and vegetable garden programmes. Teachers may also raise funds amongst themselves and in the local community in order to augment nutritional support and to involve parents and volunteers from the community to develop and maintain vegetable gardens and school infrastructure. Apart from involving parents and community volunteers to develop and maintain vegetable gardens, I propose that schools should allow community members to utilise gardens in order to generate an income and, as a result, strengthen their capacity to become self-supportive.

Finally, I conclude that schools and teachers in South African at-risk communities can attend to learners' emotional and social needs by identifying learners who are at risk at an early stage and by offering lay counselling to them. Structured school-based committees may provide planned support by, for example, training soul buddies and referring learners to relevant helping professionals (such as social workers and psychologists), when necessary. According to the findings of this study, schools may furthermore involve parents/caregivers by offering advice and moral support in order to subsequently assist learners. To prevent social problems from occurring, schools should aim to create an awareness of issues relating to cultural diversity, safety and the environment. Moreover, schools can also offer recreational opportunities in support of learners' social wellbeing by collaborating with parents, previous learners and members of the community.

Set against this, I therefore conclude that school-based initiatives can support the holistic wellbeing of at-risk learners in South African primary schools, by identifying problems, raising awareness, making referrals, and facilitating access to external support, in addition to addressing presenting problems and challenges from within the school system – all by way of a variety of support initiatives. To this end, I argue for the value of collaboration and networking initiatives with families, the community, previous learners, people in helping professions, and local and national government, as well as a focus on raising funds, establishing school structures and committees to oversee school-based support, and maintaining school infrastructure. Such initiatives are ultimately aimed at addressing the physical, emotional, social and academic needs of learners.

5.5 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the manner and areas in which primary schools and teachers can support the wellbeing of learners who face cumulative risks. More specifically, the study adds to a

better understanding of how school-based initiatives can be implemented within the South African context – a context which implies school environments characterised by limited resources, challenges on multiple levels, and learners who require ongoing support.

As my study forms part of the broader FIRST-GATE project, it also adds to the broader body of knowledge relating to ways in which schools can enhance resilience in vulnerable contexts. In terms of the potential practical application of the findings of this study, teachers who participated may have developed new ideas and strategies for school-based support during data generation with other participating schools where various teachers shared ideas on this topic. The way in which the PRA-based activities were structured could thus have contributed to a more holistic understanding of school-based support amongst the teacher-participants as it encouraged participants to think broadly about the needs and challenges of at-risk learners and how these can be addressed by utilising available resources – both internal and external to the school environment.

Lastly, this study resulted in new insight for addressing behavioural difficulties amongst learners. This insight can extend the current knowledge base on what school-based support entails and can augment the supportive capacities of schools to facilitate learner wellbeing. As this study included the importance of schools addressing behavioural difficulties as part of learner support, a broader view on what support entails, is proposed. The focus on partnerships with previous learners for providing support, and the importance of infrastructure development and maintenance, furthermore implies a broader conceptualisation of supporting learners who face multiple challenges as well as how schools may promote their wellbeing.

5.6 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED

Owing to the interpretivist and qualitative approaches I employed, and the sample size of the study (eight schools situated in the Eastern Cape), the findings may not be generalisable to other contexts. However, even though this may imply a potential limitation, generalisation was not my intention as I aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of school-based initiatives that may support the wellbeing of at-risk youth in the specific context and in the selected schools. Through my inclusion of detailed descriptions and explanations in this report, the reader may be able to decide to what extent the findings can be transferred to other similar research settings.

Another possible limitation relates to my role as researcher, as I was directly involved with participants during the data generation process. My involvement could have influenced responses, due to participants' possible attempts to please the research team. Furthermore, as I am a white male student in Educational Psychology, who mostly collaborated with black female teacher-participants (in some cases with limited qualifications), the possibility exists that contributions and participants' decisions to share these (or not), may have been affected

by the differences between the participants and me as researcher. I also remained aware of the cultural and language differences which could have influenced the way in which I conceptualised the data. As such, I included non-verbal messages and visual data, and employed strategies of reflexivity, rich descriptions, and regular discussions with my supervisor in an attempt to address this potential limitation.

A final, very specific challenge I experienced, relates to continuity, as not all the teachers who attended the colloquium in March 2016 (first data generation session), were available for follow-up sessions, resulting in some participants appearing to be confused during the follow-up sessions. In an attempt to attend to this challenge, all teachers who did not form part of the initial colloquium discussions, were informed of the nature and purposes of the study, and informed consent was obtained from them before starting with planned data generation activities. Throughout, I invited all participants to pose questions and clarify any issues they were uncertain about.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, I formulate some recommendations for training, practice and research in this section.

5.7.1 Recommendations for training

Based on the outcomes of this study, it seems clear that pre-service teachers may gain valuable knowledge on the challenges that at-risk learners in South Africa may face, if they are trained in this field. Training of such nature can contribute to a contextually relevant understanding of the needs that schools and learners may experience, and how teachers can address these. Pre and in-service training of teachers in terms of the findings of this study may also add to individual teachers' knowledge and to the existing shared skills base on supportive school-based initiatives and potential strategies to provide this.

In addition, the findings can potentially inform the training of people in helping professions, such as psychologists, counsellors and social workers. Insight in this field may enrich their understanding of the potential role they can fulfil by partnering with schools to support at-risk learners. If people in the helping professions are trained in terms of the needs and support of at-risk learners, their practice may in turn be informed in a potentially positive way.

5.7.2 Recommendations for practice

Recommendations for practice, based on the findings of this study, include the propagation of a more holistic approach to school-based support initiatives by acknowledging the value of, for example, partnerships with parents, previous learners, the community, other schools and the government, all in order for schools to mobilise available resources and address learner challenges. To this end, teachers in the profession can apply various strategies to support at-risk learners. They may, furthermore, be supported by various role-players in providing such support.

Findings of this study may also guide specific areas of support provision to schools by governmental and other organisations which seek to improve supportive strategies. This can be achieved by gaining insight into at-risk learner and school-related needs and into potential school-based initiatives and resources that may be utilised to support learners.

In terms of the teachers who participated, they may potentially apply what they have learned in collaboration with participants from other schools situated in the same at-risk context. For example, teachers may have learned how to more effectively initiate and maintain school-based vegetable gardens, despite minimal external support and resources, as well as how to network more broadly in terms of seeking support and knowledge from other local schools who face similar challenges, or from the community (e.g. previous learners). Teachers may furthermore initiate regular meetings with other local schools for motivation and moral support.

5.7.3 Recommendations for future research

Against the background of the broader FIRST-GATE project, this asset-based approach as selected theoretical framework, and the findings of this study I recommend the following possibilities for future research:

- A longitudinal study to explore the long-term effect of the identified ways in which schools can support the holistic wellbeing of learners.
- A comparative study on the school-based support generally provided by schools in other contexts.
- A case study on teacher perceptions as to the role of teacher resilience and the importance of a positive learning environment in supporting learners' wellbeing.
- A follow-up explanatory study on the effect of developing and maintaining school infrastructure in order to holistically support learners' wellbeing.
- A follow-up exploratory study on the potential role of previous learners in addressing behavioural challenges and supporting at-risk learners.

5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The significance of this study is set within the potential contribution to current literature that seeks to address the challenges often faced by South African youth. More specifically, the findings of the study suggest some ways in which primary schools can support learners who are at risk, foregrounding teachers as being well positioned to provide informative and relevant contributions in this field of interest.

Based on the findings of the study, I conclude that schools in South Africa strive to support learners by, for example, forming partnerships with parents, the local community and government in order to mobilise available support. In doing so, schools seek to create awareness of problems, identify learners who are at-risk, make referrals, employ fundraising initiatives, establish committees and structures and promote programmes to address and possibly prevent social problems.

As a final conclusion to this dissertation of limited scope, I refer to the following words of Edmund Burke (1899): *“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”*. These words resonate with me on a personal level, as the journey I undertook to complete this study developed a deeper awareness of the vulnerability of youth in South Africa within me and emphasised the need for individuals who are capable (such as teachers), to stand up and do something in support of the at-risk learners with whom they work.

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APPENDICES A

Informed consent

**REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION
AND INFORMED CONSENT:
PRINCIPALS/TEACHERS**



Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

22 March 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently busy with a masters' study in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria on the following topic: "**School-based initiatives in support of the wellbeing of at-risk primary school children**". My research forms part of the broader STAR (Supportive Teachers Assets and Resilience) and FIRST-GATE (Food Intake and Resilience Support: Gardens as Taught by Educators) projects, in which your school have been participating.

I hereby request your participation in a workshop as part of the colloquium you are currently attending, and some follow-up conversations at a later stage. During the workshop session you will be required to share your experiences and views on the ways in which your school have been and still are supporting vulnerable children. You will be requested to discuss your experiences in small groups, writing these down and then sharing them with the broader group. I will also visit your school some time and observe the initiatives you report on.

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time if you wish to do so. All data will be treated confidentially and no identifiable information will be provided when reporting on the study, except if this is your choice. During your participation you will not be exposed to any form of harm.

You will have full access to the results of the study and data will be stored in a secure place at the University of Pretoria for fifteen years, in accordance with the requirements for conducting ethical research. As this is a funded project data will also be available in an open repository for scientific use when needed. The findings of this research may provide valuable information to report to the Department of Education and relevant stakeholders following completion of the study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask my supervisor or me at any time.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the form below.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to the researcher or supervisor.

Mr Jean Louw (Researcher)

louw.jean@gmail.com

Prof Ronél Ferreira (Supervisor)

ronel.Ferreira@up.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to take part in this study. I understand that all data will be treated as confidential and anonymous (if that is my choice), and that I may withdraw at any time, if I wish to do so.

	YES	NO
You may take photographs of me while I am involved in the participatory workshop session and use this when writing up the findings of the study.		

School Principal's / Teacher's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Witness:

APPENDIX B

Research schedule

RESEARCH SCHEDULE

Field visit	Date	Activity	Schools involved
1 st Field visit	22 March 2016	Colloquium and PRA-based activities on needs of at-risk learners and how schools strive to fulfil these needs	All eight participating schools
	23 March 2016	Semi-structured individual interviews to clarify and deepen understanding of school-based initiatives in support of at-risk learners	One individual from all eight participating schools
	28 March 2016	School visits to document progress on vegetable gardens and gather visual data on their contexts	All eight participating schools
2 nd Field visit	4 – 5 & 10 – 11 August	School visits to allow for schools to confirm, clarify and elaborate on school-based initiatives in support of at-risk learners	All eight participating schools
3 rd Field visit	11 April	Member checking	The first group of four of the participating schools
	12 April	Member checking	The second group of four of the participating schools
	18 April	School visits to document progress on vegetable gardens and gather visual data on their contexts	All eight participating schools

APPENDIX C

Example of analysed transcript of PRA-based group discussion

FIELD VISIT

22 March 2016

Participatory Reflection and Action – Group Discussion: PRA-G

Purpose of PRA-based group discussion:

- For each school to report back to the larger group about the ideas and information mapped on their poster (created during the PRA-based group activity), regarding ways in which schools support the needs of at-risk learners.

KEY ABBREVIATIONS

R:	Researcher
EP:	Educator-participant

1 R1: ...to tell the rest of the group what you wrote there and we need to please
 2 with your permission just make recordings because he's not going to
 3 remember everything and then I'm going to be cross with him if he can't
 4 remember. So you'll say Is that ok? Ja. Is that fine? Ok. We're ready.
 5

6 R2: X do ... But the rest must be quite otherwise I can't Must I hold the
 7 poster for you? Ok. I can hold it for you. Ah. Its upside down. Ah ok ja I
 8 see ja.
 9

10 R1: Will you just hold that when you speak please? Ok. Daarsy thank you. Ok
 11 is everyone ready? Is it on now?
 12

13 R2: Ja it's on.
 14

15 R1: X come tell us, choose anyone that you would like to tell us about.
 16 Choose anyone. Mm I'd like to talk about the emotional needs. Ok tell us
 17 about the emotional needs.
 18

19 EP 1: Mmm the first bullet that we have under the emotional needs is love,
 20 because the situations that we see in this child in the learners that we
 21 teach is that some of them do not get enough love in their homes. So
 22 we felt that it is one of the emotional needs. And the second bullet is
 23 about the empathy, because normally when this eh children are
 24 experiencing eh learning disabilities or are get getting aa physical
 25 abuses all all all other forms of abuses in their in their homes. They
 26 need someone who will empathize with their situation. And then the
 27 third bullet is about the intervention. We feel that there must be
 28 someone if it could be eh eh a person in their community or a teacher in
 29 their school who will intervene(?)... in every situation that they go
 30 through, a person who will hold their hands and walk the mile with them.
 31 Teh...the fourth one is about them speaking out whenever they
 32 experience problems. They shouldn't keep quiet, but they must speak
 33 out and expose the perpetrators. The last one is, there is a need that
 34 they need to be listen to, because when they feel that no one is listening
 35 to their cries then te eh th th abuse that is in them they they they tend to
 36 to take it out on other kids, by means of bullying other kids, using
 37 blas(?) to other kids, so we feel that they must be listen to. Thank you.

Specific areas of support

Role-players in school-based support

Specific areas of support

38 R1: Thank you. X? Uh X(?) This group? (X?) Daarsy will you hold that for
39 me? Oh I must hold this one?

40

41 EP 2: Ok we'll take the social needs. Social needs, ok. Uh... in our school we
42 are experiencing lot of fights and bullying. They like to fight a lot. And uh
43 as well as ah our kids are into drugs. They do the dagga thing. There's
44 this thing uh that is in now that they call it a tik they even have money to
45 to to buy all those drugs and eh there's a new thing that is eh they like
46 to make at their homes, eh they call it dagga soup with eh it's a dagga
47 soup I don't know what they mix ok with eh dagga muffins, they will sell,
48 cough, they will sell muffins amongs themselves and yet in those
49 muffins there is dagga. In Afrikaans they also do that, Afrikaans kids,
50 they call it dagga koekies. Is it? Ok. Ja, it's horrible. Aah another thing
51 that they into it's stealing. We've got high rate of stealing, you know
52 starting from the Grade 1 learners or the Grade R's they busy with the
53 stealing and even breaking the school. Recently we had a problem
54 before just before we close the school our school was you know they
55 they have broken our school, they get into the admin, when we call the
56 police for them to come and do their work with the to take the
57 fingerprints and all that stuff, we found out that there were Grade 2
58 learners they have broken the school and they will tell the story it's only
59 ATT(?) you know and they did that during the night, you can imagine a
60 Grade 2 learner, there were three at twelve midnight at school. So,
61 we've got that challenge at our school. And the language that they are
62 using, they are used to vagal(?) language and there are lots of
63 gangstarizm amongs themselves, there are groups in the school that
64 they will call themselves, we are the sevens(?) or we are the clippers or
65 you'll name them. As well as eh another challenge is the high rate of
66 pregnancy with the teenagers and they also do the sex at school. You
67 know at school after after hours when all the teachers and some of the
68 learners are gone they will remain behind the residence (?) and all that
69 so that's it. Thank you very much.

70

71 R1: Z (?) Thank you.

72

73 EP 3: I will take the physical needs. We'll find out that in our schools, the
74 peoples they don't have clothing. Since some of them they don't have
75 someone who will help them to buy the clothes and also there's a need

Role-players
in school-
based support

Aims and
goals of
school-based
support

Aims and
goals of
school-based
support

76 of food they come and they in the school without having something to
77 eat. Another thing, others they don't have shelter and in in their homes
78 we'll find out that there are more than one family in this same house and
79 that can cause eh eh problem, because some of them they don't have a
80 space where they can sleep. Mm, sjoe. Thank you, that's all.
81
82 R1: Thank you.
83
84 EP 3: Must I take it back?
85
86 R1: Uh you, just for now ja. Thank you.
87
88 EP 4: Good afternoon ladies and gentleman. Hallo sir. Eh I found out that
89 some of the points overlap; I'll just take the learning needs. Uhm to the
90 experience that I have with these vulnerable children, I found out they
91 have eh inability to acquire some skills like reading, writing, counting eh
92 and then we don't have remedial remedial education to help them. And
93 then at home there is no motivation, because even the parents are
94 challenged. Eh you find out from grade to grade there is no progress. At
95 one stage I ask a psychologist about this, because I find out that a child
96 that is eh HIV positive doesn't progress as other children. And I ask
97 why and then there is other things that are challenging the child. Also
98 academically they said the children might acquire might eh eh have
99 these challenges as they grow, so which means there is still a need for
100 you academic people to come up with this solutions, because those
101 children we find out in each phase they remain if maybe there there
102 were no laws that were g(?) to say that one child should not eh stay in
103 the phase for more than four years, they would be there for a long time.
104 So that, they they go on and on till they exit the school. And also they
105 go to high school and then they are there in Grade 12 with these
106 learning eh challenges. Thank you very much.
107
108 R1: Thank you. Can I ask you something? You said uhm, at the home the
109 parents are not motivated, so do they get any help from the parents at
110 home with homework?
111

Role-players
in school-
based support

112 EP 4: Most of them are born with the virus and that means the parents had
113 the virus. Ok. So, the parents they are the problem, they need
114 counselling to. Ok. So with us black people, most of us don't think about
115 counselling when a child when maybe a parent has since passed on.
116 No one takes the the child for counselling. Sometimes we find out most
117 of the problem that we think are academic, they are not, they are
118 psychological. Ja. So we still need those interventions to help these
119 kids out.

120
121 R1: Mmm. Thank you.

122
123 EP 4: Thank you.

124
125 EP 5: Daarsy. We going to report on the social needs. We say eh there is
126 lack of parental guidance. You know stories that you hear from
127 children. One time I asked my children, when you come from school,
128 what do you do. They say we enter the house, we greet and I go to my
129 room, change, go to the kitchen, eat and go and play. Nothing that you
130 talk to your parent or your parents is asking you, what happen to school.
131 No. Nothing. So there is no communication between the child and the
132 the parent. And eh also, lack of eh positive recreational activities and
133 then that's how why the children they end up doing you know those
134 things coming to school eh eh burgling and doing all kinds of wrong
135 things and eh also **even if we as teachers are motivated to teach our**
136 **children some kinds of sports,** eh, there are sports that we are not
137 expertise of those kind of sports, like you know, new things, tennis.
138 When we grow up, there were no such kind of sports in our schools.
139 **And eh they also like eh eh positive social mentors, from you know I'm**
140 **teaching Grade 7's.** I all the time I have to score the boys, because
141 they they speak like tsjotsies, because this what they see in in their
142 communities. And eh also this abuse of eh abstinence yeah including
143 alcohol, drugs and all that, because they don't know what to do with
144 their lives after school. Thank you.

145
146 R1: Daarshy, here is your poster.

147
148 EP 5: Thank you.

Specific areas
of support

149

150 EP 6: Good afternoon. Eh this learners are experiencing a problem in with
151 their food. They don't get a balance food diet so that they can perform
152 at school. There's a lack of uniform, so they don't feel as apart from the
153 school, both the minute you are not wearing like other learners you you
154 you self-esteem has been dropped. **Clothing, these learners they don't**
155 **have clothes more especially in our school we have for fund raising,**
156 savings day, where most of them you feel as a teacher when you are
157 looking at them, you can see what is happening. So in those days I
158 don't think they feel good, cause that is one of their challenges. They
159 they lack exercises, they don't have that drive to run around even at
160 school, because they they are vulnerable. They need shelter we know
161 that, especially in the area that I'm working at the the there are still
162 shacks there. The the, when there is a flood or rain have rains, their
163 their books are wet, because it was a heavy rain during the weekend.
164 In learning needs, these learners they they need support from their
165 parents, that is parental involvement. It's not there. So they are not
166 helped with their school work. They lack concentration in the
167 classroom, because they come with empty stomach's they, so this leads
168 to affect negatively their progress in the classroom. They are not
169 motivated at all, even if you are doing group work. Most of them they
170 are not actively involved, they not participating, because they are in
171 their world, fighting with their demons in their heads. They need, uhm,
172 counselling that was mentioned by the speaker here and go to social
173 needs. They are experiencing loneliness, they are very lonely, they are
174 not they don't make friends easily, because they they they want to keep
175 themselves in their cocoons. The most of the time, even in the
176 classroom, if you can just give them eh eh eh a work and be there,
177 looking at them you will find that they are withdrawn in their groups, not
178 participating, not because they don't want to. They've got that other
179 world that is facing them right, affecting them negatively in this
180 classroom. If not they will turn out being violent and bully, they bully
181 others because they are doing what that what has been done to them.
182 **Emotionally they lack they need they lack eh eh eh protection and**
183 **support.** They feel that they are lacking that, because there is nobody
184 who who can penetrate to that that world. They need that, they they
185 they lack people that are not listening to them. They mistrust people,
186 because at times eh eh eh learner can come up with something telling

Specific areas
of support

Specific areas
of support

187 you but this whether it is a parent or a teacher, these teachers does not
188 believe this learner, so that is a mistrust they they they are facing. And
189 they tend to be violent, they don't have the inner peace. Most of the
190 time they are teary, they lack eh the the the people that are working with
191 them they they don't find confidentially in them, because if there some
192 of them there they trust that person and say something to them and that
193 person will go up around around talk talking about what happen to this
194 child, without the consent of the learner. Thank you.

195

196 R1: Thank you. Please anyone to tell us about(?) Ah, thank you. Oh....??
197 To work this.

198

199 EP 7: Ok. I'll just choose one, I'll take the emotional site of the learners. Most
200 of our learners in our school are orphans and they are being cared for
201 by their grandmothers and relatives. And you'll find out that sometimes
202 the grandmothers are not able to take care of these learners and the
203 people who are taking care of these of these learners some of them are
204 not even related, because currently we had the case with one learner
205 who was always late at school. When I called this learner, why are you
206 always late, you come at school at ten past eight, what is happening
207 with you. She told me that she has to wake up in the morning, and
208 wash the child of the woman she is living with, after that she has to
209 make coffee, after that she has to clean the house, after cleaning the
210 house that's when she has to come to school. So also orphans, uhm
211 orphanage is playing a very sad roll in our learners. So I come to the
212 abuse, I don't want to cry because it's going to make me cry. Recently,
213 two weeks ago a four-and-a-half-year-old learner was abused at home
214 sexually and physically abused. Joh. **Grade R teacher came to the**
215 **office and reported the matter.** Joh. **We called the police, we called**
216 **everyone that we could get to assist, because this learner we could see**
217 **that she is not being loved not cared for.** She was so scared, when Ms
218 Y came to the office she couldn't hold herself she went out, because the
219 tears were rolling in the learner's eyes. **It was quite a situation. When**
220 **coming to foster parenting, yes foster parenting does help, but**
221 **sometimes it doesn't help, because they want (money, money) the**
222 **package that is coming with the forest with the foster parenting.** So
223 most of these learners they need love, which is they don't get love at
224 home, they are not well cared for, so emotionally they come to school

Early
identification
and referral of
problems
requiring
professional
help

Addressing
problems and
manifestation of
challenges

Broad school-
based
strategies to
provide support

225 emotionally drained. I so wish all of us can do something. When you
226 see something at school, don't keep quite. **When you see even it's a**
227 **small, uh, issue that you see, report that, because when we worked with**
228 **that abused learner that four and a half learner.** As we are speaking
229 now she is in Cape Town with her mother, because she was not staying
230 with her biological mother. She was banned, purposely. She was done
231 everything that could be done in that person, a four year old girl, so it is
232 important that as teachers we play our role to protect those learners.
233 Ok. Thanks.

234

235 R: Thank you.

236

237 **END**

238

Aims and
goals of
school-based
support

APPENDIX D

Example of analysed transcript of individual discussion

FIELD VISIT
23 March 2016
School A
Individual Discussion – ID

Purpose discussion:

- To discuss ideas mapped on the school's poster during the PRA-based group activity

KEY ABBREVIATIONS

R:	Researcher
R1:	Co-researcher
R2:	Co-researcher
EP:	Educator-participant
EP 2:	Educator-participant 2
EP 3:	Educator-participant 3

1 R: Okay so you can just say your school's name and then you can start.

2

3 EP: Okay I'm Mrs X from Y Primary School. Here we are dealing with

4 addressing the needs that are happening by teachers and others to the

5 learners. The first thing that we are doing as teachers, we have HAC, that

6 is a health support agent of learners that will help support learners and

7 parents from classes to home with their challenges. Firstly, as teachers we

8 identify a child in class who is sick or who is having that trauma. And then

9 from there, we will send a learner support agent to go the learner's home

10 and find out what is the problem. When the learner support agent comes

11 back he will tell us the problem and then we will refer the child where ever

12 the child will get help, it can be either a clinic or with the doctor. Sometimes

13 as educators, when the learners come, we call the parents, when the

14 parents arrive we sit with them in a room and counsel them according to

15 their story. When the teachers realise that the story of this learner needs

16 support, we will provide the necessary support, we give love and where

17 necessary if they need physical things .., we collected some things from

18 NGO's and other teachers in the school who want to help.

19

20 Another support that we give to the children are the seeds of peace,

21 whereby we deal with the learner individually. We call the learner, the

22 learner must talk, then we find out what it is that the learner is making this

23 thing ...

24

25 R: So you're doing it in the classes?

26

27 EP: No in a counselling room, we have a counselling room. And then in the

28 counselling room, because everything must remain confidential, it will be the

29 parent, the class teacher and the counsellor. The counsellors are also the

30 teachers, they were trained as counsellors. Then we give the learner the

31 basics that is each and every morning he must go and hug whoever just to

32 build love so that she/he can get love again. We say to the learner she/he

33 must talk positively so that he can get positive things also. And then we

34 give the learner all the strategies of life .ja.

35

36 Then there are soul buddies. The soul buddies are the same age with the

37 learners, they talk the same language, the language that they understand ...

38

39 R: Is that soul buddy?

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Early identification and referral of problems requiring professional help

Role-players in school-based support

Addressing problems and manifestation of challenges

Role-players in school-based support

Specific areas of support

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

40 EP: Soul buddy. They talk their language, they were trained learners, they were
41 trained by the Department of Education with the teacher. When they were
42 trained they were trained for the learner to learner talks, participation ja, so
43 that they can understand each other and after that they can go to the
44 teacher and say whatever that the teacher can .., the outcome of their
45 discussions.

46
47 Another thing, there's a remedial teacher, because when the learner needs
48 support we give support to the learner. Some of the work that the learner is
49 supposed to do in class lacks, so we would ask the remedial teacher to go
50 and support the learner so that he cannot be behind with their school work.
51 The remedial teacher will go to the class teacher and ask for the extra time
52 for the learner so that the teacher cannot fight with the learner because the
53 learner is not doing their school work. He will sit with the class teacher to
54 give the extra work. The teachers will do extra time for the learner.

55
56 Again there is a learner support agent, because the teachers are supposed
57 to be in class, the learner support agent will do part of the work, like if a
58 learner is in drugs, tablets, they will give porridge to the learner, give him the
59 tablet, after the tablet, talk positively with the learner so that he can be ready
60 for class. Okay sometimes because of we are a school, we don't get
61 money, we go to the NGO's and get support, sponsors from the NGO's like
62 shoes, food, uniforms etc. And sometimes they will call the learners to go
63 and visit them for the whole day and make them enjoy the day. There are
64 also social workers in that. The social worker will see that the home is run
65 in a proper way, because we can't build and mould the child at school
66 meanwhile the home is not okay. The social worker will see that and then
67 these things run concurrently so that the learner becomes healthier and
68 free.

69
70 And then the feeding scheme in schools. The feeding scheme makes a day
71 of each and every child at school because if a child doesn't have food at
72 home, the mamas in the kitchen will give them porridge so that they can get
73 their medicine after porridge. After porridge they will see that they will take
74 their food to classes with trays, like they will call and say this is the time for
75 their tablets so that they can get something even if its bread and milk then
76 they will give them the tablets afterwards. That's it.

77
78 END

Role-players in
school-based
support

Specific areas
of support

Specific areas
of support

Broad school-
based
strategies to
provide support

Specific areas
of support

Appendix E

Example of analysed transcript of second PRA-based group discussion

FIELD VISIT

5 August 2016

School D

Second PRA-based group discussion: PRA-G2

Purpose of discussion:

- To discuss ideas mapped on the school's poster during the PRA-based group activity

KEY ABBREVIATIONS

R:	Researcher
R1:	Co-researcher
R2:	Co-researcher
EP:	Educator-participant
EP 2:	Educator-participant 2
EP 3:	Educator-participant 3

1 EP: ... so the way they enjoy the food here at school is ..(unclear) to be eager
2 to study a programme, because when ..(unclear) and say to us that it is
3 not only the programme that they are going to eat here at school, maybe
4 something you will get from the government, we are going to give it to the
5 ladies in the kitchen so they can cook, more especially vegetables
6 instead of meat because most of the time that's what they need you know
7 .., so also, if there's a surplus we also teach them to sell so that they can
8 make money, not the money that they gonna give them to whatever they
9 want to do. So the money that we can ...(unclear) to the garden?? So we
10 are on board, that's what I can say because really. Also we need to give
11 them some time to do certain things. Like Ms X has shared with us
12 something special that, they cannot only do it here at school. We can
13 also teach them to do it at their homes as well, where they can have their
14 small gardens at home, where they can grow all these things. So that's
15 why we also find it very interesting ...
16
17 R: Can I just ask about the feeding scheme, does it .., is it mainly financed
18 through the Department of Education?
19
20 EP: Yes.
21
22 R: Okay then do they then give you money and your teachers buys
23 ingredients or how does the feeding scheme work?
24
25 EP: There's money .., they get here .., I think the school buys you see, but the
26 Department they send everything that we need to buy you see ...
27
28 R: The menus ...
29
30 EP: The menus, like on Monday they have to eat this, Tuesday this, and all
31 those things you know, like a balanced diet, they are trying to like we buy
32 according to the Department of Education, what they want us to buy, but
33 it's money from the Department of Education.
34
35 R: So if I understand correctly, so this school, in terms of giving meals to the
36 children, you mainly rely on the department, is not one of the initiatives of
37 the school?
38

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Specific areas of support

Role-players in school-based support

39 EP: Ja.

40 R: And in terms of clothes because you said the children are very poor here,
41 if a child doesn't have school uniform, what do you?
42

43 EP: We also rely on sponsors. Recently there was some guy from the
44 Methodist Church here, they organised school shoes as well as some
45 uniforms because one of the girls, her house was burnt down, and the
46 school uniform was also burnt. But through sponsors she got another
47 new one.
48

49 R2: And who are these sponsors? Is it the community, some teachers?
50

51 EP: Angel's Network
52

53 R2: So it's an NGO ...
54

55 EP: He is working with them.
56

57 R3: So if I take you back to the girls that were ..(unclear) during the
58 colloquium, could it be considered that it's a success story that you have
59 the materials, have the resource person and you have identified another
60 place that you can start on, though there are some challenges that you
61 mentioned?
62

63 EP: Those resources are not enough you know, is just this guy says, some of
64 these belong to the guy who is helping, they don't ..(unclear), now that he
65 works for the school, he brings his own tools. So that's another challenge
66 that we have, we don't have enough tools there.
67

68 R3: Are there any other people that are involved in the school garden other
69 than this man that comes to work in the school?
70

71 EP2: ..(another male respondent who was not clear)
72

73 EP: Those two ladies that bring seeds, I think this is from the Department of
74 Agriculture neh, those two ladies, they will bring us seeds and everything
75 ...
76

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Role-players in school-based support

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Role-players in school-based support

77 R3: Okay ...
78
79 R2: But the man is the volunteer, he is a parent or somebody from the
80 community?
81
82 EP: Someone from the community.
83
84 R3: So if I can show you a folder of a poster, with the things that you have
85 mentioned, I hear that there are some challenges that you are
86 experiencing and if we take a look at .., so we have identified some of the
87 things that we have ..(unclear), the resources which is somewhat from the
88 community. What is the next step pertaining to the school garden that
89 you have in terms of probably establishing it, or maybe in the process of
90 looking at the things that are challenging and working through those
91 challenges in terms of going to next level? What are some of the things
92 that you can do towards the vegetable garden and who is it that you may
93 probably identify in terms of helping you or some of the teachers? Is
94 there anyone that you can involve in terms of taking the garden to the
95 next step and when can it be done? So it's more of, like a plan for the
96 next six months? What are some of the things that you can put in place
97 and take it to the next level. And also to say when is it going to be done,
98 to give it a time frame? To say probably by this time this should be done
99 towards the school garden and how is it going to be done perhaps
100 contact people or other things that can be done towards what you have
101 identified as the next step?
102
103 EP: Okay as I've said, we were interested in that land down there you know,
104 only to find that it needs a lot of work, so it needs machinery. So we
105 found other land behind the classes of Grade R's, meanwhile we are
106 waiting for the machinery, let us use that land in the meantime. We can
107 use our own manpower with the help of the kids. So we decided to
108 involve the kids as well, both boys and girls down there. Yesterday we
109 started by cutting the weeds using the weed eater so that the grass is...
110 we were going to use spades and forks today so that we can cut the
111 grass. Our next step now is to fence it because sometimes the goats get
112 into the yard and eat the crops. So our next step would also be to cut the
113 grass on the land, fence it and start growing the crops. So we started
114 yesterday, we were supposed to continue today but there's an activity

Specific areas
of support

Early
identification
and referral
of problems
requiring
professional
help

115 there in the hall, so we couldn't take the kids down there. And also the
116 man who is helping us is not here, we were supposed to start .., but next
117 week definitely we will be planting something there, ja.

118

119 R3: And who are some of the people that can also .., I think you spoke of
120 sponsors or other people that you might identify as people that might help
121 you in terms of some of the challenges that you ...

122

123 EP: Right now you don't have we don't have ..(unclear) we asked for some
124 from the Department of Agriculture but they cannot offer us anything
125 bigger than ...(unclear), so we are thinking of renting those tractors to do
126 like using them maybe, asking for funds elsewhere so that we can hire
127 that tractor, so there's no sponsor yet. Since this programme is new,
128 maybe as the time goes by we will find ways of asking relevant people
129 who can come and help us. Right now we are doing it on our own you
130 know, with the help of that man

131

132 R: Okay ...

133

134 EP: Is there anything that you can assist us with? Now that we don't have
135 sponsors and all the good stuff ...

136

137 R: So the role of the university is, the government gives us money to train
138 teachers, so our job is to train teachers in the best way that we can. So
139 we don't .., what we have is knowledge. So we learn from you and we
140 put it in books so that we can then teach teachers. So the university don't
141 have money for sponsorships, what the government pays us for us is for
142 ...

143

144 R: To train you

145

146 EP: Give us knowledge .., give the teachers knowledge ...

147

148 R: Well the teachers who are not teachers yet. So the student teachers and
149 so that is why we've learnt the best way for us to train them is to listen to
150 teachers who are teachers at the moment, so you know that constructive
151 pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. So in-service teachers are
152 already teachers and are trained and they are teachers ..., but pre-

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identification
and referral
of problems
requiring
professional
help

153 service teachers are those teachers who have not been teaching yet. So
154 we are trying to learn from in-service teachers, how to teach those young
155 ones, the pre-service teachers of what to do. So in fact you are
156 sponsoring those young teachers with your knowledge, so that they can
157 be teachers in South Africa.

158

159 EP: So when they come to the field they know what to do ...

160 R: Exactly, and they are prepared because otherwise they think they going
161 to teach mathematics or they going to teach geography or history, they
162 forget they are teaching children and that the children comes from a
163 family and that family lives in a community. So they need to understand
164 what it is to be a teacher. The best way to get that knowledge is to listen
165 to what teachers are doing everyday.

166

167 EP: Thank you so much.

168

169 R: Okay sorry can I ask more questions. I just want to get more information
170 about how you support children with different needs except for the
171 physical needs and the nutritional needs that your children need. I just
172 want to touch on their emotional needs or social needs of children as
173 well. So I just want to know if you can maybe tell me a bit more about
174 how you support children like that. Also earlier this year, I'd spoken to
175 some of the people of your school and they gave me some detail about
176 how you support children. So you already talked about the uniforms that
177 you get for children and the feeding schemes that you get. But I thought I
178 wanted to hear from you guys about children that for instance is
179 emotionally or sexually abused. How do you help children like that in
180 your school?

181

182 EP: Okay you've got social workers that are working with the kids. Presently
183 they are also students from ..(unclear)

184

185 R: New students?

186

187 EP: Ja who are here, they are doing practical work, so we gave them the list
188 of all those learners .., we can identify by their performance then they get
189 help, ..(unclear) fathers get permission to them, some extra classes to
190 see how they can help them, so they helped us a lot.

Specific areas
of support

Role-players in
school-based
support

Specific areas
of support

191

192 R: And these social workers do they mainly come in the afternoons or during
 193 school time?

194 EP: No they are here the whole day ...

195

196 R: The whole day?

197

198 EP: Yes the student ones. But there is one now who is working already, but
 199 she comes when there's a problem, when she's been called in there's a
 200 problem ..(unclear)

201

202 R: Okay, and I also just want to ask about .., so if you say you identify the
 203 children, is it the teachers that identify children that you suspect needs
 204 emotional support?

205

206 EP: Yes because in your class you see, you can find out .., you know, you
 207 have information about the learners who don't have parents, now the
 208 learners who are adopted. So you get the information as a teacher, then
 209 you can see now when there are problems based on the school work,
 210 based on the behaviour in the classroom then you can see that he/she
 211 needs help ...

212

213 R: And is there like a specific channel that the teachers follow, like a
 214 committee that they go to or do they just, if a teacher sees a child, do
 215 they go straight to the social workers that is at the school?

216

217 EP: No there are committees here at school, various committees. So each
 218 committee we have to go through committees .., there are committees
 219 here at school as well as the principal and the deputy, SMD, so we don't
 220 just go straight to the social workers and the teachers.

221

222 R: So they then gives the names to the committees or that committee ..,
 223 does it have a name or not really?

224

225 EP: Like it depends, for instance we've got disciplinary committee, when a
 226 child has done something you know, okay that is very bad, we just look at
 227 those cases .., sending him or her to the disciplinary committee. They
 228 are the ones who see how strong the case is, this one needs to be

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 problems
 requiring
 professional
 help

Role-players in
 school-based
 support

Specific areas of
 support

229 referred to the social worker, this one needs to be referred to ..(unclear)
230 by the school, this one needs the involvement of the parents, it depends
231 how strong the case is because really you know kids are involved in
232 many things. Here more especially in this township of Y???, kids are
233 exposed to many things, drugs, alcohol, violence, abuse and all those
234 things. So you will find that some kids they beat each other up. In those
235 cases now, those cases are different and you treat them differently you
236 know. So there are cases that you can see that you can solve with the
237 parents of the kids and with the kids. There are cases where we find that
238 this one is above us we cannot do anything, the child needs the social
239 worker, somebody who can help the kid because sometimes you know,
240 it's easy to say a kid is naughty but that kid is crying for help you know.
241 So the only way when the child is crying for help, he is doing something
242 bad. So we must not focus all the time on that thing, that bad thing that he
243 has done but we have to find out. So the people who are trained, social
244 workers they can find out what is wrong with the kids. As I have said they
245 are exposed to many things, more especially in this area. There's a lot of
246 things affecting the kids badly.

247

248 R: And then other, like in terms of the social needs that the learners have,
249 do you have extra mural activities and things like that to also help the
250 children .., like for instance for them to be busy with sport activities and
251 things like that?

252

253 EP: Yes we do, music, sport ..., there's a drama group here ..., we do extra
254 mural activities ...

255

256 R: And what types of sports do you coach here?

257

258 EP: It's only rugby and cricket ... And netball. Music.

259

260 R: Is there a choir?

261

262 EP: Yes. There's a teachers' choir also.

263

264 R: And the people that coaches is it mainly teachers or is it parents as well?

265

266 EP: Teachers ...

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Role-players in school-based support

Specific areas of support

Specific areas of support

Specific areas of support

267
268 R: I understand there's a homework club. How does the homework club
269 work?
270
271 EP: There's a guy from X, an NGO, he helps with homework at the school ...
272
273 R: Do they basically just .., do you just provide a classroom for the children
274 and then ...
275
276 EP: Ja we use 3 classrooms.
277
278 R: In all the grades, so from the school who ..(unclear)
279
280 EP: Grade 4
281
282 R: So intermediate? Okay Grade 4, and do they then, obviously they
283 then help the children with their homework if there's difficulties with maths
284 problems do they help with that?
285
286 EP: I think that programme is not only from here only in this school you see,
287 there's also some kids from the primary who come, they also come here,
288 so they are being helped in those learning areas that are challenging
289 them especially maths is challenging to most of the learners.
290
291 R2: X is also a maths teacher in ..(unclear), I think he knows about the
292 challenges of maths
293
294 R: Ja I know it's important.
295
296 EP: You know there are many things now, like for instance also language is
297 also challenging them, I mean ...
298
299 R: Is it very?
300
301 EP: Ja, for instance you know, there's technology, you know .., you know
302 what was troubling these teachers, they want to write here, they use the
303 venue to write their ..(unclear) technology is really troubling them. So is
304 not only mathematics, also you know writing, writing is challenging. You

Specific areas
of support

Specific areas
of support

305 know the language teacher, the grammar, she spelling, all those things.
306 But now the child would think he is writing on Whatsapp or Facebook,
307 they use those things. So there are a lot of challenges. So the Y does
308 help ...
309
310 R: And do you have like programmes to promote the children's interest in
311 like reading and writing and those kind of things like reading competitions
312 and things like that at the school?
313
314 EP: I think those .., we don't have those programmes let me tell you but we
315 need them .., those reading competitions ...
316
317 R: And Spelling Bee ...
318
319 EP: **But there was a competition but we didn't enter this year, the Spelling**
320 **Bee that was done by the Department of Education.** We didn't because it
321 was during the time of exams, so we were late, we couldn't enter
322 because they were busy writing exams. But we depend on that one, but I
323 think it would be better if we have from within the school ...
324
325 R: I also wanted to know in terms of teaching material and learning material,
326 do you ..., have you got sponsors that helps you with things like
327 computers, and teacher handbooks and those kind of things?
328
329 EP: **There are guys from Korea they are doing computers** ...(unclear) **they**
330 **sponsored by somebody ...**, computers is sponsored by someone, then
331 **the Koreans are just helping the kids to use them.**
332
333 R: Do they also train the teachers or just the learners?
334
335 EP: Just the learners, they want to be paid for the teachers.
336
337 R: They want to be paid to teach the teachers?
338
339 EP: Ja
340
341 R: But luckily if the learners know they can teach the teachers ...
342

Role-players in
school-based
support

Specific areas
of support

Broad school-
based
strategies to
provide support

343 EP: Only grade 6 and grade 7 that are trained.
344
345 R: Have you got like initiatives to like workshops to develop the teacher skills
346 in terms of helping the learners as well?
347
348 EP: Also the department workshops ...
349
350 R: So the Department of Basic Education will train you and workshop you?
351
352 EP: Yes on the curriculum.
353
354 R: Okay. I think that's all I wanted to know thank you. Is there anything else
355 that you feel you want to ask that we didn't ask, that you know is going on
356 in the school, that is helping the teachers to teach and the learners to
357 learn?
358
359 EP: (they were talking soft among themselves) pictures on the walls, then I
360 asked them where did you get these .., they said no we got them through
361 GM, General Motors, so we need those ...(unclear) so that I'm not
362 depending on ..(unclear) – give us all these things for educational for the
363 children.
364
365 R: Those are nice networks that a school can have ..(unclear)
366
367 EP: The other challenge in the school is like we do not have a library .., I think
368 it's very important, I was watching news and the ..(unclear) they
369 sponsored the library ..(unclear) can improve
370
371 R: Ja we saw in one of the schools we visited, X Primary, we saw that a
372 donor had also donated a library there and people from Correctional
373 Services, some of the inmates built the cupboards and installed the
374 burglar doors, bars, tables, so I think it's good for a school if they can
375 network and get that going ja. Would you like to show us the land that
376 you've identified?
377
378 EP: Yes we can
379
380 **END**

Role-players
in school-
based
support

Role-players
in school-
based
support

APPENDIX F

Research journal

RESEARCH JOURNAL
March 2016 Field Visit

22 March 2016

- Advantages of group discussions vs normal discussions: Participants debate with each other regarding various themes / topics.
- Frustration of teachers, not always willing to do group activities. Makes me wonder if what I am doing relates more to finishing a degree than it does to solving a problem from their point of view.
- Schools presenting their success stories:
 - Holistic Approach is needed
 - Networking with NGO's and other important stakeholders is crucial
 - Vegetable gardens improves the morale of the community and is also therapeutic
 - Vegetable gardens serves to unify communities
 - Schools sell extra vegetables for an extra income
 - In absence of enough space schools become creative in using tyres or boxes to grow vegetables
 - The involvement of individuals with business knowledge is important
 - It is also important to make learners aware of the importance of the vegetable gardens in order to ensure its sustainability
- All in all I felt the day was successful. I was able to gather the information that I set out to obtain. Using PRA-based posters facilitated information sharing amongst teachers and amongst schools – good way for them to learn from each other.
- Don't really feel that I have built any trusting relationships with the participants yet.

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Early identification and referral of problems requiring professional help

Specific areas of support

23 March 2016

Today I had individual interviews with a teacher from each of the participating schools to clarify and provide opportunities to deepen and add to the information already gathered during yesterday's PRA-based activities.

Once more, I sensed an unwillingness amongst teachers to partake in the interviews. Could this be because they feel less able to express themselves in English, which would be their second or third language. During my reflections I am also confronted with other explanations, such as that they are not really motivated to share and has come with the expectation of receiving information instead of giving (in such a case, do the teachers fully understand the purpose of this colloquium – perhaps miscommunication amongst each other?). Another explanation may be that they do not fully understand what the significands of the information I am trying to gather may have and how this can change future approaches to helping children. Lastly, I am also confronted with the possibility that their realities are so harsh, complex and draining that they may feel talking to me won't change anything for them – hence, why do the effort...?

Ultimately I feel that I was able to deepen and broaden my understanding and knowledge of school-based initiatives in support of at-risk learners.

I found it interesting to note how much teachers did to support learners emotionally. Teachers counsel learners when necessary and one of the teachers mentioned how they also use sport to support learners by keeping them of the streets.

Specific areas of support

APPENDIX G

Field notes

FIELD NOTES

March 2016 Field Visit

23 March 2016

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

1) Charles Duna Primary

Specific areas of support

- Address nutritional needs
- Address clothing needs through support of NGO's
- Emotional needs are supported through clubs at school that gives empathy. For emotionally abused there is programs like the police visiting the school and providing information on important numbers, processes to follow. There is also a psychiatrist and social workers that works with the learners in need of emotional support

Role-players in school-based support

Specific areas of support

- Learning needs are addressed by providing learners with books and stationary. Receive little support from the government. Teachers donate stationary

Early identification and referral of problems requiring professional help

2) Cebelihle Primary

Specific areas of support

- Teachers identify learners with needs. Learners are then referred to the support agent who then refers the child to the necessary support structure
- Counselling is provided for child and the family when they need emotional support. The counsellor also calls the child in the counselling room, including the parents and the teachers. They then talk positive to the child and the parents, giving love and advice for dealing with their challenges.

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Specific areas of support

- They also provide soul buddies at school to give guidance and support
- Learners with learning challenges are supported by remedial teachers. The remedial teachers also give advice for teachers dealing with learners facing learning challenges, such as giving the learners extra time to complete assessments.

Specific areas of support

- Learner support agents also give support for teachers in class
- NGO's also provide support in terms of clothes, food, etc.
- Social workers assess the home environment
- Feeding schemes to provide in learners' nutritional needs

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Role-players in school-based support

3) Seyise Primary

Specific areas of support

- School gardens provide nutritional support for learners. There is also individuals, churches and NGO's that helps with donations.
- Supporting children who do not have school uniforms though teachers and other learners who bring extra clothes from home. Teachers also collect money from other teachers and buy clothes. Churches, SASSA and Jengilenga also provide clothing.
- Welfare organisations also provide sanitary pads (menstrual pads), and also inform children on physical development and hygiene.

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Specific areas of support

- Further, there is also various events, such as World Week, World Food Day, water week and programs to inform children on proper nutrition. In the Water Week, the importance of saving water and water uses are discussed.

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

- They also have a Diversity Day, where learners learn to respect diversity amongst each other, acceptance of all are promoted and opportunity is provided for learners to learn from each other.
- WESSA, Metro etc. also help in providing transport to schools as well as food.
- The correctional services are used to give manpower, like helping to dig out the vegetable gardens.

Specific areas of support

- Environmental clubs
- African Bank holds reading competitions
- There are computer labs to promote computer literacy amongst learners, and there is also sponsors helping to promote sport development.

Role-players in school-based support

4) Ntyatyambo Primary

Specific areas of support

- Food gardens to support learners' nutritional needs.

- ILST – dealing with barriers that some learners may experience. They give support during break, after school and also on weekends.
- There is also fund raising amongst teachers and parents. Programmes to involve stakeholders, such as the police, nurses to talk about safety and drugs.
- Extra mural activities are provided for children to keep them out of trouble.
- There is a big challenge experienced in terms of raising the needed sponsors.
- Communities should help schools with crime and also getting sponsors.
- The school helps the church with buildings and the church also helps the school.
- The problem is that communities want to come to schools only because they expect to receive, and not to help provide support.

Specific areas of support

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

5) Stephen Mazungula

Specific areas of support

- Extra classes are held on weekend to support learners struggling with school work.
- Science clubs at school encourage children to debate and also socialise.
- Clothing and food parcels are also provided.
- Sanitary Pads are provided for girls.
- There are also motivational speakers to address the challenge of violent and undisciplined children.
- The parents are mostly young, and therefore parent meetings are held one on one to discuss challenges and to motivate parents.
- There is also a disciplinary committee that helps to change negative behaviour in a positive manner.

Specific areas of support

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

6) John Masiza Primary

- Physical challenges include lack of food, shelter, HIV/AIDS and also poverty.
- Emotional needs affect learners' academic achievement, and can be as a result of being abused, parent neglect, etc.
- There is also feeding schemes, sponsors and teachers buying clothes to support in learners needs.
- Lots of children fight, this bad energy is addressed through sport provision and support from social workers.
- Challenges of vandalism are also addressed through the disciplinary committee of the school.

Specific areas of support

7) Garret Primary

- Hunger is addressed through the government providing porridge.
- Clothing is bought for children with needs.
- Challenges that learners face in coping with the curriculum is addressed by having Reading and Writing workshops. Organisation helps with challenges due to AIDS and also empowering teachers.
- There is also Library and science corners to promote reading and learning in the classes.
- Police are invited to talk about drugs, give support and also to give important information regarding emergency situations.
- Social workers tend to abused children.
- SASSA provide social grants to families in financial need.
- Swimming lessons at provided also tend to learners' social needs.
- Ex-learners provide certain services to school children. These include optometrist, coaching and also helping out with the choirs.
- Voluntary workers such as parents, help look at the school grounds and gardens.
- Science and English laptops are also sponsored.

Specific areas of support

Specific areas of support

Specific areas of support

Role-players in school-based support

Programs presented at school to inform parents on good parenting skills.

Broad school-based strategies to provide support

APPENDIX H

Research team members' field notes

4 Aug 2016 Cebelihle M&E

20 Mense (incl Principal)

Garden: 10 mense

Support: 9 mense (incl principal)

HAC with nurse, clinic

7 on committee (teachers and community and clinic sister)

Learning support agent

Spul buddies

Gr5-7

Learners selected by educators for peer mediation in school for skills such as assertiveness, probl solving (based on leadership talents and academic prformance - so that they can catch up easily when they are out of the class and need to assist educators)

They assist us on the grounds - taking partly work of prefects

Assist us, eg municipality, correctional services, churches (uniforms, sanitary pads)

34 pairs of shoes

Teachers donate their own children's shoes, clothes which they've outgrown

Maybe invite a pastor

At beginning and end of the term a priest comes to pray doe the school

All aspects of child must be taken care of

Report to Learner Support Agent (LSA)

Who report to social worker

Claim short of staff

Want one that we know is our social worker so that we can send to her

Child Support Grant. Fight amongst families where child is affected.

The mother goes away with the child support grant but the child is staying with the grandmother

I'm gong to give you a letter. I want to see your parent. Then the one who is looking after the child is coming. Then they say they do not even have an old age pension

Academic Support.

collaborating

Committees for support.

Social support

↳ involve parents.

Academic

Homework. Sometimes you give and then they don't do it. Most of the parents are not educated. Illiteracy
Let's say mom and dad passed away.
Make use of LSA to investigate. Go to secretary to get child's address.
LSA = caregiver. Employed by Department → Emotional

Referring

Have teachers who have done remedial at univ.
Do not have remedial classes — committees for support.
Have a committee called ILST?? 3 on commiter. 1 per phase
Classroom teacher identifies and refers.
Dr Fetman. Esp foundation phase kids. Child goes for sessions. Pays.
But special rates

Say. If we were. Where would the teacher in our school who has remedial training work? No space

Seeds of peace — Emotional
3 Teachers involved in that programme
Refers if they see intervention is needed — Involve Parents.
Also train parents on how to handle learners
Give them a picture of how curr is structured so that they are able to assist them with homework
GMSA (General Motors) — sponsors.

Most of the learnrs come to school with emotional baggage. You notice so and so is not himself today. You notice he or she is not like usual attentive. Then later on you have a one on one with that learner. To make the learner comfortable in class. — Emotional support
That is why it is important for us in the morning to pray with them. Be with them. Know what is happening.

Most of the time when they colour. BLACK. So you know there is a problem.

Teenagers. Early pregnancy. — Involve Parents

Parents meetings. Open days where parents come to school to check on learners' work
They don't care to take the children's reports. Some of them don't even know the child is going to another grade

SGB involved in meetings. But involvement in community can be seen as meddling

APPENDIX I

Visual data

I1 VISUAL DATA

Photographs

Example of Photographs taken during the PRA-based activities in March 2016. The rest of the photographs are included on the compact disc (CD) and USB.



Schools
networking
amongst each
other

Example of Photographs taken during a school visit in August 2016 at school F. The rest of the photographs for the school visits and PRA-based activities conducted in March and August 2016, are included on the compact disc (CD) and USB.



Addressing nutritional needs

Addressing nutritional needs



Addressing nutritional needs



School policies to support learner wellbeing

Example of Photographs taken during the school visits and member checking conducted in April 2017. The rest of the photographs are included on the compact disc (CD) and USB.

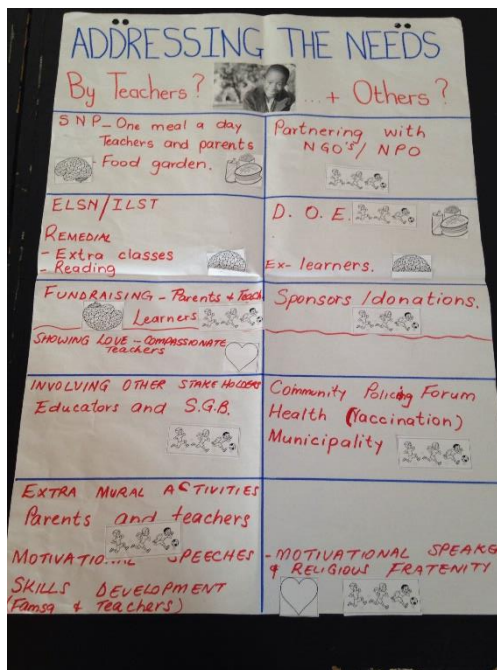
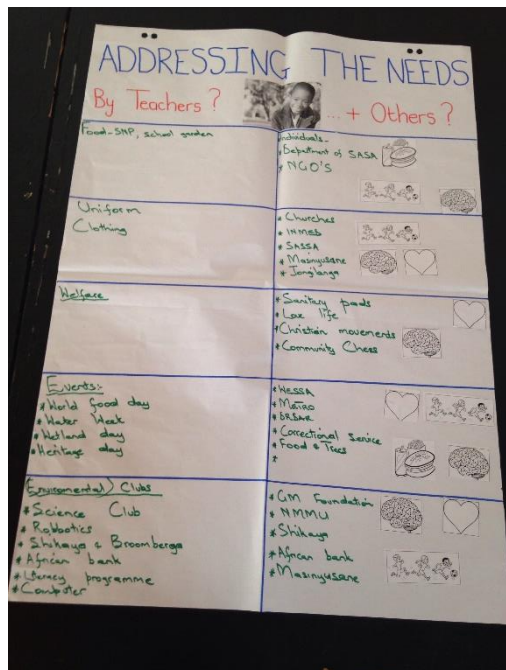
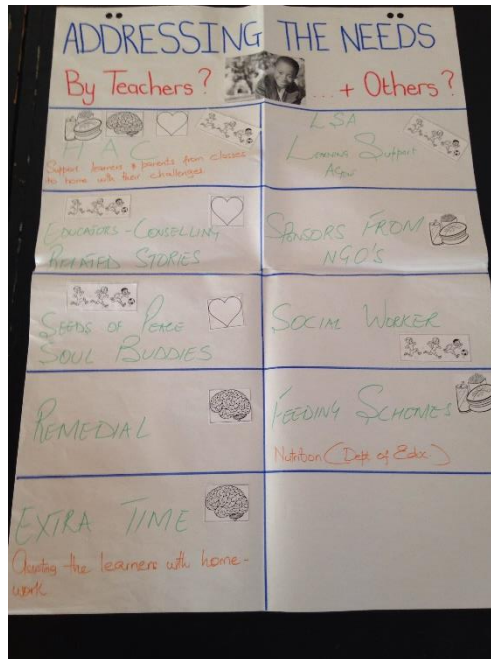
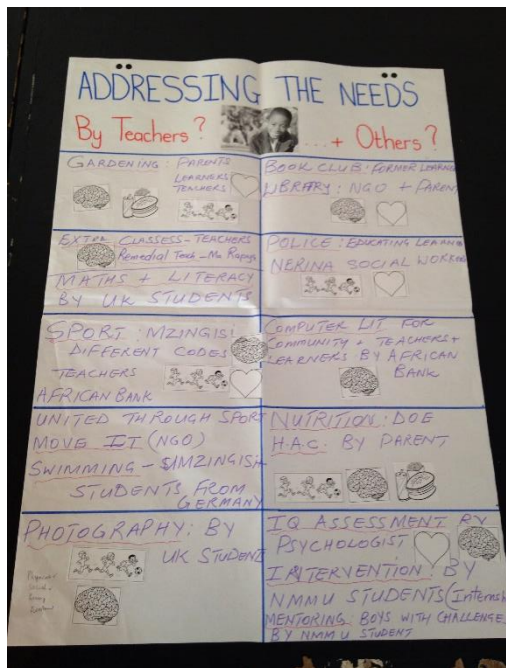


School vegetable gardens to support learners' nutritional needs



I2 PRA VISUAL DATA

Posters generated during PRA-Based activities in March 2016.



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS

By Teachers? ... + Others?

EXTRA-CLASSES by Volunteers & Educators	Volunteers COACHES - (for) Parents
CLOTHING AND Uniform by Sponsors AND Church	SCIENCE CLUB Educators DEBATE
END of the Term food parcels by School (HAC)	GRADES' Parent's Meeting Teachers
SANITARY For Girls by Sponsor (ALWAYS)	DISCIPLINARY Committee - Educator, Police officer & Rm. Religious Minister
Motivational Speaker About CRIME (by Correctional Services)	

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS

By Teachers? ... + Others?

→ Serve porridge in the mornings for learners who come to school hungry	Swimming lessons Extra-mural activities Music - choirs
→ Nal'ibali - for reading (GMSAF) → African Bank - Reading Spelling Quiz	Volunteer coaches - ex-learners helping coaches
→ (by Correctional Services) School library → Bringing Parents to the education table (GMSAF) training by teachers	Computers - Sponsor
→ Good relations with clinics, police, social workers, SASSA	Maintenance of Grounds - by sponsor
→ Adopt a child by Clothing Banks → Children (by) adopted by some organisations and individuals.	Science project - by Science teachers using laptops & data projectors

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS

By Teachers? ... + Others?

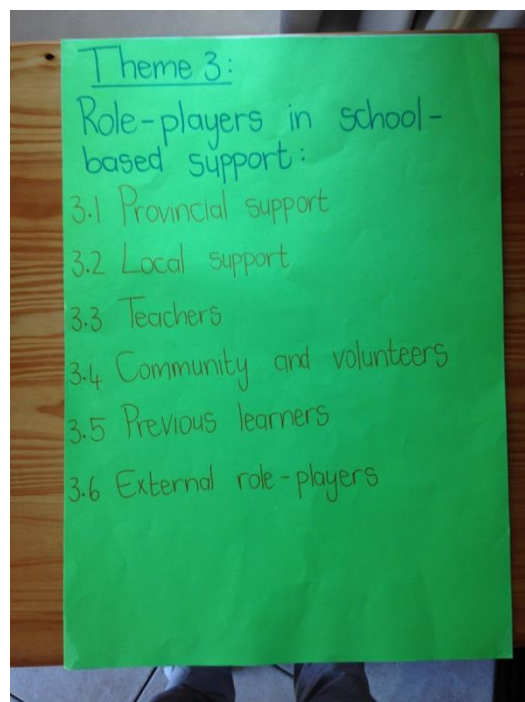
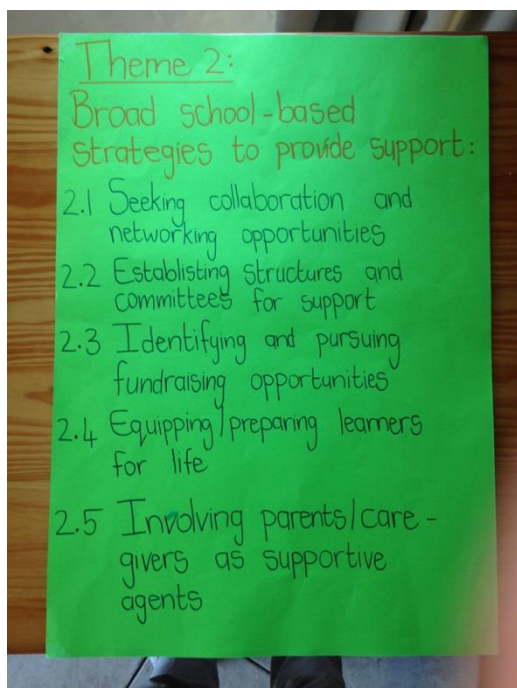
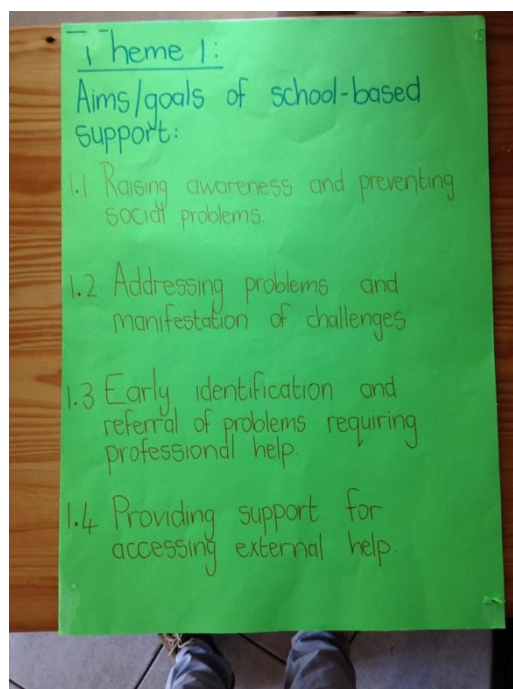
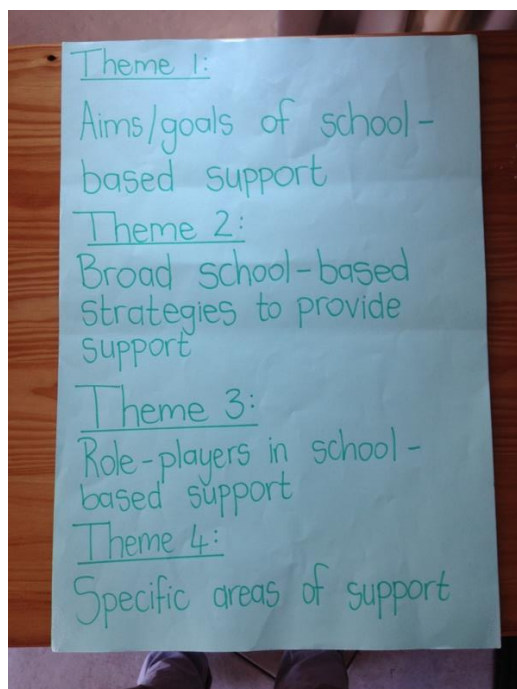
Feeding scheme School uniform Clothes Seek Sponsors	Soup kitchen Cook meals for learners
Assists students with homework Homework Clubs	Police Forum They address criminal cases that happens at skuls
Social development Social workers Have sessions with learners	Community stake holders Community must make use of the school property
Disciplinary Committees Deals with issues & challenges	Encourage night skul for adults II
Involve them in school Sport & extra mural activities	Parents involvements in all school activities

NEEDS OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN

<p>Physical Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Meal that has all the nutrients. * Adult involvement to make sure that the child is presentable * Proper shelter. * Proper hygiene in /out the classroom. * Lack of potty training. * Lack of parental guidance 	<p>Learning Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nutritious food to enhance brain function eg. veg. - carrots * Praise L's for doing good even those who do not cope in /out the classroom.
<p>Social Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lack of recreational facilities * Lack of sport expertise * Lack of social mentors * Substance abuse. 	<p>Emotional Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lack of empathy, love and secure environment * Lack of support from parents, community and peers * Everyone needs love and to be respected

13 VISUAL DATA

Member checking poster (April 2017)



Theme 4:

Specific areas of support:

- 4.1 Support for basic needs:
 - nutritional support
 - clothing
 - financial, material support
- 4.2 Academic support (learner support) (homework)
- 4.3 Emotional, psychological and social functioning
- 4.4 Recreational opportunities
- 4.5 Exposure and preparation for future / cultural awareness
- 4.6 Providing and maintaining the necessary infrastructure