

**The perspectives of Grade 10  
learners regarding  
sexuality education  
in a special school**

Yvette Muller

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**The perspectives of Grade 10 learners regarding  
sexuality education in a special school**

by

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**Magister Educationis**

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University of Pretoria

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**Pretoria**

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## DEDICATION

*This study is dedicated in loving memory*

*to my late father, Fred.*

*“Dad, your words of encouragement, I will never forget.”*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To have achieved this milestone in my life, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following:

- During this journey I have learned that I know I can depend on God and I can say, without a shadow of a doubt, that God always held me up, pushed me forward, kept me in line and moved me along, He provided me with the knowledge and everything else I needed at just the right time in a perfect way.
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- To my two daughters, Maryke and Carmen, thank you for always cheering me on and believing in me.
- To my language and technical editor, Dr Lariza Hoffman, thank you for your excellent work.
- Special thanks to the principal and governing body who allowed me to conduct the study, as well as the life orientation teacher and the educational psychologist who assisted me with my research. I am truly grateful.

- Finally, a special thanks to all my participants and parents. Thank you for allowing me to listen to your “voices”. I believe your fruitful contribution to improve education will have a great impact.

## DECLARATION

I, Yvette Muller, declare that this dissertation, *The perspectives of Grade 10 learners regarding sexuality education in a special school*, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in Learner Support, Career Guidance and Counselling at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted to any other tertiary institution.



## ETHICS STATEMENT

The author whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers* and the *Policy guidelines for responsible research*.

# DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR

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### DECLARATION

To whom it may concern

I hereby certify that the English language of the following dissertation meets the requirements of academic publishing. This dissertation was linguistically edited and proofread by me, Dr. L. Hoffman.

#### **Title of dissertation**

The perspectives of Grade 10 learners regarding sexuality  
education in a special school

#### **Candidate**

Yvette Muller



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16 November 2017

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to obtain the perceptions of Grade 10 learners as well as the Life Orientation teacher, regarding the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme in a special school. The study was conducted according to a qualitative research approach, guided by the interpretivist paradigm. A single case study was utilised to explore the views and opinions of seven males, nine females and the Life Orientation teacher about phenomenon being studied.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews which allowed the researcher to ask open-response questions to gain rich data understanding of participant's opinions and perception about sexuality education. Data was analysed by identifying themes and categories that emerged from participant's perceptions and opinions. Involvement was an additional challenge that came to the fore. The participants agreed that sexuality education does provide them with useful and important information in this regard, however, they pleaded for more "real life" examples.

Accessing contraceptives still posed a problem for learners and therefore, they suggested that contraceptives be made available at school and well as the appointment of a nurse.

Based on the study results, some valuable recommendations were made which included the standardisation of life orientation in all special schools, easy accessibility to contraceptives and most importantly, parental involvement in their children's sexuality may curb teenage pregnancy.

## **KEYWORDS**

- Special schools
- Barriers to learning
- Accommodations and modifications
- Delayed development
- Ecosystemic factors
- Sexuality education
- Special educational needs

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

WHO	World Health Organisation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Emergency fund
SIECUS	Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
NCSE	National Council for Special Educational Needs

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# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is a worldwide phenomenon, with 16 million teenage girls between 15 and 19 years of age giving birth each year (Louw & Louw, 2014:318). Pregnancy among adolescents in South Africa is also not uncommon, as 95% of these occur in developing countries, such as South Africa (WHO, 2011). According to Mudhovozi, Ramarumo and Sodi (2012:119), 30% of young women have already given birth by the age of 19. Research undertaken by Pettifor, O'Brian, McPhail, Miller and Rees (2009:84) has found that the average age of sexual debut is 16,4 years for males and 16,8 years for females. Research shows a link between risky sexual behaviour, such as sexual contact, infrequent condom use, multiple sex partners, and unwanted pregnancies (Department of Basic Education, 2013). Answering to this need, the Department of Basic Education led to a call for legislative measures to be put into place. These measures included several laws that have been passed since 1996, which were aimed at protecting the sexual rights and reproductive health of teenagers. In terms of schooling and teenagers' rights, the Department of Basic Education (1996) outlined these in the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) which permits teenagers to stay in school while they are pregnant and to return to school at an appropriate stage after giving birth in the same year. Concurrently, grounded on a rights-based framework, the Department of Basic Education (1996) also promulgated the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (No. 92 of 1996) which allows for the termination of a pregnancy by a doctor on request, up to 12 weeks of gestation.

As the number of children born to teenagers increased, with most of these teenage mothers not being able to earn an income, this contributed to poverty, which also had an impact on their children. Therefore, in 1998, the Child Support Grant was introduced, with the main purpose of easing the impact of poverty on children born to teenage mothers (Louw et al.,2014:319). Despite all the legislation that had been put in place, teenage pregnancies were still on the rise, which made the need for comprehensive sexuality education in schools more urgent. In South Africa, schools have become important intervention sites in response to teenage pregnancy, as this is a platform

where large groups of learners can be reached simultaneously. In 1997, the Department of Basic Education introduced a new education system, namely Outcomes-Based Education, which included the learning area life orientation, which sexuality education was entrenched in and which was compulsory in all public schools (Jacobs, 2014:213).

## **1.2 RATIONALE**

In the current curriculum prescribed by the Department of Basic Education (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement), the main aim of the subject life orientation, among others, is the prevention and management of teenage pregnancy (Department of Basic Education, 2011a). This curriculum also accentuates the guiding of learners to enable them to make informed choices about sex and sexuality (Adams, Collair, Oswald & Perold, 2005:354).

This study was prompted by an increase in teenage pregnancies among learners aged 16 to 18 years in a special school, even though these learners were exposed to sexuality education. Consequently, this posed a serious question about the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme currently implemented at the school. Although there is a vast database of literature on the effectiveness of sexuality education in mainstream schools (Kaufman, De Wet & Stadler, 2001:147), no research has focused specifically on the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme in special schools in South Africa. This view is supported by Jones, Woolcock-Henry and Dominico (2005:92), who stipulate that there are scanty research and information available on the incidence of teenage pregnancy among learners with special educational needs.

According to Hargreaves (2013:566), these teenagers are at extremely high risk for teenage pregnancy, for reasons that may include disadvantages in physical, behavioural, intellectual, emotional and social capacities. These teenagers, therefore, are likely to need special guidance to make safe sexual choices.

There are many misconceptions regarding the sexuality of teenagers with special educational needs. According to Sweeney (2007:38), it is assumed that these teenagers cannot articulate their sexual needs because of their disadvantaged intellectual capacity and therefore teachers, parents, health professionals and even members of society decide, on behalf of these teenagers, what they need regarding

sexuality education. By conducting this study, I aimed to give these learners an opportunity to let their voices be heard as to what their needs are about sexuality education. The study was intended to fill the gap in the literature, as these learners have never had the opportunity to be involved in discussing and giving their unique insights, opinions, experiences and expectations regarding sexuality education. Additionally, the perspective of the life orientation teacher will also be attained.

It is evident, given the findings of the above-mentioned studies, that a need does exist to explore the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme currently implemented at special schools. The participants' recorded perspectives and opinions will be scientifically analysed to provide an authentic report on the Grade 10 learners' and the life orientation teacher's perspectives on and opinions of the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme currently implemented at the school. The conclusions and recommendations made in this study could be significant to the Department of Basic Education, teachers, principals and parents. It may ultimately contribute to the enhancing of the effectiveness of sexuality education and may also ultimately influence future policies.

This study is, therefore, of great significance, as it can create awareness among teachers, heads of departments, principals and policymakers about this diverse group of learners and how to best meet their needs. The findings of this study will offer recommendations that are informed, not only by theory, but also by research findings and the learners themselves. Furthermore, for learners in special schools, this may contribute to a decrease in the number of teenage pregnancies, enabling more teenagers to complete their education and stay in the school system for longer. Ultimately, this will enhance these teenagers' participation in society, enabling them to make a more positive and productive contribution to the economy.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Learners in special schools do not differ in appearance from their peers without special needs, although they do face various challenges, such as a short attention span, not being able to focus, poor short-term memory, limited ability to engage in abstract thinking and shortcomings in social development (Jones et al., 2005:94). These learners are soft targets, because they are more vulnerable than their peers without special needs, because of their cognitive limitations in determining safety (Kaufman et

al., 2001:150). Thus, this research is a response to a problem situation that has arisen in a special school, where the increase in teenage pregnancy has become a serious concern, calling into question the efficacy of the current sexuality education programme. Therefore, the aim of the study is to give these Grade 10 learners a voice, allowing them to be part of the process of deciding what should be included in the sexuality programme – what will meet their needs and enhance what they view as important. However, this study cannot be confined to the learners' experiences at school; it will thus also involve all the environmental systems, including family, peers and neighbours, connections between the family and the school, the culture and the sociohistorical conditions. The life orientation teacher will also be granted the opportunity to voice her perspective on the sexuality education programme currently implemented at the school, as well as possible changes that could improve the effectiveness of the programme. The following research questions serve as guidelines to this study:

### **1.3.1 Main research question**

- What are the key requirements for effective sexuality education at a special school?

### **1.3.2 Sub-questions**

- What is the impact of ecosystemic factors on the sexuality of the Grade 10 learners at a special school?
- How do the Grade 10 learners at a special school perceive sexuality education?
- What is the life orientation teacher's perception of the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme in a special school?

## **1.4 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

The key terms and concepts that are used in this research report are briefly defined and described.

### **1.4.1 Ecosystemic factors**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) posits an interaction between the various ecosystems in the environment and the developing child. It is, therefore, based on a reciprocal relationship. According to Bronfenbrenner (1993), when attempting to

understand human behaviour, the entire ecological system needs to be taken into consideration. The ecosystemic factors in the environment influence the relationship between the developing person and the immediate environment, and include the school, the family, the community and various institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). In the context of this study, ecosystemic factors refer to the specific factors that influence the view of the learners in a special school regarding sexuality education.

#### **1.4.2 Sexuality education**

According to UNESCO (2009b), sexuality education is “an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex and relationships by providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgemental information”. Greathead, Devenish and Funnel (1998:52), on the other hand, see sexuality education as “an instruction in and discussion of various aspects of sexuality and human sexual behaviour and the social roles of males and females in society and relationship with each other”.

For this study, I concur with the extensive description of sexuality education by the Sexuality Information and Educational Council of the United States Guidelines for Comprehensive sexuality education (SIECUS, 2004:13) defining it as follows:

[A] lifelong process of acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs and values about identity, relationships and intimacy. It encompasses sexual development, reproductive health, interpersonal relationship, affection, intimacy, body image and gender roles. Sexuality education addresses the biological socio-cultural, psychological and spiritual dimension of sexuality from the cognitive domain, communicate effectively and make responsible decisions.

#### **1.4.3 Special educational needs**

The National Council for Special Education (2014:20) defines special educational needs as:

...a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health of learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition. (NCSE,2014:20)

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation special education comprises the following:

Education designed to facilitate the learning of individuals who, for a wide variety of reasons, require additional support and adoptive pedagogical methods to participate and meet learning objectives in an educational programme. Reasons may include (but are not limited to) disadvantages in physical, behavioural, intellectual, emotional and social capacities. (UNESCO,2011:83)

A child is commonly recognised as having special educational needs if he or she is not able to benefit from the school education made generally available to children of the same age, without additional support or adaptations.

#### **1.4.4 Special schools**

The Department of Basic Education (2005) developed the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS strategy), which is directed at determining the nature and level of support required by learners with special educational needs. In November 2007, the Department of Basic Education provided clear guidelines that stipulated that special schools may only admit learners who require support in the areas of specialisation, and that learners must undergo a screening and assessment process in terms of the SIAS strategy, before being considered for placement. Regarding referrals to special schools, Section 5(7) of the South African Schools Act (1996) states that “application for the admission of a learner to a special school must be made in a manner determined by the Head of Department”.

For this study, I want to reiterate that certain documentation is required for a learner to be enrolled at a special school. A special need assessment (SNA) must be completed by the parents, the school which the learner is currently enrolled at and the Department of Education. In addition to this, an academic and behavioural report is required, as well as a report from the school which the learner is enrolled at, stating the interventions that have been applied to help the learner and confirmation that despite these interventions, the learner could not meet the academic expectations of the mainstream environment and curriculum. The child is, therefore, referred to a special school, because he or she requires consistent input and intervention to meet his or her needs.

Therefore, educational programmes in a special school may follow a similar curriculum to that followed in a mainstream school, but the individual learners’ needs are considered by providing specific resources (e.g. speciality-trained teachers, counselling, etc.) and modified educational content or learning objectives.

## **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.5.1 Introduction**

Worldwide, schools are confronted with sexually related challenges, such as the increasingly younger age of sexual encounters, the high HIV/AIDS prevalence and other sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers aged 15 to 19 years (Bhana & Pattman, 2009:69). In their research study, Abrahams et al. (2009:546) mention that evidence of sexual violence in the world is increasing and Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod and Letsoalo (2009) make mention of the persistent high rates of teenage pregnancy. Motlatla (2007) singles out schools as the most appropriate intervention sites where sexuality-related problems need to be addressed.

In 1997, the Department of Basic Education introduced the subject, life orientation, as a compulsory subject from Grade R to Grade 12 in all schools (Department of Basic Education, 2008). HIV/AIDS and sexuality education were integrated in the life orientation curriculum and this integration of the two subjects was an important way to address various problems teenagers face regarding sexuality (Karstens, 2010; Pan American Health Organisation, 2001). Hirst (2008:400) agrees that the school is the most appropriate place to address these challenges, as school-based sexuality and relationship education offers the most promising means of improving teenagers' sexual health by developing "sexual competence".

A new curriculum, namely, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was implemented in mainstream schools and special schools in January 2012 (Department of Basic Education, 2011), which also includes the subject of life orientation, consisting of the following six topics for Grades 10 to 12:

1. Development of the "self" in society.
2. Social and environmental responsibility.
3. Democracy and human rights.
4. Careers and career choices.
5. Study skills.
6. Physical education.

The following specific aims of life orientation are defined (Department of Basic Education, 2011):

1. Guide learners and prepare them to respond appropriately to life's responsibilities and opportunities.
2. Equip learners to interact optimally on a personal, psychological, cognitive, motor, physical, mental, spiritual, cultural and socioeconomic level.
3. Guide learners to make informed and responsible decisions about their own health and the well-being of others.
4. Expose learners to their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to the rights of others and to issues of diversity.
5. Equip learners with the knowledge, skills and values to make informed decisions about subject choices, careers, additional and higher education opportunities and the world of work.
6. Expose learners to various study methods and skills pertaining to the assessment process.
7. Expose learners to an understanding of the value of regular participation in physical activity.

Therefore, seen as central to the holistic development of teenagers, life orientation is concerned with the learner's social, personal, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical growth. In addition, the central focus of life orientation is the development of the "self-in-society", which places emphasis on the individual's growth (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The topic, "development of self-in-society", therefore, focuses on sexuality, which aims to provide learners with the life skills they need to manage crisis situations, become aware of their bodies and their functioning, and protect themselves from sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS infections, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. As a result, sexuality education programmes should help learners make sense of their observations and experiences regarding sexuality education, ensuring that there are no gaps in their knowledge and that what they learn, can eventually be integrated into a coherent, consistent and mature perspective. In this literature review, the special school as an educational environment and the delayed development of adolescents in a special school are investigated.

### **1.5.2 The special school as an educational environment**

As this study is focused on adolescents aged 16 to 18 years, these learners are already in high school. However, as these learners are not able to cope with the academic expectations of the mainstream schools, they are also not able to progress at the same pace as their peers. As stipulated by Mullins and Preyde (2013:147), these learners will fall further and further behind, which often results in their having to repeat a grade. These learners are, therefore, referred to a special school, where there are teachers who are competent at educating such learners, as well as professionals (e.g. educational psychologists) who are available to attend to the specialised needs of these learners.

### **1.5.3 Vulnerability of teenagers in a special school**

Teenagers in a special school are often neglected in research and therefore their needs regarding sexuality education have not been recorded before. Moreover, the families and homes that teenagers come from, are important in developing certain sexual attitudes and behaviours (Thornton & Camburn, 1987:323). Hogan, Rogers and Marchell (2000) and Kaufman et al. (2001:147) argue that family characteristics should be considered because learners with special educational needs often live in families that are poor, single-parent families or households with lower educational attainment. Previous research has also revealed that daughters of teenage mothers are three times more likely to become teenage mothers themselves, when compared to daughters of adult mothers (Iverson, 2007:202). According to Wells, Sanderful and Hogan (2003:805), teenagers with special needs face substantially greater barriers to meet their educational and employment goals than those without special educational needs. These authors further assert that to these teenagers, motherhood seems like a more attainable indicator of adulthood. Some teenagers become pregnant intentionally because they are experiencing academic and/or other difficulties, have low educational and career expectations, lack positive role models and see pregnancy as the only way to acquire adult status (Jones et al., 2005:98). This means that, among the teenage population, many teenage mothers are those who are the least equipped for adulthood and parenting and may continue to face the challenges that they experienced in childhood in another generation of vulnerable children (Mercer & Mercer, 1993).

Because of their limited intellectual ability, learners with special educational needs may find it challenging to negotiate safer sex and may be more prone to HIV/AIDS infection and teenage pregnancy. Henkel (2001:36) warns that these teenagers are easily persuaded to participate in premarital sex, not only because of their limited intellectual ability, but also because they want to be accepted by the other party.

These teenagers may be very trusting and unable to judge the motivation of others. Consequently, they are vulnerable to sexual abuse by non-disabled people (Carter, 1999:222). Howland and Rintala (2001:42) explain, in this regard, that these teenagers often find themselves participating in unwanted sexual experiences and then lack the necessary social and practical skills to be able to extricate themselves from the situation and/or alert the relevant authorities. UNICEF (2005) is of the view that any form of disability increases the risk of sexual violence and victimisation. Martin et al. (2006:825) believe teenagers with special educational needs have an increased likelihood of being the victims of sexual assault.

Although these learners are vulnerable, previous research done by Kirby, Larris and Rolleri (2007:209) has indicated that improved knowledge results in an improved decision-making ability and, therefore, illustrates that capacity is not static and can be improved through appropriate individually tailored sexuality education. Some of the skills teenagers should master, relate to assertiveness, increasing their knowledge about sexual abuse and negotiating safer sex to protect themselves. By setting higher educational goals for themselves, they will have better prospects regarding employment, thus becoming financially independent and productive members of society (Hockaday, Crase, Shelley & Stockdale, (2000:430).

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2012:26), the meaning of theory in any scientific field is to provide a framework that is useful for explaining relationships among the phenomena being studied and to provide insight that will lead to the discovery of new relationships.

This research study will, therefore, be based on, firstly, Piaget's cognitive developmental stage theory (1958), which consists of four stages, namely the sensory-motor stage (0-2 years), the pre-operational stage (2-7 years), the concrete operational stage (7-11 years) and the formal operational stage (11-15 years and up). For this

study, the focus will be on learners 16 to 18 years of age. However, these learners' cognitive development can be as much as two years behind that of their peers (Langdon, Clare & Murphy, 2010:273). Despite their age, these learners do not function at a formal operational stage and, therefore, the concrete operational stage, at which these learners do function, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Secondly, the moral development theory of Kohlberg (1969) will also form part of the theoretical framework. Kohlberg's theory consists of three levels of moral reasoning, namely pre-conventional morality (Level 1), conventional morality (Level 2) and post-conventional morality (Level 3). As clearly stipulated by Kohlberg (1973: 12), moral reasoning cannot be attained without a corresponding increase in cognitive maturity. Because these learners' cognitive development has been delayed, this also influences their moral reasoning. For this study, conventional moral reasoning (Level 2) will be discussed, as this is the level at which these learners are able to reason. This aspect will also be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2. Thirdly, Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory of development is based on the principle that the child goes through stages, which are related to a distinct life "crisis" and must be resolved to move on to the next stage. The psychosocial stages include the following developmental tasks: trust versus mistrust (0-1 year), autonomy versus shame or doubt (2-3 years), initiative versus guilt (4-5 years), industry versus inferiority (6-11), identity versus role confusion (12-19 years), intimacy versus isolation (20-39 years), generativity versus stagnation (40-60 years) and ego integrity versus despair (65 years-death). As this study focused on adolescents aged 16 to 18 years, the crisis of identity versus role confusion will be explored. It is during this stage of development that adolescents establish a clear and definite sense of who they are and where they fit into the world. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. The last theory that formed part of the theoretical framework was the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner. This theory was useful, as it was based on a contextual approach that takes the biological and environmental factors into account when investigating what determines learners' views on sexuality education in special schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The various systems in this theory comprise the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. For this study, the first four systems that are applicable to this study will be discussed below.

### **1.6.1 Microsystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1993), the microsystem is the main setting in which the individual spends most of his or her time, such as the family, peer group, school and neighbourhood. Within this microsystem, the individual has direct interaction with parents, teachers, peers and others. The child is not a passive recipient of experiences but is someone who interacts reciprocally with others and helps to construct the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For this study, the focus will be on Grade 10 learners in a special school and their interaction with their family, parents, peers, teachers and friends and how this influence the sexuality education of these adolescents.

### **1.6.2 Mesosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the mesosystem involves the linkages among microsystems. This means that family experiences may be related to school experiences, for example, the relationship between the parents and the school. For this study, better collaboration between the school and the parents involves an environment where parents can attend workshops, in which way, the school can empower them with the necessary skills to enable them to talk about sexual matters with their children.

### **1.6.3 Exosystem**

The exosystem consists of the interaction between two or more settings in which the learner does not play an active role. In this system, events occur that do not directly affect processes within the immediate environment which the developing person lives in (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:577). For this study, the exosystem relates to the effect that the media has on the adolescent's perception of sexuality and how this can contribute to his or her risky sexual behaviour.

### **1.6.4 Macrosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1993), the macrosystem includes the belief system, the culture and the value system of an individual. It is the most all-encompassing context in which the child lives and includes the society, its values and its customs. For example, poverty can overwhelm children's development and impair their ability to learn. For this study, the macrosystem will include the life orientation curriculum and the value system

incorporated in the curriculum, and how these values are conveyed to the learner by the teacher. Policies on special schools will also be regarded as part of the macrosystem.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The word “methodology” has its origin in the Greek words *meta* (along), *hodos* (the path) and *logos* (knowledge) (Bezuidenhout, 2011:42). The research design, the research paradigm, the qualitative research approach and the case study are included in the methodology of the study.

### **1.7.1 Research design**

According to Creswell (2009:3), a research design provides a framework for the research or guidelines that are followed during the research project. Mouton (2012:56) further stipulates that the research design is the “plan or blueprint” of the research process. Maxwell (2013:2) elaborates on this view by stating, “a good design, one in which the components work harmoniously together, promotes efficient and successful functioning”. The research design guided the study, as this allowed me to get insight into the views of learners and the life orientation teacher about the effectiveness of the sexuality education currently implemented at the special school.

### **1.7.2 Research paradigm**

Mertens (1998:401) states that a paradigm “provides a tool to identify one’s own worldview or, in research terminology identify one’s paradigm; a metaphysical construct associated with specific philosophical assumptions that described one’s worldview”. As this study will qualitatively seek to understand what learners want from sexuality education and what the experiences and the perceptions of life orientation teachers are, the interpretivist paradigm is ideal for this study, as it requires that the insights and understanding of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:22) should be observed and described. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm will allow me not only to investigate what learners want from sexuality education, but to explore the perceptions of the life orientation teacher regarding sexuality education at a special school.

### **1.7.3 Qualitative approach**

According to Creswell (2009:10), the aim of qualitative research is to explore and understand the meaning that individuals attribute to a phenomenon. The qualitative approach was well-suited for this study, as I wanted to understand the phenomenon from the participants' point of view (Rule & Vaughn, 2011:60). As pointed out by Niewenhuis (2007a:51), qualitative research emphasises qualities, processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured. Qualitative research stresses the social construction of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the institutional constraints that shape inquiry (Burke & Christensen, 2012:23). The primary intention is to understand and describe sexuality from the point of view of each participant.

### **1.7.4 Research type**

A case study research is an effective qualitative design as it is based on experimental knowledge and the social context of individuals (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:256). The defining feature of a case study is that it explores a phenomenon in context, from which a sample is collected, and it is usually carried out over a period (Creswell 2007:40). A case study is described by Leedy and Ormrod (2014:143) as researching "a particular individual, programme or event over time". I chose to make use of a case study, because I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and experiences of Grade 10 learners, as well as the life orientation teacher in a special school about the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme currently implemented at the school.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODS**

Research methods refer to the practice of collecting information and data for gaining a better understanding (Creswell, 2014:15). In this section, I will explain what elements constituted my research methods, and how these were applied to the study. My role as researcher will be illuminated and the relevant information on the participants, the research site and the instruments I have used to collect data, will be provided.

Descriptions of the ways in which the data were analysed and interpreted will follow. I will conclude with measures of trustworthiness and explain the ethical considerations which were considered and adhered to.

### **1.8.1 The role of the researcher**

According to Creswell (2013:187), the researcher is also referred to as the “inquirer” which is naturally involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants”. In this study, the interaction involved semi-structured interviews during which the Grade 10 learners and the life orientation teacher revealed their perspectives and opinions about the effectiveness of the sexuality education currently implemented at a special school. My role as a qualitative researcher was that of interviewer and interpreter, which guided me to arrive at an answer to the main research question. Once all the material to study had been collected, I categorised, coded, analysed and interpreted the data, while remaining unbiased and emotionally unattached (Niewenhuis, 2007a:51). The nature and the intent of the study were explained to participants, as well as the possible outcome of the study. No rewards or incentives were used to encourage learners to partake in the study and learners could withdraw from the study at any time. No interference with the normal school programme took place, as interviews were conducted after school hours.

### **1.8.2 Participants and the research site**

#### *1.8.2.1 Selection of participants*

I purposefully selected one Grade 10 class, consisting of 13 females and 11 males, as these learners have all been exposed to sexuality education, which was entrenched in the life orientation curriculum. Although the class consisted of 24 learners, the parents of only 16 learners gave consent for their children to participate in the study. The life orientation teacher also partook in the study and gave her consent.

#### *1.8.2.2 Research site*

The research study was conducted at a special school in Pretoria. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the natural sciences classroom. As this class was not occupied after school, the principal gave me permission to conduct interviews in this class.

## **1.9 DATA COLLECTION**

To collect data, I entered into a collaborative partnership with respondents, with the main aim of understanding their opinions and perceptions about sexuality education. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to collect rich and descriptive data

from the participants to see the world through their eyes. The participants were asked open-ended questions which were recorded to capture the participants' responses, which could provide more clarity on the phenomenon being explored. I asked additional questions and immersed myself in the real world and situation of the participants, to record the changes in this real-life context (Mouton, 2012:65).

## **1.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis consists of a text database which describes the context which the research took place in as well as the research participants adding to a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The interviews that had been recorded, were transcribed to make sure that all the important information obtained during the interviews were captured. All the similar topics were clustered together and coded, which allowed for the research findings to emerge from the themes in the raw data by making use of inductive analysis of the data. The themes were based on the research questions that were posed to the participants, which, in turn, reflected the purpose of the study. Finally, the findings of the research were interpreted by using themes and categories, followed by a narrative which explained the findings of my research.

## **1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness ensures the quality of findings and increases the reader's confidence in the findings. This requires that there be logical connections among the various steps in the research process from the purpose of the study through to the analyses and interpretation. (Letts et al., 2007:9)

In this study, trustworthiness was addressed by focusing on credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), which are discussed below.

### **1.11.1 Credibility**

Credibility seeks to establish whether there is a correspondence between the way researchers portray their viewpoints and the way the participants perceive the social construct (Abrams, 2010:540). Credibility is enhanced when researchers describe and interpret their experiences as researchers (Koch, 2008:18). To obtain information from respondents, it is necessary for the researcher to gain the trust of the respondents to ascertain whether the true reflection of personal experiences will surface. To determine what the participants' needs are, the researcher should give participants the opportunity

to speak freely without interruption and listen attentively to their views. During the semi-structured interviews, I also paid attention to possible non-verbal cues, facial expressions and anything that could provide more quality and meaningfulness to the information already obtained that could assist me when transcribing the data.

### **1.11.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to whether the findings of a study can be applied to other participants or in a different context and relies on the possibility that data may be representative of the broader population (Shenton, 2004:69). This study is limited to a specific class and findings cannot be generalised to other learners with special educational needs. However, a more detailed study of a similar nature, with more participants, would probably add value to the lessons that may be learnt about sexuality education.

### **1.11.3 Dependability**

Dependability means, if the study were to be repeated with the same participants and the same methods, the same results would be achieved (Shenton, 2004:71). It is, therefore, imperative to ensure that the teenagers' words are captured accurately when the data are transcribed.

### **1.11.4 Confirmability**

As clearly stipulated by Clisset (2008:104), to maintain confirmability, the study should consist of as many direct quotations as possible to demonstrate that the findings have their basis in the data that were collected by the researcher. As I was dealing with human participants, I had to make sure that my assumptions, my position as a researcher and any biases I might have, were demarcated in my interpretation and conclusion.

## **1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research should always be conducted from an ethical perspective. According to Creswell (2008:238), conducting qualitative research “requires a sufficient level of trust based on a high level of participant disclosure” and, therefore, it is required that important guidelines need to be followed to proceed ethically. I adhered to these guidelines by first applying for ethical clearance for the study from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. The necessary consent was also obtained from the Department of Education, the principal, the life orientation teacher, the educational psychologist, the school governing body and the parents. Assent was also obtained from the learners, which indicates their voluntary participation in the study. They were able to withdraw from the study at any time, without being penalised. As this study dealt with a sensitive topic, the protection of the participants’ rights and emotions was of the utmost importance and, therefore, an educational psychologist was available during the interviews. I made sure that the purpose and the research process were clear to everyone who was involved in the study and assured them of their rights, namely to stay anonymous and to maintain their trust by allowing them to ask questions and talk freely. I clearly stated my role as researcher, I respected my participants and I ensured the confidentiality of the data.

## **1.13 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction, orientation and background**

Chapter 1 provides the background and orientation of the proposed study, the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, as well as the research questions and the clarification of key concepts. I provide insight into learners with special educational needs by making use of the theoretical framework, methods and methodology. I also consider the ethical matters and quality criteria, as related to trustworthiness of the study and finally a plan of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature study and theoretical framework**

In Chapter 2, the recent literature on teenage pregnancy is presented. I provide more insight on teenagers with special educational needs, namely their referral and admission to a special school and their overall delayed development. The theoretical frameworks which underpinned the study, namely Piaget’s cognitive theory, Erikson’s

psychosocial theory of development and Kohlberg's theory of moral development are presented. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is discussed as a useful tool in understanding the different systems that had either a direct or an indirect influence on the sexual development of the teenager with special educational needs.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

In Chapter 3, the research process and the methodology that guided the study are discussed. The research design and data collection methods are presented. The method used for data analysis is explained, as well as the measures taken to ensure credibility and validity. Ethical considerations are stated.

### **Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation**

The research site is described in Chapter 4 to give background information about the phenomenon under study. The research findings are presented according to the themes and categories that have emerged during the data analysis. The empirical research findings are discussed with reference to the recent literature on sexuality education to compare the findings of this study to previous studies of this phenomenon.

### **Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions, recommendations and the limitations of the study.**

In Chapter 5, I conclude the study by providing a summary of the literature on sexuality education in a special school, the empirical research findings of this study, as well as relevant conclusions in the form of answering my research questions.

Recommendations are made to the Department of Basic Education, the school, the parents, the teachers and further research. The limitations of the study have also been outlined. The conclusions are drawn by first answering the secondary research questions and finally the main research question that guided this study

#### **1.14 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Grade 10 learners and the life orientation teacher about the effectiveness of the sexuality education currently implemented at the school. This process required a holistic perspective of all the significant factors that may have a profound impact on these learners' perceptions and sexual development. By capturing the voices of these adolescents and the life

orientation teacher, I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of participants, as well as possible changes they suggested that could enhance the effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme. Each chapter will illustrate the different aspects and developments.

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

It was the aim of Chapter 1 to introduce the topic and to provide the framework for the rest of the study. In this chapter, the relevant literature will be presented to reflect on the choices, thoughts and decisions of adolescents, 16 to 18 years of age, in a special school about sex and sexuality. According to Lerner and Johns (2012:250), the various biological changes involved in reaching physical and sexual maturity for learners in a special school are in congruence with those of their peers in mainstream schools. However, their delayed cognitive development impairs their ability to make informed choices about sex and sexuality, placing them at a higher risk for sexual abuse, exploitation and teenage pregnancy (Helmer, Senior, Davidson & Vodice, 2015:168). Hargreaves (2013:562) highlights that these learners' impulsivity, low-self-esteem, lack of social skills and emotional immaturity heighten their vulnerability for being easily coerced into taking part in risky sexual behaviour (e.g. not using condoms or contraception), often resulting in teenage pregnancy.

There is an alarming escalation in teenage pregnancy in South Africa, according to Tolman and McClelland (2011:242). Therefore, there is a need for effective and comprehensive sexuality education programmes to be developed. In this regard the Department of Basic Education (2002) introduced the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in all schools in South Africa. This curriculum included the subject, life orientation, as a compulsory subject in all public schools for all learners from Grade R to 12 (Department of Education, 2008:2). Sexuality education forms an integral part of this subject. This study focuses on adolescents of 16 to 18 years of age in a special school, with the objective to understand their views and opinions on what should be included in the current sexuality education programme implemented at the school, to meet their needs.

To contextualise this study, related literature will be reviewed. I will first discuss the special school as the educational environment where learners with special educational

needs are accommodated. This will be followed by a profile of the adolescent in a special school and a discussion on the cognitive development theory (Piaget, 1969), the psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963) and the moral theory (Kohlberg, 1969) to highlight the delayed development of adolescents in a special school in these domains. In conclusion, sexuality education will be discussed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979).

## **2.2 THE SPECIAL SCHOOL AS EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

This study focuses on adolescents from 16 to 18 years of age, who have already made the transition from a primary to a high school. Mather and Goldstein (2012:30) remark that it is often during this stage that some learners are not able to meet the academic expectations of the mainstream environment and find it difficult to cope with the academic curriculum. Mullins and Preyde (2013:147) agree, when they note that adolescents who fall short of meeting the academic expectations of the mainstream environment are unlikely to progress at the same rate as their peers. This may result in these adolescents falling further and further behind the achievement of their classmates, often resulting in having to repeat a grade.

Dunn (2010:32) points out that some of the academic difficulties these adolescents may encounter, include forming concepts (e.g. colour), putting their thoughts and ideas into words, paying attention in class, remembering what they have learned in the classroom, transferring the knowledge to other settings, basic reading skills and mathematical calculations. This accentuates the realisation that, because of their delayed cognitive development, these adolescents are not able to keep up in all or most of the academic areas and are, therefore, unable to benefit from the curriculum provided in a mainstream school (Barnstein & Lamb, 2011:214). Croker (2012:38) postulates that these academic difficulties can stem from a "neurological condition that interferes with the learner's ability to store or produce information". According to Mowat (2010:631), these adolescents' holistic development, including their cognitive, social and emotional domains, tends to be delayed, which causes them to not only fall behind academically, but also have the propensity to be socially and emotionally immature. For these adolescents to reach their full potential, they are accommodated in a special school, where they receive more specialised instructions based on their individual needs and are generally referred to as "learners with special educational needs" (Daviso, Denney, Baer & Flexer, 2011:78).

To make provision for quality education to all learners, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, language, class and disability, the Department of Education (2001) proposed an inclusive education (IE) system that could accommodate a diverse range of learning needs. The principles of inclusive education are clearly prescribed in the Department of Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (Department of Education, 2001). In brief, IE is based on the premise that all children can learn, irrespective of their learning differences. All children's educational needs should be met and, therefore, attitudes, behaviours, teaching methods and curricula need to be adapted. The focus needs to be on the individual strengths of each child to maximise participation and minimise barriers to learn (Department of Education, 2001; Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009:106). Although some progress has been made towards achieving the objective of IE, South Africa is still growing and developing in this domain. As there are currently a lack of sufficient resources and facilities required to meet the needs of IE, learners are still referred to more specialised environments that could provide the learning support learners need (Pillay et al., 2009:107).

In a special school, there are qualified and competent teachers, as well as professionals (e.g. an educational psychologist) who can provide regular and consistent support and instructions on an ongoing basis to meet the learners' unique needs. Most of these learners have an aptitude and interest in applied knowledge, which includes certain technical and vocational subjects that are not fully available in mainstream schools. In a special school, these learners can obtain the necessary skills, knowledge and values they need to continue leading successful lives in adulthood. In the following sections, the measures which are in place to govern the placement of learners in a special school will be discussed.

### **2.2.1 Referral to and admission of learners**

In 2008, the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) was launched, which provides clear guidelines on how to screen, identify, assess and support learners who experience barriers to learning. The aim is to determine if a learner should be referred to a special school, thereby improving the teaching and learning environment that could meet his or her specific educational needs and provide the additional support he or she needs (Department of Education, 2008).

The SIAS process consists of the following four stages:

### **STAGE 1: The initial screening, guided by the learner's profile**

This stage applies to all learners upon entry to school, when a profile is completed for every learner. This profile will follow the learner throughout his or her school career, so that information regarding the learner's experiences and his or her progress is readily available. The learner's profile is a confidential document, which is held at the school by the school-based support team (SBST), and any information in the document may only be made available with consent granted by the learner's parents or caregivers. The learner's profile provides information about the learner's family and home situation, the family structure, such as siblings, parents or caregivers and the extended family. Information on significant home circumstances may bear light on the level of support available, or not. Other supporting information is, for example, professional assessments, psychologists' or therapists' reports, medical information provided by a medical practitioner or health clinic, information provided by parents about the learner's strengths and weaknesses and possible support needed, year-end school reports, previous support provided at the school which the learner is enrolled at and areas needing ongoing support. All information is recorded on the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) form, Section 1, to achieve a deeper understanding of the learner's needs.

### **STAGE 2: Identifying barriers to learning and development**

This stage applies to learners who have been identified, through the initial screening, by the teacher as experiencing challenges in the learning process. Identification of the learners is based on evidence accumulated from the curriculum assessment process, which includes observation, documentation from the learner's workbooks and consolidated verbal and written information from other teachers and parents or caregivers. In the first part of Stage 2, Section 2a of the SNA form needs to be completed, which requires a review of the curriculum challenges experienced by the learner in one or more areas of learning and a summary of the accumulative assessment conducted by all the relevant teachers of the learner. Information is also required about the barriers the learner may experience in terms of his or her ability to communicate, behavioural and social competencies, health, wellness and personal care.

In the second part of Stage 2, Section 2b of the SNA form focuses on the contextual factors that negatively and/or positively affect the learner's potential for learning. Negative contextual factors can be a poor or violent home environment, poor parenting, poor teaching and poor knowledge of the teacher about curriculum differentiation. Positive contextual factors can be supportive parents, access to community-based support structures and a responsive teacher, who is able to differentiate to accommodate the diverse needs of the learners.

With this information in hand, the teacher must now compile an Individual Support Plan (ISP), which clearly outlines what support will be provided at school level and how it will be monitored. A record should be provided of the learner's needs and progress, which should include quarterly consultation with parents or caregivers.

### **STAGE 3: Assessment of support requirement-establishing levels and nature of support**

In this stage, a formal assessment is done to determine what level of support is needed and the type of support package that is needed. This information is recorded in Section 3a of the SNA form. If the support provided is not sufficient and the learner needs additional support, Section 3b of the SNA form needs to be completed. A request for additional support provision is then managed and coordinated by the district-based support team (DBST) in collaboration with the school and the parent. It is important that all the significant role-players (e.g. teachers, learners, parents and school) are involved in the decisions about the support package needed.

### **STAGE 4: Action planning for support provisioning and monitoring**

In this stage, the plans around the implementation and responsibilities of each role-player are recorded in Section 4 of the SNA form, which will also serve as a tracking instrument which the progress of the learner can be monitored with. This will include specialised staff, teaching and learning support materials, curriculum differentiation and ongoing mentorship and guidance (Department of Education, 2008).

## **2.2.2 Accommodations and modifications**

According to Berbeck (2016:76), accommodations are tools provided to learners, such as extended timelines, large-print material and the provision of a scribe if learners battle

with reading and writing. Daviso et al. (2011:78) point out the fact that these accommodations do not change the content of the learning material, but just make provision for extra measures to assist the learners in accessing the curriculum. The school I am currently teaching at, already provide the following accommodations to the learners:

- Teachers who are trained in providing learning support to learners by using different strategies better suited for learners with specific learning needs.
- Improved teaching resources and individual attention because of a smaller number of learners per class.
- Teachers may read questions out loud to learners during tests and exams.
- Support, in the form of a scribe or reader, will be considered in cases where the learner's writing or reading ability prevents the learner from giving a true account of his or her knowledge and/or competence.

With regard to the content of the learning material the following modifications are implemented at the school I am currently teaching at:

- The curriculum that is used, is aligned to the Senior Phase of the National Curriculum Statement but is adapted to be at a more applied and functional level in accordance to the level, interest and aptitude of the learners.
- Teachers select high-interest materials to reinforce the basic curriculum by making use of manipulative or hands-on materials and create activities that require active participation, such as talking through problems and acting out scenarios.
- Learners can learn better when they are active participants in the learning process, in addition to only listening and observing – learners are therefore actively involved in the learning process.
- Tests and exams are adapted about time, marks and content. Questions are also aligned to the level of learning.
- Questions mostly asked, are to evaluate rote learning and test knowledge base, rather than application.
- Simplified activities and assignments.
- Workload is not as much as in the mainstream schools.

Understanding the make-up of these learners helps us to understand what we can expect them to achieve. As these are a diverse group of learners, the individualised education programmes with the necessary accommodations and modifications will allow these learners to achieve their full potential. The following section will provide an overview of the physical, cognitive, social and moral developmental domains of the adolescent, which have an impact on their sexual behaviour.

### **2.3 DELAYED DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENTS IN A SPECIAL SCHOOL**

The sexual development of learners has evolved over time and young people are maturing at a younger age, which means they are reaching puberty earlier than in previous generations (Helmer et al., 2015:159). For girls, reaching puberty means having their first monthly menstruation, which is an indicator of their production of ova and their ability to become pregnant. For boys, reaching puberty means having their first erection and ejaculation, which is an indication of their production of sperm and their ability to impregnate a female (Lerner et al., 2012:250).

After growing at a steady rate throughout childhood, the adolescent will now experience a growth spurt, the appearance of pubic hair and underarm hair, changes in body shape, breast development, the appearance of facial hair, change in voice, menstruation in girls and sperm production in boys (Arnett, 2012:369). According to Bale (2011:304) the adolescent will also experience a sexual awakening, coupled with sexual urges that surface during puberty. Francis (2010:314) points out that first sexual debuts are also occurring earlier, as adolescents are already having sex before the age of 15 years. At such an age, most adolescents are too young to think wisely about the use of protection, such as condoms or contraceptives, to prevent them from falling pregnant. Furthermore, there is many learners in the special school I am currently teaching at, that experiment with alcohol and drugs. When adolescents are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, chances are that they will not use condoms. All these factors contribute to adolescents being at a high risk for unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

In the following section, the domains of development, namely the cognitive (Piaget, 1969), moral (Kohlberg, 1981) and psychosocial (Erikson, 1968) domains, will be discussed with the aim of understanding the delayed development in these various domains of adolescents with special educational needs, as compared to their peers in

the mainstream schools. In understanding these developmental delays, teachers and other professionals can be assisted to develop interventions to accommodate these adolescents' needs. Lourenco (2016:135) supports this statement by emphasising the usefulness of developmental stages as “[h]eurestics to chart development changes in the past, identifying characteristics of development change in the present and the continued useful constructs in future development”. Piaget’s theory will be discussed first.

### **2.3.1 Piaget’s cognitive development theory**

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1990) produced a cognitive-developmental stage theory that described how children’s ways of thinking develop as they interact with the world around them. According to Piaget (1958), children are born with a very basic mental structure (genetically inherited and evolved), on which all subsequent learning and knowledge are based. His theory, therefore, proposes to explain the mechanisms and processes by which the infant, the child and, eventually, the adolescent develop into an individual who can reason and think by using hypotheses (Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 2014:286). According to Piaget and Inhelder (1969), children’s knowledge of the world changes as they mature. Carey, Zaitchik and Boscandzhev (2015:40) clearly stipulate that as changes in the cognitive system take place, the nature of the child’s knowledge changes, which means that the infant’s view of the world is significantly different to that of the adolescent.

Piaget emphasised that children actively construct their understanding of the world and are not merely passive recipients of environmental influence (Gilmore, Johnson & Munakata, 2002:29). According to Barnstein et al. (2011:371), Piaget postulated that the child constructs reality using “schemes”, which are structures of knowledge that are the building blocks of development and cognition.

About sexuality, through constant interaction with the environment, the sexual schema of the adolescent becomes broadened, modified and combined with other cognitive structures (Mueller, 2013:3). An example is that during infancy, the major sexual tasks involve the formation of basic gender identity. The infant mainly deals with the mother and is dependent on her being present in his or her immediate perception. As the infant develops, his or her existing schema is modified about the absent mother and the gradual realisation of a separate gender identity, apart from the mother (Breese,

1978:269). The process through which schemas are adjusted or changed, is known as “assimilation and accommodation” (Carey et al., 2015:37). Through assimilation, new information is added to the existing knowledge base, sometimes reinterpreting new experiences, so that they will fit in with previously existing information (Keenan et al., 2009:158). For example, new information about sexuality is acquired and with growth in language acquisition and utilisation, this can include the learning of new sexual words without content, and the learning of sexual activities without naming it (Breese, 1978:273). In contrast, when new information is accommodated by changing the mental representation to fit the new information, existing ideas are often challenged (Bernstein et al., 2011:371). This entails that there can now be differentiated between sexual objects and conceptualised between the person’s own and other’s sexuality (Breese et al., 1978:276).

Tuckman and Monetti (2011) suggest that Piaget believed it is of the utmost importance that there is a balance between the assimilation and the accommodation process, as this is a force that moves development along. Piaget (1958) describes assimilation as using an existing schema to deal with new objects or situations. Piaget (1958) also stipulates that accommodation happens when the existing schema (knowledge) does not work and needs to be changed to deal with objects or situations when an unpleasant state of disequilibrium occurs, when new information cannot be fitted into existing schemas (assimilation). As we do not like to be frustrated and will seek to restore balance by mastering new challenges (accommodation), new information is acquired by the process of assimilation with the new schema, which creates equilibrium (balance), and it will continue until the next adjustment needs to be made (Green et al., 2014:288).

The adaption process is a critical part of cognitive development. Through the adaptive processes of assimilation and accommodation, adolescents can take in new information and adapt their behaviour accordingly, preparing them to better deal with the world.

What follows, is an outline of the four major cognitive development stages of the Piagetian theory.

**Table 2.1: Piaget’s stages of cognitive development (adapted from Arnett, 2012:167)**

<b>Ages</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
0-2	Sensorimotor	Capable of coordinating the activities of the senses with motor activities
2-7	Preoperational	Capable of symbolic representation, such as in language, but with a limited ability to use mental operations
7-11	Concrete operations	Capable of using mental operations, but only in concrete, immediate experiences; difficulty thinking hypothetically
11-15 and up	Formal operations	Capable of thinking logically and abstractly; capable of formulating hypotheses and testing them systematically; thinking is more complex; can think about thinking (metacognition)

For this study, the focus will be on adolescents (16-18 years) with special educational needs. It must be reiterated that the physical development of these learners follows the same genetically determined course for the growth of physical structures as that of their peers without special educational needs (Barnstein et al., 2011:371). However, these learners’ cognitive development, as underscored by Lerner et al. (2012:141), includes one or more disorders about psychological processes that are needed for learning at school. The term “psychological processes” is defined by Lerner et al. (2012:140) as “difficulties that learners with special educational needs encounter in cognitive development” (see Section 2.2.2).

With reference to the special school I am currently teaching at, although these learners’ chronological age is 16 to 18 years, their cognitive development can be as much as two years behind that of their peers in mainstream schools (Langdon et al. 2010:273). Therefore, school work should be simplified and is at a lower level than the work in mainstream schools. The learners can advance to Grade 10, but there is no Grade 11 or Grade 12.

About the foregoing information, this study will focus on the concrete operational stage, as these learners, despite their age, do not function at the formal operational stage, which, according to Huitt and Hummel (2003:3), only 30 to 35% of adults attain. The concrete operational stage will therefore be discussed to explain the processes learners acquire during this stage.

### 2.3.1.1 The concrete operational stage

Reaching the concrete operational stage, the learner's thoughts start to resemble more adult thoughts, as their reasoning becomes more flexible, logical and organised, and thus more powerful (Piaget et al., 1969). This statement is supported by Barnstein et al. (2011:374) and elaborated on as follows:

- Conservation – referring to understanding that changes in appearance do not equal changes in amount. For example, if the same amount of water is poured into a short glass and a long glass, although the shapes of the glasses differ, the amount of water is still the same.
- Class inclusion – learners must view sets of objects, some of which are subsets of one another. For example, in biology we have the class, Amphibia, and the frog is a subset of this class.
- Classification – grouping things into some logical sequence or order. For example, arranging groups of squares separately from triangles and then arranging them from big to small.
- Separation – arranging things into some logical sequence. For example, arranging sticks from the shortest to the longest.
- Reversibility – can perform the mental operations of reversibility to confirm that quantity has not changed. For example, if clay is rolled into a long, cylindrical shape and then into a ball, it is the same size as the original ball of clay.

According to Bruce, Marlowe and Canestrari (2006:105), the operations do not deal with propositions or hypotheses, as learners in this stage can think only about concrete information (Section 2.2.4) for accommodations and modifications about school work. As adolescents in a special school function at a lower cognitive level, they need guidance regarding logical thinking, as their logical thinking is often clouded by their immediate sexual desires. This often leads to risky sexual behaviour with multiple partners, as they cannot comprehend the meaning of long-term commitment to one partner. The implications of functioning on a lower cognitive level and the impact on sexual behaviour will be discussed in the next section.

### 2.3.1.2 The relation between sexual behaviour and cognitive developmental delay

In adolescents with special educational needs, cognitive developmental delay causes an inability to reason at a formal operational level, often being the cause of risky sexual

behaviour, such as the absence of contraceptives, which results in an increase in teenage pregnancy (Hargreaves, 2013:560). McAvoy (2013:487) postulates that these adolescents find it difficult to evaluate the consequences of their actions and, therefore, do not plan, which is also considered a major contributing factor to how they conduct their sexual behaviour.

According to Bhana et al. (2010:876), there is a definitive correlation between teenage pregnancy and a history of poor academic performance. This is also a clear indication of these learners' cognitive difficulties. With reference to learners at the special school I am currently teaching at, challenges these adolescents often encounter, include the following: Some of the males have difficulty understanding the importance of the use of contraceptives and females often romanticise their boyfriend's position by perceiving unprotected sex as an affirmation of love and commitment to a relationship. Often teenagers who become pregnant, have difficulty discerning the causal relationship between intercourse and pregnancy – many consider the chance of pregnancy to be cumulative, rather than independent for each episode of intercourse. They would often say “we just had sex a few times, so I didn't think I could get pregnant”. Carey et al. (2015:37) confirm that pregnant teenagers are poor estimators of the odds of pregnancy, given the frequency of intercourse. Bhana et al. (2010:878) write that, in most cases, these teenagers' decision to raise a child is often determined by egocentric desires, such as the wish to get married; for some it is a way to get out of their unfortunate circumstances at home or to assert autonomy and gain adult status. They often hope to receive unconditional love from the dependent object – the baby. These adolescents also usually do not consider the moral implications of their sexual behaviour.

### **2.3.2 Kohlberg's moral development theory**

The high incidence of teenage pregnancies among learners from special schools necessitates the exploring of moral reasoning. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory (1973) provides a framework for understanding how moral reasoning develops from stages of less adequate to more adequate conceptions of justice and fairness. Arnett (2012:393) postulates that Kohlberg's primary concern is with moral thinking and justification, rather than moral behaviour. This statement is supported by Green et al. (2014:327), who maintain that there is nothing in the behaviour itself that is necessarily moral or immoral – the only element of morality lies in a person's intent, not in behaviour. Kohlberg

(1981) maintains that moral development proceeds in a linear, step-wise fashion, that is, moral development proceeds gradually from one stage to the next, in a predictable ordered sequence. Kohlberg (1984) also recognises that each child progresses through these stages at different rates and acknowledges that some adolescents may never reach the highest stages of moral development. Keenan and Evans (2009:303) indicate that Kohlberg’s theory does not account for regression back to former, previously mastered stages, building on the same assumptions as Piaget’s theory. As adolescents’ cognitive, emotional and social development continues to mature, their understanding of morality expands, and their behaviour becomes more closely aligned with their values and beliefs (Kohlberg, Levine & Hwer, 1983). The aim of these guiding principles is geared towards the ability of the adolescent applying these to their daily lives.

**Table 2.2: Summary of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development (adapted from Keenan & Evans, 2009:304)**

LEVEL/STAGE	DESCRIPTION
<p><i>Level I</i>  <i>Pre-conventional morality</i>            Stage 1: Punishment and obedience orientation            Stage 2: Instrumental orientation</p>	<p>The child abides by the parents’ rules unquestioningly; these must be obeyed to prevent punishment.            Children recognise that people can have different views, but correct behaviour comes from self-interest.</p>
<p><i>Level II</i>  <i>Conventional morality</i>            Stage 1: Good boy-good girl morality            Stage 2: Maintenance of social order</p>	<p>Morality is more than an exchange; people should live up to the expectations of family and society. The child is concerned with doing good, but out of a desire for approval, rather than a fear of parental power.            The individual considers the larger social law perspective – a kind of “law and order” morality, where the rules are considered essential for natural order. Many people never go beyond this stage.</p>
<p><i>Level III</i>  <i>Post conventional morality</i>            Stage 1: Social-contract orientation</p>	

LEVEL/STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Stage 2: Universal ethical principle orientation	<p>Rules are regarded as flexible and for promoting human well-being. Laws are social contracts that can be modified when members of a society decide it is advantageous for everyone's well-being.</p> <p>Morality involves social standards and internalised ideals, or a conscience. Decisions are based on principles such as justice, compassion and equality.</p>

Kohlberg's theory differentiates between levels and stages. There are three levels, and each consists of two stages. Pre-conventional morality (Level 1) incorporates Stage 1 (consisting of an orientation towards punishment and obedience) and Stage 2 (consisting of instrumental orientation). Conventional morality (Level 2) which includes Stage 1 (good boy-good girl morality) and Stage 2 (maintenance of social order)

Post conventional morality (Level 3) consists of Stage 1 (social-contract orientation) and Stage 2 (universal ethical principal orientation). This is the highest level in Kohlberg's theory and the level in which the individual recognises alternative moral courses, exploits options and then makes decisions based on his or her own moral codes.

Kohlberg (1973:10) believes that each level of moral reasoning cannot be attained without a corresponding increase in cognitive maturity. As previously mentioned, the cognitive development of adolescents with special educational needs is delayed and often as much as two years behind the development of their peers. Therefore, about moral reasoning, the focus will be on conventional morality or moral reasoning (Level 2). Stage 3 (good boy-good girl) will first be explained to clarify certain terminology.

#### 2.3.2.1 Level 2: Conventional moral reasoning

At this level of moral development, right and wrong are now defined in terms of conventions; this implies that the adolescent is now conforming to socially acceptable behaviour (Mithra, 2001:72). The focus of this level has shifted, according to Boom (2011:356), from the individual's self-interest to the norms of the group which the adolescent belongs to, for example the family, peer group, church and community. These norms then become the basis for moral development.

About sexual behaviour, the role of the family, peers, church and the community have a tangible influence on the adolescent's moral reasoning, which, in turn, has an impact on the decisions he or she makes. Parents are regarded as adolescents' role models and they tend to follow their parents' example in moral reasoning (Arnett, 2012:394). In my experience as a teacher, when adolescents observe their parents making immoral decisions, for example if the mother had fallen pregnant as a teenager, they will align their moral beliefs accordingly (e.g. daughter also falls pregnant when she is a teenager). Tumedi (2011:16) points out that adolescence is a period during which detachment from parents starts to occur as the adolescents start spending more time with their peers, which is mentioned in the following stage.

#### 2.3.2.2 Stage 3: Good boy-good girl

During this stage, the adolescent acts to gain the approval of others (Arnette, 2012:395). The adolescent is now concerned about other people and their feelings and is motivated by what others expect of him or her (Kohlberg, 1976). According to Kohlberg and Hersh (1977:53) it is during this stage that the adolescent wants to be "good" in the eyes of the parents, other authorities and peers. To achieve this, adolescents will often adopt the moral standards of the parents or the peer group to be "good" (Santrack, 2010:431). During this stage, Rathus (2003:565) explains that needs and expectations are met, and to do what the majority does, is considered normal. Adolescents value trust, caring and loyalty to others as a basis for moral judgements (Santrack, 2010:431). In this regard, Kohlberg and Hersh (1977:55) remark that conformity to stereotypical images of what most of behaviour involves, is followed.

Lerner et al. (2012:252) warn that, about risky sexual behaviour and teenage pregnancy, learners with special educational needs often turn to peers for acceptance and are very susceptible to peer pressure. With reference to the learners at the school where I am teaching, adolescents often become involved in alcohol and drug abuse, as well as risky sexual behaviour, which often leads to teenage pregnancy, to be accepted and to "fit in". As these learners face numerous challenges, such as the lack of parental involvement, divorce, low socioeconomic circumstances, learning difficulties and other related disabilities, a proper foundation about moral reasoning is never established properly, which leads to delayed moral development (Langdon et al., 2010:284). The psychosocial domain of the adolescent in a special school is also affected.

### **2.3.3 Erikson's psychosocial theory**

Child psychiatrist Erik Erikson (1892-1994) defines development as a continual process through eight sequential stages, continuing throughout the life span of a person (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2013:404).

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is based on the premise that each stage is presented with a distinct life "crisis", which must be resolved to move on to the next stage. Thus, how children resolve the developmental challenges at each stage, affects their ability to cope with future developmental tasks (Wiley & Berman, 2013:1302). In other words, the more successful these crises are resolved, the healthier the child's development will be, with the added ability to cope with future developmental tasks (Santrack, 2010:24). Erikson (1968:92) states that "anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its special time of ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functional whole". Keenan et al. (2009:26) observe that about development, this theory does not end at adolescence, but continues to old age. Another crucial aspect includes stability and change, which are balanced by early influences continuing to play an important role with the progression of age. The individual is faced with crises and challenges, which encourage new personal adaptation and the evaluation of past achievements and failures (Wiley & Berman, 2013:1302).

Table 2.3 shows a summary of important elements in the different psychological stages, which relates to the crises, the virtues associated with these stages as well as the significant people involved in the child's life, important relationships and, lastly, the tasks of the significant people with relation to the child's development. Table 2.3 provides a summary of Erikson's psychosocial theory.

**Table 2.3: Summary of Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development  
(adapted from McLeod, 2013)**

<b>PSYCHOSOCIAL CRISIS</b>	<b>FOCUS OF CRISIS</b>
Trust vs mistrust Birth - 18 months	Social attachment Maturation of sensory, perceptual and motor functioning Primitive causality
Autonomy vs shame & doubt 18 months - 3 years	Locomotion Fantasy play Language development Self-control Sex role identification
Initiative vs guilt 3-6 years	Early moral development Self-esteem Group play Egocentrism
Industry vs inferiority 6-12 years	Friendship Skill learning Self-evaluation
Identity vs role confusion 12-18 years	Physical maturation Emotional development Membership in peer group Sexual relationships
Intimacy vs isolation 22-34 years	Autonomy from parents Sex-role identity Internalised morality Career choice
Generativity vs stagnation 34-60 years	Stable relationship Child rearing Work
Integrity vs despair 60- 75 years	Promote intellectual rigor Redirect energy to new roles and activities

For this study, the phase relating to adolescents, 12 to 18 years of age, will be discussed, namely identity versus role confusion.

### 2.3.3.1 Identity versus role confusion

Erikson (1968:135) clearly stipulates that “identity refers to a sense of who one is as a person and as a contributor to society”. In this stage of development, adolescents establish a clear and definite sense of who they are and how they fit into the world around them (Erikson, 1972). This identity formation is related to the adolescent who has mastered childhood-related issues and is ready to face the challenges of the adult world, resulting in the successful formation of identity (Erikson, 1980). Therefore, Erikson believed that having a solid sense of identity is crucial for further development. However, if this solid sense of identity is not established, it results in role confusion. Consequently, the individual experiences extreme doubt regarding the meaning and purpose of his or her existence, leading to a sense of loss and confusion (Erikson, 1968:135). Therefore, this hampers the adolescent’s resolution of the psychosocial stages.

As adolescents in a special school do not have a solid sense of identity because of factors such as low self-esteem, failure at school, poor academic achievement and immaturity, they are often confused about who they are and where they fit into the world (Hardin, 2016:47). Relating this absence of a clear identity to their sexuality, the lack of resolution of the psychosocial stages, as outlined by Erikson, has a profound effect on the decisions they make about sexuality. As these learners are immature, this often results in impulsivity, their being easily coerced into risky sexual behaviour and their not being able to make informed choices regarding sex and sexuality, the consequences of which may be teenage pregnancy (Grieger, Kusunoki & Harding, 2014:16)

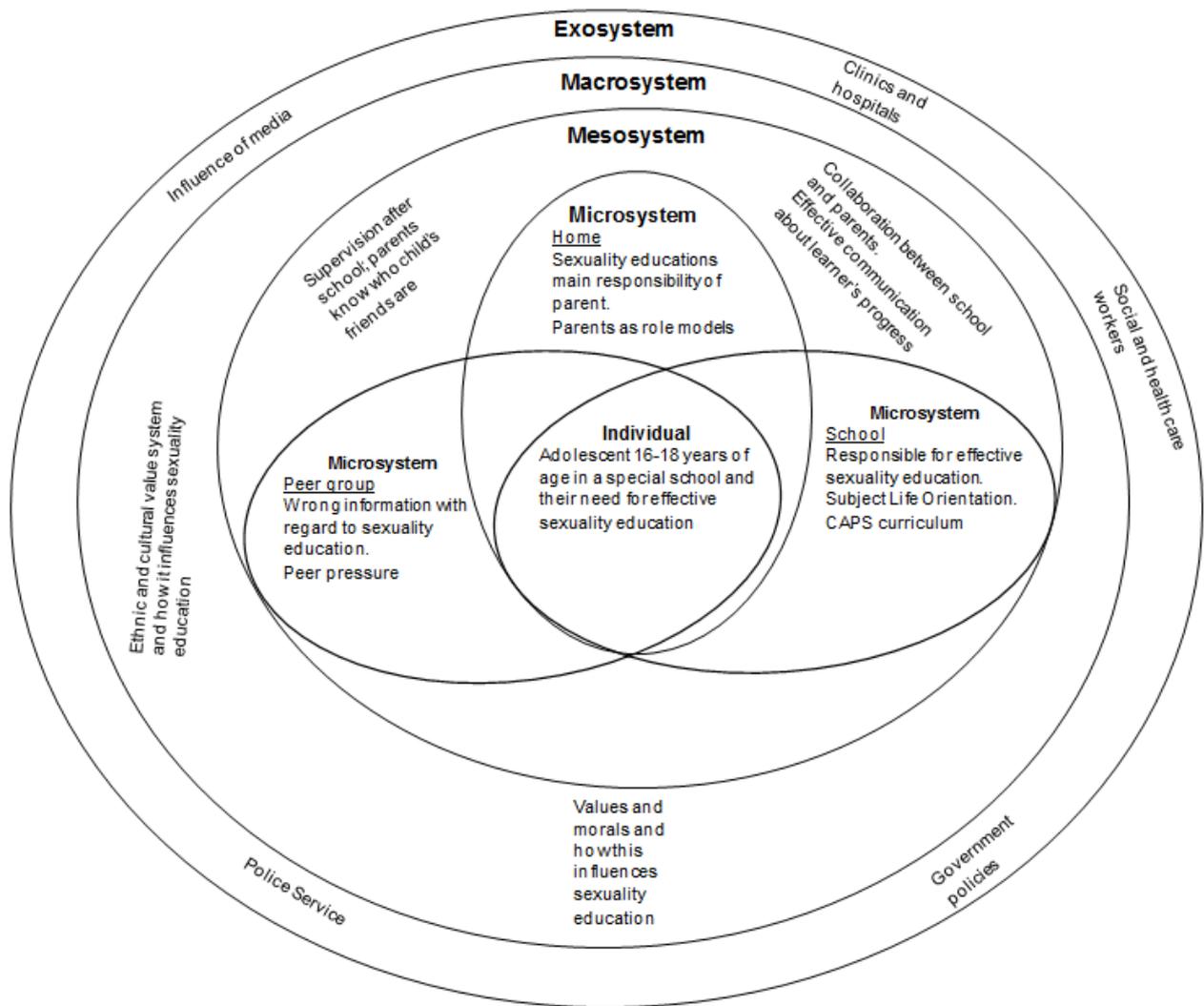
Regarding the foregoing, these learners are a high-risk group for sexually risky behaviour and teenage pregnancy, which is underscored by their delayed development in several areas. In the section that follows, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory will be discussed to shed more light on the sexuality of these adolescents.

## **2.4 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY**

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005), a well-known Russian psychologist, proposed the ecological systems theory of development, which will form the lens through which the factors having an impact on the sexuality of the adolescent at a special school will be explored.

In line with the theories of Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson (see Section 2.3), Bronfenbrenner agreed that development continually takes place during the life span of a person (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:513). He, however, opposed their stage development theory, as he believed that development is influenced and shaped by various systems in a person's environment (Bronfenbrenner 1989:190).

The "bio" aspect of Bronfenbrenner's theory refers to a person's own biology, which can be viewed as a primary environment that fuels development of the person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:568). The "ecological" aspect of his theory accentuates the mutual relationship between a person and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:267). According to Bronfenbrenner (1989:188), the environment is constantly changing, and he portrays it as a "nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next". He also accentuated that social, political and economic factors, existing in the environment, influence the growth and development of a person. Bronfenbrenner (1994:568) furthermore postulated that the entire ecological system in which growth occurs, needs to be considered to understand human development. Each system depends on the contextual nature of a person's life and offers a diversity of options and sources of growth. Furthermore, within and between each system are bi-directional influences, which imply that relationships have an impact in two directions – both away from the individual and towards the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1989:200). In Figure 2.1, an outline is provided of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and its application to sexuality education for adolescents of 16 to 18 years of age in a special school.



**Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's theory as applied to this study (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1989)**

The first of these systems is the microsystem, in which the sexuality of the adolescent at a special school is at the centre. The influence of various significant people in the adolescent's life world, such as parents, the school and peers, and the impact these people have on the sexuality education of the adolescent in a special school will be discussed. Secondly, the mesosystem, which focuses on the interrelationship between various microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005:148) will be explored, including the collaboration between the parents and the school, the extramural activities after school and the responsibility of the parents to provide supervision for their children after school. Thirdly, the exosystem will be explored, focusing on the Department of Education and its mandate to establish policies and the curriculum, as well as the Department of Health, which is responsible for the distribution of information on sex and

sexuality to the broader public, the police services (guest speaker, regard to safety), ChildLine, support groups for parents and the influence of social media. Lastly, the macrosystem, which focuses on the ethnic and cultural value systems, values and morals, crime and safety in the community, social and health care workers, as well as clinics and hospitals, will be explored.

### **2.4.1 The microsystem**

Bronfenbrenner (1989:189) describes the microsystem as the innermost level of the “concentric arrangements”, which includes various environmental layers. This statement is underscored by Arnett (2012:35), stating that this is the setting which adolescents experience their daily lives in, which includes their relationships with their family, parents, peers, friends and teachers. Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) furthermore defines the microsystem as a “path of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with specific physical and materialistic characteristics”. According to Bronfenbrenner and Cecil (1994:569), at this level the bi-directional influences are the strongest and have the greatest impact on the adolescent’s development. To this study, the microsystem entails how these close associations, namely the parents, peers and school, influence the sexuality education of the adolescent.

#### **2.4.1.1 Responsibility of parents regarding sexuality education**

Adolescence is a developmental stage that is often associated with identity confusion, as it is a time during which physical changes (e.g. including growth spurts, hormonal changes and other somatic changes), emotional changes (e.g. including varying and extreme emotions and feelings), social changes (e.g. including the emergence of abstract thinking, decision making and the ability to solve problems) and spiritual changes (e.g. including beliefs, values and social morals) occur (Fields, 2013:187).

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned changes, it is normal and healthy for adolescents to be interested and curious about sex (Tolman et al., 2011:245). As this is also a time of experimentation, adolescents are more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. According to Beckmeyer and Jamison (2015:38), healthy sexual development is defined by the degree to which the adolescent is knowledgeable about sexual health practices, poses self-efficacy over their decision-making and consistently using safer sex practices. Malacane and Beckmeyer (2016:28) state that

this does not happen involuntarily – it requires parents to promote healthy sexual development by initiating discussions about sex and sexuality with their children. Helmer et al. (2015:159) believe sexuality education starts at birth and, as children grow up, the parents should communicate their sexual values to their children during their daily interaction. For this communication to be successful, parents should establish a relationship with their children at a young age (Wight et al. 2013:4). This statement is supported by Arnett (2012:340), who indicates that this could lay the foundation for mitigating clear and open communication about sex and sexuality always. Widman, Choukos-Bradley, Helmes, Golin and Prinstein (2013:732) state that open and frequent conversations about sex and sexuality are associated with delayed sexual initiation, increased use of condoms, fewer sexual partners and a lower risk of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

Malacane et al. (2016:34) accentuate that if the adolescent's parents withhold information and do not provide proper guidance in this regard, the adolescent will turn to other sources for information, such as the internet, peers and television, which are readily available. This emphasises the fact that it is the main responsibility of the parents to educate their children about sex and sexuality (Wight et. al., 2013:15). Ballan (2012:678) states that when there is an openness about sex and sexuality between parents and adolescents, the adolescents tend to follow their parents' advice more and approach them in a time of difficulty. Parents should therefore be viewed as the experts on their own children, being best placed to teach their children about sex and sexuality (Akers, Holland & Bost, 2011:494). Parents are viewed by adolescents as role models and, therefore, sexuality and the way parents behave and treat each other, will be adopted by the adolescent (Mapetla & Francis, 2013:124).

The responsibility to educate their children about sex and sexuality is often neglected by parents, transferring this responsibility to the school and teachers. This necessitates the implementation of quality sexuality education in schools (Smith et al. 2013:68).

With reference to the special school I am currently teaching at, the disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds most learners come from, cannot be disregarded, as these circumstances make learners with special educational needs a vulnerable population group for risky sexual behaviour and teenage pregnancy. As divorce has become epidemic (Akers et.al., 2011:496), a staggering number of these adolescents grow up in single parent families. Some adolescents live with stepfamilies, grandparents, brothers,

sisters or aunts, as some parents work outside the home, which could be in another province, or even in another country. Some parents work long shifts, leaving for work very early (e.g. 05h00) and returning home late (19h00), resulting in the parents not spending enough time with their children and leaving the children unsupervised for most of the day. When parents enrol a child in a school, they often feel that the child is now receiving the help he or she needs, and they expect teachers to take over their responsibility as primary educators. Some parents are so detached from their children that they have no idea who their children's friends are, if they are involved in a romantic relationship and if their children are sexually active. When girls fall pregnant, it is often the school that informs the parents.

Although these adolescents are exploring life, they still need a base to come back home to. Their homes should be the place where they feel safe and protected, cared for and taken seriously (Helmer et al., 2015:160). As most of these learners do not get the proper guidance from their parents about sex and sexuality, this makes them more susceptible to risky sexual behaviour and teenage pregnancy.

#### 2.4.1.2 Responsibility of the school regarding sexuality education

Although sexuality education is first and foremost the responsibility of the parents, the Department of Education (2008:2) states that the school also has a responsibility to provide comprehensive sexuality education to all learners. About meeting this responsibility, the subject life orientation, which sexuality education is embedded in, was implemented in all the schools (Department of Education, 2008:8). According to Hirst (2008:400), school-based sexuality education is an important means of improving learners' sexual health and restricting risky sexual behaviour.

Regarding adolescents at a special school, the responsibility of the school in this regard is especially valuable, as this is often the only information learners receive about sexuality education. The current sexuality education implemented at the school is based on the CAPS curriculum implemented in the mainstream schools. Curriculum differentiation is applied to accommodate the diverse learning styles and needs of learners. Differentiation considers the learner's level of functioning, interests and background.

As the subject life orientation is based on the holistic development of learners (Steyn, 2015), it is concerned with their social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical

growth. The central focus of life orientation, therefore, is the development of *self-in-society*, which places emphasis on the individual's growth (Department of Education, 2011). The topic "development of self-in-society", therefore, focuses on sexuality, which aims to provide learners with the skills they need to handle crisis situations, to become aware of their bodies and the functioning thereof and to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

Regarding the subject sexuality education, which is taught in Grade 10 at a special school, the following topics are included:

- HIV/AIDS
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Sexually transmitted infections
- How to choose the correct partner
- Romantic relationships

The school also aids learners who may encounter sexually related challenges (e.g. unwanted pregnancy, rape or sexual molestation) with the necessary counselling and referral to more specialised services, should extra help be required. As this is a vulnerable group of learners, because of their cognitive, social and emotional immaturity, they are not able to make informed choices about sex and sexuality. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the school provides effective sexuality education. This could help the learners to be more assertive and make wise decisions when confronted with complex situations (Tumedi, 2011:24).

#### 2.4.1.3 Influence of peers on sexuality education

According to Keenan and Evans (2009:278), the peer group is the setting in which adolescents get a sense of who they are and what they can do by comparing themselves to others. Arnett (2012:398) asserts that adolescents will spend less time with their family as peer relationships now offer a secure base outside the family. Peer relationships also form an integral part of the social and emotional development of the adolescent. Reciprocity is an element of peer relationships, as adolescents are not only aware of their feelings towards their peers, but also their peers' feelings towards themselves (Tolman et al., 2011:245).

The dynamics of relationships change, as it is now required from the adolescent to live within the code of the specific peer group and conform to the social expectations thereof (Deptula, Henry & Schoeny, 2010:732). The influence of the peer group can be positive and encourage pro-social action, or negative and encourage anti-social behaviour. As the adolescent spends more time with his or her peers, peer pressure has a powerful impact on the adolescent (Lerner et al., 2012:249) – the adolescent is now concerned with which behaviour will lead to acceptance and which will lead to rejection by his or her peers. Akers, Holland and Bost (2011:495) are of the view that adolescents' relationships with peers may partly reflect their relationships with their parents, implying that adolescents who lack close and positive communication with parents are more susceptible to peer pressure and peer influence. This statement is supported by Malance et al., (2016:30), stating that the adolescent will turn to his or her peer group for acceptance and information.

Wight et al. (2013:15) state that if adolescents do not receive the necessary information about sex and sexuality from their parents, they will turn to their peers for information, which is often flawed. Learners with special educational needs are more susceptible to peer pressure, because of their overall delayed development (see Section 2.3). Adolescents with special educational needs are cognitively, socially and emotionally immature and will partake in risky sexual behaviour to “fit in”, without any consideration of the consequences of their actions (Secor-Turner, Sieving & Eisenberg, 2011:490). Keenan et al. (2009:286) argue that adolescents who experience rejection are twice more likely to engage in sexual risky behaviour. Therefore, an adolescent's decision to have sex coincides with the sexual choices of his or her friends (Miranda-Diaz & Corcoran, 2012:262).

The question should be posed as to where the members of the peer group get their information about sexually related topics. According to Smidt (2006:56), the central source of information concerning sex and other sexual topics is the media (e.g. television, Facebook and the internet), where they share information with one another and make social decisions based on this information. This information is often biased and does not necessarily reflect reality. As some adolescence are not cognitively equipped to interpret and discern media images and messages, they have a distorted idea of sexuality and lack the necessary skills and knowledge to make responsible choices about sexuality (Pressley et al., 2007:326). These factors accentuate the

necessity for effective sexuality education to provide adolescents with the correct knowledge about sex and sexuality.

## **2.4.2 The mesosystem**

Bronfenbrenner (2005:148) defines the mesosystem as “the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person”, for example, the relationship between the parents and the school, extramural activities after school and the responsibility about the supervision of adolescents after school.

### **2.4.2.1 Partnership between parents and the school**

There is a correlation between the relation between parental involvement at the school and the academic development of the child (Du Preez, 2015). In this regard, Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) suggests that the involvement of parents in the education of their children and the communication between parents and teachers contribute to the initiative and independence of the learner. According to Deptula, Henry and Schoeny (2010:731), where parents are involved in their child’s education, learners are less likely to repeat a grade or to be expelled from school. Malacane and Beckmeyer (2016:32) point to the fact that parents need clear and useful information from their children’s teachers and from the school management to help their children develop their full potential.

As a teacher at a special school, the lack of parental involvement is evident to me in the learners’ low achievement, their lack of motivation, coming to school poorly dressed, often on drugs, being late for school, not doing homework and showing little respect for the teachers. Teachers also find that learners are not supported with their schoolwork at home. From the school’s side, regular phone calls are made to parents and they are invited to attend budget meetings and parents’ evenings to strengthen the relationship between the school and the parents. Other kinds of communication include report cards, progress reports, activity calendars and discussions with the school psychologist about problems that arise.

#### 2.4.2.2 Supervision of learners after school

The special school I teach at, have extra-mural activities that takes place during school hours. The implication is that most of the learners are unsupervised for two to four hours a day, until their parents return from work. According to Keenan et al. (2009:278), strict supervision by parents or other family members is often associated with delayed sexual activity. Parents often have no idea who their children associate with and are often ignorant about the romantic relationships these adolescents are involved in. As an educator, it has been my experience that girls often become involved in relationships with men who are much older than they are, engaging in risky sexual behaviour that often results in pregnancy. Learners with special educational needs need the guidance and strict supervision of their parents to prevent these adolescents from becoming sexually active at an early age (Lerner et al., 2012:160).

#### **2.4.3 The exosystem**

According to Arnett (2012:36), the exosystem refers to the societal institutions that have an indirect, but potentially important influence on development (e.g. health services, Department of Education, the Police Service, the government and policies). For this study, the exosystem involves the role of social media and its impact on sexual behaviour of adolescents in special schools.

##### 2.4.3.1 Role of social media on sexual behaviour

Adolescents receive continuous stimulation about the sexual nature and sexual habits of the world, where media and electronic social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp) portray the sexual behaviour and sexual habits of society (Tumedi, 2011:25). Electronic media thus allow them to “place themselves” sexually in the wider world and society and play a vital part in their evolving sexual subjectiveness, as it “grips their hearts and minds and strongly influences the possibility of their imagination” (Dolby, 2006:32). When adolescents are unsupervised and have unlimited exposure to the television and electronic media, they often base their sexual decisions on this information (Dolby, 2006:34).

Undoubtedly, the use of the internet poses very similar problems to those of all media – although they can be used for informative educational ends, they can also be purely for recreational purposes and they can be used in ways that may cause concern, such as

incorporating violence and pornography, affecting the moral development of people. According to Berk (2003:625), teenagers use the internet more hours than adults do, like the television, regardless of age, greater internet use predicts a drop in the time spent communicating with family members. This aspect only further accentuates the need for quality sexuality education, as adolescents are not provided with accurate knowledge or the skills to make informed choices about sex and sexuality.

#### **2.4.4 Macrosystem**

Bronfenbrenner (1979) asserts that macrosystems are blueprints for interlocking social forces at the macro level and their interrelationships in shaping human development. They provide the broad ideological and organisational patterns within which the mesosystem and the exosystem reflect the ecology of human development (Santrock, 2002:42). The macrosystem describes the culture which individuals live in. Cultural contexts include developing and industrialised countries, socioeconomic status, poverty and ethnicity (Elbot & Fulton, 2008:18). Macrosystems are not static but might change through evolution and revolution. For example, economic recession, war and technological changes may produce such change (Chaniball, 2010:8).

##### **2.4.4.1 Culture**

Conger (1991:488) notes that adolescents develop, as a counterculture, a set of values, beliefs and lifestyles so different from that of their more traditional elders that a profound generation gap has developed. According to Pretorius (1998:104-105), South Africa is, notably, a country where cultural differentiation is arranged according to ethnic and racial diversity. Culture includes cultural differentiation, cultural integration, cultural continuity, cultural relativism, cultural ethnocentricity and cultural pluralism. Cultural differentiation includes ethnic diversity, social diversity, democratic diversity, racial diversity and cultural diversity.

The differences in the moral climate of a culture probably reflect many factors, from the narratives and myths different cultures use to make sense of the world (e.g. the religious, philosophical or scientific narratives about the origins and meaning of life), to the material circumstances of society (Thornton, 2008:323).

Turiel (2002), on the other hand, proclaims that the surrounding culture sets the tone for the moral, social and personal rules that families and communities teach and expect

from adolescents. According to Miller and Goodnow (1995:7), cultural practices are actions that are repeated, shared with others in a social group and invested with normative expectations and meanings or significances, which go beyond the immediate goals of the action. They include ideas about what is natural and moral. In the special school I am currently teaching at, we have diverse cultures, ranging from Tswana to Zulu, Shangaan, Sepedi and Sotho. In some of these cultures, the adolescents go to initiation schools where they are taught about adult life (including sexuality). For some girls, to become pregnant is not seen as a shame. Moreover, teenage mothers who still attend school, receive a social grant (Department of Education, 2009:70).

The macrosystem also includes policies that could influence the learner. In South Africa, the Schools Act (Department of Education, 1996) regulates the support of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in schools. Allowing pregnant teenagers to remain in school and to return there after giving birth, is significant, not only in delaying a second birth, but also in offering young women increased economic productivity opportunities to get an education and increase their economic standing (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer & Ngobaza, 2010:872).

The Bill of Rights, as contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108/1996, Section 29), affirms that everybody has the right to basic education. Therefore, it might be improper to deny teen mothers to continue their schooling when they are ready to do so. In other words, without proper education, the teen mothers will not have the skills needed to become self-supporting and economically productive citizens (Chigona & Chetty, 2008:261).

Teenage mothers do not always get the support from their communities and parents in this regard, which causes many of them not completing their schooling careers.

#### 2.4.4.2 Policies related to special schools

Most of the adolescents who fall pregnant do not return to school after their pregnancy.. Those who do return, are often absent, especially when their babies are ill. As these learners' development has already been delayed, they find it difficult to balance motherhood and school work and then drop out of school.

While legislation does allow adolescent mothers to attend school, this is not the solution for the prevention of teenage pregnancies. The need for effective sexuality education,

which not only includes the use of contraceptives, but also the responsibility and hardship teen mothers must face, is evident.

## **2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter provided a literature overview of the most important factors that influence the sexuality of the adolescents in a special school by creating an awareness of the developmental theories and the impact various environments have on the risky sexual behaviour of learners in a special school. Since the aim of this study is to determine what these adolescents consider effective sexuality education to be, it was important to offer theoretical insights in understanding the sexuality of these learners. This chapter also clarified the important role of the teachers, parents, school, Department of Education and policymakers in providing effective sexuality education to learners by allowing them to voice their needs and views of what they regard as important.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2, the importance of an effective sexuality education programme was investigated, with a specific focus on the risky sexual behaviour of adolescents of 16 to 18 years of age in a special school. To gain more insight and understanding of this phenomenon, various factors, which may contribute to the risky sexual behaviour of these adolescents, were explored. The developmental theories of Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson were utilised to illuminate the delayed development of these adolescents and how this influences their ability to make informed choices about sex and sexuality. The ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1989), is functional in explaining the ecological systems that represent the different contextual factors in the life world of the adolescent (e.g. teachers, parents, the school, the Department of Education and policymakers), can attribute to the risky sexual behaviour of these adolescents. This accentuates the need for an effective sexuality education programme that can meet the needs of these adolescents.

In this chapter, I will describe the research methodology, which includes the research design and the research methods (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:8) that have been used to conduct this qualitative study. Attention to the ethical considerations and the elements pertaining to the trustworthiness of the study will also be discussed.

#### **3.1.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:76) define the research design as a “general strategy for solving a research problem”. According to Babbie and Mouton (2010:47), a research design is a plan or “blueprint” of how a researcher intends to conduct his or her research. In other words, with a research design, one goes from merely having questions one wants to ask, to building up a strategy to ensure that one obtains the most appropriate data to answer the questions. Luttrell (2014:497) responds that this “blueprint” is not drafted in advance and is not inflexible, but rather is a plan that guides

the decision-making throughout a qualitative study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:20) support this statement by defining the research design as a technique or general plan that indicates how the research will be conducted by the researcher, with the purpose of attaining the most appropriate data that could aid in answering the research question.

The research design guided the study to gain a better insight into the views and opinions of adolescents by determining what they regard as important and what should be included in the sexuality education programme (see Chapter 2). Aspects that will be covered in this section, are the paradigm which the study was situated in, the approach that was followed and the type of design that was utilised, namely a case study.

### 3.1.1.1 Research paradigm

According to Niewenhuis (2007'a:47), paradigms serve as lenses for organising principles by which reality is interpreted. In other words, paradigms determine how the researcher views the phenomenon that is studied. Creswell (2007:238) further elaborates by stating that patterned sets of beliefs and assumptions concerning the reality (ontology), the knowledge of that reality (epistemology) and the strategies of knowing that reality (methodology) and methods typify any research paradigm. Ferreira (2012:35) accentuates the importance of the paradigm, as this affords a lens through which the results of the study can be understood. The research paradigm not only places the phenomenon under investigation in context, but also places the researcher's view of the world in perspective (Fouche & Schurink, 2011:310). Similarly, Niewenhuis (2007a:48) points out that research cannot be separated from the beliefs of the researcher, as the researcher's own interpretation of reality matters. My beliefs about sexuality education allowed me to become totally immersed in the study and to extract the most crucial information from the adolescents involved in the study, as well as the life orientation teacher, for the purposes of analysis and interpretation.

This study was viewed through the lens of the interpretivist paradigm. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), the interpretatvist approach values the experiences and perspectives as important sources of knowledge. This statement is underscored by Scotland (2012:12), asserting that interpretative methods provide insight and understanding of behaviour and explain actions from the participants' perspective. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm was well suited for the study, as it enabled me to

gain insight into the intricacies of the adolescents' experiences, viewpoints and opinions about sex and sexuality. This paradigm also allowed me to give a voice to these adolescents, as their views have rarely been considered or recognised, because they are in a special school. Table 3.1 presents the assumptions associated with the interpretivist perspective and the way they function in this study.

**Table 3.1: Assumptions of an interpretivist perspective and how they feature in this study (Niewenhuis, 2007b:59-60)**

<b>ASSUMPTIONS OF AN INTERPRETIVIST PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>HOW IT FEATURES IN THIS STUDY</b>
<p>“Human life can only be understood from within” (Niewenhuis, 2007b:59-60). People’s subjective experiences and the interpretation thereof are studied from their interaction within their social environment.</p>	<p>The interpretivist paradigm enabled me to gain access to the subjective perceptions and experiences of the participants about sex and sexuality. By making use of semi-structured interviews, I encouraged the participants to share their experiences, perspectives and opinions on sex and sexuality. Participants were also enabled to disclose what they wanted from sexuality education to meet their needs.</p>
<p>“Social life is a distinctively human product” (Niewenhuis,2007b:59-60). This implies that the meaning people give to a certain phenomenon is always linked with a unique context.</p>	<p>In understanding the context in which adolescents “grow up and live”, clarifies their view and beliefs about sex and sexuality. This also illuminates how adolescents’ unique social context can contribute to their risky sexual behaviour.</p>
<p>“The human mind is the purposive source of origin and meaning” (Niewenhuis, 2007b:59-60). Exploring the intricacies of a phenomenon, leads to a better comprehension of the meaning it has for people.</p>	<p>Through an in-depth literature review, the scant research about sexuality education programmes for learners with special educational needs surfaced and accentuated the need to give these learners a voice to express what they need from sexuality education.</p>
<p>“Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world” (Niewenhuis,2007b:59-60). A further understanding of the reality of the social world of participants enriches our conceptual framework and provides a connection between the concrete world and the abstract theory.</p>	<p>My interaction with the participants produced multiple realities, which revealed their perspective about sex and sexuality. Hence, from their various perspectives, I was able to generate a mutual understanding/ convergence between their real existence in the concrete world and the abstract theory.</p>

<b>ASSUMPTIONS OF AN INTERPRETIVIST PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>HOW IT FEATURES IN THIS STUDY</b>
<p>“The social world does not exist independently of human knowledge” (Niewenhuis, 2007b:59-60). Existing knowledge, values, beliefs and intuition people accrue, influence the way in which reality is understood.</p>	<p>My prior teaching experiences and knowledge were linked with the research. This offered a lens through which I carried out the study and guided my understanding of what the learners want/need from sexuality education.</p>

### 3.1.1.2 Research approach

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural context within which they live. In addition, Burke and Christensen (2012:33) argue that the qualitative approach, as an inductive approach, is eminently effective in determining the deeper meaning of the experiences of human beings and in giving a rich description of a specific phenomenon. As the purpose of this study was to explore what the adolescents in a special school want from sexuality education to meet their needs, I chose to make use of a qualitative approach to develop an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon. I adopted a qualitative approach with the aim of giving these adolescents a voice to express what they view as important to be included in the sexuality education programme, as there was very little research available about the needs of adolescents in a special school regarding sexuality education. To obtain this goal, I interacted and observed these participants in their natural settings, focusing on their view and understanding of the phenomenon. Being a teacher at this special school, I could gather first-hand information about their experiences, perspectives and understanding of sex and sexuality. Creswell (2008:46) also defines qualitative research as a “type of educational research that relies on the view of participants, ask specific questions, collect data consisting largely of words (text) from participants, describe and analyses these words for themes and conduct the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner”. The nine key characteristics of qualitative research, which are typically found in most qualitative studies, and the application thereof in this study are outlined in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Key characteristics of qualitative research and the application thereof in this study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:324)**

CHARACTERISTIC	HOW IT FEATURES IN THIS STUDY
Behaviour is studied as it occurs in <b>natural settings</b> .	Data were collected from the participants after school at the research site, which was the natural sciences classroom. Interviews could be conducted there without any external restrictions or control.
<b>Context sensitivity</b> is needed to interpret behaviour.	The overall delayed development of these learners had to be considered, as this influences their ability to make informed choices about sex and sexuality. In the larger context, challenges, including the parents' lack of involvement, peer pressure, the media (television and the internet) and substance abuse, should be considered, as these contribute to the vulnerability of the learners. These factors contribute to learners being easily coerced into taking part in risky sexual behaviour, which often results in teenage pregnancy.
The researcher <b>collects data directly</b> from the source through direct interaction with the participants.	Data were collected directly from the participants through semi-structured individual interviews with the learner participants and the life orientation teacher to gain more insight into what they want/need from sexuality education.
<b>Rich narrative descriptions</b> are necessary for an in-depth understanding of a complex phenomenon.	The interviews that were conducted, were recorded and transcribed, as this could provide a "rich" description of the participants' views and perspectives regarding sexuality education. The transcription of the data was done in detail, as nothing was insignificant or unimportant.
<b>Process orientation:</b> the researcher focuses on the <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> of behaviour, and not just on the outcomes.	The focus of the study was based on the causes of risky sexual behaviour of adolescents. This could shed light on what these adolescents want from sexuality education and gave an indication of how to improve the current sexuality education programme to meet the needs of these learners.

CHARACTERISTIC	HOW IT FEATURES IN THIS STUDY
An <b>inductive data analysis</b> enables the researcher to work through the data progressively and generate a new understanding of the phenomenon.	The transcripts of the interviews were divided into meaningful analytical units, which were possible to code. After the data had been coded, I could identify certain themes, which emerged from the raw data. Research findings then emerged from the themes in the raw data.
The researcher uses the <b>perspectives of his/her participants</b> to reconstruct reality.	The aim of the research was to explore what adolescents want from sexuality education by allowing the participants to reveal their own experiences, perceptions and understanding of this issue. This was accomplished by interviewing adolescents as well as the life orientation teacher.
An <b>emergent design</b> is chosen. Changes in the research design may be necessary after the data have been collected.	I intended to keep an open mind when analysing the data, as it might have been necessary to make changes retrospectively (Abrams, 2010:537).
The <b>understanding and explanation</b> of a complex phenomenon need to be equally <b>complex</b> to capture its true meaning.	As sexuality education is a multi-dimensional construct, with many facets, it is not possible to comprehend every aspect of an investigation.

### 3.1.1.3 Research type

Given that this study aimed to explore the perspectives, experiences and understanding of adolescents in a special school about sex and sexuality, I opted for a single case study research. According to Seabi (2012:83), a case study provides the researcher with the opportunity to look at a real-life phenomenon with the intent of discovering why certain matters arise within the event. According to Jupp (2006), a case study could also provide initial analysis for further study, a more thorough interpretation of a specific finding and a detailed interpretation of a problem and what had caused the problem. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:135) point out that another strong point of the case study is its ability to influence policy and current practice. Niewenhuis (2007a:75) adds that case study research “opens the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless, like children”.

A single case study was perfectly suited for this study, as it could provide the adolescents in a special school with the opportunity to voice their experiences,

perspectives and understanding of sex and sexuality, which could aid in understanding what they need from sexuality education. This aspect had not been considered in previous studies. Therefore, exploring this phenomenon through the perspective of these adolescents, made them valuable sources of data, which may influence policy and current practice about sexuality education. This design helped me to critically look at the cases, the challenges associated with these cases and their diverse contexts to make meaning of their experiences and answer the research questions. The research methods applied in this study will be discussed next.

### **3.2.1 Research methods**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:9) explain research methods as the ways in which data are collected, where data are collected, and the process followed to analyse the data. The following sections explain the methods used in this study, namely the role of the researcher, the participants and the research site, the instruments that were used to collect the data and the data analysis.

#### **3.2.1.1 The role of the researcher**

As a qualitative researcher, my main role was that of interviewer and interpreter.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:344) stress the importance of the researcher establishing a relationship with the participants, which begins with the first contact with the participants (e.g. making an appointment, explaining the purpose of the research study and elucidating the confidentiality of the participants). As I am a teacher at the same school, I was familiar with them, which I regarded as very positive in that I had already established a relationship of trust through engaging with them during teaching contact time in the subject natural sciences.

Creswell (2007:192) warns that the more involvement there is with participants, the greater the risk of bias taking place. To prevent this, continuous self-reflection was necessary to create an open and honest research narrative. To encourage learners to take part in the study, I explained the nature and intent of the study and mentioned the potential outcome of the study. I assured them that no incentives or rewards would be used and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Their contribution to the study was their time and valuable information. Due to my teaching experience and knowledge about the phenomenon, I was able to empathise with the participants and recognise subtle meanings in their response (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:35). I also

recognised my personal role in the study and guarded against bias and prejudice to ensure precise interpretation (Algozzine & Hancock, 2006). In order not to interfere with the normal school programme, the interviews were conducted after school hours. The next section will describe in detail where the research took place and the steps I took to select participants.

### 3.2.1.2 Participants and research site

#### (i) Selection of participants

The selection of the participants was done through the process of sampling, which included only a portion of the population, because they hold the essential qualities and information necessitated by the study, Niewenhuis (2007:79). Rule and Vaughn (2011:64) agree when they state that “the researcher therefore has to choose people who can shed the lightest, or different lights on the case”. Leedy et al. (2014:154) emphasise that the identification of a sample depends on the research question. Likewise, Creswell (in Morgan & Sklar, 2013:110) agrees that sampling should be related to the research question, the methodology used in the study and the purpose of the study.

As the aim of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of what adolescents in a special school want from sexuality education, I utilised purposeful sampling which, according to Babbie and Mouton (2010:166), is appropriate to select a sample based on one’s own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of one’s research aims. I also chose this method of sampling as the selected sample is usually relatively small, since the purpose of the study is not to generalise the findings thereof, but to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2008:213).

One Grade 10 class, consisting of 13 females and 11 male learners, was selected, as the learners in this class were able to articulate the matters better than the other Grade 10 classes and because these learners have already been exposed to sexuality education, which forms part of the life orientation curriculum. Although the class consists of 24 learners, only 16 learners’ parents gave consent for their children to partake in the study. This number included nine females and seven male learners who could shed more light on the phenomenon being investigated.

The life orientation teacher (who is also the Head of Department), was a participant in the study as well. As a teacher, she had immense knowledge about the life orientation curriculum and the sexuality education programme currently implemented at the school.

(ii) The research site

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:350), the criteria of the research study should determine the selection of a suitable research site. For the research of this study, the site that was selected, was a special school in Pretoria. The interviews were conducted in a classroom at the school, in surroundings familiar to the participants.

Creswell (2009:178) states that a researcher ought to gain access to the research site by seeking approval from the gatekeepers. As I am a teacher at the selected school, I explained the purpose of the study to the principal and asked for permission to conduct in-depth interviews with one Grade 10 class and the life orientation teacher. I explained that the research would take place after school. The principal was generous in allowing me to use one of the classrooms that was not occupied after school to conduct the interviews.

### 3.2.2.3 Data collection

Data collection is defined by Seabi (2012:88) as “bits and pieces of information found in the environment”, which focuses on what the phenomenon under investigation means to the participants.

According to Seabi (2012:89), interviewing is a method used to collect rich and descriptive data about the views, ideas, beliefs and opinions of the participants, which enable the researcher to understand their social reality. Niewenhuis (2007b:87) supports this statement by claiming that the aim of research is to see the world through the eyes of the participants, as they are valuable sources of information. Creswell (2012:217) asserts that a qualitative interview involves the art of asking one or more participants general, open-ended questions and recording their answers. For this study, semi-structured interviews were used to explore what these Grade 10 learners want from sexuality education.

Semi-structured interviews require the participants to answer a set of predetermined questions, as this will allow the researcher to clarify answers, Niewenhuis (2007b:87). All the participants were asked the same predetermined questions (see Appendix H). I recorded these interviews with the participants to ensure that the participants' feedback

could be captured to increase my understanding and interpretation of the information provided (Creswell, 2008:228). I engaged with the participants by posing the questions in a neutral manner and by not leading the participants according to any preconceived notions or encouraging the participants to provide specific answers by expressing my approval or disapproval. As a researcher, I listened to the participants' responses attentively and asked follow-up questions and probes based on their responses. My aim was to allow the participants the opportunity to voice their opinions. Therefore, I chose to hold the interviews in a private location, which was the natural sciences classroom so that participants could feel that their confidentiality was protected. The educational psychologist was also present during the interviews. The interviews were concluded by following the advice of Creswell (2012:218) – thanking the participants, assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses and informing them that the results of the study will be made available to them.

#### 3.2.2.4 Data analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367) define qualitative data analysis as a process of “organising data into categories with the purpose of identifying patterns and relationships among these categories”. Niewenhuis (2007b:92) points out that the aim of qualitative data analysis is to understand and interpret the data, keeping the research question as well as the aims and objectives of the study in mind, whereas Maree (2007:28) stipulates that inductive data analysis is preferred to reach the “possible means to identify multiple realities potentially present in the data”. Creswell (2009:183), on the other hand, compares data analysis to an onion being peeled, where different analyses move progressively deeper into an understanding of the data.

To make sense of the data from this study and to answer the research question, I followed the steps suggested by Creswell (2009:185), McMillan and Schumacher (2006:368) and Niewenhuis (2007b:90) to aid me in the data analysis. As I made use of audio-taped interviews, I needed to transcribe the data to typed files. I read through the transcripts of each interview to divide it into meaningful analytical units, which are possible to code. This process of coding is described by Creswell (2009:186) as “organising the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information”. After the coding process, I identified some emerging themes to create the headings in the findings section of the study (Creswell, 2007:189). Niewenhuis (2007b:75) explains that these themes should be given a label or identifying name.

These themes are major ideas in the data, which should reflect the purpose of the study, as well as the research question. As clearly stipulated by Niewenhuis, 2007b:92), the main purpose of inductively analysing the data is to allow the research findings to emerge from the themes in the raw data. Through developing and describing the themes, answers to the research question should start emerging, leading to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied, which is the aim of the study (Creswell, 2008:254). Through interconnecting the themes, the researcher can discover relations such as cause and effect, sequence or chronology (Creswell, 2008:258). Identifying these themes can facilitate the understanding thereof and give meaning to the text. Finally, I interpreted the findings by using the themes and categories as a point of departure. The following table explains the steps that were followed to analyse and interpret the qualitative data.

**Table 3.3: Steps that were followed in the analysis and interpretation of the data (Adapted from Creswell, 2009:185; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:386; Niewenhuis, 2007b:90)**

<b>STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED TO ANALYSE QUALITATIVE DATA</b>	<b>HOW I APPLIED THIS IN THE STUDY</b>
<p><b>STEP 1:</b>  <b>Describing the sample and the participants.</b>            According to Niewenhuis (2007b:90), data in a qualitative study consist of a text database which is analysed by firstly describing the research context and the participants, to understand and grasp the reality of the phenomenon under investigation.</p>	<p>In the study, I made use of semi-structured interviews with one Grade 10 class, including seven boys and nine girls, to determine what these learners want from sexuality education. The life orientation teacher was also a participant in the study, as she could shed more light on the current sexuality education programme and possible adjustments that could be made.</p>
<p><b>STEP 2:</b>  <b>Organising and preparing the data gathered.</b>            This study involves a small group of participants, allowing for data to be organised according to the setting, the situation, participants, perspectives, activities, processes, relationships and social structure (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:386).</p>	<p>I made an inventory of all the data I had accumulated through the semi-structured interviews. As this study consisted of a small group of participants, I could organise the data according to the setting, the perspectives of the participants about sexuality education and their lived experiences, activities, processes, social structures and relationships.</p>

STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED TO ANALYSE QUALITATIVE DATA	HOW I APPLIED THIS IN THE STUDY
<p><b>STEP 3:</b>  <b>Transcribing the data.</b>            McMillan and Schumacher (2006:386) advise that it is crucial that the data are transcribed by the researcher as the researcher could include non-verbal cues in the transcript. Niewenhuis (2007:104) points out that data should be transcribed word for word to ensure that important elements of the interviews would not be overlooked.</p>	<p>As I audio-taped the interviews, I transcribed these word for word to make sure that all the important elements of the interviews were captured, and nothing was overlooked.</p>
<p><b>STEP 4:</b>  <b>Reading through the data.</b>            Creswell (2007:185) stipulates that good analysis is dependent on the understanding of the data gathered and this can be obtained by reading and rereading the text.</p>	<p>I read through the data to obtain a general sense of the information I had gathered. I also reread the information to make sure that I understood the data I had collected and to get a holistic view of the data I had gathered.</p>
<p><b>STEP 5:</b>  <b>Begin with the coding process.</b>            Creswell (2009:186) defines the process of coding as “organising the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information”. These segments should then be coded by assigning labels to each in the form of words or phrases, which accurately describe the meaning of the specific segment (Niewenhuis, (2007b:90)).</p>	<p>The transcription of each interview was read carefully, and I made a list of topics. After I had read through all the documents, I clustered together all similar topics. I went back to my data and wrote down codes next to the appropriate segments of the text.</p>

<b>STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED TO ANALYSE QUALITATIVE DATA</b>	<b>HOW I APPLIED THIS IN THE STUDY</b>
<p><b>STEP 6:</b> <b>Establishing categories or themes.</b></p> <p>This study involves using the coding to generate a small number of themes to create headings in the findings section (Creswell, 2007:185). As stated by Niewenhuis (2007b:90) these themes should then be given a label or identifying name, by using descriptive phrases or words for the text.</p>	<p>From the codes, I looked for emerging themes and categories. These were used to generate a small number of themes, to create headings in the findings section of the study. Regarding the study, I based the themes I identified on the research question I had asked the learners and the life orientation teacher to reflect the purpose of the study.</p>
<p><b>STEP 7:</b> <b>Structuring the data analysis.</b></p> <p>Niewenhuis (2007b:90) asserts that the identified categories should be linked to other categories to trace connection.</p>	<p>About the study, I constructed a narrative discussion to explain what I have learned from my data analysis. This is clearly outlined in Chapter 4.</p>
<p><b>STEP 8:</b> <b>Interpreting the data.</b></p> <p>Niewenhuis (2007:90) points out that the ultimate of interpreting data is to draw up conclusions of the findings as well as to ask further questions.</p>	<p>Finally, I interpreted the findings by involving relevant literature, the theoretical frameworks, the research questions and my own experience. This enabled me to draw conclusions of the findings.</p>

### 3.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Di Fabio & Maree, 2012:140) refers to trustworthiness as “the way in which data is collected, sorted and classified, especially if they are verbal and textual”. According to Letts et al. (2007:9), “trustworthiness ensures the quality of the findings and increases the reader’s confidence in the findings”. This, however, requires that there are logical connections among the various steps in the research process, from the purpose of the study through to the analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2007:191).

Since qualitative data analysis is based on the researcher’s interpretation of the data, self-reflection should be continuous. The role of the researcher is stated clearly, as well as the influence his or her paradigmatic view might have on the research process and the interpretation of the data (Butler-Kisber, 2010:14). With regard to this study, I ensured the trustworthiness of the data by spending much time observing the participants, reflecting on my own interpretation of the data, asking the participants for

their interpretations of and perspectives on sexuality education, getting input from my colleagues (the life orientation teacher and the educational psychologist) and supervisors, and validating my findings with distinct kinds of data (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2013:45). The following procedures and strategies were used to meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Abrams, 2010:540).

### **3.2.1 Credibility**

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:272) define credibility as the degree to which others recognise the findings of the study to be substantial. According to Abrams (2010:540), credibility embraces the degree to which the findings symbolise credible, conceptual interpretation. In the study, I made use of semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the views and opinions of the participants. I also made the transcribed interviews available to the participants to check whether the transcribed data and the interpretation thereof were accurate and reflective of the meanings they intended to share (Creswell, 2008:267). The participants and other people, such as my supervisor, were able to comment on the research findings, interpretation and conclusions ( Niewenhuis, 2007c:114). As a researcher, I kept in touch with the participants, as this enabled me to follow up on my research findings.

### **3.2.2 Dependability**

Di Fabio and Maree (2012:140) define dependability as the stability and consistency of the research process and the method over time, and how these aspects influence the degree of control in the study. According to Abrams (2010:540), it involves the “quality of the integrated process of data collection, data analysis and theory generation”. I outlined how the research design and research questions were formulated within clear and explicit theoretical and philosophical traditions, and the activities I undertook at the physical research site, such as questioning, observing, conversing, listening, recording, interpreting and handling logistical and ethical matters. I also ensured that the language of the texts was simple to read.

### **3.2.3 Transferability**

Transferability is regarded as the way in which the reader can take the findings from the research and transfer them to other contexts (Maree, 2007:301). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:9), transferability refers to the findings of the data that can be used and understood by others in different settings, but the same context. I believe that my research contained valuable significance that can be applied in other classroom settings, as well as other learning areas. One of the topics that is part of the CAPS curriculum for natural sciences is reproduction. Regarding this topic, the findings of this research could contribute greatly to learners' knowledge of sex and sexuality.

### **3.2.4 Conformability**

Conformability indicates how well the collected data support the findings of the research inquiry (Creswell, 2007:203). In this study, I made use of uncensored direct quotes from the participants and ensured that each comment was aligned with the theme and categories. I used consistent reflectivity, in-depth explanations and high-order conceptualisation to derive meaning from the emerging patterns (Brynan, 2012:205).

## **3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:333) state that conducting a qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than a quantitative study and, therefore, ethical guidelines such as obtaining informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, privacy and caring, ought to be in place. According to Maree (2007:300), when working with individuals, it is important to understand and pay attention to the ethical guidelines of informed consent and voluntary participation, protection from harm and privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.

### **3.3.1 Trust**

“Ethical relationships and practices are key aspects of the research quality, conducting research in an ethically sound manner not only enhances the quality of the research, but contributes to its trustworthiness” (Rule & Vaughan, 2011:111). I gained the trust of the participants by preparing them in advance for the sensitivity of the topic that would be discussed. I used two consent forms – one before I started with the interviews, by which the participants agreed to participate and to be recorded, and by which I

acknowledged that the participants had the right to withdraw at any time and that a copy of the transcribed interview would be made available to the participants. The participants were also given the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences during the interview.

### **3.3.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation**

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:107) clearly stipulate that “any participation in a study should be strictly voluntary”. Therefore, it is expected to seek the consent from those involved in the research (Burton & Bartlett, 2009). Consent and voluntary participation were obtained from the relevant role-players by obtaining the following documents:

- Consent forms from the learners (Appendix A).
- Consent from the parents for their children to participate in the study (Appendix B).
- A letter of consent from the life orientation teacher (Appendix C).
- A letter of consent from the principal of the school (Appendix D).
- A letter of consent from the governing body of the school (Appendix E).
- Permission to conduct the research from the Gauteng Department of Education (Appendix F).
- An ethical clearance letter from the University of Pretoria’s Ethics Committee (Appendix G).

### **3.3.3 Benefits and consequences**

The main aim of the research was to give these learners the opportunity to voice their needs regarding the content covered in a sexuality education programme. The perspectives, opinions and views of these learners and the teacher were important, as these aspects have not previously been researched. I made it clear to all the participants that should they withdraw from the research process at any time, they would not be penalised and there would be no consequences because of their withdrawal.

### **3.3.4 Potential risk and harm to the participants in the study**

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, there was a possibility of heinous discoveries. Therefore, an educational psychologist, who was employed at the research site, was approached and she gave her consent to be available during the interviews. As the interviewer, I allowed the interviewees to shape their own discourse and interpretation by giving them the opportunity to ask questions and talk freely. As the participants were able to describe their own unique experiences, it was important that they were reassured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process and, specifically, in the reporting of the research findings (Rule et al., 2011:112). The participants would also be provided with an opportunity to have insight into the final reporting of the findings. I assured them that neither their names, nor the name of the school would be revealed at any stage and that the recordings and transcriptions of the interviews would be kept under lock and key, and that no one else would have access to them.

### **3.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The purpose of this chapter was to give a detailed description of the research methodology applied to explore what the Grade 10 learners want from sexuality education. The aim was to obtain an in-depth understanding of their perspectives, opinions and views about sexuality education. Situated in an interpretive paradigm, I followed a qualitative research approach and utilised a case study design, using semi-structured interviews, field notes, observations and the analysis of personal and policy documents. A detailed discussion of the analysis and interpretation of the findings will follow in Chapter 4.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 3, a detailed description was provided of the research methodology followed in the study. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to analyse the data gathered through interviews and to interpret the data by means of the literature, the theoretical frameworks as well as the research questions. This research study employed a qualitative approach, making use of a case study, which consisted of one purposively selected Grade 10 class in a special school as well as the life orientation teacher. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore what the Grade 10 learners want from sexuality education. The interviews were conducted through a set of six pre-determined questions (Niewenhuis, 2007b:87). Where necessary, the interview questions were simplified to allow for engagement with the participants and to contribute to a better understanding of the research questions. Quotations from the transcribed individual semi-structured interviews are used to support the presentation of the research findings.

A description of the case study followed by the analysis of the data gathered from the learners and the life orientation teacher will be presented. Thereafter, the themes and categories that emerged from the data will form the basis for interpretation.

### **4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE**

#### **4.2.1 Context of the study**

This study was conducted at a special school situated in Pretoria West, catering for learners with special educational needs. Because of their delayed cognitive, social and emotional development, they are not able to cope in a mainstream school and, therefore, require specialised instruction that meets their individual needs. There are 676 learners enrolled at the school – 449 males and 188 female learners. Most of these learners come from various areas in and around Pretoria and are, therefore,

transported daily by bus or taxi to and from school. As most of these learners come from poor backgrounds, the school has a privately funded feeding scheme. At the end of 2015, 77 children benefitted from the feeding scheme; however, at the end of 2016, this number had increased to 85 children and it is currently still rising. As the number of parents who have no income has grown, 178 parents have been exempted from paying school fees.

The school consists of two phases – the Junior Phase, which caters for learners of 13 to 15 years and the senior phase for learners of 16 to 18 years of age. Most of these learners have an aptitude and interest in applied knowledge and, therefore, certain vocational subjects are taught as well. The timetable is structured in such a way that learners can develop their practical skills. There are ten periods in a school day, of which five periods (50%) are allocated to academic subjects and the other five periods (50%) are allocated to vocational subjects. There are 39 teachers at the school, of which 15 teach pre-vocational subjects, such as electricity, sheet metal, welding, woodwork, spray-painting and motor repair, for the boys and six teach vocational subjects, such as hairdressing, early childhood development, computer typing, needlework skills and cooking, for the girls. Eighteen teachers at the school teach academic subjects. Regarding the academic subjects, the CAPS curriculum is followed; however, the content of the subjects is more simplified and at a lower level than at mainstream schools. Learners can advance to Grade 10, which is the highest grade being offered. Competent and qualified teachers, as well as professionals (such as an educational psychologist), provide constant and ongoing support and instruction to meet the diverse needs of these learners.

#### **4.2.2 Biographical data**

The biographical data of the learner participants and the teacher participant are provided in the following tables.

#### 4.2.2.1 Learner participants

**Table 4.1: Biographical data of the learner participants**

Participant	Age	Gender	Home language	Language of instruction	Race
Participant A	18	Female	Xitsonga	English	African
Participant B	18	Female	Swahili	English	African
Participant C	18	Female	Sotho	English	African
Participant D	16	Female	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Brown
Participant E	17	Female	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	White
Participant F	18	Female	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Brown
Participant G	18	Female	Setswana	English	African
Participant H	18	Female	Xhosa	English	African
Participant I	18	Female	Zulu	English	African
Participant J	16	Male	Sotho	English	African
Participant K	18	Male	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	White
Participant L	18	Male	Sotho	English	African
Participant M	16	Male	Zulu	English	African
Participant N	18	Male	Xhosa	English	African
Participant O	18	Male	Xhosa	English	African
Participant P	16	Male	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Brown

Table 4.1 indicates that the group of learners who participated in the study consisted of nine females and seven male learners. Purposive sampling was used to select one Grade 10 class consisting of 13 females and 11 male learners, as these learners had been exposed to sexuality education. Although the class consisted of 24 learners, only 16 learners participated in the study, because the interviews were conducted after school hours and some learners made use of public transport and, therefore, were not able to stay after school. The participants were aged between 16 and 18 years. The interviews were conducted in the learners' language of instruction, which could be either Afrikaans or English. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, codes were allocated to the participants.

#### 4.2.2.2 Teacher participant

**Table 4.2: Biographical data of the teacher participant**

Participant	Age	Gender	Years experience	Subject taught	Qualifications	Position	Home language	Language used for interview	Race
Participant T	51	Female	18	LO	HED Diploma in Remedial teaching	HOD Educational guidance	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	White

The life orientation teacher, who teaches this subject to the Grade 10 class, also participated in the study. The teacher has been teaching life orientation at this special school since 1998 and, therefore, has 18 years of experience. She also holds the position of Head of Department, Educational Guidance, as she is not only very well qualified, but also has a vast amount of experience. She works with all the female learners in the school, should they experience any problems or if they are pregnant. It is often the case that learners reveal to her first that they are pregnant, and she then must inform the parents. An appointment is made with the parents to devise a plan of action to assist the learner in keeping up with the school work. The parents are therefore allowed to collect the relevant learner's books on Fridays for the learner to complete the work she has missed during the week. The learner's books are then handed in on the Monday to be marked. The learners are also allowed to write their tests and exams in the office, instead of the classroom. These accommodations are made to enable the learner to return to school after giving birth, to avoid interrupting her education. To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the teacher, she is referred to as Participant T in the study. The interview was conducted in Afrikaans, as this was the language the participant felt comfortable with. This interview was, therefore, translated into English.

### 4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis refers to a range of methods, practises and techniques that are used by the researcher with the objective of understanding what the participants' views are regarding the phenomenon being studied (Niewenhuis, 2007c: 99).

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories.

As clearly stated by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:346), general themes emerge from the data, rather than being imposed prior to the data collection. This qualitative

data analysis method allowed me to look for themes within the segments of data, whereupon I could develop categories and look for relationships among them which created patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:351). In this way, I could bring order, structure and meaning to the mass of data I had collected.

The interview is the most important tool for data collection in the qualitative research approach, as it gives the researcher the opportunity to get to know the participants more intimately (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:297). To reach the aims and objectives of the study, an interview guide containing open-ended questions was used (McMillan et al., 2010:206). Unlike single-word yes-or-no questions, the open-ended questions helped in getting in-depth answers that indicate 'why' and 'how'. For this study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to collect rich descriptive data about the participants' views and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Niewenhuis, 2007b:87). The data collected from the interviews with the learners will be discussed, followed by the data collected from the interview with the life orientation teacher.

### **4.3.1 Interview data**

#### **4.3.1.1 Interviews with the learners**

All 16 semi-structured interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and transcribed for data analysis (Creswell, 2008:225). To present a more comprehensive report, verbatim excerpts obtained from the participants during the interviews are presented with the purpose of augmenting and supporting the findings.

As some of the participants did not understand the questions, I had to simplify the questions to provide more clarity. The interview questions are highlighted in yellow and the simplified questions are highlighted in purple.

## QUESTION 1:

**Where did you get your information from with regard to sexual matters?**

**Did you get this information from your parents, the media, your teachers, the internet or your peers?**

When this question was posed to participants, seven of the 16 participants reported that they got their information from their parents. According to Participant D, she got her information from her mother and others who explained to her how the situation works – “*My ma-hulle. Hulle het vir my verduidelik hoe die hele situasie werk*”. [More from my mother and others. They explained to me how the situation works.] Participant H also replied that her parents were her primary source of information and further elaborated that they talked to her about teenage pregnancy. Participant F explained that she got information from her mother and her extended family, namely her aunt – “*Ek het dit by my ma gehoor en my tannie hulle het my geleer van dit sodat ek kon leer by dit.*” [I heard it from my mom and my aunt taught me about it so that I could learn by it.]

It was apparent that not all the participants obtained their information from their parents, as three of the participants mentioned that their main source of information was their peers or friends – “*Ah actually it was more from my friends*” (Participant J).

Participant P’s response was somewhat confusing, but she also mentioned her friends as a source of information –

*Em vriende, ... Juffrou, maar by die huis ook gehoor dan daar ook by die vriende wat gaan vir wat, maar alles eintlik by die vriende rêrig en by die skool maar rêrig nou is by die vriende rêrig als.*

[Em friends, Teacher, but heard it at home also now and then there also at the friends what is going for what but everything at the friends really and at school but really it is from friends really everything.]

Two of the 16 participants claimed that they had turned to the media for information, as this was readily available, and they had free access thereto. Participant B acknowledged, “*I get the information from television, well my parents never really sat down with me based on these things.*” Participant C confirmed that she had also obtained information by watching television and she further expressed that she enjoyed watching programmes with valuable educational information that she could learn from –

*“I watch TLC and I watch the birth control how they menstruate is how to prevent so I can know information”* (Participant C).

As all the participants were still in school and exposed to sexuality education, six participants pointed out that they had obtained most of their information from their teachers. According to Participant L, he had obtained most of his information from his teachers – *“I heard more from my teachers.”* Participant E was more specific in her response by revealing not only the specific grade she had first heard about sex and sexuality, but also the specific subject, natural sciences, as an imperative source of information – *“...begin ons in Graad sewe daaroor te praat in Natuurwetenskap en dis waar ek dit alles gehoor het.”* [We started in Grade 7 – we started talking about it in natural sciences and that is where I all heard it.] Participant C had the same disposition, but indicated that she had first learned about sexuality in Grade 8 and referred to the subject life orientation as an essential source of information –

*I heard about it from my teachers in life orientation class. Basically, we started learning about it in Grade 8 in life orientation class and till now today we still doing about the pregnancy testers and everything in life orientation class* (Participant N)

Modern technology, especially cell phones and computers, are the way whereby adolescents communicate with one another and is also a way whereby they can access various websites to find any information they need. Two of the 16 participants indicated that their primary source of information had been the internet – *“Internet and television and on my phone and sometimes also in magazines”* (Participant A). Participant M also mentioned the internet, but added that one sometimes does not even look for information, it just pops up – *“It all started with the internet and social media and stuff because like when you done and you want some other webs it appears there you are searching other stuff but it appears there naturally”* (Participant M).

## **QUESTION 2:**

**Why do you think school girls still get pregnant, even if they have access to sexuality education?**

In responding to the question, the participants were adamant that friends and peer pressure did influence the risky sexual behaviour of teenagers. Participant A stated, *“...they get encouragement from their friends. They are not preventing, so they are rushing things”* (Participant A). Participant K agreed and added, *“Die probleem is hulle*

*wil dit doen, want hulle dink hulle gaan 'cool' wees as hulle dit doen. Wanneer hulle dit gedoen het en die manier hoe hulle dit het, sê hulle dit vir hulle vriende hulle het dit gedoen en alles”* (Participant K). [The problem is they want to do it, they think they are going to be cool if they do it. When they have done it and the way they did it, they say to their friends they have done it and everything.]

Two participants explained that some parents were too afraid to say “no” to their children when they wanted to go out and other parents just did not care and had no idea how unsafe their children really were at these parties – “...mostly parents, they are afraid to tell their children what is right and what is wrong, they just say, ‘no, you can go to parties’...” (Participant G). “Because they sleep around they go at parties, farewells things happen there, and some are not safe and the parents, they don’t care” (Participant I).

Alcohol use was also listed as a possible reason for falling pregnant. Participant P reported,

*Dit is meisies wat rondlê en byvoorbeeld by partytjies, dan is hulle deurmekaar en dronk, obviously, en dan gebruik hulle nie die goed nie omdat hulle deurmekaar en dronk is.*

[It is girls who sleep around and for example at parties they are confused and drunk, obviously, and then they don’t use the things because they are confused and drunk.]

### **QUESTION 3:**

**In Grade 10, there is a section on sexuality education in the subject life orientation. Do you feel that the content dealt with is giving you sufficient information to make decisions concerning sexually related matters?**

I had to rephrase this question, as the learners did not understand the question.

**What would you add to the current sexuality education programme, which would help you, that is not currently being taught?**

Although teenage pregnancy is part of the CAPS curriculum, four of the 16 participants reported that more information about teenage pregnancy would help them. Participant G’s response represents these answers –

*Em I think that they should teach most of the time about the pregnancy today youth and when is the right time ok, ja they do teach us about the right time of the relationship and when to have sex with a guy, but then I think they to be more in those information about those things.*

Drug use is also associated with risky sexual behaviour. Three of the 16 participants reported that drugs should also be discussed –

*Yes, I think they have to add some drug because some of some kids most of kids in South Africa because they getting into drugs; we have to know that drugs is not right and then know that drugs is not the right thing and know that maybe what makes you the lungs maybe it causes the lungs to be broken, so I think it's right to know about drugs (Participant H).*

This statement was supported by Participant E – “*Em, dalk soos em drugs*” (Participant E). [Em, maybe like em drugs.]

Three of the participants emphasised the importance of teaching about HIV/AIDS, although this is a topic that is dealt with not only in Grade 10, but in other grades as well. Participant J was very positive about learners being taught about HIV/AIDS and stated, “*I think that teaching us about HIV/AIDS it's a good thing that we can learn about more because people think that just sleeping together is a good thing*” (Participant J).

#### **Question 4:**

**What do you think could be added to the sexuality education programme that could prevent girls from falling pregnant?**

Participants provided various suggestions that could help to enhance the effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme. Five of the 16 participants reported that condoms and contraceptives should be available at the school. Participant I suggested that condoms should be handed out to learners in the life orientation class – “*I'm thinking we can do for the learners in our school is give them condoms in LO classes to use while they are having sex*” (Participant I). Participant L agreed by saying, “*I think we should just give them out condoms every day for them not to fall pregnant and give them birth control pills or contraception pills for them to stay safe.*” Participant F felt that there should also be a nurse at the school, who can give learners contraceptives with the permission of the parents – “*They should get a nurse at school and put the children*

*on the birth control pill with the permission of the parents so that the girls cannot get pregnant” (Participant F).*

The following question focused on the CAPS curriculum, as I wanted to get the participants’ views on what they thought could be included in or omitted from it.

**Question 5:**

**Would you change anything in the curriculum?**

Although all the participants answered the question, it was apparent that most of the learners did not understand the question, as 14 of the 16 participants indicated that they do not want any changes and only two participants suggested changes – *“I would probably I think I would open a session where we could, where could have teenagers talking about it and getting them to know and understand the facts and the consequences behind everything” (Participant B).*

#### 4.3.1.2 Interview with the teacher

The life orientation (LO) teacher who participated in this research study had definite views about the subject, which ranged from the effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme to possible changes and adaptations that could enhance the effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme. The first question focused on the weighting of this topic in the LO curriculum.

**Question 1:**

**Is enough time allocated in class and the curriculum for sexuality education?**

*Ek dink ons probeer baie hard by die skool om die tyd wat ons toegelaat word so veel as moontlik inligting te gee.*

[I think we try very hard at school with the limited time that we have to give as much information as we possibly can.]

As mentioned earlier (see Section 4.2.1), the timetable of a special school differs greatly from that of a mainstream school. However, the subject life orientation has its rightful place on the timetable, and Grade 10 learners have life orientation three days per week and do not partake in physical education. The life orientation teacher also reported, *“Ek gebruik die meeste van die tyd aan seksualiteit en ouerskap.”* [I use most

of the time on sexuality and parenting.] The teacher motivated her use of time by explaining that learners in a special school are vulnerable and easily coerced into partaking in risky sexual behaviour and, therefore, need more guidance than their peers in the mainstream schools to make informed choices in this regard.

**Question 2:**

**What is your opinion on the current sexuality education programme?**

This question was asked, as there currently is a lack of standardisation in the life orientation assessment tasks and the content of the curriculum in special schools, the reason being that there is no set curriculum for special schools. Although the CAPS document is used as a parameter, teachers also have the freedom to add to this content as they see fit to accommodate the needs of the learners.

The teacher responded by saying,

*Die kurrikulum soos dit nou is, waar ons die vryheid het om inligting by te werk wat bepaal word deur die behoeftes van ons leerders, het 'n deur vir ons oopgemaak om regtig die kinders te kan help waar nodig. Ek het baie inligting bygewerk oor ouerskap met die doel om leerders te leer wat hulle eendag vir hulle kinders gaan moet leer. Dit het leerders laat besef dat daar feite en inligting is wat hulle nie het oor ouerskap nie.*

[The curriculum as it is now, where we have the freedom to add work as determined by the needs of learners, has opened a door for us to really help the learners where needed. I added a lot of information about parenting, with the objective of teaching learners what they will have to teach their children one day. This made learners realise that there are a lot of facts and information they do not have regarding parenting.]

She furthermore emphasised that the school culture allows for the teachers to focus on the questions and needs of the learners and, therefore, lessons contain a strong moral component where it is explained "*hoe verkeerde besluite hulle toekoms kan affekteer*" [how wrong decisions can affect their future].

She also pointed out that information must be explained over and over on a consistent basis, as these learners have difficulty in remembering what they have learned. It is also important to constantly remind these learners about how uninformed choices can affect their future. The overarching aim expressed by the teacher was future-oriented, with the teacher being concerned about assisting the development of responsible young

adults, who can function in the society and make informed decisions and choices regarding sex and sexuality.

**Question 3:**

**What would you suggest can one adapt or change to meet the needs of the learners more effectively?**

The teacher accentuated that the subject life orientation aims to facilitate learners' holistic development within a supportive classroom environment, where important matters to well-being and optimal functioning of the child can be addressed. As a result, the teacher incorporated intervention and prevention strategies into the curriculum to attend to the challenges learners with special educational needs face. As teenage pregnancy and risky sexual behaviour are common among these learners, the teacher explained that she had added information to the curriculum –

*Ek het baie inligting oor ouerskap bygevoeg met die doel om leerders te help om ingeligte besluite te maak. Ek gee ook leiding in die stel van doelwitte oor wat hulle wil bereik in hulle lewens, huidiglik en wanneer hulle skool verlaat. Ek moedig leerders aan om te fokus op hierdie doelwitte; om hierdie doelwitte te bereik kan hulle nie in seksuele verhoudings betrokke raak wat kan lei tot swangerskap nie, want dit sal hulle verhoed om hierdie doelwitte te bereik.*

[I added a vast amount of information about parenting with the objective to guide learners to make informed choices. I also guide them in setting goals about what they want to achieve in their lives currently and when they leave school. Learners are encouraged to focus on these goals and for them to reach these goals they cannot get involved in sexual relationships which could lead to pregnancy, as this will prevent them from reaching their goals.]

The life orientation teacher felt very strongly about teaching the learners about parenting and the responsibilities that go hand in hand with parenting, as many of these learners never obtain this information from their parents. Setting goals and focusing on these goals give learners a sense of something to work for and focusing on something they can achieve. In most cases, the school is the only place where these learners get guidance and information about sex and sexuality.

**Question 4:**

**Despite the fact that learners are exposed to sexuality education, the girls still fall pregnant. Why?**

In her answer, the teacher emphasised the role of the parents –

*“Ek voel baie sterk dat ons grootste leemte is by ouerleiding. Ons kinders word wees groot, in die opsig dat ouers is daar, maar ouers is glad nie betrokke by die kinders nie. Ons ouers weet glad nie waarmee ons kinders hulle besighou nie. Ek dink baie van die ouers weet, maar hulle wil dit nie erken nie, want dan moet hulle die probleem hanteer. Ek dink ook omdat ons kinders in ‘n gemeenskap grootword waar daar regtig nie aandag en intense liefde is en gesonde liefde nie, is dit vir hulle aanvaarbaar om liefde op ander plekke te kry en verwar hulle liefde met ‘n seksuele verhouding.*

[I feel very strongly that our biggest gap is found in parental guidance. Our children grow up like orphans in the sense that the parents are there, but they are not involved in the children’s lives. Parents do not know what their children are keeping themselves busy with. I think some parents do know but will not admit it because then they must handle the problems themselves. I also think because our children grow up in communities where they don’t get enough attention and intense love and healthy love, they find it acceptable to look for love in other places and they confuse love with a sexual relationship.]

The teacher also mentioned that the lack of parental involvement in their children’s lives is something that needs to be addressed. Parents often do not know what type of information their children access on their phones, who their friends are and where their children go to when they are unsupervised for long hours after school. She elaborated by pointing out,

*Ons beplan ‘n vergadering met die senior leerders se ouers wat ons alreeds hierdie jaar begin het, waar ons met ouers praat oor hulle kind se toekoms.*

[We are planning a meeting with the senior learner’s parents, which has already started this year, where we engage with the parents about their child’s future.]

These meetings were held to empower the parents in assisting their children in setting goals for the future and motivating them to work towards a goal. Furthermore, a meeting was also held with the senior learners’ parents to strengthen the collaboration between the school and the parents regarding sexuality education.

*Ouers moet hulle kinders meer aan buitemuurse aktiwiteite laat deelneem aangesien leerders te veel vrye tyd het waar daar geen toesig is nie.*

[Parents should get their children more active in extra-curricular activities because the learners have too much free time where they are not supervised.]

**Question 5:**

**Should changes or adaptations be made to the sexuality education programme and, if so, could this help decrease the incidence of teenage pregnancy?**

The teacher reiterated the importance of the involvement of the parents. She stated,

*Baie van ons leerders word groot in huise waar daar net een ouer is en ander word weer deur oumas en oupas grootgemaak. Hierdie leerders het dikwels nie ouers waarna hulle kan opkyk as rolmodelle nie en het daarom geen idee wat ouerskap behels nie.*

[A vast amount of our learners grow up in homes where there is only one parent and others are raised by their grandparents. These learners often do not have parents to look up to as role models and have no idea what parenting really entails.]

The teacher believed parenting should be one of the topics discussed in life orientation, with the purpose of awakening learners to the stark reality of what parenting entails, the responsibility that goes with it and how this can affect their future goals. Regarding the structure of the content, she said that she had become aware that learners were hungry for conversations about their experiences outside of school, which they often did not communicate with parents.

*Omdat ek met die senior kinders werk, het ek besef dat hierdie leerders 'n behoefte het daaraan om oor hulle ervarings te praat. Ek noem hierdie klas somer die 'vry-gesels-periode', aangesien leerders in hierdie periode kan praat oor enige onderwerp wat hulle graag wil, wat hulle dikwels nie by die huis kan doen nie.*

[As I work with the senior children, I realised that they have a need to talk about their experiences. I call this period the 'free-talking period', as it was open to any topic learners wanted to discuss, which they often cannot do at home.]

The teacher mentioned what a learner reported to her in class – “*There are parties that we go to, we call it 'house parties', where children have sex with each other in front of*

*their friends.*” According to the teacher, these types of activities become normal to learners and they just see sex as an act and nothing more. The teacher elaborated and pointed out that some learners live in small houses, which only have two bedrooms, with no doors. This results in the following:

*...kinders luister na ouers wat seks het in die kamer langs hulle en dit stimuleer kinders dikwels om te eksperimenteer en begin dan kyk na pornografie. Dit lei ook tot vroeë seksuele ontwaking en kinders raak betrokke by ongewenste seksuele praktyke.*

[Children listen to their parents having sex in the adjacent bedroom and this is what triggers children’s minds to experiment and turn to pornography. This also leads to early sexual awakening and children engaging in risky sexual behaviour.]

The life orientation teacher restated that she would add to the curriculum better collaboration between the school and the parents. She also suggested meetings with the parents to provide them with the necessary tools and skills to teach their children about sex and sexuality –

*As die fondasie met betrekking tot seks en seksualiteit gelê word by die huis, dan kan die skool verder voortbou op die kennis wat die leerder alreeds het oor seks en seksualiteit, wat ’n diepgaande effek of die afname in tienerswangerskappe sal hê*

[If the foundation regarding sex and sexuality education is laid at home, the school could build on this already existing information the learners have about sex and sexuality, which will have a profound effect in the decrease of teenage pregnancy.]

#### 4.3.4 Themes and categories

The themes and their categories, which arose from the research findings, are depicted in the following table.

**Table 4.3: Themes and categories that emerged from the data**

THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. Information on sexuality	1.1 Parents
	1.2 Peers
	1.3 Media
	1.4 School/teacher

2. Views on the incidence of teenage pregnancy	2.1 Peer pressure
	2.2 Parents
	2.3 Alcohol
	2.4 School culture
3. Sexuality topics preferred by teenagers	3.1 Teenage pregnancy
	3.2 Drugs
	3.3 HIV/AIDS
4. Effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme	4.1 Protection
	4.2 School-based services
	4.3 Real-life examples
	4.4 Standardisation of life orientation
	4.5 Future of learners
5. Suggested changes to the curriculum	5.1 Consequences
	5.2 Parenting
	5.2 Parental involvement

#### 4.4 DATA INTERPRETATION

According to Bogdan (2003:147), data interpretation refers to “the developing ideas about your findings and relating them to the literature and broader concerns and concepts”. Madjitey (2014:208) elaborates on this description by stating that the “essence of the interpretation phase is to attach meaning and significance to the data”.

The discussion of the findings was conducted according to the five themes that emerged from the coding process to give meaning to the data and provide answers to the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme currently implemented in the special school. This was done in accordance with the research questions (see Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2), the theoretical framework which guided the study (see Sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.2 and 2.4), the literature findings (see Section 2.2), as well as my own personal experience.

## **Theme 1: Information on sexuality**

When analysing which resources learners relied on when needing or looking for information about sex and sexually related matters, five main factors came to light, namely parents, peers, the media and the school or teachers.

The findings revealed that nearly half of the participants reported that they had obtained their information about sex and sexual matters from their parents, which is in line with the research (Section 2.4.1.2; Wight & Fullerton, 2013:15) indicating that it remains the primary responsibility of parents to educate their children about sex and sexuality.

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the relationship the child has with his or her parents can be found in the microsystem (see Section 2.4.1). It is in this close face-to-face interaction with the child that open communication about sex and sexual matters should take place (see Section 2.4.1.1). The parent should establish a relationship with the child, which could lay the foundation for clear and open communication about sex and sexual matters (see Section 2.4.1.1). The events at home, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), can affect the child's sexual behaviour, as parents are their children's role models, and the way parents behave and treat each other will be adopted by the adolescent (see Section 2.4.1.1). The home should be the place where the child feels safe and protected and where he or she is supported and taken seriously (see Section 2.4.1.1). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model also suggests that if the child grows up in a high-risk environment, the child's development will be strongly influenced in a negative way (see Section 2.4.1.1). Researchers have indicated that because of the high divorce rate, a staggering number of children grow up in single-parent families, making these children a vulnerable group for risky sexual behaviour (see Section 2.4.1.1).

According to information that had been obtained from the 16 participants who took part in this study, only three participants stayed with both their biological parents, nine stayed with their mothers, two stayed with guardians and two stayed in a place of safety. As clearly outlined in Section 2.4.2.2, these children are often left unsupervised, as parents must work late, and the parents are often so detached from their children that they have no idea which relationships their children are involved in or who the children's friends are (see Section 2.4.2.2). The life orientation teacher voiced her concern about the lack of involvement of parents in their children's lives – *“Our children grow up like orphans in the sense that the parents do not know what their children are*

*keeping themselves busy with.*” She reported that although some parents know that their children are involved with the wrong friends, they will not admit it, because then they will have to solve the problem themselves.

When there is a lack of communication between the parent and the child about sex and sexual matters, the child will turn to other sources for information (see Section 2.4.1.3). This also came to the fore in the research when three of the 16 participants indicated that they turned to their friends for information, which could not be obtained from the family. As these learners lack close and positive communication with their parents, they are more susceptible to peer influence (see Section 2.4.1.3). This is viewed as problematic because peers are less reliable or as providing information that is flawed (see Section 2.4.1.3). Peers also share information with one another and make decisions about sex and sexuality, which is often biased and not necessarily reflects reality (see Section 2.4.1.3).

Another source of information participants turned to, was the media. Three of the 16 participants indicated that they watch television programmes to get information about sexuality education. In Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, the media is found in the exosystem and has a profound impact, both negative and positive, on young people’s knowledge, beliefs and attitude regarding reproductive health and sexual relationships (see Section 2.4.3.1). Adolescents do not only share the information they see on television with one another, but also make decisions about sex and sexuality based on this information (see Section 2.4.3.1). Although learners can get valuable information from educational programmes about sexuality education, some of the movies and soap operas learners tend to watch, give them a distorted perception of sex and sexuality, causing the adolescent to initiate sexual intercourse at an early age, often resulting in pregnancy (see Section 2.4.3.1).

Two of the 16 participants indicated that they use social media, specifically the internet, as a source of information. Although only two participants indicated that they obtained information from the internet, this was not a true reflection of the number of learners who do access the internet. Despite the poor backgrounds these learners come from (see Section 4.2.1), every learner in the school has a cell phone. Outside the school premises, a Wi-Fi tower was erected, and the learners can access websites for free, before and after school. The internet poses similar problems to those of other media, as it can be used for educational, informative ends, but it can also be used for recreational

purposes and in ways that may cause concern, such as incorporating violence and pornography, which affects learners' moral development (see Section 2.4.3.1). To elaborate further, according to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, the adolescent's self-interest will now shift to the morals of his or her parents and peers as well as the general population, and these norms then become the basis of the adolescent's moral development (see Section 2.3.2.1). Kohlberg (1973) further stipulates that each level of moral reasoning cannot be obtained without a corresponding increase in cognitive maturity (see Section 2.3.2). Learners with special educational needs face various challenges, such as a lack of parental involvement, learning difficulties, low socioeconomic circumstances and other related disabilities. Therefore, a proper foundation regarding moral reasoning is never established properly, which causes delayed moral development (see Section 2.3.2.1). This statement was supported by the life orientation teacher, who stated that because of the unlimited and unsupervised access learners have to the internet, pornographic material falls into the hands of both the junior and the senior learners and is often passed on to other learners. The danger of these websites is that learners base their sexual decisions on this information (see Section 2.4.3.1). According to Berk (2003; see Section 2.4.3.1), internet use further enhances the lack of communication between the child and the parent because, as most of our learners are not cognitively equipped to interpret and discern media images and messages, they have a distorted idea of sexuality and they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to make responsible and informed choices with regard to sexuality (see Section 2.3.1.2).

The school was also an important source of information for the learners and, in some cases, their only source of information. The participants also referred to the subject life orientation, in which sexuality education is embedded (see 2.4.1.2). The education sector has a critical role to play in ensuring that young people are informed and equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to make informed and responsible choices in their sexual lives. Thus, the school provides a practical means of reaching many learners from diverse backgrounds, with the main purpose of not only improving learners' sexual health, but also restricting risky sexual behaviour (see Section 2.4.1.2).

## **Theme 2: Views on the incidence of teenage pregnancy**

A factor that was identified by the participants as contributing to the incidence of teenage pregnancy was peer pressure. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological

systems theory, the peer group forms part of the microsystem (see Section 2.4.1.3). The adolescents' relationships with their peers may partly replace the relationships they have with their parents, implying that adolescents who lack close and open communication with their parents are more susceptible to peer pressure (see Section 2.4.1.3). As clearly outlined in the stages of cognitive development in Piaget's theory, adolescents aged 11 to 15 years, and up, should be able to reason at the formal operational stage (see Section 2.3.1). However, the participants in this study reason at the concrete operational level because of their delayed cognitive development and find it difficult to evaluate the consequences of their behaviour, which makes them more vulnerable to risky sexual behaviour (e.g. not using condoms or contraceptives) and peer pressure (see Section 2.3.1.2). Kohlberg (1976) clearly stipulates that the adolescent wants to be seen as "good" by his or her peers and, therefore, seeks their acceptance (see Section 2.3.2.2). The participants in the study reported that they were pressured by their peers to have sex and they complied because they wanted to "fit in" and to be "cool". According to the psychosocial theory of Erikson (1968), the adolescent is faced with the crisis of identity formation, which includes his or her confidence, self-esteem and ability to socialise and be a member of the peer group (see Section 2.3.3.1). In the case of these participants, their delayed cognitive development spills over in their social ability which, in comparison to their peers in the mainstream schools, is immature (see Section 2.3.3.1). As all these participants have experienced numerous failures in school and have poor academic records, they have very a low self-esteem and will go to any length to be accepted by their peers. They are, therefore, easily coerced into risky sexual behaviour (see Section 2.3.3.1).

Participants felt very strongly that parents also contributed to the incidence of teenage pregnancy, as they reported that some parents just did not care. One participant indicated that parents are afraid to say "no" to their children, allow them to go to parties and are ignorant about what goes on at these parties. In the mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, the supervision of children was discussed (see Section 2.4.2.2). According to the researcher, strict supervision by the parents or other family members is often associated with delayed sexual activity (see Section 2.4.2.2). Learners with special educational needs especially need the guidance and strict supervision of their parents to prevent them from becoming sexually active at a young age (see Section 2.4.2.2). The life orientation teacher also voiced her concern about the lack of parental involvement. She further reported that learners are unsupervised for

long periods of time after school and parents are ignorant about the romantic relationships their children are involved in. Parents often neglect their responsibility to educate their children about sex and expect educators to take on this responsibility (see Section 2.4.1.1). The lack of parental involvement is a contributing factor in learners' engaging in risky sexual behaviour, which results in teenage pregnancy (see Section (2.4.2.1). Participants also mentioned the use of alcohol as a factor that contributes to the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Participants reported that when they are drunk, they do not think about using contraceptives, which contributes to teenage pregnancy. Because of these learners delayed cognitive development, they find it difficult to evaluate the consequences of their actions and, therefore, do not plan which is a major contributing factor to how they conduct their sexual behaviour (see Section 2.3.1.2).

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the macrosystem describes the culture which the individual lives in (see Section 2.4.4.1). The cultural context also includes developing and industrialised countries, socioeconomic status, poverty and ethnicity (see Section 2.4.4.1). The life orientation teacher accentuated the fact that we have learners from diverse cultural backgrounds in our schools. The learners' cultural background sets the tone for the moral, social and personal rules families and communities teach and expect from adolescents (see Section 2.4.4.1). The school plays an important role to bridge the gap between cultures. Many of the black learners, boys and girls, in the school still go to initiation schools, which can last up to three weeks or more. The school respects this by allowing the learners to go and helping them to catch up the work they have missed. The teacher also mentioned that during a discussion in class, some learners had mentioned that due to poverty (see Section 4.2), they live in homes with only two bedrooms, with no doors. This results in the children listening to their parents having sex in the adjacent bedroom. This often triggers children to experiment with sex and to turn to pornography. This could become a potential breeding ground for sexually risky behaviour.

### **Theme 3: Sexuality topics preferred by teenagers**

Four of the 16 participants indicated that although unwanted pregnancies are discussed in life orientation, they want more information about teenage pregnancy. Girls are ignorant about topics such as ovulation and their menstrual cycle. Another topic the participants wanted more information on, was drugs. The life orientation teacher revealed to me that there are numerous learners in the school who are addicted to

drugs. During 2017, 57 drug tests were administered, specifically for dagga addiction, and 35 learners tested positive. Four learners were referred to a rehabilitation centre, but not one single learner completed the programme. When the parents were contacted to inform them about their children's addiction, most of the parents had no idea that their children were addicted to dagga. This reflected the lack of involvement of the parents in their children's lives. This is a big concern, as drug addiction could cause adolescents to get involved in risky sexual behaviour since this is a mind-altering drug and learners do not worry about using condoms or other contraceptives when they are under the influence of drugs, which often results in teenage pregnancy. The participants were positive about the fact that they learn about HIV/AIDS, but indicated that this topic should be emphasised, as some learners are not taking HIV/AIDS seriously.

#### **Theme 4: Effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme**

This theme addresses how the Grade 10 learners perceived the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme. Five of the 16 participants indicated that they were learning about safe sex in life orientation but felt that contraceptives and condoms should be available at the school. They suggested that a nurse, who could provide them with contraceptives with the permission of their parents, should be available at the school. The participants also indicated that they would prefer real-life examples of people who have HIV/AIDS come and talk to them, so that they can see what it is like to have this disease. In other words, these learners wanted to have the reality to be part of the lessons, which links to Piaget's stage of cognitive development. As these learners still function in the concrete operational stage, they need to see, feel and learn by sensory stimulation, for successful learning to take place. The life orientation teacher, on the other hand, was concerned about the standardisation of the assessment tasks and the content of life orientation. She mentioned that the CAPS document is used as a parameter, but teachers have the freedom to add to the curriculum according to the needs of the learners. She further emphasised that the culture of the school provides the teacher with the opportunity to focus on the needs of the learners and, therefore, lessons on sexuality education contain a strong moral component, which focuses on the impact of risky sexual behaviour on the future of the learners. The overarching aim expressed by the teacher was future-oriented, in assisting the learners to become responsible adults, who can make informed choices about sex and sexuality.

## **Theme 5: Suggested changes to the curriculum**

Two of the 16 participants suggested that the consequences of teenage pregnancy should be addressed. The life orientation teacher reiterated the fact that most of the learners grow up in single-parent families, which implies that they have no role models to imitate or to advise them about sex and sexual matters. She suggested that parenting should have a place in the curriculum to awaken learners to the stark reality of what parenting entails and the responsibility that goes with it and how this could influence their future goals. She also suggested that a period should be made available on the timetable, when learners can speak freely about their experiences regarding sex and sexuality outside of school, as she was aware that the learners were eager to share their experiences. The collaboration between the parents and the school was an aspect the teacher felt very strongly about. She suggested meetings with the parents to empower the parents with the necessary skills and knowledge to educate their children about sex and sexuality. When parents take up their responsibility as the primary educators, the teacher can build on this already existing knowledge, which will have a profound influence on the decrease of teenage pregnancy.

## **4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In this chapter, the empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme implemented at a special school was explored. Various themes and categories emerged from the data during the thematic analysis and served as the basis for the interpretation of these findings. These findings were primarily based on the analysis of the interview transcripts of the 16 participants and the life orientation teacher who participated in the study. Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the research findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

# **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 4, I presented the research findings according to the themes and categories that had emerged during the data analysis process. The views and opinions of the participants about sexuality education were addressed, including their sources of information, the incidence of teenage pregnancy, preferred topics, the effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme and ways in which it could be improved.

The aim of Chapter 5 is to provide a summary of all the information accumulated during the literature review and empirical investigation. The research questions will be answered, and recommendations will be presented to the Department of Education, parents and teachers and for the benefit of future research. A reflection on the overall research process will conclude the study.

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In this section, I present a summary of the key literature and empirical findings.

#### **5.2.1 Summary of key literature findings**

As there is scanty research available on sexuality education at a special school, the purpose of this study was to give these learners an opportunity to be involved in discussing and giving their unique insights into sexuality education, their opinions and experiences thereof and what they want from sexuality education. As these adolescents' holistic development is delayed, they are accommodated in a special school where they can receive specialised instruction based on their individual needs (see Section 2.2). Accommodations and modifications are provided with the purpose of making provision for extra measures to assist learners in accessing the curriculum (see Section 2.2.2). It was apparent that learners with special educational needs have a

higher propensity to be coerced into risky sexual behaviour, which often results in teenage pregnancy (see Section 2.2). The physical development of these adolescents follows the same genetically determined course as that of their peers without special needs. However, although these adolescents' chronological age is 16 to 18 years, their cognitive development can be as much as two years behind that of their peers (see Section 2.3.1). In learners with special educational needs, a cognitive developmental delay causes an inability to reason at a formal operational level, often being the cause of risky sexual behaviour (e.g. not using condoms or contraceptives), which results in an increase in teenage pregnancy (see Section 2.3.1.2). Their cognitive delayed development also spills over into their psychosocial development.

According to Erikson (1968), adolescence is a crucial period for identity development. As adolescents at a special school often experience poor academic achievement, which results in their ongoing failing at school, they have a poor self-concept and no solid sense of identity, which makes them susceptible to negative peer pressure. Kohlberg (1973) believes that each level of moral reasoning cannot be attained without a corresponding increase in cognitive development. As these adolescents face numerous challenges, such as their overall delayed development, a lack of parental role models, a lack of parental involvement, divorce and low socioeconomic circumstances, a proper foundation about moral reasoning is never established properly. These adolescents are, therefore, easily coerced by their peers to get involved in risky sexual behaviour just to "fit in", or they may turn to pornography for information about sex (see Section 2.3.2.2).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) postulates that the development of adolescents is influenced and shaped by various systems in their environment. In the first system – the microsystem – the responsibility of the parents regarding educating their children about sex and sexual matters is highlighted (see Section 2.4.1.1). When the parent neglects this responsibility, the adolescent will turn to sources outside the home, such as his or her peers, the television or social media, which are often not reliable sources of information and may cause adolescents to have distorted ideas and beliefs about sex and sexual matters. In the second system – the mesosystem – the collaboration between the school and the parents, as well as the supervision of learners after school, was emphasised (see Section 2.4.2.1). The lack of parental involvement in their children's school work is evident in the learners' low academic achievement, lack of motivation, coming to school poorly dressed, being late for school and showing little respect for teachers. This is often the result of a lack of strict supervision by the parents

and other family members, causing these adolescents to be easy targets for getting involved in risky sexual behaviour, which often results in teenage pregnancy. In the third system – the exosystem – the influence of the media was stressed (see Section 2.4.3.1). The media can have a profound impact on adolescents' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about sex and sexuality. They may benefit from educational programmes on the television or videos on the internet. The flipside of the coin is the negative influences, such as risky sexual behaviour in soap operas they watch on television and pornography they watch on the internet. This may result in an inaccurate perception of sex and sexuality and may encourage adolescents to initiate sexual intercourse at an early age, which often results in teenage pregnancy. This accentuates the importance of sexuality education in schools to ensure that the adolescents are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed and responsible choices about their sexual lives. The fourth system – the macrosystem – describes the culture which the individual lives in, as well as policies that may influence the adolescent (see Section 2.4.4.1). In some cultures, it is expected that adolescents (male and female) attend initiation schools, as this is part and parcel of their cultural beliefs. In some cultures, sexuality is a taboo topic, while in other cultures, it is discussed more openly, which can influence the incidence of teenage pregnancy.

Regarding schooling and the rights of pregnant teenagers, the South African Schools Act 92 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996), permits teenagers to stay in school while they are pregnant and return to school after child birth. However, this could serve as an incentive regarding teenage pregnancy, as learners know they may return to school after giving birth. The adolescents at a special school, whose holistic development has already been delayed, find it difficult to balance motherhood and school work (see Section 2.4.4).

Overall, the literature overview supplied useful information, which provided insight into the delayed cognitive, social and emotional development of learners with special educational needs. The ecosystemic factors that have a profound influence on their views and beliefs about sex and sexuality were highlighted. This information gave a better understanding of the needs of these adolescents regarding sex and sexuality, which was informative to this study.

## **5.2.2 Summary of the key empirical research findings**

Sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with one Grade 10 class in a purposively selected special school, as well as the life orientation teacher (see Section 4.1). From the data, five themes emerged, namely the sources of information, the incidence of teenage pregnancy, the topics preferred by teenagers, the effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme and suggested changes to the curriculum.

### **5.2.2.1 Sources of information**

Most of the participants reported that they had obtained their information about sex and sexuality from their parents, which speaks of an open relationship with their parents. However, when there is a lack of positive and open communication between parents and their children, the children will turn to other sources for information. Some participants indicated that they watched television to get information about sex and sexuality and others turned to the internet for information. Learners can get valuable information from educational programmes on the television and internet websites; however, unlimited and unsupervised access to these resources can result in learners watching soap operas on television and accessing pornographic websites. As this information is not a true reflection of sexual relationships and other sexual matters, learners get a distorted perception of sex and sexuality on which they base the decisions they make in this regard. This often causes learners to initiate sex at an early age, which may result in teenage pregnancy. Some learners also indicated that they obtained their information from their peers. As learners spend most of the day at school and they are unsupervised for hours after school until their parents come home from work, they spend more time in the company of their peers. When there is a lack of communication between the parents and their children about sex and sexuality, they then turn to their peers for information. This information is often flawed and biased and may cause learners to become involved in risky sexual behaviour, which can result in teenage pregnancy. Other learners reported that they obtained information from the school and they specifically mentioned the subject life orientation. An important aspect that came to the fore was that education was regarded as a proactive way of reducing risky sexual behaviour among teenagers. This study found that it is, to some extent, meeting the needs of both the learners and the educators. However, by taking heed of the suggestions of the participants, this programme can be improved.

### 5.2.2.2 Incidence of teenage pregnancy

Learners reported that they were easily coerced into risky sexual behaviour because they wanted to “fit in” and to be accepted by their peers, which made them more susceptible to peer pressure. Participants also mentioned that their parents allowed them to go to parties and were ignorant about what went on at these parties. Participants stated that they often used alcohol at these parties and when they were intoxicated, they often did not use condoms, which often resulted in teenage pregnancy.

### 5.2.2.3 Topics preferred by teenagers

The participants reported that they wanted more information about teenage pregnancy, the consequences of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and drugs. Participants indicated that although they learned about pregnancy and HIV/AIDS in life orientation, they wanted more real-life examples. They suggested that people from outside the school who have HIV/AIDS should come and share their experiences with the learners. They also stressed that the learners do not take the consequences of teenage pregnancy seriously and, therefore, this topic needs to be explored more. Drugs are a huge problem at the school, especially the use of dagga. More knowledge about drug use can also be beneficial to combat teenage pregnancy, as dagga is a mind-altering drug, which may cause learners to become involved in risky sexual behaviour, as they do not think about using protection when they are on drugs.

### 5.2.2.4 Effectiveness of the current sexuality education programme

The participants additionally wanted condoms to be made available at school, so that protection would be easily accessible. They also suggested the availability of a nurse at the school premises, who could assist them with sexual health matters. The learners wanted to have reality to be part of the lessons and opted for a more practical curriculum, rather than completing worksheets. The life orientation teacher called for the standardisation of the current life orientation curriculum, so that the same topics are covered in all special schools. She also stated that the current curriculum was future-oriented, with the aim of assisting learners to become responsible adults, who can make informed choices about sex and sexuality.

### 5.2.2.5 Suggested changes to the curriculum

The most important factor that came to the fore during the research process, was the lack of parental involvement in the school work and in the lives of their children in general. According to the life orientation teacher, the school has started to organise meetings with parents to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to educate their children about sex and sexuality. She also suggested that parenting should be added to the curriculum in all special schools, as adolescents often grow up in single-parent homes and have no idea what responsibilities are required of a parent and what parenting really entails. The learners stated that they wanted more information about the consequences of teenage pregnancy.

The empirical findings helped shed light on the shortcomings that are present in the current curriculum, as well as factors that could help to improve the current sexuality education programme to meet the needs of these learners.

## 5.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In this section, I present the research conclusions as the answers to the research questions (see Section 1.3.1). I will firstly address the sub-questions, before answering my main research question.

### 5.3.1 Secondary research question 1

What is the impact of exosystemic factors on the sexuality of the Grade 10 learners at a special school?

Various ecosystemic factors influence the sexuality of the Grade 10 learners in a special school, namely the parents, the peers, the media and the school. Open and positive communication between the parent and the child has a positive impact on the sexuality of the teenager. A lack of communication and strict supervision by parents will result in the learners turning to other sources of information outside the home. The learner will seek the company of his or her peers, which often results in the learner spending more time in the company of his or her peers. As learners seek the acceptance of their peers, they will comply with the positive and negative influences of the peer group. The learners accept the information they obtain from their peers as true and reliable, and they become more susceptible to peer pressure and will partake in

risky sexual behaviour just to “fit in”. Some learners are unsupervised for hours after school and watch television programmes (e.g. soap operas) or turn to the internet (e.g. pornography) for information. The information the learners obtain from these sources are not reliable and may result in their having a distorted image of sex and sexuality. This may cause the learners to initiate sex at an early age, which often results in teenage pregnancy.

### **5.3.2 Secondary research question 2**

How do the Grade 10 learners at a special school perceive sexuality education?

The learners were positive about the sexuality education programme and reported that they obtained some valuable information about sex and sexuality in life orientation. This statement was confirmed as the learners revealed their knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy indirectly, through their responses to other questions. However, the learners indicated that they wanted more “explicit” information, as they wanted to know what the virus does to the body, what the various stages of infection are and how to care for people with HIV/AIDS. Regarding contraceptives, they wanted more information on how to use the “pill” and they wanted to physically handle contraceptives such as the pill. The learners elaborated further by stating that they wanted more real-life examples, such as people from outside the school to come and talk to them, for example, people who have HIV/AIDS could come and share their experiences with them. The learners wanted a more practical curriculum, rather than completing worksheets on the various topics discussed. As drug usage is a huge problem in the school, the learners wanted more information about drugs. The learners also requested that condoms and other contraceptives should be made available at the school. They suggested that a nurse should be appointed at the school to assist them with sexual health matters.

### **5.3.3 Secondary research question 3**

What is the life orientation teacher’s perception of the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme in a special school?

The life orientation teacher called for the standardisation of the life orientation curriculum, so that the same topics are covered by all special schools. She also stressed the importance of including the topic “parenting” in the curriculum, with the

objective of making the learners aware of the responsibilities of parenting and what it entails, as these learners often do not have role models to look to and are, therefore, ignorant about what parenting really entails. The most important aspect she mentioned was the improvement of collaboration between the parents and the school, as this could curb teenage pregnancy and risky sexual behaviour among teenagers. She also stressed the importance of the overall aim of sexuality education, namely to prepare the learners to be able to make informed choices about sex and sexuality.

#### **5.3.4 Main research question**

What are the key requirements for effective sexuality education at a special school?

As the cognitive abilities of the learners in special schools are delayed, they cannot follow the same curriculum as the learners in the mainstream schools. The following guidelines emerged from the literature and the empirical study as key requirements for effective sexuality education in a special school:

- A more practical curriculum that could better meet the needs of the learners in a special school, rather than a teacher-driven curriculum.
- A more hands-on approach is required and more real-life examples that bring the practical aspects of sex and sexuality to the learners.
- Bringing to learners the reality of HIV/AIDS, by interacting with people who are experiencing this disease, when they come to the school and talk to the learners about the disease.
- The accessibility of condoms and contraceptives by making these available at the school.
- The learners also requested the appointment of a nurse at the school, who could help the learners with contraceptives and their sexual health in general.
- The standardisation of the curriculum across all special schools, so that the same topics are discussed in all the schools.
- An important topic that should be included in the curriculum is parenting, in order to stress the responsibility that goes hand-in-hand with parenting, as well as the reality of what parenting really entails.
- The learners should also be guided on how to set goals and how teenage pregnancy can influence these goals. The overall purpose will then be to equip

the learners so that they are able to make informed choices about sex and sexuality.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

With reference to the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made to the Department of Basic Education, special schools, parents, teachers, as well as for future research:

### **5.4.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education**

#### **Recommendation 1**

Policymakers should acknowledge learners' needs and expectations of sexuality education in developing the curriculum content. This will ensure that the content is relevant, that the learners will be more engaged in learning and the learners will partake more in lessons, which could enhance the effectiveness of this programme.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Department of Health, the Department of Education and Social Services can play an additional role by supplementing the sexuality education programming by going to schools and doing plays or giving speeches about HIV/AIDS and other related topics. This initiative can also strengthen the hands of the teachers by building on the existing knowledge of learners through non-governmental organisations supplementing school-based instruction in HIV/AIDS prevention and sexuality education through occasional assemblies and performances.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Sexuality education in special schools must cover a wider scope of information and not just follow the standard curriculum, as the adolescents in special schools have basic sexual knowledge and need more advanced information.

#### **Recommendation 4**

The life orientation curriculum should be standardised in all the special schools and specifically be developed by taking the needs of the learners into account. A definite focus on teenage pregnancy should be included in the curriculum by addressing the

knowledge and beliefs on contraception, conception and pregnancy, and focusing on the responsibilities of parenthood, the knowledge and skills required for successful parenthood, together with an understanding of the importance of planning for and timing of parenthood.

### **Recommendation 5**

The learners also indicated that they would want some people from outside the school, from various communities, who could come and talk to them about HIV/AIDS and how they experience the disease. This form of learning is potentially more interactive than paper-and-pencil methods because of the opportunity it provides for engagement with the speakers. Other people's stories are powerful – they suggest reality, not fiction, and offer young people tangible and personal “proof” of what things are really like. Real-life stories add meaning to what can be abstract concepts, such as HIV/AIDS or unplanned pregnancy, and this meaning can capture adolescents' imagination as a first step in the enhancement of knowledge of safer sexual practices.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Department of Basic Education should visit special schools on a regular basis to stay in touch with the needs of both the teachers and the learners. Their needs should be incorporated within the life orientation curriculum, specifically the sexuality education programme.

#### 5.4.2 Recommendations to schools

### **Recommendation 7**

Schools should offer information on contraception and may consider making contraceptives available to learners in some cases. The participants recognised an incongruence between the insistence on safer sex in sexuality education and the reluctance of some schools to distribute condoms to the learners. This inconsistency undermines the potency of the messages of safer sex by communicating the underlying preference of the schools that the learners should not engage in sexual activity at all.

### **Recommendation 8**

Adopting a comprehensive approach that addresses both abstinence and safe sex practices, rather than a focus on abstinence only. The focus of the programme should

be dependent on the stage of development or the age of the learner, rather than the grade. This will ensure that the learners who are older for their grade (due to high levels of repetition – a known risk for dropping out of school and, in turn, pregnancy) receive developmentally appropriate messages.

### **Recommendation 9**

The teachers at special schools should be able to comment on the content of the sexuality education programme, as they know what the learners' needs are.

### **5.4.3 Recommendations to parents**

#### **Recommendation 10**

Parents should partake in parenting programmes initiated by the school to obtain the necessary skills and knowledge to talk to their children about sex and sexual matters and to be more involved in their children's lives by improving the monitoring and control of how their children spend their free time and knowing who their friends are and what they access on their phones and computers.

#### **Recommendation 11**

As most of the participants come from single-parent homes and their parents must work due to financial difficulty, they are unsupervised for hours after school until their parents return home from work. Parents should, therefore, strengthen the support networks among the community members to extend informal social control that can assist the parents with the supervision of their children even if they are not there.

### **5.4.4 Recommendations to teachers**

#### **Recommendation 12**

Teachers should structure classroom activities in more interactive ways to ensure interaction between the teacher and the learners.

### **Recommendation 13**

Schools should ensure parental involvement by presenting workshops on sexuality education. These workshops should focus on open communication between the parents and their children about sexual matters.

### **Recommendation 14**

Department-based programmes must address the varied life experiences and sexuality of adolescents and young people and should focus not only on the negative potential consequences of sex, but also on healthy sexuality as a normal part of the life course.

#### **5.4.5 Recommendations for further research**

The following recommendations are made for further research:

### **Recommendation 15**

Throughout the study, I could not find any research regarding the evaluation of the effectiveness of the sexuality education programme with regard to learners with special educational needs. Therefore, further research that includes other special schools in this regard is necessary.

### **Recommendation 16**

The content of sexuality education textbooks should be assessed to include topics on sexual diversity. Including sexual diversity in ways that do not further marginalise 'other' or marginalised sexualities is not only important in terms of inclusivity but can be a means of combating discriminatory practices.

## **6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

During the research process and the writing of my dissertation I identified possible limitations of my study. I became aware that my participants might have wished to discuss the issue of adolescent sexuality which was not part of the interview schedule. This limitation also led to the researcher not being able to dig deeper into how the HIV positive adolescent's girls got infected with the HIV epidemic as their explanations were shrouded in mystery because they fear disclosure.

The study also relies on interview data only. An additional method of data collection could have been used, such as naïve sketches to gain more depth. As this study was limited to a specific class the findings cannot be generalised to other learners with special educational needs.

## **7. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The aim of this study was to explore how the Grade 10 learners in a special school perceive sexuality education and give possible guidelines that may help make the sexuality education programme more effective to meet the needs of these learners. I was not disappointed by either my choice of topic or my choice to follow a qualitative approach in the research. The primary significance of this study is the opportunity it afforded me to listen to the opinions and beliefs of the learners in a special school about sexuality education and to bring it to the fore. This also provided the participants with the opportunity to voice their perceptions and needs regarding sexuality education.

Although I am familiar with some of the challenges these learners face on various levels, my interaction with the learners during the interviews caused the stark reality of these challenges to dawn on me afresh, illuminating the vulnerability of these learners even more. The improvement of the collaboration between the parents and the school by holding parents' meetings where parents are afforded the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills to foster more open communication with their children.

Sexuality education can only be effective if the Department of Education, the parents, the teachers and all other stakeholders get on board and are active participants in this regard. I trust that this research study will contribute to the sexuality education programme in special schools being refined to meet the needs of these learners with special educational needs. I also hope that further research will be done in other special schools, which could result in a standardisation of the sexuality education in special schools with the purpose of providing the learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed choices about sex and sexual matters, now and in the future.

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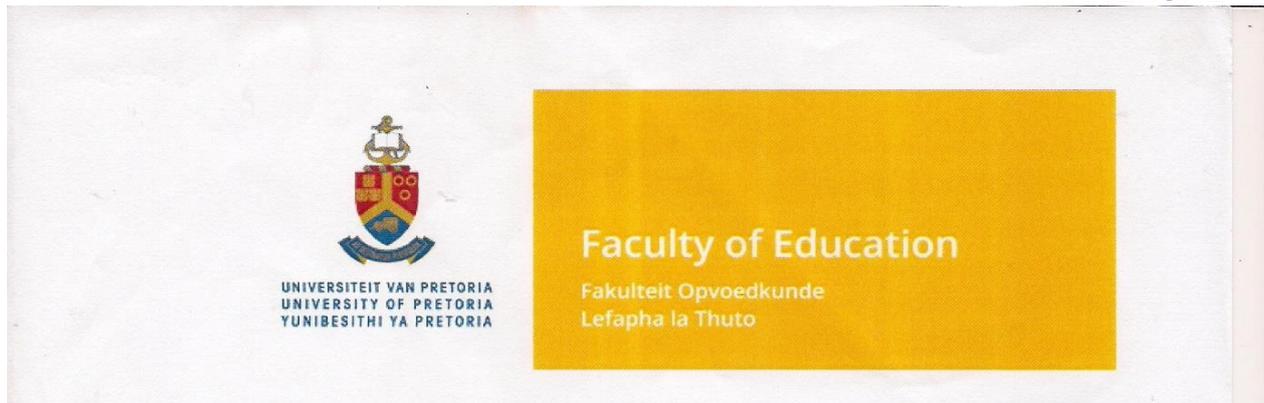
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May 2016

Dear Grade 10 Learner

**REQUESTING YOUR PERMISSION TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY  
ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

You are hereby invited to participate in a research study on the effectiveness of the Sexuality Education as part of Life Orientation in Grade 10. Let me explain what this is all about: I want to give you, as Grade 10 learners, the opportunity to give your opinion on what information you think should be included in the section on Sexuality Education. Sometimes learners know better what they should be taught, and not the curriculum.

If you participate, it will involve that I conduct an interview with you. An interview is like a conversation – I will ask you a few questions which you will then answer. But if you decide that you do not want to take part anymore, you are welcome to tell me, and the interview will be ended. You will be doing me a big favour if I can hear what you think about this important issue. This interview will be recorded as this will help me to remember your answers when I am writing up my research. Once the interview is finished I will show you what I have written down from what I have heard so that you can make sure that it contains the correct information. I also want to assure you that your real name will not be used in my study. I will give you another name so that nobody will know who you really are. This study, in which you will partake, will be read by many people all over the world, and this will help many boys and girls like you, if they receive the correct information.

I agree / do not agree to take part in this study and I agree / do not agree that the interview conducted with me, may be recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE**

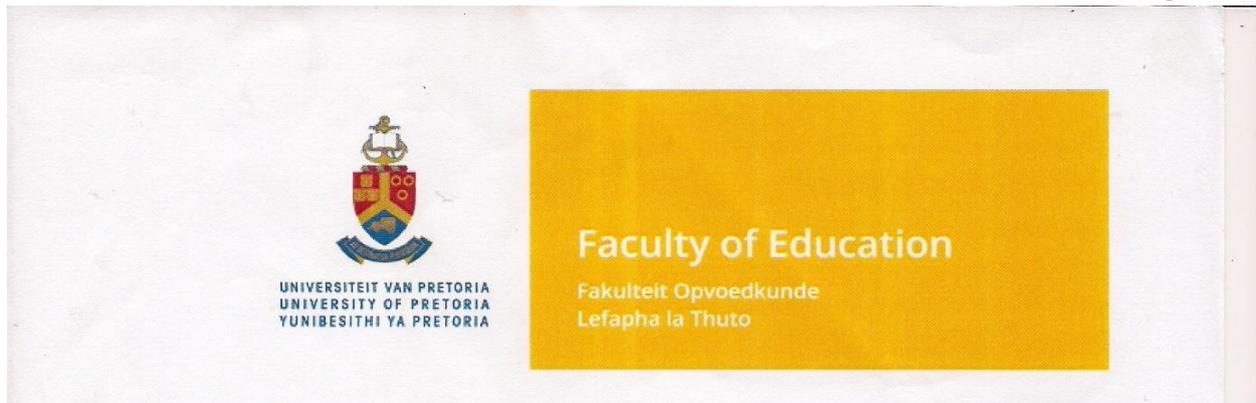
\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ms Yvette Muller  
(Student)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr MG Steyn  
(Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_



Dear Parent/Guardian

**REQUESTING CONSENT FOR YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

I am a teacher at a special school and a student in the master's programme for Learning Support at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for completing this degree is to conduct a research study. The title of the study is:

***“The effectiveness of the Sexuality Education programme in a special school”***

My study will involve Grade 10 learners, as they are exposed to Sexuality Education in the subject Life Orientation. I believe that they will be able to provide valuable and important information for the research.

I want to conduct an interview with your child on what she/he regards as the relevant information that she/he feels should be included in the Sexuality Education programme. Usually the Department of Education decides what content should be included in a subject and this content is included in the curriculum. Often learners do not find this content relevant. Attached please find the questions that your child will be asked. Interviews will be recorded as this will help me to remember the answers of learners when I write up my research. Learners will get a copy of what I have written down and what I have heard during the interview, this will also be read to them to make sure it contains the correct information.

I hereby request permission to conduct an interview with your child to determine her/his views on Sexuality Education. Your child's participation in this study will give us, as teachers, insight into the perceptions of Grade 10 learners on Life Orientation and

specifically Sexuality Education and will assist us in possibly adapting the programme to meet their needs.

- All information will be kept strictly confidential. Your child's name and that of the school will not be disclosed. Your child's participation is voluntary, and she/he can withdraw from the interview at any time should she/he wish to do so.

All data collected with funding may be available in an open repository for public and scientific use.

## CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

Please initial the box on the right-hand side if you agree to the statement.

I confirm that I have read the information provided and understand what this research entails.	
I understand that my child's privacy will be protected in that my child's name and that of the school will not be disclosed.	
I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that she/he can withdraw from the interview at any time.	
I acknowledge that I have been informed that the interviews will be recorded, and information given will be kept strictly confidential. I, therefore, give consent to the use of recording equipment for the purpose of data collection and data analysis, as stipulated in this letter.	

I hereby agree / do not agree to my child's participation in the research and give consent that the interview may be recorded.

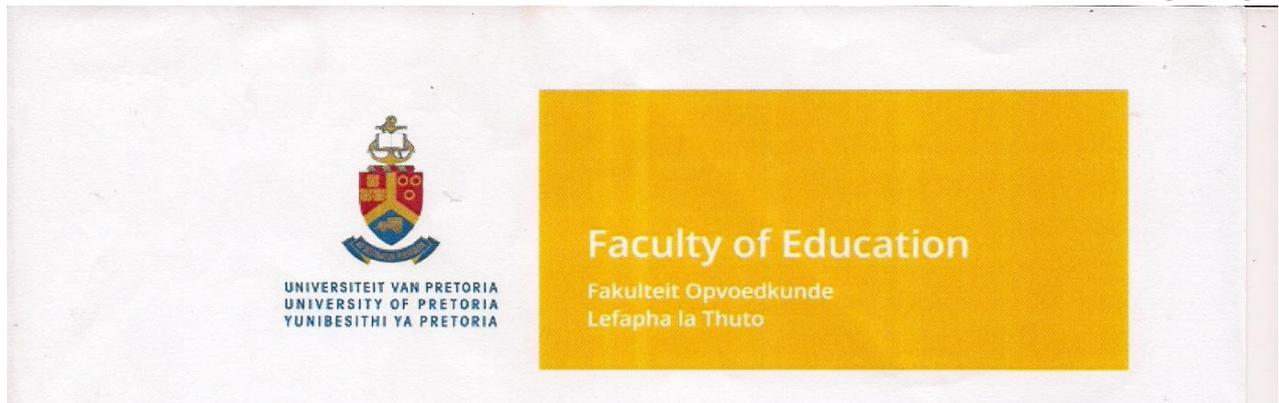
\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

Your sincerely

Yvette Muller



Dear Life Orientation teacher

I am a student in the master's programme for Learning Support at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for completing this degree is to conduct a search study. My study will involve one Grade 10 class that has been exposed to Sexuality Education and their Life Orientation teacher. The focus will be on the effectiveness of the current Sexuality Education programme implemented at the school. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. Your name, the name of the school and the name of the learners will not be linked to the research material. A copy of the questions that will be asked during the in-depth interview, will also be provided.

The interview will be recorded for the purpose of data collection and data analysis. A printed copy of the interview will be made available to ensure that it is a true version of what was recorded. Information disclosed during the interview will only be assessed and used by the researcher for research purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained during and after the interviewing process.

I hereby give consent/do not give my consent to participate in an in-depth interview. I also give my consent/do not give my consent for the interview to be recorded.

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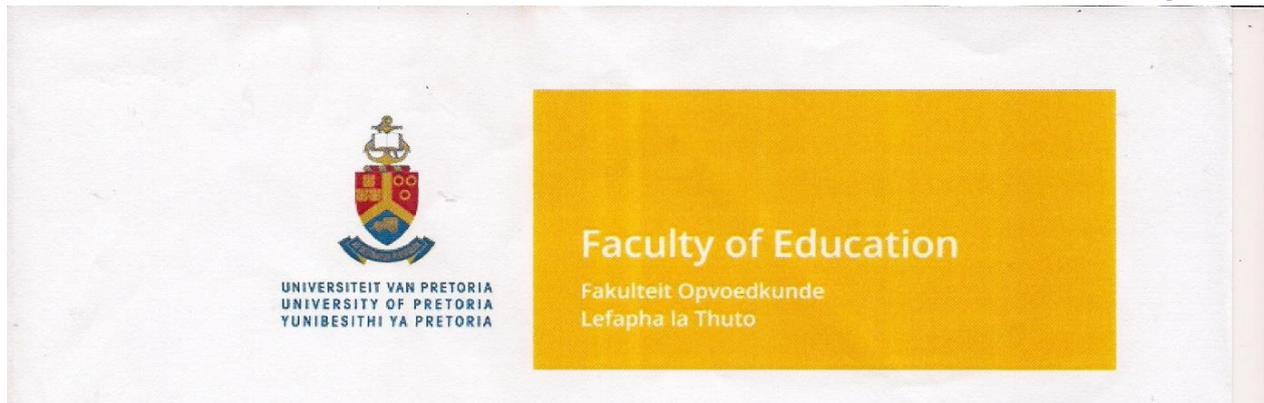
**NAME**

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**SIGNATURE**

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**DATE**



May 2016

The Principal

Dear Sir

**REQUEST PERMISSION FOR ONE GRADE 10 LIFE ORIENTATION CLASS, CONSISTING OF 9 GIRLS AND 7 BOYS AGED 16-18 YEARS, TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION.**

I am a student in the master's programme for Learning Support at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for completing this degree is to conduct a research study. My study will involve one Grade 10 class that has been exposed to Sexuality Education as well as their Life Orientation teacher.

I, therefore, request permission to include one Grade 10 class, consisting of 9 girls and 7 boys aged 16-18 years, as part of this study.

The aim will be to give these Grade 10 learners a voice, allowing them to be part of the process of deciding what information should be included in the Sexuality Education programme that will reflect their views and meet their needs.

Parents, learners and the Life Orientation teacher will receive a letter of consent to inform them about the study and what will be expected of them. These letters will also

clearly state that participation is voluntary and that the learners and the teacher are free to withdraw from the interview at any time should they wish to do so. Only learners with consent will take part in the study. Permission will also be obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education and the Chairman of the Governing Body. The research will be conducted outside of school hours (place, date and time will be confirmed). The name of the school, the identity of the learners and that of the Life Orientation teacher will not be revealed and will be kept confidential.

Consent will also be obtained from learners and the Life Orientation teacher for interviews to be recorded, for the purpose of data collection and analysis. A printed copy of the interviews will be made available to the Life Orientation teacher and the learners, to ensure that it is a true version of what was recorded.

All data collected with public funding may be available in an open repository for public and scientific use.

Should you have any questions or concerns, you are welcome to contact me via e-mail or telephonically. My contact details, and those of my supervisors, are at the end of the letter.

**Research project:** The Effectiveness of Sexuality Education in a special school.

**Name of researcher:** Yvette Muller (Student No. 87505569).

Please sign in the box on the right-hand side if you agree to the statements

	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
I confirm that I have read and understood the information in the letter explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it.	
I understand that my school and the Grade 10 learners put forward for participation are participating voluntarily, and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.	
I understand that my name, the name of the school, the names of the Grade 10 learners as well as that of the Life Orientation teacher will not be linked to the research material. The school will not be identifiable in the reports as well as in the results from the research.	
I acknowledge that I have been informed that the interviews will be recorded and I, therefore, give consent for the use of recording equipment for the purpose of data collection and data analysis as stipulated in the information letter.	
I agree that the Grade 10 learners may take part in the above-mentioned research project, should they choose to do so.	

I hereby give my consent / do not give my consent for interviews to be conducted with one Grade 10 class consisting of 9 girls and 7 boys aged 16-18 years and their Life Orientation teacher to determine their views on Sexuality Education.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NO.</b>	<b>e-mail</b>
Yvette Muller	Researcher (Student)	0828796347	<a href="mailto:ymuller@livre.co.za">ymuller@livre.co.za</a>
DR MG Steyn	Supervisor	(012) 420-5289	<a href="mailto:mg.steyn@up.ac.za">mg.steyn@up.ac.za</a>
Ms K Bruwer	Co-supervisor	(012) 420-5542	<a href="mailto:marietjiebruwer@up.ac.za">marietjiebruwer@up.ac.za</a>

Yours sincerely

Yvette Muller  
(Student No. 87505569)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME OF RESEARCHER**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME OF SUPERVISOR**

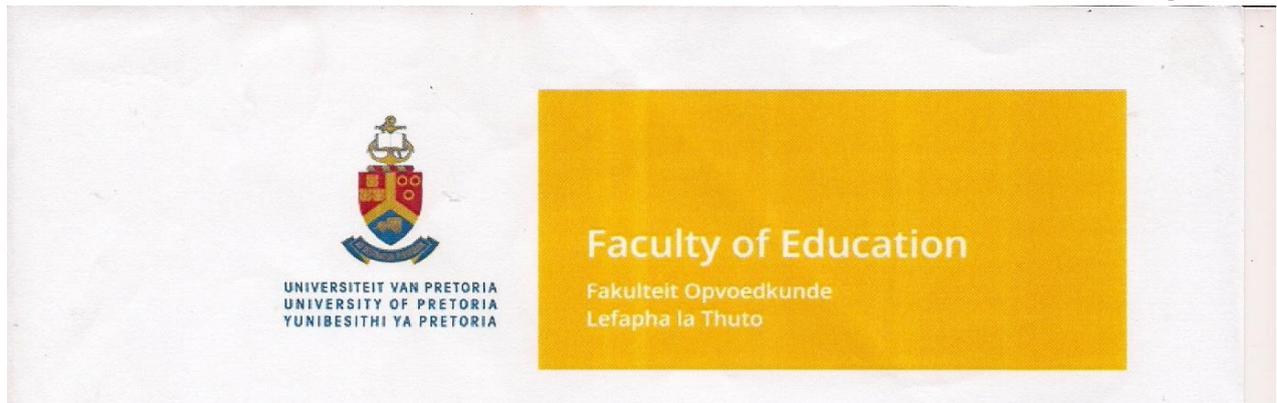
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**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME OF CO-SUPERVISOR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**



May 2016

Chairman of the Governing Body

Dear sir

**REQUESTING PERMISSION TO INCLUDE ONE GRADE 10 LIFE ORIENTATION CLASS AND THEIR LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER IN A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SEXUALITY PROGRAMME.**

I am a teacher at a special school and a student in the master's programme for Learning Support at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for completing this degree is to conduct a research study. My study will involve one Grade 10 class consisting of 9 girls and 7 boys aged 16-18 years that are exposed to Sexuality Education which is entrenched in the subject Life Orientation.

The aim of the study is to give the above-mentioned learners a voice by allowing them to be part of the process in deciding what information to include in such a Sexuality Education programme.

Learners parents and the Life Orientation teacher will receive letters of consent to inform them about the study and what will be expected of them. These letters will also clearly state that participation is voluntary and that the learners and the teacher are free to withdraw from the interview at any time should they wish to. Permission will also be obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education and the principal to conduct the research outside of school hours (place, time and date will be confirmed).

Interviews will be recorded for data collection and data analysis. Consent will be obtained from the learners and the Life Orientation teacher to record the interviews. The Life Orientation teacher will have access to a printed copy of the interviews to ensure that it is a true version of what was recorded. A printed copy of the interview will be read to the learners to ensure that it is a true version of what was recorded.

Any information given will be kept strictly confidential and the names of the learners, the Life Orientation teacher as well as the name of the school will not be disclosed. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the research, you are welcome to contact me via e-mail or telephonically.

All data collected with public funding may be available in an open repository for public and scientific use.

My contact details and those of my supervisors are as follow:

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NO.</b>	<b>e-mail</b>
Yvette Muller	Researcher (Student)	0828796347	<a href="mailto:ymuller@livre.co.za">ymuller@livre.co.za</a>
DR MG Steyn	Supervisor	(012) 420-5289	<a href="mailto:mg.steyn@up.ac.za">mg.steyn@up.ac.za</a>
Ms K Bruwer	Co-supervisor	(012) 420-5542	<a href="mailto:marietjiebruwer@up.ac.za">marietjiebruwer@up.ac.za</a>

I believe that my research will benefit the school as it can give teachers an insight into the perceptions of Grade 10 learners on Sexuality Education and contribute to adapting the current curriculum to meet the needs of these learners.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Yvette Muller**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr MG Steyn**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

Please sign in the box on the right if you agree to the statement.

	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
I understand that the learners and the Life Orientation teacher's privacy will be protected in that their names and that of the school will remain anonymous.	
I understand that the learner's and the Life Orientation teacher's participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw from the interview at any time without any negative consequences.	
I acknowledge that I am informed that the interviews will be recorded, and data given will be kept in the strictest of confidence. I, therefore, give consent that the use of recording equipment for data collection and data analysis, as stipulated in the information letter, may be used.	

I hereby grant permission / do not grant permission for interviews to be conducted with one Grade 10 class consisting of 9 girls and 7 boys aged 16-18 years and their Life Orientation teacher, as to determine their views on Sexuality Education.

For administrative use only:  
Reference no: D2017 / 081  
enquiries: Diane Bunting 011 843 6503



GAUTENG PROVINCE

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	21 June 2016
Validity of Research Approval:	21 June 2016 to 30 September 2016
Name of Researcher:	Muller Y.
Address of Researcher:	55 Ireland Gardens; 93 Ireland Avenue; Eldoraigne; Centurion; 0157
Telephone / Fax Number/s:	012 654 0604; 082 879 6347
Email address:	everlastinglife.fred@telkomsa.net
Research Topic:	The effectiveness of sexuality education in a special school.
Number and type of schools:	ONE LSEN School
District/s/HO	Gauteng West

**Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to the Principal, SGB and the relevant District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted. However participation is VOLUNTARY

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher has agreed to and may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

***CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE***

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principals and the chairpersons of the School Governing Body (SGB) must be presented with a copy of this letter.
2. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the GDE District officials, principals, SGBs, teachers, parents and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid.

*2016/06/27*

***Making education a societal priority***

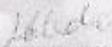
Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management ER&KM

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2006 Tel: (011) 355 0505

3. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal and/or Director must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
4. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded by the end of the THIRD quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
5. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
6. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written consent from the SGB/s, principals, educators, parents and learners, as applicable, before commencing with research.
7. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilizing his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institution/s, staff and/or the officer/s visited for supplying such resources.
8. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research title, report or summary.
9. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management, with electronic copies of the Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation as well as a Research Summary (on the GDE Summary template). Failure to submit your Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation and Research Summary on completion of your studies / project – a month after graduation or project completion - may result in permission being withheld from you and your Supervisor in future.
10. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
11. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director/s and school/s concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Dr David Makhado

Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 2016/06/27

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management (ER&KM)

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
 011 300 7710 / Johannesburg 2001 Tel: 011 300 0405



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

## RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: EC 15/06/03
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd The perspectives of Grade 10 learners regarding sexuality education in a special school
INVESTIGATOR	Ms Yvette Muller
DEPARTMENT	Early Childhood Education
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	12 February 2016
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	23 November 2017

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

CC

Ms Bronwynne Swarts  
Prof Miemsie Steyn

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

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

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS

1. Where did you get your information about sexual matters?
2. Why do you think school girls still get pregnant even if they have access to Sexuality Education?
3. In Grade 10 there is a section on Sexuality Education in the subject Life Orientation. Do you feel that the contents dealt with is giving you sufficient information to make decisions concerning sexually related matters?
4. What do you think could be added to the Sexuality Education program that could prevent girls from falling pregnant?
5. Would you change anything in the curriculum?
6. What do you think could be added to the Sexuality Education programme?

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER**

1. Is enough time allocated in class and the curriculum for Sexuality Education?
2. What is your opinion of the current Sexuality Education programme?
3. What would you suggest one can adapt or change to meet the needs of the learners more effectively?
4. Even though the learners are exposed to Sexuality Education, the girls still fall pregnant. Why?
5. Should changes or adaptations be made to the Sexuality Education programme and if so, could this help decrease the incidence of teenage pregnancy?



## CONSENT FOR THE USE OF RECORDING EQUIPMENT

Yvette Muller is conducting research about the effectiveness of Sexuality Education in a special school. She will focus on giving Grade 10 learners a voice by allowing them to be part of the process of deciding what information to include in the Sexuality Education programme that will reflect their views and meet their needs. She will also focus on the perception of the Life Orientation teacher about Sexuality Education.

I declare that I am aware that my participation in the research is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time. I am also aware that during the in-depth interview I can choose not to answer any of the questions.

The information that I will disclose during the interview will only be assessed and used by the researcher for research purposes. All data collected with public funding may be available in an open repository for public and scientific use. I am aware that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained during and after the interview process.

By signing this form, I certify that Yvette Muller has satisfactorily explained the research project and that I consent to have my interview recorded for this study.

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**NAME**

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**SIGNATURE**

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**DATE**