CHAPTER 4

HOW EDUCATORS IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF ORPHANED LEARNERS: EMERGING THEMES

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present and illustrate the themes that emerged from interviewing four educators from School A and four educators from School B. The purpose of interviewing the educators was to explore how they identify and respond to the orphaned learners' needs. The same iterative process of data collection and analysis described in the second chapter was used. In the initial open coding of the data collected in the interviews with the educators, I identified 144 codes (see Appendix T). I then compared and contrasted the codes, and finally grouped the codes sharing common characteristics into categories. A total of 15 categories were identified. Two main themes and five sub-themes emerged from integrating and summarising the categories. Table 4.1 is a list of themes, sub-themes and condensed categories developed from the data collected in these interviews. Verbatim interview excerpts supporting the themes, sub-themes and categories are presented in the grey boxes.

Table 4.1: Emerging themes, sub-themes and categories

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
Theme 1: Identifying orphaned learners and their needs	**Sub-theme 1.1:** Educators' perception of orphaned learners	**Category 1.1.1:** Orphaned learners' appearance and behaviour **Category 1.1.2:** Orphans and non-orphans
	Sub-theme 1.2: Identifying the orphaned learners and their needs	**Category 1.2.1:** Behaviour of the orphaned learner **Category 1.2.2:** Appearance and financial status of the orphans **Category 1.2.3:** Educator-orphaned learner relationship **Category 1.2.4:** Routine administrative work
Theme 2: Responding to the needs of orphaned learners	**Sub-theme 2.1:** Educators' perception of their roles	**Category 2.1.1:** Responsibilities of providing care to the orphaned learners **Category 2.1.2:** Educator-educator relationship **Category 2.1.3:** Motivation to help orphaned learners
	Sub-theme 2.2: Fulfilling the needs of orphaned learners.	**Category: 2.2.1:** Addressing physical needs **Category 2.2.2:** Addressing emotional and social needs, and learning support. **Category 2.2.3:** Management involvement in responding to the needs of orphans
	Sub-theme 2.3: External response to assisting orphaned learners	**Category 2.3.1:** Community response to the needs of orphans **Category 2.3.2:** Government response to the needs of orphans

4.2   THEMES

Theme 1: Identifying orphaned learners and their needs

This theme reports on how educators in School A and School B perceive and identify orphaned learners. The theme also demonstrates how educators ascertain the needs of the orphaned learners in their schools. The characteristics and behaviour of the learners that draw the attention of the educators are reported.

Sub-theme 1.1: Educators' perception of orphaned learners

During the interviews with the educators it became apparent that the common conception of an orphan was drawn from the appearance of the learner, how the learner behaved in class and the learner's interaction with other learners. Educator assumptions of the orphaned learners were linked to how the educators recognised the orphans and identified their needs.

Category 1.1.1: Orphan appearance and behaviour

This category includes different versions of reality of how educators construct orphanhood and how the educators identify orphaned learners. Most of the educators interviewed construe orphaned learners as learners who are deprived of basic needs such as food and clothes. In addition to the material needs mentioned, some educators depict orphans as learners who struggle academically and who are often unhappy. Three educators articulated the following:

*We have a lot of problems with the orphaned learners. These learners – sometimes there are things that they need but they do not get like enough food, sometimes you see them by their clothes, their uniform is not right (**Malope 8 & 9).***

*The orphaned learners are withdrawn. Especially during winter if you look at them you see that they are wearing only a few clothes that cannot keep them warm (**Mabena 5-6).***

*The appearance, you can see that the child is not happy, he is not performing well in class, does not have enough learning materials (**Mokoena 6-8).***

While it appeared common for most of the educators in both schools to associate orphanhood with poverty, two educators, namely Mabena and Khumalo, were concerned that the perception of orphans as being destitute could be flawed. The two educators explained that some orphans have relatives who take care of their physical needs such that they do not appear destitute. The two educators reported that there are some non-orphaned learners from poor families who are deprived of material needs or neglected by their parents such that they appear impecunious. The concern was that there is a possibility that poor non-orphaned learners could be mistaken for being orphans. The educators expressed the following views:

> *Most of them you cannot identify them even if they come here you cannot identify them. They are very shy. Some do better at home – maybe they have relatives who support them. They come to school in school uniform, only a few are struggling. We have some learners who have parents but they are neglected, if you look at them you think that they are orphans (**Mabena 7-10**).*
>
> *Some of them you can identify by looking – others you cannot. You will not notice that they do not have parents (**Khumalo 26**).*

The perceptions of the educators above imply that not all orphans appear destitute. Therefore, the image of orphans as being children deprived of material needs that reflect on their appearance could be deluding.

Category 1.1.2: Orphans and non-orphans

This category describes the opinion of the educators with regard to the orphaned learners in relation to non-orphans. Some of the educators interviewed remarked that orphans are learners who other learners often tease, isolate and stigmatise. Educator Khumalo gave an account of orphans as **being isolated** by other learners, while Educator Chabalala reported observing orphans isolating themselves from the other learners and forming a group of their own. According to Educator Mabena the orphaned learners appear reluctant to reveal themselves, possibly for fear of being labelled by other learners.

> *Other non-orphans will make them feel that they are orphans. They isolate them. They say, "I do not want to go with this one". I have been observing them. You will not become their friend until you group yourself with other orphans (**Khumalo 84 & 85**).*
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> *We have those who go home together they feel like they are birds of the same feather they will stick together. They feel like this is the person who is like me. On the day when they do not get food, they know that if we stick together they will all not have food, unlike, those who are with the others they become burdens to them (**Chabalala 51**).*
>
> *Sometimes the granny do not know what to do. They go and buy no name shoes. When they come to school wearing the shoes the other learners tease them (**Mtalala 101**).*
>
> *There are programmes sent by the government telling us to go to class to look for orphans. So we go to class and say "Can we have orphaned learners come to see me after this period". Some will be shy and not come. So I ask: "Where is this one? I know he is an orphan." The others will say: "Mam, she did not stand, and we do not know what the problem is." I think that they are shy or the class is laughing at them (**Mabena 30 & 31**).*

Other educators had different views on the relationships between the orphans and other learners. Educator Mtalala described orphaned learners as shy and clumsy learners, who do not interact with other learners. She confirmed that other learners tease orphans. According to Educator Khumalo, orphans and non-orphans **do not interact socially**. In contrast, Educators Mabena, Malope and Chabalala indicated that orphans do get along with other learners. Educator Malope expressed that the orphaned learners do socialise with other learners through play and tell each other their problems. These educators stated:

> *So far we have not had anything reported that the orphans are segregated. They mix with them. They are not isolated. We have not received any report unless they are shy to report (**Mabena 36 & 37**).*
>
> *They are friends sometimes you find them playing together one will tell the other: "I am not happy at home" (**Malope 21**).*
>
> *In our school we have not have a case where the other learners pick on them. I think that they feel that these people are different from us. Maybe these ones have and we do not have (**Chabalala 53 & 54**).*

The difference in opinion regarding the relationship between the orphans and their peers also emerged during the interviews with the orphans. Six learners reported that they got along well with their peers, sharing food and playing together. They described their relationship as positive and supportive. Conversely, six other learners narrated their experiences of being rejected and stigmatised by non-orphaned learners.

In addition to relationship with peers, Educators Chabalala and Mokoena see orphans as typically poor learners in school. In their quantitative study, Schierhout, Kinghorn, Govender, Mungani and Morely (2004) report similar findings where 80.6 percent of the educators who participated in the study were of the opinion that orphanhood affects school performance. In this study there were educators who believed that all the learners in their school were generally underachievers and not necessarily only the orphans. The educators voiced the following views:

> *From 36 orphans there is only one in Grade 6 who excels academically. His background is terrible. I got it from the class educator. The others do not do well. It affects them* *(Chabalala 57-58).*
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> *…The appearance, you can see that the child is not happy; he is not performing well in class. Does not have enough learning materials (Mokoena 6–8).*
>
> *…they are not identified as underachieving because our learners are underachieving generally. We have a problem with all of them and not only the orphaned learners. So they are just like other learners (Mabena 44 & 45).*

It seems that some educators believe that orphanhood has a negative effect on the academic performance of the learners owing to the orphaned learners' emotional state and a lack of material resources that support learning, while other educators did not connect learner underachievement with orphanhood.

Sub-theme 1.2: Identifying orphaned learners and their needs

This sub-theme illustrates how the educators identify orphaned learners and the needs of the orphans. The strategies for identifying the orphans and recognising their needs are closely linked and overlap. Most educators in the two schools identify the orphans and

their needs by their appearance and by their behaviour when they open up to the educators or when recording background information for administrative purposes.

Category 1.2.1: Behaviour of the orphaned learners

The majority of the educators interviewed from both schools indicated that they identify orphans and their needs by analysing the learner's behaviour. Educator Mtalala explained that orphaned learners are learners who often **react violently** towards fellow learners and educators; while Educator Chabalala described these learners' behaviour as often being disruptive in class and that they dodged coming to school after the lunch break. Educator Malope on the other hand explained the **absenteeism** of some of the learners as being caused by hunger and lack of concentration in class. The following are some of their responses:

Some become violent. Maybe you find that the friends are teasing them when they are playing. They will take the teasing seriously. It seems there is anger inside them so, when they start teasing she or he will react violently and automatically somebody will have some blood moving out of the body. When you call the boy and ask him: "Why do you fight?" – they say that they are defending themselves **(Mtalala 36 & 37).**

When I arrived in the school what I noticed was that during break a lot of the kids were not eating and after break others were playing truancy. When you try to find out why they were not at school after break that is when I discovered that most of them were hungry. They felt that coming to school after break and they have not eaten was useless because they could not concentrate **(Chabalala.3-6).**

I had a certain girl in my class. I observed the girl during break. The girl was not playing at all or even having a drink. I approach the girl and asked what is wrong? Are you having a headache? She said no I have a problem. Then I told her let us go to my office. In my office the girl explained that her mother passed away **(Mtalala 1 & 2).**

In class they would not concentrate. Sometimes you see a learner is tired you can see that the learner is not getting the right food **(Malope 12 & 13).**

The quotations give the impression that the orphaned learners' behaviour seems to be a challenging reality for the majority of educators who were interviewed. Educator Mtalala

believed that the orphans react violently and are disruptive[14] in class due to their emotional state and their deprived needs. She described the orphaned learners' behaviour as ranging from withdrawal to reacting violently when teased by other learners. Willis (2002) identifies withdrawal and violent behaviour as common signs of mourning. This therefore implies that some of the orphans in the study could still be mourning the death of their parent(s). Dowdney (2000) points out that one in five bereaved children is likely to have emotional and behavioural symptoms manifested in forms of anxiety, depression, anger, outbursts and regression. De Witt and Lessing (2005) concur, reporting that educators in their study indicated that factors influencing the psychological behaviour of orphans in their schools involved depression, sadness and stigmatisation. The following quotations exemplify the experiences and views of the educators in the current study with regard to the behaviour of the orphaned learners:

> *"Some of the learners are a little bit quiet. Others become violent. Maybe you find that their friends are teasing them when they are playing but they will take the teasing seriously. It seems there is anger inside them so when they start teasing she or he will react violently and automatically somebody will have some blood moving out of the body. When you call the boy and ask him: "Why do you fight?" They will tell you something like maybe "I miss my mummy" or "I miss my dad" or maybe "I am staying with my granny and my granny can not buy me one, two, three maybe here in school I see other children are having one, two three and I do not have because I don't have parents" (Mtalala.36-39).*
>
> *You find that when a child is disruptive in class the educator throws them out. So when I walk around I write their names and then tell them to come to my office in the afternoon. When they come I ask them: "Why are you outside during this period?" They say: "No, this was doing this to me, so when I tried to revenge myself the educator saw us." When you ask them" "Why are you doing this?" You will capture that this one the parents are separated or the parent has abandoned them and they are living with the granny (Mtalala 57–60).*

The excerpts suggest that some educators believe that orphans act in response to frustration from their unfulfilled needs by either withdrawing from others or responding violently when aggravated. Some of the educators believe that the orphaned learners' negative behaviour is likely to be caused by conditions at home. For example, Educator

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[14] Libbey (2004) describes disruptive behaviour in class as learners who disturbs the class, do not follow instructions and annoy the educator.

Mtalala mentioned that some of the grandparents caring for the orphans might be exhausted from trying to provide for the orphaned learners. Mtalala narrates:

> *The granny also gets tired in supporting the kids. That grant that was suppose to take care of the granny, the granny is now sharing it with the girl children. You see, it becomes a headache to the granny. The granny will start saying go and look for your mummy or go and look for your dad so the child comes to school with that when somebody provokes him he will react (**Mtlala 60 –63**).*

Another reported concern of Educator Chabalala was the **behaviour of the orphans outside the school premises**. Educators Chabalala and Selepe, both on the staff at School A, believed that orphans engage in criminal activities, such as prostitution and breaking into houses to steal, when they were not engaged in school activities. The educators interviewed by Giese et al. (2003), reported cases of children dropping out of school and either begging on the street or getting involved in crime to meet their needs. The following insert expresses the views of the educators concerning the behaviour of orphaned learners:

> *Another thing that we talked about in the staff room is that these girls they get exploited. They are lacking a lot of things like no money or food and they are not like their friends. Most of them get into affairs with older men, not because they want, but it is some form of prostitution. They get money for their needs. I think their status pushes them to do a lot of bad things* (*Chabalala 96-98*).
>
> *Now that it is winter this one does not have any warm clothes – especially when it comes to boys – boys they tend to turn to drugs or they can do burglar, maybe they break houses and take some appliances and sell to buy food or drugs. You ask: "Why did this boy do this?" At the end of the day you find out that this boy did not have food. They do not have anything to eat or clothes to wear. That is why maybe they steal things and sell them (Selepe.1.6-8).*

These quotations illustrate educator assumptions about the behaviour of the orphaned learners off the school premises. The two educators from School A who were quoted believed that orphaned learners get involved in criminal activities to survive because there is nobody accountable to provide for their needs. On the other hand, Educator Dube commented that, in terms of general behaviour, orphaned learners are just like other learners. They do not have distinctive behavioural problems. She stated:

> *They are not delinquent. They are just like any other learner. Their silliness is like other ordinary learners (**Dube 46**).*

In the previous study done by Makame and Grantham-McGregory (2002), it was noted that there was no significant difference between orphans and non-orphans in terms of behaviour and complaints about homework not being completed. In contrast, Educators Dube and Malope, both from the Foundation Phase, reported that one of the problems with orphaned learners is that they lack parental care and assistance in doing homework. They identified orphaned learners when they did not do their homework or when they struggled with homework. The educators made the following remarks:

> *We have many orphaned learners especially this year. They cope very well in the classroom, except the time you give them homework. They start to struggle. That is when, if you do not know the background of the learner, you start asking the learner: "Why is this not done?" That is when they start to tell you all the details and you as the educator take the position of a parent to the learner (**Dube 2-7**).*
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> *Usually the learners do talk. They would tell you that I do not have parents. Sometimes when you give them activity to do at home with a parent, they would come to you and tell you that I do not have a mother or a father. I am staying with my brother. So I would say this person you are staying with, take him as your parent. They can help you with the schoolwork (**Malope 15-17**).*

The excerpts further indicate that although some orphaned learners may have relatives who provide for their material needs, there seems to be a gap in terms of parental involvement in supporting the orphans' learning experience. The learners may not regard the adult figures in their lives as parents hence the hesitation in approaching them to assist them with their homework.

Category 1.2.2: Appearance and financial state of the orphans

Two educators, Educators Khumalo and Chabalala, reported that some of the orphaned learners divulge their status when they are asked to pay for school activities, buy and wear full school uniforms or when they are hungry.

> *I like checking uniform the learners with uniform; I was also the choir conductor. I told them "you have to wear this and this". They would come and tell you "I do not have this and this". Then I tell them "you go and tell your parents to buy them". The learners would come and tell me pathetic stories like "there is no one to buy for me, I am staying alone I do not have parents". The others, the parents just disappeared. Others their parents passed away. Then I started identifying learners who are orphans (**Khumalo 3 & 4**).*
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> *…And from there you see a lot of absenteeism a lot of dodging and maybe you also expect them to wear uniform and all that. If they do not have and you do not know the background may you ask them you find that they are rebellious; so after you talk to them and you find out that they cannot afford uniform (**Chabalala 16 & 17**).*

Educators Dube and Mokoena revealed that orphans feel inferior when they are unable to meet the financial obligations expected of them, such as contributing to funeral expenses, paying school funds or wearing home clothes to school on special occasions. The following excerpt presents the experiences of some of the educators:

> *One other thing about these learners is that they feel inferior – especially when it comes to condolence money. If the family loses the one who they love we usually take condolences (**Dube 22**).*
>
> *They come to school regularly, but the ones who absent themselves are the orphans and the others whom their parents are unemployed when it is time for fund raising or mothers and fathers day. They absent themselves from school because the learners are supposed to wear home clothes. They are aware that they do not have smart clothes so they absent themselves from school (**Mokoena 3 & 4**).*

The excerpt implies that the orphaned learners seem to be absent from school as a result of financial and material deprivation. In this study, the educators reported that non-orphaned learners from poor families also avoid exposing their vulnerability by missing school during the period that they are expected to make financial contributions to funeral expenses or come to school wearing home clothes. The responses of the educators regarding these learners' material and financial deprivation imply that orphans and non-orphans are regarded as vulnerable children and may behave in similar ways. Foster (1995) also reports that educators identify orphaned learners by lack of school fees, poor clothes and lack of food.

In the current study, Educators Mabena and Khumalo disclosed that there are orphans who stay with relatives who provide for their material needs, while there are others who stay with relatives who are not able to provide for their needs such as food and clothes or to pay for their school funds. Educator Khumalo articulated that some orphans are more vulnerable than others and need more support, while other orphaned learners who have relatives taking care of them are better off than the children from poor families. Urassa, Boerma, Ng'weshemi, Isingo, Schapink and Kumogola (1997) report from their study that there were no major disadvantages of orphans compared with non-orphans in terms of material needs because the extended family system appears to be able to provide for their needs. However, there were no details of the type of care provided. Educator Khumalo elaborated:

They differ in their needs. You cannot generalise. There are others who are orphans but they have guardians taking care of them. They will not eat with those who are eating. The ones who are eating are those in real need. They do not eat because they are orphans. They eat because they do not have anything. Their parents are not working. Some have guardians but they need to be given love of a parent. But the orphaned learners at their age you know when you want to report something. When you come home there is nobody to report to. Some of the orphans are afraid to tell their guardians that they need this and that. Maybe there are trips but they do not talk. We tell them that if you have a problem come to us we are here for you **(Khumalo.73, 77, 79 & 82)**.

This excerpt suggests that some orphaned learners may have guardians who provide for their material needs but they may be deprived of love and somebody they can talk to freely. The above extract further proposes that educators might be the adult figures that the orphans can talk to. Similar evidence of emotional deprivation emerged from the interviews with the orphaned learners. The orphaned learners talk of relatives who could buy uniforms and food for them but there were no narrations of experiences of affection, or an emotional and loving relationship. Some orphans narrated negative experiences of abuse and emotional neglect. Wilson, Meintjes, Croke and Chamberlain (2002) indicate that the identification of vulnerable children can be facilitated by the awareness of warning signs of vulnerability. Giese et al. (2003) report some of the warning signs

mentioned by educators in their study as signs of hunger,[15] physical exhaustion, a change in behaviour, a change in appearance,[16] a drop in academic performance, tardiness and absenteeism, and by their homework.

When I asked the educators to prioritise what they think the needs of the orphans were, material and financial needs, such as nutritious food, school uniforms and payment for school excursions were given priority, followed by emotional needs, such as love, care and guidance. Similarly, De Witt and Lessing (2005) report from their quantitative study using questionnaires administered to 120 educators from different schools that lack of food and clothing were identified as the most prominent needs, while important psychological needs were a desire for acceptance, dealing with stress, security and managing fear. The following are some of the responses indicating how the educators prioritised the needs of the orphaned learners in this study:

> *First need is food. You cannot study on an empty stomach. When you study you need food. They would come and tell me that we do not have food (**Khumalo 71**).*
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> *The list is very long. Number one is education. Some of them do not have money to pay school fees and others buy school uniform. Number two; they need healthy life style for them to have healthy food and every meal. They must have proper meals and other basic things. The other thing they must have is a foster parent, maybe someone who does not have children to take care of them. A person who have love for children, if it is possible (**Selepe 27**).*
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> *I would prefer that somebody give them food and pay school funds for them. I wish our government could pay school fund for them, buy them clothes and food and take them out for excursions or pay for school trips so that they feel like other learners, if they cannot adopt them, because every child needs love and family, they need somebody to call: "Mom." If they cannot do that, let them provide those needs (**Mabena 50-53**).*

These educators seem to place material needs before the social and psychological needs that were mentioned after material needs. Although the educators were able to rank the needs of the orphans, the experiences of the orphaned learners seem to indicate that the needs were intertwined. For example, when the learners talked about emotional longing

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[15] Giese et al. (2003) report signs of hunger to include vomiting water, shivering, collapsing in class, lack of concentration, sleeping in class, begging for food and not playing with other children.

[16] Dirty, not wearing school uniform, or wearing too small or torn uniform (Giese et al. 2003).

for their parents, they related the feeling to their deprived material needs. The orphans generally talked of lack of food, clothing, money to pay for school activities, adult supervision, love and care. Foster et al. (1995) point out that those psychological needs is less obvious than material needs and may go unnoticed by the orphans themselves. In addition, the difference between the needs inferred from the experiences of the orphans and the needs identified by the educators was that the educators predominantly talked about material needs, while paying little attention to the emotional and social needs that appeared prominent in the interviews with the orphans. A possible explanation for the way in which the educators identify the needs of the learners could be that material needs may be deduced from the appearance while the social and psychological needs are not as visible.

Category 1.2.3: Educator-learner relationship

This category describes experiences of interaction between the educators and the orphaned learners. In this study some of the orphans reportedly open up and reveal that they are orphans to the educators they trust. They also tell the educators what they need and their experiences at home

Educator Khumalo, from School A, encouraged the orphans to open up. She was of the opinion that the orphaned learners should not be afraid of identifying themselves. She elaborated:

> *I have managed to get them all. I insisted that they identify themselves. I told them not to be afraid because some of the educators are also orphans. You know they like money. When you tell them that there is money and that they will go for trips they will come out. They came out until I got 33 of them in school (**Khumalo 25**).*

In some cases the orphans opened up to educators who seem to show concern, caring and understanding for their problems. The learners also built up a relationship of confidence and trust with the educators who talked to them. Educator Mtalala and other educators narrated the following:

> *Yes they open up. It is difficult for kids to open up. There are those who can open up to me and there are those who cannot open up to me. They feel it is safe if they talk to the educators in the Foundation Phase. So I let them talk to their educators and I tell their educator to give me the report when the learners open up. Then we call the guardian to bring the necessary documents. Others repeatedly come to the office saying I am having a headache or stomach ache just like that. So if I give you a pill today then tomorrow you come again I will ask you have you eaten? That is when I find some of them because you find that they had nothing to eat. That is why they react like that. I normally say if you see the learner who is clumsy or a little bit funny you just call the learner and if you see the learner cannot open up bring the learner to me. When they are with me although, I am strict they are at ease when they talk to me they can open up (**Mtlala 26–27 & 44–48**).*
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> *There were cases of learners fainting in the morning assembly. When you talk to them alone they tell you that they have not eaten since yesterday lunchtime (**Chabalala. 1.5**).*
>
> *Sometimes they would tell you that at home the food is not right, they would tell you that my mother cooks for us porridge and cabbage or potatoes so the learner does not get a balanced diet (**Malope 14**).*
>
> *Sometimes they come here crying very early in the morning, crying in tears. When you ask them: "What is the problem?" They say that I am hungry. Then you ask: "Why are you hungry?" They would say that today I said I wanted porridge and they said: "There is no mealie meal at home" (**Dube 39 & 40**).*

The interviews with the orphaned learners revealed that some of the learners confide in their educator if the educator promises to keep the information the learners were willing to share confidential. Pomeroy (1999) also reports from her study that students responded positively to educators who took the initiative in establishing friendship, played a pastoral role and showed care and concern. In the current study, Educator Chabalala reported that the orphaned learners start opening up and seeing the educators as a confidante when there is communication between the educators and the learners. According to Giese et al. (2003) some students do not open up because they are scared and ashamed of exposing their material deprivation. The educators in this study described the situations as follows:

> *…Then I asked her: "Where are your relatives? Don't you have relatives?" She said "The relatives were ill treating us very bad. They will beat you when you want to study. They will close your book and tell you to go and wash the dishes and you don't study". The other educators are still beating learners in other schools. She told me that the educators would beat her for not doing her homework when she tried to explain, it was difficult for her to explain the situation at home. She was afraid that her guardians would be called at school and then she would be beaten again (**Khumalo 32-34**).*

> *Yes, they open up and tell us so many things what is happening at home. We call the grandfather or grandmother and we sit down and talk to them (Dube 26 & 27).*
>
> *Once you start talking to them helping them and all that, they change and they see you as a mother figure because now they have a person they can talk to. When they have problems they open up because they know there is somebody who cares and understands (Chabalala 32-35).*

Two educators in this study, Dube and Mokoena, reported that orphaned learners talk about their emotional needs on occasions like Mothers Day or Fathers Day. Haggard (2005) reports that bereaved children find it difficult to participate in activities such as making valentine cards or holiday gifts and need a friend or a relative to represent the parent on such occasions. During the interview with the orphaned learners some of them expressed emotional longing for their parents who had passed away on specific days. It seems that the celebration of occasions like Mothers Day or Fathers Day could bring back the memory of the parents. The educators explained their experiences with the orphaned learners during such occasions as follows:

> *We start from the school before we celebrate the occasion, such as Mother's Day. Some learners in previous years used to cry when we talk about our mothers. The orphaned learners start crying. When you go to the learners and make enquiry they will tell you "I do not have a mother so when you talk about mothers I feel pain because I do not have parents". That is when you learn that they are orphans (Dube 18-21).*
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> *Most of the time I realise it when it is Mothers' or Fathers' Day they would say: "Oh!" Maybe we are making cards in the classroom they would say "I do not have a father. What should I write?" I tell them write your uncle's name because he is a father's figure at home (Mokoena 14 &15).*

These two examples illustrate that some of the orphaned learners occasionally reveal their emotional needs to their educators. Educator Chabalala indicated that some orphaned learners tell their educators about their emotional and material needs indirectly by saying what their younger siblings miss at home and how they feel about it. At other times the non-orphans tell the educator the needs of the orphaned learners. Educator Chabalala narrated the following:

> *Like the learner that I told you about – the one who never came back from break – it is the other kids who told me about it. They will say that, that learner does not come to school after break because of hunger. They will tell you in a joking manner. They say "She is hungry she cannot come". and that is how you get to know the learner's problem* **(Chabalala 46 & 47).**

From the extract, it seems that orphaned learners might not know how to approach the educators for help. Similarly, educators also may be uncertain of how to establish a positive relationship with orphaned learners. For example, one of the educators acknowledged that the orphans do have emotional needs but unless they *opened up* and talked about their problems the educators might not be aware of these needs, which may then remain unfulfilled. One problem of depending on the learners to disclose their emotional needs is that some orphaned learners find it difficult to open up and talk about their experiences. This was evident in one of the interviews with the orphaned learners when one responded that she did not want to talk about her parents because it made her feel bad. A likely explanation for her response could be that she is internalising her emotional needs, such that without communication the educators might not be able to identify the needs and provide assistance.

Educators Dube and Mokoena, both from School B, mentioned that they encourage the learners to *open up* by asking them to write about their problems at home and in school, then to put the letters in a post box in the classroom or on the educator's table. The learners use the post box facility as an opportunity to express themselves. The educators then read the written text and talk to the learner during break. The two educators explained:

> *I always tell them that if you are not happy today, tell me in the morning. Sometimes I put a box here and I tell them to write what they do not like in the classroom or at home. They use to write the papers and put them in the box. Then I read them before we start the lessons. Then during break time I call the learner, we sit down and we talk to each other* **(Dube 47-49).**
>
> *I ask them orally but before I ask them, most of the time, I allow them to bring letters to me. I tell them to write for me letters. I allow them to bring the letters they write about whatever they did not like. Something that happened to them and they put the letters on the table. I tell them just write and I will not read it to anyone* **(Mokoena 9 &10).**

The quotations indicate that the two educators used writing as an outlet for the learners to express themselves and communicate what they are feeling in a less intimidating way. The educators acknowledged that some of the orphaned learners could not talk about their problems, so they give them alternative means of communication. There is also the confidentiality of the information that the learners disclose to the educators in writing. The educators had to reassure the orphaned learners that their letters would be confidential. It is notable that this finding is consistent with Giese et al. (2003), who report that educators provided the children with opportunities to express themselves by writing essays[17] on their personal experiences, a suggestion box,[18] and communication with the caregivers through a communication book.[19]

Category 1.2.4: Routine administrative work

Educator Selepe said that she identifies the orphans through a routine process of compiling the learners' background at the beginning of the year and at the end of the term when their report forms are not collected. Giese et al. (2003) also report that educators lack formal mechanisms for identifying vulnerable children, apart from class educators identifying them when collecting background information at the beginning of the year. Similarly, Educator Mabena identified orphaned learners when the Department of Education asked for this information. Educator Mabena and Educator Selepe narrated the following:

> *There are programmes sent by the government telling us to go to class and look for orphans. So we go to class and say "Can we have orphaned learners come to see me after this period?" Some will be shy to come … (Mabena 31).*
>
> *When you are a class educator there are some forms that you have to fill in asking the children: "Do you have both parents or do you one parent or are you an orphan?" They*

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[17] The children write about their experiences especially those who find it difficult to express themselves verbally.

[18] The children post their concerns and can choose to remain anonymous.

[19] The educator communicates with the caregiver by writing notes in the book and the caregiver responds and gives his/her inputs.

> *will come to you and say: "I do not have parents. Since I do not have parents I have nothing to eat or clothes to wear"* **(Selepe 47).**
>
> *…Whenever you call meetings for those who do not have parents, no one comes to represent them or collect their report forms. We got report forms from 2004 December 2005 June and 2005 December. They are still here at school* **(Selepe 36).**

Theme 2: Responding to the needs of orphaned learners

This theme reports on how educators perceive their role in terms of responsibilities towards the orphaned learners and how educators respond to their needs.

Sub-theme 2.1: Educators' perception of their roles

This sub-theme describes the different ways in which the educators conceptualise their roles. It appeared that the educators described their responsibilities in terms of how they constructed their roles. In this theme I discuss the responsibilities of the educators, how the educators relate to each other and what motivates the educators to respond in different ways.

Category 2.1.1: Responsibility of providing care to the orphaned learners

This category presents the views and lived experiences of the educators in terms of providing care for the orphaned learners. One of the educators interviewed at School B felt that educators should provide orphaned learners with **emotional support**, as indicated in the following statement:

> *"I believe that all educators, in all schools, should provide emotional support to the orphaned learners. It can be better, because they spend most of their time with us. They are mostly with us so we should do that"* **(Mabena 54).**

Another educator in School B narrated how she responded to the needs of a sexually abused learner by facilitating assistance from different role players, such as a medical

practitioner, social worker, counsellor and policewoman. Although she did not perform the multiple roles of providing medical assistance, legal action and counselling directly, she went beyond her responsibilities at school to communicate with other people outside the school who could help the learner. She narrated her experience as follows:

> *Unfortunately the cousin raped the girl. So I called the girl and sat down with her and asked her whether she has been taken to the doctor – did the doctor do check up or blood test and so on? I wanted to see if she was helped or not. The guardian took the girl to the doctor and only asked for painkillers. The doctor did not check the girl. I phoned the doctor and the doctor told me to take the learner to the hospital. I asked the principal for permission to take the learner to the doctor. The doctor examined the girl and she was safe. We remained with the part that the girl must be counselled, go through therapy because when she is quiet the things comes back to haunt her. So I approached the hospital, they said that they need a docket number. So I had to go and look for a relative to go with the girl to the police station. The girl talked to one of the CPU to get the docket number. Thereafter is when the girl got attention of Social Welfare. They were able to counsel the girl. Now I think that she is doing form two somewhere. It seems that she is coping* **(Mtalala 31-35).**

It is likely that the rape incident narrated by the educator and lack of proper procedure thereafter may be due to the absence of parental care. Perhaps, what needs to be considered is whether educators have the skills and the time to support learners in such situations and whether it is a reasonable expectation.

Educator Selepe responded to the needs of orphaned learners differently, depending on the role she was playing at a particular place and time. **As a school educator**, Selepe perceives her responsibilities as monitoring the learners, and checking their attendance and their school uniform. Her concern with the orphaned learners seems to be based on how they adhere to the school rules. She said the following:

> *There are two or three orphaned learners in my class. They do not give me any problems. They come to school regularly and they have school uniform. If you ask them, they will say, "My sister is taking care of me." I think she has everything. The one I do not know much about is Sithole because he is a repeater. I monitor them. I do not talk to them very much* **(Selepe 20 & 21.)**

As a **community member**, Educator Selepe assisted other orphans by making donations through community interventions programmes. She elaborated:

> *There were some orphans who use to pass by our home on their way to school. When they came back from school they would eat in our home. At church we send clothes to the orphans. There is this organisation called SVP (St Vincent Paul) there are times when they send food parcels. We have 5kg paper bag in which we put food inside. Then we give it in during the church service. There are times when we send clothes that we no longer wear. They do not want clothes that are worn out or torn; they want clothes that are in good condition. Then we send them to children in the orphanage. Sometimes they sell those clothes to get money to buy other things for the children* **(Selepe 18-20).**

When I asked her what she did when she encountered a needy orphan, she responded as follows:

> *As a class educator I have to report this to those who help the orphans. Like Ms Chabalala. She does it by giving them money to buy bread and soup during break but that is done only on Mondays and Wednesdays* **(Selepe 16).**

The extracts above suggest that the educator perceives her responsibility as facilitating learning and responding to the needs of the learners by referring them to other educators for assistance. The emerging dominant theme of the educators' role perception of teaching and learning is consistent with the findings of Giese et al. (2003), who report that many educators in their study conceptualise their role as teaching and not as providing assistance to vulnerable children. A possible explanation of why some educators seem to downplay care as part of the role of the educator could be that educators do not have the knowledge, skills, resources and time to provide the care needed by the orphaned learners. Other reasons could be lack of motivation to assist the learners.

Six educators, namely Khumalo and Chabalala from School A, and Dube, Mokoena, Malope and Mtalala from School B, talked about performing **multiple roles of teaching and caregiving** in terms of providing for material needs, such as uniform and psychosocial needs, through guidance. This finding is in agreement with that of Schierhout and others (2004) who report that educators perceived their role as providing

food, counselling and advice, shelter, money, school fees and encouraging the learners to attend school. The study did not elaborate on how the educators provided such assistance, what motivated the educators or the relationship that supported the caring response. In the present study, Educator Dube commented that getting to know the background of the learners is part of her responsibilities and once she recognises the learners' problems she attends to them in the hope of putting these learners on a par with the others. Furthermore, Educator Mokoena emphasised that teaching and counselling are intertwined, such that both roles are played interchangeably. The two educators commented:

> *I am an educator, I am a parent, I am a caregiver and a guidance educator at the same time. When you see that the child is lacking and you know the background of the child you make some means; even the school uniform we make means, so that the learner can be like other learners* (**Dube 28 & 29**).
>
> *Most of the time I do counsel them. I do not always teach. Sometimes I guide them* (**Mokoena 17**).

It is evident from the findings of this study that the educators interviewed in School A and School B were unaware of the seven roles of an educator as stipulated by the Department of Education (1996). The seven roles of the educator include performing the teaching and learning role, management responsibilities, and the community and pastoral role. The findings of this study indicate that some of the educators have prioritised these roles, such that they concentrate more on the teaching and learning (transfer of content) and management roles and pay less attention to the community, citizenship and pastoral roles.[20] According to Educator Chabalala, providing care is not part of an educator's responsibilities and educators who help orphaned learners do so of their own free will. Such understanding implies lack of knowledge of the policy and possibly lack of understanding of the policy intention.

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[20] The community, citizenship and pastoral role stipulates that educators will practice a critical commitment to an ethical attitude towards developing a sense of responsibility towards others. Within the school the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of the learner and fellow educators The educator will also develop supportive relations with parents and other key persons and organizations based on a critical understanding of community and environment developmental issues (Department of Education, 1996:A-47)

Category 2.1.2: Educator-educator relationship

I noted from the educators' responses that their role perception was likely to influence how the educators related to each other. For instance, in School A two educators, Chabalala and Khumalo, were identified by others as *educators who are responsible for the orphaned learners* and all the other educators referred the orphaned learners to them for assistance. Educator Khumalo seemed to be overwhelmed by the responsibility of caring for a large number of orphaned learners. She felt that the multiple roles were demanding and she felt overburdened with responsibility. The two educators described their roles as follows:

> *You know, I am teaching at the same time I am dealing with the orphans at the same time I am a policewoman, I am a social worker I am a counsellor – there are many things that are around me; that is why I am involving other educators to take part in this (**Khumalo 49).***
>
> *As educators we have to be social workers, parents and everything (**Chabalala 68).***

Educator Khumalo also appeared to be frustrated and expressed that it was unfair for the other educators to do nothing but to continually refer the orphaned learners to them, instead of helping the learners themselves. She expressed her frustration in this way:

> *When it comes to the problem of orphaned learners, they push the orphans to me. "Go to Educator Khumalo she will help you". The other day I said "Why can't you help? Why do you always send the learners to me? Are you taking advantage of me because I do not have children?" I am supporting other family members of mine. It does not mean that I am only support these learners at school. I do not want to be forced to do things. I do it from my heart (**Khumalo 36-38)***
>
> *This is what is happening now to Educator Chabalala. In winter she brings soup and bread and in summer polony and bread. The educators they will tell you we want orphan food. We also want. They will eat with them instead of buying food for the orphaned learners. They want to share the food that was donated. I tell them that you share the food, you tell yourself that this food is not their money we should share it while you are working. It does not mean that I am funny. You are the people who are supposed to bring something for the orphans because they eat at school and in the evening there is nothing to eat (**Khumalo 62 & 63.)***

The above extracts indicate the frustration and irritation Educator Khumalo feels concerning the other educators for being irresponsible and taking advantage of her empathy and commitment to helping the orphaned learners. In addition, she reported that some of the other educators ate the food donated for the orphans, instead of buying food for the orphans. The educator seemed emotionally drained as a result of her responsibilities of care in a situation where there is limited support and resources. Wilson and others (2002) also report strained relationships between the educators with regard to supporting orphans. In their study one of the factors that impeded identification, support and monitoring of children experiencing orphanhood within the school was the victimisation of educators who put extra effort into providing care for the orphans.

The picture that seems to be emerging from these educator's responses as to their role perception proposes multiple understandings of their responsibilities towards orphaned learners. In another study, Wilson et al. (2002) report that many educators responded to the needs of the children in their own personal capacity, according to their own commitment and ideology. In other schools the responsibility of care is assigned to the guidance and counselling educator, house tutors or social workers (Chittenden, 1999; Bennell, Hyde & Swainson, 2002).

The difference in perceptions of the role of educators in helping the orphaned learners appears to be causing tension and conflict in School A. Educator Khumalo felt that the other educators were not only taking advantage of her but were also being sarcastic about her. Wilson et al. (2002) report a similar incident. In their study they identified one of the factors that impede identification, support and monitoring of children experiencing orphanhood within the school as the victimisation of educators who put extra effort into providing care for the orphans. In the current study, Educator Khumalo expected the other educators to also care for the orphans and not just refer them to her for help. She expressed her aggravation as follows:

> *The other time I was angry, when they said I am* Mother Teresa*. I ask myself why am I Mother Teresa? They said we are not being sarcastic. I asked them: "How can you send a learner to me and tell the learner* 'Go to Mother Teresa'*? Do you think that it is fair? Can't you help the learner? When the learners come to you and tell you their problems you refer the learner to me." It is not fair* **(Khumalo.55 - 57).**

In the current study, the second educator *who helps orphaned learners*, Educator Chabalala, thought that caring for the orphans was not the responsibility or part of the educator's role. She claimed that educators helped the orphans of their own free will. She did not take offence when the other educators sent the orphaned learners to her because she was of the opinion that the school system did not endorse care for orphaned learners as part of the educators' responsibility. Furthermore, Educator Chabalala indicated that not all educators have the same personality. She argued that some educators were more compassionate in giving care to the orphans than others, owing to individual differences. Educator Chabalala narrated the following:

> *… I think others are just accepting it as part of what is happening in the community. They know that this is happening but they do not do anything. Some refer them to us when they see a learner with problems they would come to us and say Ms Chabalala there is this learner or Ms Khumalo there is this learner. I do not think that they do not want to be involved they just feel that it is not their problem. This thing is not really part of what we should be doing – it is what you feel. This feeling not everybody has it, so you cannot condemn those who do not help.*

The differential response to the needs of the orphaned learners also emerged in School B. Educator Dube expressed concern that not all educators helped the orphaned learners. She explained that some educators are empathetic, while others do not care. According to her observation the other educators are not concerned about the cause of the learners' disruptive behaviour; instead they assume that the orphaned learners are in need of discipline. Educator Dube believes that in order to understand the behaviour of the orphaned learners the educators must talk to the learners and understand the learners' background. The following are the views of Educator Dube:

> *No, not all educators help. Some educators they think that the learner is just not listening to the instruction of the school. Like if the learner is not wearing shoes they do not even care about going after the child and ask some questions – why is this happening all the time and why you do not change from this to this? The way I am my self, I use to go after the child and look for the information until I find it. I also consult the previous educator. Yes some do not care (**Dube 32-36**).*

The idea of *educators who help orphans* also emerged prominently in School B. Three of the four educators interviewed (Dube, Malope and Mokoena) talk of one particular educator, Mtalala, who assists the orphans and their guardians in applying for grants. The three educators mentioned that the other educators send the orphaned learners who are in need of financial support to Educator Mtalala. Educator Malope and Dube described educator Mtalala as follows:

> *Recently we have a educator who we refer them to because she knows where to get the funds and apply for grants. The learners, all of them they were told and their parents that, if I have this problem maybe the child is an orphan there is a particular educator I can go to. Even if the parents come they ask who is the educator that I can talk to about this problem (**Malope 25 & 27**).*
>
> *There is only one educator who writes letters for the learners to take to the social workers (**Dube 62**).*

When I interviewed Educator Mtalala, she confirmed that she assists orphans in applying for grants and also communicating with the trust funds on behalf of orphaned learners by writing letters and sending the required documentations to facilitate payment. Apart from the Social Welfare Grant and Child Support Trust funds, Educator Mtalala also communicates with the coordinators of community development projects to assist learners who are not benefiting from grants and trust funds. She narrated her responsibilities as follows:

> *Some of the orphans, their parents have just vanished. Others their parents are dead and there is no follow up as their guardians are illiterate on how to do the follow up. For those who have a positive attitude, they do come to school and ask for assistance. I normally write letters to Social Work Department. I tell the guardians that they must bring death certificate of the parent. We photo copy them and send to the Department. After three to four months they come and tell me that they are getting their grants.*

> *… I started helping other children in school, by communicating with Alexander Forbes until today. There are some children whose parents did not have this trust maybe they did not have stable jobs so we could not trace how to help these learners. I had a group of project coordinators from Kwamhlanga. They wanted details of the learners and said that I can refer some of the learners to them for follow up. Then I contacted them at (MCDC) - Community Development Center. Then I talked to the lady who was conducting the project. We came to school and made a list of learners who were having problems…MCDC people brought food parcels for those types of learners. I sign for the food parcels and give them to the learner concerned and they went home with them parcels. At least it covered them until we open school then we continue with the feeding scheme (Mtalala 8-12 & 18-19).*

From the extracts of the experiences of educators in both schools; it appears that educators assume different identities from their role perception and the action they take in responding to the needs of the orphaned learners. The findings of this study are consistent with Giese et al (2003), who noted that different educators and different schools respond in different ways towards the needs of orphaned learners. Some educators in their study supported the vulnerable children, while others fail to respond – despite the presence of warning signs.

In the current study the notion of *educator(s) who help orphans* was common in both schools. In both schools there seem to be power – inequality as some educators took up most of the pastoral role while others did not. The responsibility for caring for the orphans was either voluntary – as in School A – or an educator was appointed to help the orphaned learners – as in School B. From the educators' responses in School B, it is likely that assigning the responsibility of caring for the orphaned learners to a particular educator extends the responsibilities of that educator and gives the educator authority in responding to the needs of the orphans. However, it seems that empowering one educator to care for the orphans has a negative effect on some of the other educators. For instance, Educator Malope felt disempowered and expressed a change in attitude towards helping the orphans after Educator Mtalala was assigned special responsibility for caring for them. Educator Malope expressed her views as follows:

> *I used to help, but presently it is not part of what I am doing. I do not feel that I am doing enough because I am not able to help that much, since they have a relevant person doing that (**Malope 28 & 42**).*

In School A, it looks as if Educator Selepe and Educator Mabena felt that it was not their responsibility to care for the orphans. Seemingly, a general feeling exists in both schools that the educators given the responsibility of helping the orphans or those who volunteer to help orphans assume a position different from other educators. According to Educator Khumalo most of the educators in her school appeared to be reluctant to assist the orphans.

Apart from the different role perceptions, some educators experience conflict in performing their perceived roles. Educator Chabalala, for instance, explained that there are times when helping the orphaned learners clashed with her teaching role. She would leave her lessons before the end of the period to prepare sandwiches for the learners; while Educator Dube expressed that she managed her time in such a way that she attended to some of the needs of the orphans and talked with caregivers in the afternoon after teaching hours.

> *I had to come quickly just before lunch and prepare the soup and bread for the learners on the day they have soup and bread. I had to leave class before time and leave them with work. I knew that it was not right but now the lady who works as a general worker helps me (**Chabalala 69 &70**).*
>
> *We usually call them in the afternoon at half past one. It does not interfere with our teaching (**Dube 28**).*

It appears from the extracts that some teachers have strategies of time management that make it possible for them to provide multiple roles besides teaching.

Category 2.1.3: Motivation to help orphaned learners

It seems that due to multiplicity of role, some of the educators seem to overstretch their capacity in responding to the needs of the orphans. During the interviews with the

educators, I realised that educators who were involved in helping orphans were self-motivated. Educator Dube was motivated to help the orphans by her background experiences and her religious beliefs. She narrated that when she reflected on her deprived background she was able to relate her experiences to those of the orphaned learners. Educator Khumalo seemed to have a positive attitude towards helping orphaned learners because she learned from her mother to be empathetic and altruistic towards those who are less fortunate. Her compassion for helping the orphaned learners seemed to be deeply rooted in her family values. The values that the educator talked about were trust, confidentiality, respect, and dignity, among others. According to Fonagy (2003) an infant internalises its mother's empathetic expression, and as an adult, develops secondary representation of the experience when faced with similar circumstances. Cooper's (2004) and Pomeroy's (1999) research findings reveal that educators who were empathetic to the learners were emotionally close and were able to discover factors that threatened or enhanced the learners' ability to learn and develop.

Educator Chabalala highlighted the fact that not all educators have the compassion or humane response towards orphaned learners. She understands why other educators do not help orphans and she is not discouraged by their attitude. The act of helping orphans gives her satisfaction: when the orphans are happy she also feels happy.

Educator Mokoena was motivated to help the orphaned learners by reflecting on her experiences of growing up in a single-parent family. The following excerpt from the interviews echoes the experiences of the educators:

> *I am from a poor background. When I use to go to school the educators would buy for me the things that I did not have like school uniform and books. I am also a Christian and I like to help people when I can. That is why I ask the learners about their problems* ***(Dube 65-67).***
>
> *Every year I would buy uniform for one learner. It became my job; I do not feel pain, I do not ask for contribution from the others. I was buying from my pocket without any problem. I think I got it from my mother. When she was still alive she used to help the learners. In fact, she was not an educator; she was just cooking for the learners who did not have something to eat during break time* ***(Khumalo 11).***

It is seems from the extracts that not all educators were able to provide care for the orphaned learners. For some of the educators, it was likely that their altruistic response to fulfilling the orphans' needs was influenced by their background and experiences. For others, like Educator Dube, motivation was based on religious beliefs. Foster (2002) reports that compassion is the key underlying factor to an individual act of kindness and care towards others. Cooper (2004) points out that although it would seem that empathy contributes toward quality learning, in her study factors such as class size, time, curriculum, policy and management were identified as constraints on educator ability to be empathetic.

Sub-theme 2.2: Fulfilling the needs of the orphaned learners

This sub-theme entails the kind of assistance and support participating educators give to orphaned learners. They responded to the needs of the orphaned learners by making a material contribution, communicating with other external agencies and government departments and providing guidance to the learners.

Category 2.2.1: Addressing the physical needs of orphans

All the educators interviewed in School A and School B identified *food* as one of the crucial needs of the orphaned learners. The educators responded to these nutritional needs by bringing leftover food from home, giving the learners money to buy food and seeking food donations from institutions and business enterprises. This response is consistent with the research done by Schierhout et al (2004). The researchers point out that educators reported providing food for needy children, buying food for them, bringing food from home or giving them money to buy food.

Learners in School B received food from the Government Feeding Scheme (RDP White Paper 1994). Educator Mtalala reported that some of the orphaned learners relied on the food from this Feeding Scheme, meaning that during the weekends and school holidays they would go without food. Educator Mtalala said that they sometimes took leftover food from the Government Feeding Scheme and redistributed this food among the orphaned learners so that they could eat over the weekend and during school holidays. School A does not receive food from the Government Feeding Scheme. Some of the educators, like Educators Khumalo and Chabalala, responded to the nutritional needs of the learners by bringing food from their homes. Educator Chabalala got food donations from the Roman Catholic Church. Twice a week this church provides sandwiches for the orphans. These educators narrated the following:

> *When they move away from the school they feel abandoned. Who is going to take care of us? We have to take leftover of raw food that they cook normally here at school then divide it among them. When the school is closing for a longer period they cannot cater for them. In a family where there are five or six and they have to cook everyday the food we give is easily consumed* **(Mtalala 1.83).**
>
> *I am Catholic. I also belong to the Catholic Women League and we specialize in helping people. I brought the matter to the league. I told them that I am in this school. What I have noticed first I thought that it was one or two kids but as you are helping others a lot of other children approach you then I realize that I can not do it on my own. The ladies said: "Identify how many kids you have got we will see what we can do*" **(Chabalala 10).**

Although educators regarded providing food as a high priority need, Educators Khumalo (from School A) and Mokoena (from School B) reported that learners were sometimes reluctant to take food donated from the church and from the Government Feeding Scheme because other learners laughed at them. Educator Khumalo indicated that she is aware of other learners ridiculing the orphaned learners and poor non-orphaned learners who eat donated food. Educator Chabalala also reported observing that orphans isolate themselves from other learners and other learners stigmatise orphans because they do not bring lunch from home. According to Educator Khumalo, donated food was associated with poverty. Orphans and other learners were reluctant to take the food owing to the stigma attached to receiving it. Educator Mokoena also narrated that other learners regarded taking food from the Government Feeding Scheme as disgraceful. She said that

she eats from the Feeding Scheme to change the negative attitude towards this scheme and emphasises that the food is healthy.

> *Like the students who are eating at school, the non-orphans do not want to mix themselves with those who are eating. They take them as if they are poor. (Khumalo 87).*
>
> *Most of the time I encourage them that if you do not have food do not take the other learners food box just go and dish out because I also eat from the Feeding Scheme. I am eating the feeding scheme food so you can also go. They used to laugh at them most of the time and I tell them that even myself I have money but I eat from the feeding scheme because it is healthy. (Mokoena 26 & 27).*

From the experiences related by Educator Khumalo and Educator Mokoena, it is likely that providing food at school may present another form of stigma to the orphaned learners. The above narrations suggest the possibility that orphaned learners receiving food from the Government Feeding Scheme feel less worthy than others. It would seem that taking donated food lowers the learner's self-dignity. For instance, Educator Chabalala reported that orphaned learners find comfort in the company of other orphans with similar deprived needs. She explained that the orphans stick together because they have similar experiences. From the interviews with the orphans, some reported that they were able to identify and socialise with other orphans with whom they share with similar experiences. Educator Mtalala stated that she encouraged the non-orphans to respect the orphaned learners by sharing food in a dignified manner. The educators expressed the following:

> *We have those who go home together - they feel like they are birds of the same feather they will stick together. They feel that this is the person who is like me. On the day when they do not get food they know that if we stick together they will all not have food unlike those who are with the others, they become burden to them when they do not bring food from home. The learners who eat have friends among themselves. (Chabalala 52 &53)*
>
> *I tell them you come with bread from home and you do not feel like eating it, they should not throw it but put it on the table then I will find somebody to eat it. Normally when I find food on the table, I collect it and give to others to eat. Some of the learners are from rich families and you cannot tell them do not do this and this. They are spoilt. Some come with four slices of bread eat one and throw the rest away and the others who do not have will take the bread from the bin. It is not nice. So it is best if they put it on the table (Mtalala 104-105).*

The experiences narrated by the educators suggest the need to promote relationships among the learners that are supportive and empathetic to the needs of the learners. The stigma emerging from taking donated food is likely to be as a result of a lack of understanding of the experiences of the orphaned learners and other needy learners by their peers. Two educators (Mabena and Selepe) were of the opinion that if they had more money they would buy the orphans food (so they could eat everyday).

When I asked the educators what else they would do for orphans, Educator Malope suggested that educators should *adopt* the orphans (informally) and provide for their financial needs. Malope narrated:

> *We should introduce the form of adopting a child in the school, if we can identify them, but now we do not know who is getting the grant and why are the others not getting the grants. I was thinking of introducing this to the school, if there are learners who are unable to get this grant. Each and every educator should adopt the child that they can help. You find that if they are trips in the school they cannot go because they do not have money. We could help that learner* **(Malope 43 & 44).**

Educator Mokoena describe that she assisted the orphaned learners in her class by providing their stationery and school uniform.

> *What I usually do is I adopt them but I do not tell them. I buy for them pens, pencils, rulers, Pritt glue and other learning materials. I buy and give them rather than staying helpless. Sometimes I provide also uniform if I have because my son is now in secondary. If I get similar uniform to our school, shoes and shirts I give it to them* **(Mokoena 49 & 50).**

Educator Mabena felt strongly that creating awareness of the needs of the orphaned learners should be part of the curriculum – specifically an area in Life Orientation. The aim of incorporating orphan awareness is to reduce the stigma experienced by some of the orphaned learners. She narrated:

> *In Life Orientation period much can be done. They should talk about it more - not when I go to look for them in the class and say: "You - what are you laughing at?" The Life Orientation educator should do that. It should be one of our themes in Life Orientation to say educators must talk about this in class with the learners.*

Apart from providing food donations and stationery, Educators Khumalo, Chabalala and Mabena have formed a Uniform Committee to check the uniform of the learners. The educators in the committee identify learners who are in need of a uniform. Occasionally the educators buy a uniform for the orphaned learners or bring items of school uniform from their homes and other clothes that these children can wear over the weekend. The educators narrated:

> *…Then I started donating from my pocket because there are other learners and I said that I do not have a child why don't I buy clothes at least school uniform for these learners (Khumalo 10).*
>
> *I still help with clothes if I have. My mom, she helps me if she has clothes that she does not use. I have relatives who help; I help other kids with clothes that they can use at home (Chabalala 14).*

In School B, Educators Mtlala and Dube are responsible for the lost property. They assisted the learners who cannot afford to buy school uniform by cleaning uniforms from lost property and giving them to the learners. Educators explained the following:

> *Some of them they do not have school uniform. Other learners leave their school uniform here in school. Many times you ask them "Whose jersey is this? Whose trouser is this? Whose socks are these?" So when nobody claims them I take the clothes wash and give the orphans who do not have uniforms. Sometimes I do not have boys and the orphans are boys I do not have boys also my children are at tertiary levels and I cannot buy shoes for the learners. So I ask other educators, even the principal she has boys so she brings trousers shirts socks and so on and we give to the learners (Dube 53-56).*

Some of the educators were able to identify a learner's need for school uniform from their appearance. Educator Mabena mentioned that the reason for giving the orphaned learners uniform was to make them look like other learners.

Educators Khumalo, Chabalala and Mtalala said that at times they gave the orphaned learners money to pay for donations at school. Educator Chabalala indicated that learners needed money to pay for school activities, like educational trips. When the learners confide in her she finds a way of raising money to pay for them. The following are narrations of how educators respond to the financial needs of the orphans:

> *Some times they do not have that money to pop up or, as an educator, if you know that this learner is having a problem every time when they pop up that amount you assist them so that they cannot feel inferior (Dube 23).*
>
> *Most kids do miss educational tours. Only those who can come to you and ask: "There is this educational tour and I cannot pay for it". You try but sometimes I do not have money like I said most of the educators do not think that it is their duty but if I go to the staff room and tell them that there is this child who cannot pay for the trip I collect donation from the other educator. They contribute what they have and at the end of the day you get the money. It is just that they cannot come out and help but if you ask they will (Chabalala 40-42).*

Educator Chabalala quoted experience suggests that although some educators provide for the financial needs of the orphaned learners, other educators need somebody to guide them in responding to their financial obligations. Educator Chabalala feels that educators should provide financial assistance to the orphaned learners although it is not part of the official responsibilities of educators.

Apart from financial assistance, Educators Khumalo, Mtalala and Chabalala mentioned how they act on behalf of the orphans in applying for government grants and liaising with social workers (whose job description includes assisting orphans to access child support grants), communicating with the Orphans' Trust Funds and applying for financial assistance from donor agencies. Educator Khumalo indicated that most of the caregivers are illiterate. Therefore, educators write letters on their behalf and assist them in accessing the Trust Funds and getting Child Support Grants. These educators also communicate with the social workers in cases of abuse and applying for grants.

Category 2.2.2: Addressing emotional, social needs and learning support

The majority of educator responses suggest that they identified and responded to the emotional needs of the learners, depending on what the learners disclosed to them. Some of the educators, like Mabena and Selepe, believed that the learners who did not confide in them did not have emotional needs and that the caregivers were providing for their needs.

Educator Mtalala explained how she provided emotional support to orphans by **talking to their guardians and advising them** on how to assist the orphans in the grieving process and when they talk about missing their parents. Educator Mtlala recalled one such incidence as follows:

> *One time there was a parent who came and said this child does not sleep at night. When we go to sleep the child sleep for maybe two hours then the child wake up and say: "I want to see my mummy." Then I told the granny we are blacks, we blacks take the children to the graveside and we tell them here is your mummy and your mummy is peaceful with God. Then the child will learn that, okay, my mummy is dead. You find that when they bury, then relocate, they must take the child to the burial site. Then when they came back they will say: "Mam the child is now ok." I told them that when the children start behaving like that they must take them back to the burial site, maybe it is loneliness and they get confused. "Why is my mummy not coming back?" Because some guardian do not tell the learner that your mum or dad has passed away and is not coming back. They just say: "No, she is sleeping." So the child will say: "Why is that guy not wake up and come back to me?" We find that the image of the parent is still in the mind of the child; so it is troubling the child and the child keep on asking himself. Then he starts reacting (**Mtalala 49-52**).*

From the extract, Educator Mtalala did not counsel the orphan directly but did it indirectly by advising the caregiver on how to handle the learner's grief and other emotional needs. Educator Mtalala's narration implies that some orphans may be going through the process of grieving alone because the caregivers do not know how to relate to or support a grieving child.

When some of the orphaned learners were feeling lonely, Educators Dube and Mokoena reported providing emotional support to the learners by encouraging them to look upon their caregivers as parent substitutes.

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> *We know that we have these learners in school so we usually tell them before if you do not have parents who can be my parent at home or at school, we tell them of the importance of a parent and if you do not have a parent we also give them support they must not feel lonely. People around them are supportive, especially their grandmothers (**Dube 14 & 15**).*
>
> *Maybe during events like Father's day and one learner says: "I do not have a father, what should I write?" Then I creating a topic and I tell them even if you do not have a father, your elder brother can be a father figure. Maybe if you are having an uncle, your uncle can also buy food. You should not be ashamed to take him as a father (**Mokoena 18 & 19**).*

Educator Mokoena was of the opinion that the orphaned learners do not have emotional problems because the grandparents provide emotional care. In contrast, Educators Dube and Mtalala believed that some orphaned learners were not receiving emotional support from their grandmothers and that the educators were providing more emotional support and creating a caring and loving family atmosphere at school. The following quotations indicate the views of some of the educators:

> *They do not have emotional problems because granny brings them up and they see her as a mother figure. Presently they are seven and eight years old. Most of them their parents died when they were still young (**Mokoena 54-56**).*
>
> *…Grandmothers they stay with the orphans but they do not get full love like we give them here (**Dube 24**).*
>
> *The way you handle them is the way the feel loved and closer to you because the school looks like a family to them, a close family to them. When they move away from the school they feel abandoned (**Mtalala 72**).*

Recognition of the psychosocial needs of the orphaned learners remains a predicament for the educators. The lack of identification of these needs in learners became more evident when Educator Mabena reported that orphans are more emotional in the early stages of their orphanhood and develop resilience with time. She considered orphans who cry a lot as weak and those who do not express their emotions as commendable. She encourages orphaned learners not to disclose themselves physically and emotionally but try to be like other learners. She expressed that:

> *There is only one that I know who is very sensitive about it. I think that reason is that it is not too long that they have been orphaned. She is still feeling it just as raw as it is. The others most of them were orphaned at an early stage, when they were still not aware of what life is. They had to develop it that we do not have parents and granny is taking care of us and I am doing better with granny. In fact all of them are not exposing it. They are trying to keep it inside. They try hard to be like other learners, in fact that is what we emphasis to them (**Mabena 11-15**).*

This extract suggests that this educator's understanding of the grieving process is that the length of time that has elapsed since the death of the parent relates to the present emotional state of the orphan and this, according to Educator Mabena, tends to determine how the orphans in this study responded to grief. It may appear from the interviews with the orphans that learners who have been orphans for a long time seems to internalise their emotions or hide their vulnerability as a coping strategy. Conversely, another explanation could be that newly orphaned learners are still in the initial stages of grieving and hence emotionally expressive. For instance, the orphans interviewed seemed to be still emotional, despite the time lapse since the death of their parents. The orphaned learners could remember the details about the day their parents passed away and how they grieved. Others avoided talking about their parents because the memory was painful.

Sengendo and Nambi (1997) report that school educators lack the knowledge of identifying psychological and social problems and fail to respond to them. In the current study, Educator Chabalala confirmed that educators were often unaware of learners' emotional needs because they do not open up to talk about their emotions. Educator Dube elaborated on this saying that she was able to intervene in the problems that the orphaned learners were experiencing when the learners confided in and shared their experiences.

> *…they open up and tell us so many things like what is happening at home. Then we call the grandfather or grandmother and we sit down and talk to them (**Dube 26 & 27**).*

With regard to academic work, Educators Dube, Malope and Mokoena reported that they do help the orphaned learners with their homework because they do not have an adult guardian to help them. Educator Malope's approach to helping orphaned learners who do not have somebody to assist with homework was to get somebody from the learner's

neighbourhood to assist the learner in doing the homework. Haggard (2005) describes this approach as having a homework buddy to provide the necessary support. Another strategy applied by Educator Mokoena was motivating the orphans to do their homework on their own. The educators narrated that:

> *When you give them homework the learners would remain with you in the afternoon and ask you questions like - I need your help here and there what should I do when I arrive at home" That is when you start helping the learner. We do not give him or her the answers we try to simplify the work so that he or she may not find it difficult to do the work. (**Dube 8 & 9**).*
>
> *I try to help the learner. For instance I give them homework. If a learners comes to me that there is no one to help them with the home work, I sit down with the learner or try to find out in the neighbourhood if there is anyone who is willing to help the learner with the homework (**Malope 31 & 32**).*
>
> *They do the homework. They are hard workers because I encourage them to do the homework. I am not harsh; I tell them that you pay school fees with your granny's money so you must work hard (**Mokoena 35 & 36**).*

Assisting the learners with homework is normally considered the responsibility of the parents or caregivers. According to the educators, in the absence of the parents it appears some of the educators fill the gap of parental absence by taking up the task of supporting the orphaned learners in doing homework.

Category 2.2.3: School management involvement in responding to the needs of orphans

This category describes the educators' opinions on the involvement and support of school management in responding to the needs of the orphaned learners. The school management includes the school principal, deputy principal, school management team (SMT) and school governing body (SGB). From the responses of the educators it seems that school management in the two schools was not directly involved in providing for the needs of the orphaned learners. Sometimes they however supported the efforts that some of the educators made in responding to their needs. For example, Educator Chabalala

commented that the school management encouraged and supported her efforts in assisting the orphans. She narrated:

> *If you go to the principal and tell her that you have something like they do it in such a way that they not block your efforts they encourage you to go ahead . Like when I was telling you that I had to come before break to prepare the lunch for the learners. I was never hassled about it. They understood that I had to do it. When the general worker came in I asked the principal to include in her job description that she should help with this and she did it* **(Chabalala 21-26 & 83-85).**

Educator Mtalala also reported moral support from the principal of her school. In contrast, Educator Khumalo experienced a conflict of interest in playing the role of a caregiver. She was passionate about seeking donations for the orphaned learners to help in providing food and clothes, while the school management was more interested in donations to improve the school structure. This educator narrated:

> *When I was telling my principal that I got donations from the university for the orphans and she said that you must also take donations for the school. I said ok, I would do it. I asked my sister to get donation for paving the school. She asked for computers and paving but the university wanted to know the school first, before they help the school. But this is not the job I want to do*. **(Khumalo 66 & 67).**

It appears that school management is also uncertain of how to provide guidance to educators in regard to supporting the orphaned learners, so they seem to encourage what the educators decide what to do.

Sub-theme 2.3: Sources of external support in assisting orphaned learners

The third theme *External support* encompasses the type of assistance the orphaned learners received from outside the school context. Besides the support provided by the educators, other sources of assistance mentioned were the community within which the schools are situated, government intervention and donations from the business sector.

Category 2.3.1: Community response to the needs of orphans

Both School A and B are situated in poor communities. According to the educators interviewed the majority of learners come from poor families. The learners are at times mistaken for orphans due to their impoverished physical appearance. The educators were divided on community involvement in assisting the orphaned learners. Five educators (Khumalo, Chabalala, Mabena, Dube, and Malope) believed that their community members were not helping the orphaned learners. Educator Dube reported that the community members come to school for help but they do not help the orphans. Educator Mabena was of the opinion that the community wants to help, but because of lack of income they cannot assist as much as they would wish to. Educator Mtalala, unlike the other educators, was aware of the community involvement in assisting orphans: she mentioned that some community organisations buy school uniforms and send food parcels to orphans. The following are the perceptions of the educator regarding how their community responds to the needs of orphans:

*I cannot see that they are helping. We are starting a school garden, maybe they will be involved. The garden is also going to help them (**Dube 58-60**).*

*I cannot say much about the community I think they do accept them in a sense that when I talk to that learner she said that they do receive something from the neighbours. They do feel that they are people. People in our community are poor. You give the orphans today then tomorrow you look at your children and say no it would be enough for mine and somebody else kids (**Mabena 38-40**).*

*I do not know about other community members because I have not communicated with them (**Malope 39**).*

*I think they feel that they can help but they do not know how they can do it. I do not think that the community is helping. I was asking the learner who is staying alone with her sister. She was telling me that the neighbours used to give them food but they got tired. They will give you and then when you go to them it is as if you went for food. They will then give you rotten food (**Khumalo 94-96**).*

…I think that it is from an organisation because they even come with old clothes to give to these learners. They will come to school and ask how many kids need clothes. They buy

Foster et al. (1997) also report contrasting views about community involvement in their study. Many community members were actively involved in helping the orphans despite their impoverished economic status, while other community members felt that they could not help the orphan households because of their own poverty.

From these educators' perception of the level of community involvement in helping the orphans, it seems that generally there is limited communication between the school and the community and a weak educator-community relationship. Most of the educators were unaware of community involvement in supporting the orphans. According to Educator Mabena, it appears that the community itself is economically impoverished, such that it is hard to tell whether they are unable or unwilling to help the orphaned learners. The fact that community members sometimes come to school for help may suggest that some of the parents in the community are unable to provide for their own needs.

Apart from community support, Educator Khumalo narrated how she had been trying to get food and clothing donations from businesses and other institutions. One of the learning institutions she approached donated clothes to the orphans and money to pay the school. She is still pursuing the businesses to contribute towards feeding the orphans, providing clothes and/or monetary donations that could be used to provide for the material needs for the orphans. She describes her efforts:

*… So I stared looking for donations for the orphans. I got very few donations. I went to the social workers, I invited the police, I went to the businessman. But I did not get help. I cannot meet all their needs. I am applying for donations because the orphaned learners do not know where to go (**Khumalo 10**).*

Educator Mabena blamed the caregivers, the community and the government for not caring for the orphans and envisaged that institutionalising the orphans could be a solution to the existing problems. She narrates:

> *I blame the government and the community at large. Since their parents are not there the government must take over, and the community especially, where they can put the orphans. Maybe they can have one place for them so that the government can send the food to one place (**Mabena 42).***

The comment of Educator Mabena and the views of other educators suggest that the educators expect the members of the community to assist them in providing care to the orphaned learners.

Category 2.3 2: Government response to the needs of orphans

Most of the educators mentioned the Child Support Grant and Government Feeding Scheme as government efforts for helping orphaned learners. Educator Malope reported that in School B some of the orphaned learners get a Child Support Grant and food through the Government Feeding Scheme. According to Educator Chabalala, the majority of learners in School A do not get the Child Support Grants because they are older than 14 years. Some of the orphans in School A appeared to be more deprived of their nutritional needs, when compared with learners in School B, because there is no government feeding scheme that could provide at least one meal during school days. One of the educators remarked that:

> *This new government is a little bit better - they are getting grants and most of the parents they are told that the grant money they have to use on the learners. So for the school uniform it is better (**Malope 10).***

The government assistance the educators talk about was mostly material support. Yet the Norms and Standards Policy expects educators to provide pastoral care that includes social and emotional needs. It is evident from this study that there is a lack of strategies for fulfilling the social and emotional needs of the learners. Educators Mabena, Chabalala

and Selepe had other expectations from government. Educator Chabalala and Mabena were of the opinion that the government should provide finance for educational activities, food and clothes. In addition, government should make a means of meeting the social and psychological needs of the learners available. Educator Selepe suggested that the government should extend the Child Support Grant to children older than 14 years, so that learners in high school could benefit from receiving these grants. The educators expressed the following suggestions:

> *I wish our government could pay school fund for them, buy them clothes, food and take them out for excursions or pay for school trips - so that they feel like other learners. if they cannot adopt them, because every child needs love and family, they need somebody to call mom if they cannot do that let them provide those needs* **(Mabena 1.57 & 58).**
>
> *The government should make provision for an orphanage, sporting and entertainment facilities to make the learners happy* **(Chabalala 1.54).**
>
> *They should come to school and see the situation. Maybe they can extend the age for receiving social grant.* **(Selepe 26).**

Educators Mabena and Chabalala were concerned about lack of social services that could provide psychosocial support to the orphaned learners. Educator Khumalo mentioned that some of the problems of the orphans require professional assistance. These highlighted concerns leave one with the impression that attempts to involve social workers in the two schools have been fruitless. There was a general feeling of lack of commitment from the Social Welfare Department in assigning social workers to visit the school and assist in providing psychosocial support. The educators talked of a lot of paperwork that the Social Welfare Department expected from them every year, yet the social workers failed to respond to the cases that the educators reported. These educators expressed their frustrations as follows:

> *…the Department they will say: "Go to class and write names of those learners". We always send the list and they do not do anything. And that is so painful and even the learners, I believe, that they are tired. They say that, they always call us. They write our names and they do not do anything. So, I will no longer go. It is painful on our side because you do this and that and they are not doing anything* **(Mabena 68).**

> *I have been in this school for three years and I have not seen any social worker. When I came here the first year and discovered this I was so mad. It bothers you. I told the principal that we need a social worker. When I got the number of the learners - I realize it is not a problem of one or two learners - the principal contacted the social worker. They gave us the forms to fill in the list of the learners and their background. That was the last time we saw the person. We tried phoning. They would promise to come and if they come they give you papers to fill. Then that is the last time you see them. So we stopped. The social workers are there but maybe they have other things to look at because at school they do not bother* **(Chabalala 1.55 & 56).**

Giese et al. (2003) found that some educators were frustrated owing to the non delivery of assistance from social workers when they referred the children to them. Many educators were not aware of the services of social workers and how to contact them. In another study educators reported that they had high expectations of the social workers to get involved in supporting the orphans (Schierhout et al., 2004). Over 60 percent of the educator respondents in the study reported that they had access to the social workers. However, in this study it was acknowledged that the effectiveness of involving the social workers in terms of feedback of the referrals was not explored. In this current study, during one of the interviews Educator Khumalo gave an example of a case that needed the assistance of a social worker. The educator talked of trying to get help outside the school when an orphaned learner disclosed that she had been repeatedly raped. She contacted social workers and the police but no assistance was given to the affected learner. She narrated the following:

> *Sometimes you invite the social workers but they do not come. The other learner, the parent died and she was raped and raped again and she is a sick student because she has epilepsy, so this learner will come tell me the story. I called her sister and the case was taken to the police but the police still did not take action. They just opened a docket, then nothing else happened. So, it is difficult* **(Khumalo 46 & 47).**

It is evident from the extracts that some of the educators interviewed associate social workers with paperwork and no service delivery with regard to the orphans. Educators Khumalo, Chabalala and Mtalala were of the opinion that they were playing the role of a social worker. It seems that the absence of social workers forces the educators to perform multiple roles outside their professional training. What needs to be researched is the

relationship between the social workers and the educators and the availability and capacity of the social workers to handle cases referred from schools.

4.3 SUMMARY

In Chapter 4, I presented results from the interviews with the educators from School A and School B. The main themes that emerged from these interviews on how educators identified and responded to the needs of the orphaned learners are described. Most of the educators seemed to perceive orphans as learners who are generally impoverished, have emotional problems and are, at times, socially isolated. The educators derived their understanding of the needs of the orphaned learners from their appearance, behaviour and the information these learners disclosed to the educators from time to time. All these educators appeared to prioritise the need for food, clothes and school funds above other needs. The social and emotional needs, although mentioned by certain educators, were given less attention.

These results suggest that educators understand and distinguish their roles in different ways. There were educators who identified orphaned learners and provided for their needs or they sought assistance for these learners from other sources; while there were other educators who responded to the needs of the learners by sending them for help to other educators who showed a willingness to help these children. The differential role conception seemed to strain the relationship between the educators on the staff at the two schools. The results of this study suggest that some educators felt empowered to fulfil this pastoral role, while others felt disempowered. There were incidences where some educators reported experiencing tension, frustration and intimidation between the two types of educator identity that emerged from this study. Furthermore, it appears that the educators who help orphaned learners are likely to be self-motivated by their background and lived experiences relevant to the circumstances of the orphans.

In Chapter 5, I present the emerging core category themes resulting from this research study.