PSYCHOSOCIAL BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN A DEPRIVED ENVIRONMENT

By

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Port Elizabeth January 2007
DECLARATION

I, Esmé Judy Mack, declare that the dissertation entitled: Psychosocial barriers to learning in a deprived environment, submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Magister Educationis in the Faculty of Education at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, is my own work, and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university. All the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. Language editing was done by a professional linguist.

Ms E. J. Mack

..................

January 2007
This research study is dedicated to my brothers and sisters:
Laetitia, Percival, Joan and Andrew.
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We hereby certify that we have language edited the treatise prepared by Ms E.J Mack, entitled *Psychosocial barriers to learning in a deprived environment*, and that we are satisfied that, provided the changes we have made are effected to the text, the language is of a standard fit for publication.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of tables</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opsomming</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary - Acronyms</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY, CONCEPT CLARIFICATION, METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PLAN</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 RESEARCH ORIENTATION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 FORMULATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Rationale</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1 Psychosocial</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.2 Barriers to learning</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.3 Deprived environment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5.1 Philosophical foundation and research approach</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1 Phase 1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1.1 Demarcation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1.2 Sampling</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1.3 Data collection</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1.4 Data analysis and description</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1.5 Literature control</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.2 Phase 2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.2.1 Data collection and analysis</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 2: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON A DEPRIVED ENVIRONMENT AND POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

2.2.1 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

2.2.1.1 Extrinsic barriers

2.2.1.2 Intrinsic barriers

2.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL DEPRIVATION

2.2.2.1 Social deprivation

2.2.2.2 Educational deprivation

2.2.2.3 Material deprivation

3. MANIFESTATION OF BARRIERS

3.1 Examples of systemic barriers

3.1.1 Lack of access to basic services

3.1.2 Lack of human resources and development strategies

3.1.3 Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services

3.1.4 Inflexible curriculum

3.1.5 Language and communication

3.2 Examples of societal barriers

3.2.1 Socio-economic barriers

3.2.1.1 Poverty

3.2.2 Negative attitudes in society

3.2.3 Child abuse

3.2.4 Teenage pregnancies

3.2.5 HIV/AIDS

4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BARRIERS TO LEARNING
3.4.1 Participants and sampling
3.4.2 Method of data collection
3.4.3 Focus group interviews
3.4.3.1 Participation and observation
3.4.3.2 Field notes
3.4.4 Role of the researcher
3.4.5 Data analysis and description
3.4.6 Literature control
3.4.7 Data collection, analysis and control
3.4.8 Data verification
3.4.8.1 Measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the research
3.4.9 Ethical measures

3.5 CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

4.1 INTRODUCTION
4.2 DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS
4.3 THEME 1: A DEPRIVED HOME SITUATION GENERATES BARRIERS TO LEARNING
4.3.1 Relationships
4.3.1.1 Neglect
4.3.1.2 Rejection
4.3.1.3 No communication
4.3.2 Abuse
4.3.2.1 Physical abuse
4.3.2.2 Sexual abuse
4.3.2.3 Alcohol and drug abuse
4.3.3 No privacy
4.3.3.1 Sexual behaviour of parents
4.3.3.2 Overcrowding
4.3.4 Poverty

4.3.4.1 Unemployment
4.3.4.2 Cannot afford school fees – learner is suffering
4.3.4.3 No electricity – affects homework
4.3.4.4 No breadwinner

4.4 THEME 2: A DEPRIVED SCHOOL SITUATION CREATES BARRIERS TO LEARNING

4.4.1 Social relationships

4.4.1.1 Peer pressure
4.4.1.2 Relationships with teachers

4.4.2 Physical factors

4.4.2.1 Broken windows and roofs
4.4.2.2 Water, electricity and lights
4.4.2.3 School grounds and ablutions
4.4.2.4 Overcrowded classes

4.4.3 No Resources

4.4.3.1 Libraries
4.4.3.2 Counselling centre

4.4.4 Racism

4.4.4.1 Language issues
4.4.4.2 No mixing of races

4.4.5 Distances to school

4.4.5.1 Costly
4.4.5.2 No time for homework

4.5 THEME 3: A DEPRIVED ENVIRONMENT CAUSES BARRIERS TO LEARNING

4.5.1 HIV/AIDS and TB

4.5.1.1 Taking care of parents
4.5.1.2 Tiredness and illnesses
4.5.1.3 Discrimination against them

4.5.2 Community not conducive to learning
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, SHORTCOMINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.2.1 Conclusions: the global picture

5.2.2 A differentiated picture of psychosocial barriers and their implications

5.2.2.1 A deprived home situations generates barriers to
5.2.2.2 A deprived school situation creates barriers to learning

5.2.2.3 A deprived environment causes barriers to learning

5.2.2.4 Learner-related factors creates barriers to learning

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS SUPPORTING LEARNERS FROM A DEPRIVED ENVIRONMENT WITH REGARD TO THE BARRIERS TO LEARNING THEY EXPERIENCE, IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THEIR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

5.3.1 THEME 1: A deprived home situation

5.3.1.1 Recommendations regarding the home

5.3.2 THEME 2: A deprived school situation

5.3.2.1 Recommendations regarding the school

5.3.3 THEME 3: A deprived environment

5.3.3.1 Recommendations regarding the environment

5.3.4 THEME 4: Learner-related factors

5.3.4.1 Recommendations regarding the learner

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO FURTHER RESEARCH

5.6 CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANNEXURE
1. Letters
2. Form on biographical data
3. Transcriptions
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>A brief overview of the strategies to ensure trustworthiness</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The summary of identified themes, categories and subcategories</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic model layout</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Maslow's hierarchy of needs</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

Many secondary schools in deprived environments are characterized by teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, high dropout rates, gangsterism and low pass rates. Teachers are confronted on a daily basis with learners who are exposed to barriers to learning.

The purpose of this study is in line with the formulated problem, namely to:

- investigate the various dimensions of the relationship that exists between psychosocial barriers to learning and environmental deprivation;
- provide guidelines based on the findings of the research and present them as recommendations for teachers to support learners from a deprived environment who experience barriers to learning.

A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and interpretative research design was utilized to provide acceptable answers to the research problem. A literature study regarding psychosocial barriers to learning was done to explain the concept along with concepts related to environmental deprivation. This study was conducted in two phases:

**Phase 1** presented an exploration of the problem in the form of a single open-ended question:

> What hindrances to learning are you experiencing in your specific physical and social environment?

Eight focus group interviews with learners were undertaken at a secondary school in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality. A purposive sampling method was used. Data collection took place through open-ended interviews and Tesch’s model was used to analyse the data. After the research investigation was completed the researcher and an independent coder analyzed
the results from the transcriptions of a voice-recorder. Guba’s model of data verification was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Ethical measures were adhered to during the study. The research findings were evaluated for educational purposes. Consensus was reached between the researcher and the independent coder with regard to the identification of themes, categories and sub-categories.

**Phase 2** generated recommendations from the findings of Phase 1 to assist the teachers in dealing competently with learners from deprived environments.

The following four themes emerged from the results which led to various conclusions:

1. **A deprived home situation** (relationships, abuse, no privacy, and poverty) generates barriers to learning.

   - Neglect: no interest and a don’t care attitude of parents, no parents at home, rejection and no communication have a negative effect on the learners.
   - Physical, sexual, alcohol and drug abuse in the home situation influence the learners negatively.
   - No privacy: sexual behaviour of parents and overcrowding have a decisive effect on the learners.
   - Poverty: factors such as unemployment, cannot afford school fees, no electricity and no breadwinner make the learner feel desperate and despondent.

2. **A deprived school situation** (social relationships, physical factors, no resources, racism and distances to school) creates barriers to learning.
The following features of social relationships were identified as contributing factors to poor social relationships at school, namely: peer pressure: drugs, dropping out of school, unsafe school environment; relationships with teachers: no respect for teachers and teachers who degrade learners.

The following physical factors have a detrimental effect on a learner’s progress: broken windows and roofs, lack of water, electricity and lights, the state of the school grounds, ablutions and big classes.

Schools with no resources such as libraries and counselling centres contribute to the poor performance of the learners.

Racism, language issues and no mixing of races are contributing factors to barriers to learning.

The long distances to school, the cost of transport and the fact that they do not have time for homework affect the learners as hindrances to learning.

3. **A deprived environment** (with factors such as HIV/AIDS and TB, a community not conducive to learning, unsafe communities and overpopulation) causes barriers to learning.

   - HIV/AIDS and TB, taking care of parents, tiredness, illnesses and discrimination are seen as factors that hamper learning.
   - A community that is not conducive to learning, with a don’t care attitude and that is not very helpful, causes barriers to learning.
   - Unsafe communities, where crime is rampant, with ineffective police services and overpopulation, where noise and loud music are the order of the day, have a negative effect on learning.

4. **Learner-related factors** (early pregnancies and the susceptibility of youth) create barriers to learning.
- Teenage pregnancies are detrimental to education where the mother must baby-sit, and is not studying, as well as sexual abuse and rape, are factors that contribute to school dropouts.
- Cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, taverns, discos, taxis and gangs were identified as factors contributing to learner delinquency.

The conclusion was reached that learners in deprived environments are exposed to psychosocial barriers to learning. Recommendations in this regard were proposed to assist the teacher in understanding these learners and the barriers that they are exposed to on a daily basis.

**Key words:**
- Psychosocial
- Barriers to learning
- Deprived environment
OPSOMMING

Talle sekondêre skole in agtergeblewe gebiede word gekenmerk deur tienerswangerskappe, alkohol- en dwelmmisbruik, misdaad, hoë vroeë skoolverlatingsyfers, bendes en ‘n algemeen lae sukseskoers. Die werklikheid wat onderwysers in die gesig staar is leerders wat blootgestel word aan hindernisse wat remmend is tot leer.

Die doel van dié studie kom ooreen met die geformuleerde probleem, naamlik om:

- onderzoek in te stel na die omvang van die verskillende verhoudings wat bestaan tussen psigososiale hindernisse wat leer rem en omgewingsdeprivasie;

- riglyne te bied wat gebaseer is op die navorsingsbevindinge en dit aan te bied as aanbevelings vir onderwysers om leerders van agtergeblewe gebiede te ondersteun wat hindernisse tot leer ondervind.

‘n Kwalitatiewe, ondersoekende, beskrywende en interpretatiewe navorsingsontwerp is aangewend om aanvaarbare antwoorde op die gestelde navorsingsprobleem te bied. ‘n Literatuurstudie met verwysing na psigososiale hindernisse tot leer is onderneem om die konsep tesame met konsepte wat verband hou met omgewingsdeprivasie te verduidelik. Die navorsing is in twee fases onderneem:

Fase 1 behels ‘n verkenning van die probleem in die vorm van een oopeinde-vraag.

*Watter hindernisse tot leer ondervind jy in jou spesifieke fisiese en sosiale omgewing?*
Agt fokusgroeponderhoude is gevoer met leerders by ‘n sekondêre skool in die Nelson Mandela Metropolitaanse Munisipaliteit. ’n Doelgerigte monsternemingsmetode is gebruik. Data is versamel deur ope onderhoude en Tesch se model is gebruik om die data te ontleed. Nadat die navorsingsondersoek voltooi is, het die navorser en ’n onafhanklike kodeerder die resultate van die transkripsies vanaf ’n stemopnemer ontleed. Guba se model van dataverifikasie is gebruik ten einde die vertrouenswaardigheid van die data te verseker. Etiese maatreëls is gedurende die studie gehandhaaf. Die navorsingsbevindinge is vir opvoedkundige doeleindes geëvalueer. ’n Ooreenkoms is bereik tussen die navorser en die onafhanklike kodeerder met betrekking tot die identifisering van temas, kategorieë en subkategorieë.

In Fase 2 is bevindinge van Fase 1 gebruik om die onderwysers te help om leerders van agtergeblewe agtergronde doeltreffend te hanteer.

Die volgende vier temas het aan die lig gekom, wat tot verskeie gevolgtrekkings aanleiding gegee het.

1. **Gedepriveerde huislike omstandighede** (verhoudings, mishandeling, geen privaatheid en armoede) genereer hindernisse tot leer.

   - Verwaarlosing: geen belangstelling en ‘n traak-my-nie-agtige houding van ouers, ouers wat nie tuis is nie, verwerping en geen kommunikasie nie het ‘n negatiewe effek op die leerders.
   - Fisiese, seksuele, alkohol- en dwelmmisbruik in die huislike omstandighede beïnvloed die leerders nadelig.
   - Geen privaatheid: seksuele gedrag van die ouers, en oorbevolking het ‘n wesenlike uitwerking op die leerders.
   - Armoede: faktore soos werkloosheid, leerders wat nie skoolgeld kan bekostig nie, geen elektrisiteit en geen broodwinner laat die leerling desperaat en moedeloos voel.
2. **Gedeprimeerde skoolomstandighede** (sosiale verhoudings, fisiese faktore, geen hulpbronne, rassisme en lang afstande skool toe) veroorsaak hindernisse tot leer.

- Die volgende kenmerke van sosiale verhoudings is geïdentifiseer as faktore wat bydra tot swak sosiale verhoudings by die skool, naamlik: groepsdruk, dwelms, vroeë skoolverlating, onveilige skool omgewing, verhoudings met onderwysers, geen respek vir onderwysers en onderwysers wat leerders verneder.
- Die volgende fisiese faktore het 'n stremmende invloed op 'n kind se vordering: gebreekte vensters en dakke, gebrek aan water, elektrisiteit en ligte, toestand van skoolgronde, ablusies en groot klasse.
- Skole met geen hulpbronne soos byvoorbeeld biblioteke en beradings kantore dra by tot die swak prestasies van die leerders.
- Rassisme, taalkwessies en verskillende rasse wat nie met mekaar meng nie is alles faktore wat bydra tot hindernisse tot leer.
- Die lang afstande skool toe, die koste daaraan verbonde en gevolglike gebrek aan tyd vir tuiswerk is stremmend vir leer.

3. **'n Gedeprimeerde omgewing** (met faktore soos HIV/AIDS en Tering, 'n gemeenskap wat nie bydra tot leer nie, onveilige gemeenskappe en oorbevolking) veroorsaak hindernisse tot leer.

- HIV/AIDS en Tering, om na ouers om te sien, moegheid en siektes en diskriminasie word gesien as oorsake wat leer benadeel.
- 'n Gemeenskap wat nie leer bevordeer nie, met 'n traak-my-nie-agtige houding en wat nie baie hulpvaardig is nie, veroorsaak hindernisse tot leer.
- Onveilige gemeenskappe waar misdaad hoogty vier, met polisie dienste wat nie baie effektief is nie en oorbevolkte gebiede waar geraas en harde
musiek aan die orde van die dag is, het ook ‘n negatiewe uitwerking op leer.

4. **Leerder-verwante faktore** (vroë swangerskappe en die ontvanklikheid van die jeug) veroorsaak hindernisse tot leer.

   - Tiener swangerskappe is nadelig tot die tiener se opvoeding waar sy die baba moet oppas en nie kans kry om te studeer nie, sowel as seksuele mishandeling en verkrachting is alles faktore wat ‘n bydrae lewer tot vroeë skoolverlating.
   - Die gebruik van sigarette, dwelms, alkohol, ‘tauerns’, ‘discos’, ‘taxis’ en bendes is geïdentifiseer as faktore wat bydra tot jeug misdaad.

Daar is tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat leerders in agtergeblewe omgewings blootgestel word aan psigososiale hindernisse tot leer. Laastens is riglyne in hierdie verband aan die hand gedoen om die onderwyser te help om hierdie leerders en die hindernisse waaraan hulle op ‘n daaglikse basis blootgestel word beter te verstaan.

**Sleutelwoorde:**
- Psigososiaal
- Hindernisse tot leer
- Omgewingsdeprivasie
## GLOSSARY – ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCSNET</td>
<td>National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCESS</td>
<td>National Committee on Education Support Services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes Based Education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRC</td>
<td>Human Research Council</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND PURPOSE OF
THE STUDY, CONCEPT CLARIFICATION, METHODOLOGY AND
RESEARCH PLAN

1.1 RESEARCH ORIENTATION

An important aim of education is to guide the learner to maximise his/her potential and fulfil his/her role in society (Pretorius, 1998:5). (In this study, the masculine form only will henceforth be used, but will represent both genders). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa emphatically states that all learners, irrespective of race, language, culture, religion and belief, have a fundamental right to education and equal access to educational institutions, and warns that discrimination in this regard will not be tolerated (The South African Constitution, 1996:14,15). Hence, the Department of Education (1997:i) emphasises the promotion of effective learning for all learners.

In the report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (hereafter referred to as NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (hereafter referred to as NCESS), (Department of Education, 1997), the reorganisation of education to more effectively address the diverse needs of the entire learner population is also postulated. The objective is to minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and promote maximum development of all learners (Department of Education, 1997:i).

interplay between education and the social environment in the following statement: “Education is always situation-bound and as such the nature of the macro-educational situation (society) also influences the nature of the micro-educational situation (e.g. the family)”.

The learner’s life is shaped by his family, his school and his community contexts, which not only provide him with opportunities for development, but unfortunately also impose restraints on him (Green, 2001:7). In this regard, Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:74) explain that a learner’s development is a “continual interaction” between his “individual psychological characteristics and his social context”. What transpires from the work of these authors is that a learner’s social contexts, including socio-economic conditions, way of life, and cultural patterns, have a profound influence on how he develops (Prinsloo, 2005:27).

In order to understand the interaction between individuals and different social contexts it is important to examine Bronfenbrenner’s eco-systemic perspective. The focus of the ecosystemic perspective is the individual: his context, his development and his interaction with his environment. The learner’s environment is defined as a “set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3). Shaffer (1993:60) describes these structures as the developing child nesting in various environmental systems, “ranging from immediate settings, such as the family, to more remote contexts, such as the broader culture”. These structures can be regarded as separate systems that will interact reciprocally with the individual to influence his development in intricate ways.

A learner may be exposed to internal and external factors during his interpersonal relationships in the environment. These may include specific factors in the education process that are likely to operate at different levels of the ecosystem (Donald, et al., 2002:55). A learner’s environment and his experiences at home influence his development, his learning achievement and
his understanding of the reason for and value of school attendance (Booyse 1991:124). It is evident that all the various environmental factors in the context in which education takes place, have a profound influence on the learner's development.

Tripathi (1982:20-21) states that assets in a learner's home or neighbourhood are usually used to determine whether any environment is deprived. He further claims that the behavioral complicatedness of individuals brought up under adverse conditions will be low. Donald, et al. (2002:205), on the other hand, assert that if we examine the cycle of poverty and barriers to learning it is obvious that poor people are at an increased risk of health and safety problems, such as injury, malnutrition, neglect, disease and infection. These health risks develop into physical, intellectual, neurological or sensory problems that are likely to lead to individual disabilities that may act as barriers to learning. Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994a:33) support this statement with their viewpoint that poverty-culture learners find themselves trapped in an environment that impedes their attempts to actualize their hidden potential.

According to Donald, et al. (2002:4), a barrier to learning refers to either internal or external factors that may cause an obstruction to the learner’s ability to benefit from schooling and to develop to his full potential. The education system must be able to provide for the diverse needs of a learner population, in order to provide and sustain effective learning. Those factors that contribute to the inability of the system to make provision for diversity that prevent learners from obtaining educational provision are seen as barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 1997:v).

The school plays an important role in a learner’s life, as it exposes him to both formal and informal curricula. It is the place where he spends a major part of his day (Shaffer, 1993:634); therefore, the school is the obvious place where an empowering school culture can be established that is conducive to his academic
and emotional growth (Slavin, 2003:119). The school’s task is to educate the learner towards co-existence and to provide him with the opportunity to obtain social skills, attitudes and values that will help him to learn to communicate, socialize, cooperate and coexist with others (Pretorius, 1998:127).

The introduction of outcomes-based education (hereafter referred to as OBE), in South Africa has changed the role of the educator dramatically. Gone are the days when educators were simply conveyers of knowledge and learners did not participate actively in lessons (Geyser, 2000:26); the educator is now a facilitator who helps the learner to constructively develop his skills. Kruger and Adams (1998:15) emphasise the key role of educators in the overall development of learners and the identification of physical, psychosocial and moral factors that may obstruct their cognitive development and hinder their self-actualization.

The poverty-culture learner from a deprived environment usually experiences problems in the formal schooling situation, because the learning content is based on the science system that provides subject-specialized learning content. Therefore, is it important that programmes be designed to redress the environmental shortcomings and psychosocial barriers that prevent the learner’s self-actualization to reach his full potential in life (Le Roux and Gildenhuys, 1994b:56). Although schools may pride themselves on their usefulness and relevance in learners’ development, but they may also provide an environment in which learners experience psychosocial barriers to learning.

The question now arises how educators teaching in deprived environments can identify and address these barriers to learning caused by a deprived environment. To prevent the development of these barriers, it is important to monitor and meet the different needs among the learners and within the system as a whole (Department of Education, 1997:12). Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services, lack of parental recognition and involvement, disability and a lack of human resource development strategies must be
identified to prevent a complete learning breakdown or the exclusion of such learners from the system. According to Muthukrishna (2001:46), it is “the priority of an education system to address those factors that prevent learners from accessing educational provision”.

From the researcher’s teaching experience at a secondary school in a deprived environment in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality, the following social issues are prevalent: teenage pregnancies; substance abuse; crime; high dropout rates; poverty; single parenthood; insufficient parental control and involvement in school activities; and poor learner ability to set and achieve goals. Truancy occurs on a regular basis. Learners are apathetic towards their responsibilities at school, and there is a general lack of any culture of learning and schooling. Fighting among learners and involvement in gangsterism are also common occurrences in school communities. Some learners have no respect for educators and authority. The learners’ disregard for punctuality is evident from their late arrival in the mornings.

This study therefore aims to explore and understand the relationship between the contextual issues that affect learners in a deprived environment, which may create psychosocial barriers to learning. Prinsloo, Vorster and Sibaya (1996:208) confirm the notion that a deprived environment may lead to particular barriers to learning.

1.2 FORMULATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.2.1 Rationale

Teachers are generally expected to teach in a way that promotes both learning and psychological wellbeing (Goedeke and Schoeman, 1998:280). Teaching or learning is not a one-way process; but a continuous interaction between the teacher and the learner. According to Erikson, the social context has just as
much influence on the psychosocial development of the learner as it does on his cognitive development (Donald, et al., 2002:90). Most important of all is that the teaching and learning process cannot be separated, but must involve the whole learner. This means that the teacher must be aware of physical, psychosocial or moral factors, which may hamper the learners’ cognitive development and their self-actualization (Kruger, 1998:15).

McGregor and McGregor (1992:6) maintain that the quality of education in the learning situation depends on the commitment and qualifications of teachers and the quality of the learning materials available to them and their learners. Donald, et al. (2002:20), assert that “if what happens is really meaningful to those involved; if it results in the healthy development of whole, competent and confident persons; and it empowers all, and not only some, only then we can speak of quality.” Regrettably, this is very far from what is happening in the South African education system, specifically in deprived environments.

South Africa is in a process of transformation and faces many challenges in transforming and integrating all aspects of its education system. Prinsloo, et al. (1996:312), state that “this challenge encompasses the full extent of social reconstruction, including tackling issues of strife, intolerance and violence.” These issues have a definite effect on the development of learners.

It is generally assumed that deprivation is a direct function of some social or economic stratification (Tripathi, 1982:66). Some learners may experience a limited mental ability, lack of motivation and various emotional conditions. They may find no support from their parents, and intellectual stimulation may be limited. The extent of material deprivation may be substantial. Some of the negative effects of such deprivation are a loss of self-respect, tolerance, low teacher morale and the erosion of learners’ will to learn (Hofmeyr and Jaff, 1992:174).
South African youth from disadvantaged environments generally find that their formal educational experiences are inadequate for the needs of the job market and the demands of the commercial and technological world and discover that they are unable to join society as productive members (Slabbert, Malan, Marais, Olivier and Riordan (1994:103).

Donald, et al. (2002:205), maintain that “poverty, poor educational and social conditions often reinforce one another.” Specific problems in learning may often be a result of living in impoverished circumstances. If, in addition to unfavourable social conditions, the educational conditions are also not conducive to learning, specific learning needs may exist, be ignored and eventually result in negative causes and effects that culminate in a cycle of obstacles to learning (Donald, et al., 2002:205).

The general challenge in improving the quality of education for all learners, irrespective of their context, is to determine how educators can become more responsive to the diverse learning needs of the learners. In the South African context, where social and educational disadvantages are prevalent, external factors are causing specific learning needs (Prinsloo, 2005:29). Learners from a deprived environment feel trapped and frustrated in their attempts to actualize their latent potential. An unsupportive environment usually impedes the potential of these learners (Le Roux and Gildenhuys, 1994a:33).

Teachers should be alerted to the specific barriers to learning caused by learners’ deprived environment, in order to make adequate provision for effective teaching and learning in school.

1.2.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Against this background, the following research questions have been formulated:
Primary research question:
- To which psychosocial barriers to learning are learners from a deprived environment exposed?

Secondary research question:
- What guidelines can be provided to teachers to support learners from a deprived environment with regard to the barriers to learning they experience, in order to promote their effective learning?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of the study is to qualitatively explore the various dimensions of psychosocial barriers to learning related to environmental deprivation and to determine how a deprived environment contributes to learners experiencing such barriers to learning. Furthermore, the research aims to provide guidelines of support to teachers with regard to the barriers to learning learners experience and to promote effective learning.

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

For the sake of clarity, the concepts relevant to this study will now be explained.

1.4.1 Psychosocial

Mwamwenda (1995:351,528) describes the term psychosocial as a connection between relationships that involve psychological factors, as proposed by Erikson’s psychosocial theory, which emphasizes the interaction between the person and his physical and social environments. According to Donald, et al. (2002:74), 'psychosocial' is perceived as a reciprocal action between an individual's characteristics and his social context. The term is generally used to
cover any situation where both psychological and social factors are presumed to play a role (Reber and Reber, 2001:585). Woolfolk (1993:66) describes psychosocial as the individual’s emotional needs in relation to his social environment.

For the purpose of this research, ‘psychosocial’ will refer to an individual’s interaction with and the characteristics of his physical and social environments.

1.4.2 Barriers to learning

‘Barriers to learning’ refers to any factor, either internal or external to the learner, which causes a hindrance or “barrier” to that person’s ability to benefit from schooling (Donald, et al., 2002:4). According to Green, Forrester, Mvambi, Janse van Vuuren and du Toit (1999:129) barriers to learning, as described in the NCSNET and NCESS reports (1998), may be created by pervasive social conditions and attitudes, inappropriate education policies, unhelpful family or school conditions and norms, or a classroom situation that does not match the learning needs of a particular learner. Barriers may also prevail as a consequence of particular disabilities intrinsic to the learner (Green, et al., 1999:129).

For the purpose of this research, ‘barriers to learning’ will refer to internal or external factors to the learner, social conditions, unsuitable educational policies, and family and school environments that do not suit the needs of the learner but rather impede his learning and development.

1.4.3 Deprived environment

Le Roux (2000:12) describes a ‘deprived environment’ as the situation in which an individual finds himself as part of a society that has a low socio-economic status, in which he experiences limited community involvement and a limited potential for upward mobility, with the prospect of either poorly paid employment
or unemployment. A learner’s problems can be related to the environment or the conditions in which he grows up. A deprived environment may impede his development and learning so that he does not realize his full potential (Du Toit, 1991:30). Payne and Biddle (1999:7) state that deprived learners are those clients of schools who are uniquely disadvantaged because of their poverty. Their homes provide little or no intellectual stimulation or access to resources such as books, computers and writing materials, which have a definite effect on their learning.

For the purpose of this research, a ‘deprived environment’ will refer to those disadvantaged conditions at school, home and in society with which the underprivileged learner has to contend and which obstruct his progress.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.5.1 Philosophical foundation and research approach

Educational research forms an integral part of the social sciences, according to De Vos (2002:5) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994:1), because it deals with a particular aspect of human society. Willig (2003:9), Fouché (2002a:273) and Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147) state that qualitative researchers are interested in how humans find meaning in the world and how they experience events, because they “tend to be concerned with meaning”. De Vos and Schultze (2002:5) and McMillan and Schumacher (1993:372) confirm this view when they state that the social sciences involve the study of people; their beliefs, behaviour, interaction and habits.

By means of the qualitative approach I will strive to offer an educational perspective on the field of this inquiry. The research question will be appropriate to participant observation, which means that the researcher is compelled to make direct contact with the participants of observation (Strydom, 2002:278; Denzin
and Lincoln, 1994:378). The research will be designed around a qualitative, contextual, interpretative, explorative and descriptive approach.

The basic viewpoint of interpretative research is that information is gained from the participant and his interpretations of the world around him (Gay and Airasian, 2003:169; Goldenberg, 1992:323). Cohen and Manion (1987:40) state that “theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations; and should be ‘grounded’ on data generated by the research act.”

The participants in this study will be met in their own world in an attempt to acquire an extensive understanding of the research problem. The information gained from the participants, namely learners from deprived environments, with regard to the psychosocial barriers that they are experiencing, will provide the foundation on which their environment is interpreted and their views will be holistically interpreted.

Gay and Airasian (2003:169) state that a holistic approach is characteristic of the qualitative approach, that focuses on the processes, as well as the outcomes. According to Goldenberg (1992:323), much of the interpretative work is exploratory, therefore, this research will be exploratory; as Cohen and Manion (1987:40) state, “theory should not precede research, but follow it.” The intention is to determine what barriers to learning learners from a specific deprived environment are experiencing and the challenges they face in the current educational situation.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will be conducted in two phases, namely:
1.6.1 Phase 1

This phase investigates and determines the psychosocial barriers to learning that learners are experiencing and are exposed to in a deprived environment.

1.6.1.1 Demarcation

The learners who will be participating in the study will be selected from one particular secondary school within the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality and will share the experience of a particular condition, namely that they all come from a deprived environment and are experiencing barriers to learning (Willig, 2003:58). This falls within the parameters of the requirements for a treatise.

1.6.1.2 Sampling

*purposive* sampling will be used during the study (Strydom and Delport, 2002:335; and Goldenberg, 1992:163). The participants will be selected for this study on the basis of their suitability, as well as the fact that they can offer rich information (Morse, 1994:229). The researcher will take care that the information obtained from and about the context will provide rich detail, to maximize the range of specific information.

Learners from Grades 10, 11 and 12 will be used in this study. Criteria for the selection of the participants will be discussed in Chapter 3. The reason for selecting more mature learners only is that they will have a better understanding of what is expected from them.

1.6.1.3 Data collection

Qualitative research is multi-methodic in focus. It involves a naturalistic and interpretative approach to the description and analysis of people's individual and social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. This means that participants are studied in their natural environments and that the “researcher is concerned
with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants’ perspective” (Gay and Airasian, 2003:205; Willig, 2003:16; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2; and McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:372-373).

Data will be collected by means of semi-structured focus group interviews and participant observation. A pilot interview will be conducted to become accustomed with the technique. The researcher will have no preconceived ideas (‘bracketing’ of own ideas will be done). A moderator and an observer will participate in the research process and will make salient observations. The role of the moderator will be to act as a facilitator, while the observer will take field notes during the interviews (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:422). It is important that field notes and observations of what occurs be recorded while the researcher is in the field (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport, 2002:319). For the sake of triangulation, the researcher will draw on these different data sources and different methods of data collection (Gay and Airasian, 2003:215; Willig, 2003:37).

The following open-ended research question will be put to the participants to gather information on the topic, namely:

**What hindrances to learning are you experiencing in your specific physical and social environment?**

A friendly, relaxed environment will be created. Participants will be encouraged to speak and share their views openly and freely. The following skills will be used during the interviews and observation sessions: listening, probing, clarification, summarizing and paraphrasing. Both verbal and non-verbal responses will be recorded. Interviews will proceed until the data become saturated.
1.6.1.4 Data analysis and description

De Vos (2002:339) maintains that data analysis is a process that brings order, structure and meaning to the data collected during the research. The interviews recorded by means of a voice recorder will be transcribed verbatim, and the information will be analysed by means of the descriptive analysis of Tesch (Creswell, 1994:155). Colman (1994:1155) refers to coding as the interpretation of what has been recorded during the interviews. Coding will be used to identify the emerging main themes, which will be divided into categories and subcategories.

1.6.1.5 Literature control

A literature study will be undertaken to form the theoretical foundation of the study, as well as relate the findings of this research with other studies that were previously researched, in order to establish if any similarities, contrasts, inconsistencies and unique contributions emerged during the research process (Creswell, 1994:21-22).

1.6.2 Phase 2

In this phase, strategies of support and assistance to learners from a deprived environment, who are experiencing barriers to learning, will be generated and proposed.

1.6.2.1 Data collection and analysis

The results of Phase 1 will be used to derive guidelines, to assist learners from a deprived environment who experience barriers to learning. This will be done by effectively managing the diverse challenges they have to deal with. A literature control will again be undertaken to confirm the proposed guidelines.
Professionals in the field of education will also be consulted to discuss the guidelines and to gain more insight into the research study.

1.7 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the conclusions, Guba’s model will be applied to verify the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:296). Field notes, triangulation, peer examination and independent coding will be used to verify:

- The credibility and truth value of the findings.
- Transferability, which ensures the applicability of the findings.
- Dependability, which ensures consistency in the findings.
- Confirmability, which can be achieved by using the criterion of neutrality or freedom of bias.

1.8 ETHICAL MEASURES

Permission for the interviews with the learners will be obtained from the school principal and the District Director of Education. Gay and Airasian (2003:194-195) and Willig (2003:18) state that the following ethical considerations need to be taken into account during qualitative research: informed consent, no deception, the right to withdraw, debriefing, feedback and confidentiality. Great care will be taken to comply with these ethical measures during the research. The participants will be well informed about the procedures that will be used during the voluntary participation and anonymous research process, and they will be reassured about the confidentially aspect.

1.9 RESEARCH PLAN AND OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Research orientation, problem statement and purpose of the study, concept clarification, research design, methodology and plan.
Chapter 2: A theoretical perspective on a deprived environment and possible related barriers to learning.

Chapter 3: A theoretical explanation of the chosen research design and a description of the method of the investigation.

Chapter 4: Research results and literature control.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, shortcomings and recommendations.
CHAPTER 2
A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN A DEPRIVED ENVIRONMENT

If families do not …
Then schools must
provide roots for children…
so they stand firm and grow…
Provide wings for children…
so they can fly.
Broken roots and crippled wings
destroy hope
and hope sees the invisible,
feels the intangible,
and achieves the impossible.

Unknown Author

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A worldwide fundamental aim of any objective educational system in a democratic society is to make provision for all learners to have access to quality education. This will enable learners to reach their full potential through their learning, so that they are able to make a meaningful contribution and become involved in society throughout their lives (Department of Education, 1997:ii).

Bugelski, in Dreyer & Duminy (1993:73), defines learning as the cognitive activity through which knowledge, skills, habits, viewpoints and principles are obtained and used effectively. This results in an ongoing change of behaviour. To qualify as learning, this change must be brought about by experience, through the interaction of a person with his environment (Woolfolk, 1993:196). Slavin (2003:165) defines learning as the procurement of capabilities that are not
inborn, but depends on actual observations, which are partly based on feedback from the environment.

Dockrell and McShane (1993), in Reid (2005:41), suggest that the *environment* and the collaboration of the environment with the learner are essential for learning to occur. The environment in which the learners grow up can have a definite influence on the quality of their learning and becoming (Prinsloo, Vorster and Sibaya, 1996:208). Du Toit (1991:30) also contends that the learner’s problems are connected with the environment in which he grows up. Poor socio-economic conditions and a culturally poor environment that lacks opportunities may impede the learner’s development and learning to such an extent that he cannot develop fully.

*Environmental deprivation* and its influence on the learning of the learner have received much attention over the past few decades, since it is one of the major problems in South Africa (Prinsloo, *et al*., 1996:208). Jansen (1996:152) notes that it is evident that learners may demonstrate learning problems that arise from environmental deprivation. This means that there is a shortage of possibilities in the deprived learner’s environment. This restricts him in his adequate actualization (Booyse, 1991:123).

Circumstances that emerge from the deprived environment can sometimes place learners at risk. Often for learners who are experiencing *barriers to learning* the collaborative role in learning can be especially important, because a large number of learners with barriers do not have independence and flexibility in learning. The learners depend to a great extend on the reciprocal action with the teacher and the environment (Reid, 2005:41). In identifying the conditions within the environment, which can cause barriers to learning, is it important to recognize problems that will have a particular impact on the learners (Department of Education, 1997:14).
Reid (2005:41) states that by understanding the significance of deprivation in the environment and the teacher’s role in assisting the learner to use the environment effectively, can minimise the results of barriers to learning and increase performance and self-esteem.

According to Eloff and Ebersöhn (2004:5) South African learners in our contemporary society are confronted with major challenges, such as the actualities of unemployment, poverty, HIV/AIDS, barriers to learning and development. Society, and especially educators, will have to take responsibility for the learners in their care. It is important to establish safe and secure environments conducive to learning, where learners can experience warmth and acceptance and where provision is made for them to fulfil their learning function as best they can (Prinsloo, 2005:41,42).

This chapter will establish a theoretical basis for describing the possible barriers to learning that secondary school learners from a deprived environment are exposed to. An attempt will be made to give an account of and clarify their development, learning, needs and drives from an educational perspective. An explanation or definition of the concepts will be given, followed by theories related to perspectives on barriers to learning. Factors addressing barriers to learning will be discussed and finally the relationship between psychosocial barriers to learning and environmental deprivation will be addressed.

2.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The relevant concepts related to the topic will now be further explained for the sake of clarity.
2.2.1 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

A barrier can be defined as an impediment or an occurrence that can separate things or people; it hinders communication and prohibits admittance to promotion (Prinsloo, 2005:27; Tulloch, 1993:112). Reber and Reber (2001:79) describe a barrier as any impediment that prevents an individual from reaching a goal. Similarly, a barrier is defined as any condition that makes it difficult to make progress or to achieve an objective (www.visualthesaurus.com). This means that any factor, which impedes a learning ability to benefit from schooling, can be seen as a barrier to learning (Donald, et al., 2002:4).

For the purpose of this study, barriers to learning will refer to factors outside of the learner, namely extrinsic barriers, such as systemic, societal and economic barriers, and intrinsic barriers, within the learner such as psychosocial and physical barriers, that might have a hampering effect on their learning.

2.2.1.1 Extrinsic barriers

According to Van den Berg and Naicker (1996:25) extrinsic barriers refer to barriers that are created extrinsically, such as socio-economic disadvantage. In societies where a large percentage of the population have undergone hardship because of economic exploitation and social deprivation it is expected that many more will be categorized as “suffering from a ‘private’ disability” such as barriers to learning.

- Systemic barriers

A very basic definition of the term systemic, as given by Reber and Reber (2001:734), is that it generally refers to a system, namely the totality of a situation, rather than the different parts thereof. However, Donald et al. (2002:47), state that systems usually have subsystems, which reciprocate with
the whole system. A characteristic of a system is that it correlates with other systems. Likewise, Swart and Pettipher (2005:10) claim that systems are affected by one another, in other words the relationship between causes is reciprocal.

These systems refer to the different environments in which a learner lives and develops; this means that the learner’s desire and ability to learn, is being influenced by the environment at home, school, the social group and his cultural background (Lerner, 1993:115). For example, the principal of a primary school on a farm near Colchester stated that “the school’s classrooms need urgent renovation, the cement floors need mats and the ceiling is on the brink of collapsing” and the school is also without electricity. Some learners had to walk twenty kilometres to school because the new transport policy banned the use of bakkies for transporting pupils to school (Matomela, 2006:10). Such circumstances can be regarded as systemic barriers. Donald, et al. (2002:4,5), agree that barriers to learning cannot be disconnected from the wider social context, the systems inside it, as well as within the individual, in order to understand the origins, support and solutions to barriers to learning.

- **Societal barriers**

Haralambos and Holborn (2004:238) refer to societal barriers as situations in which several forms of deprivation hinder individuals from engaging in important areas of society’s activities. Swart and Pettipher (2005:10) note that the South African context is a good example as to why the usual challenges of development cannot be disconnected from the particular challenges of addressing social issues and barriers to learning. The challenges of development, social issues and barriers to learning are all linked with each other.

External influences of barriers to learning are very intense and are very similar and related to internal influences. Social problems, such as substance abuse,
sexuality (HIV/AIDS), violence, gangsterism, gender and race prejudices are examples of societal barriers experienced in a deprived environment (Donald, et al., 2002:31).

- **Economic barriers**

Haralambos and Holborn (2004:241) define economic barriers as the shortage of resources needed to partake in activities, and having living circumstances, which are to a large extent sanctioned in societies. According to Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994a:29) economic barriers are directly linked to educational deprivation, because they lead to insufficient training and therefore, limited job opportunities. Some families expect their children to work over weekends so that the family can survive and this often is the cause why many learners drop out of school early to earn money or to accept family and social responsibilities (Donald, et al., 2002:209).

Incompetence in provision is connected to other societal disparities such as discrimination on the grounds of disability, race and gender. Differences in societies, as well as disparities, which originate from poverty and also from policies and practices, can develop into barriers to learning. It is therefore clear that the boundaries between systems, societies and economic barriers are not sharply defined, but are reciprocal and overlapping. Donald, et al. (2002:32), note that it is important that internal barriers to learning should not be seen in isolation, because they cannot be disconnected from the contexts of the family, school, community and society.

2.2.1.2 **Intrinsic barriers**

Intrinsic barriers can be described as learning breakdown that learners encounter as a result of intrinsic cognitive or learning difficulties within the learner himself (Department of Education Directorate 2002:141). According to (Uys
2005:414,415; Du Preez, 2004:55,56; Snyman and Bloem; 2001:172; and Van Niekerk, 1997:234 intrinsic barriers to learning are categorized as follows:

- Physical barriers: Limited physical mobility or use of limbs.
- Sensory barriers: Visual, low vision or partial sightedness or hearing disabilities.
- Neurological barriers: Damage to the brain such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and epilepsy.
- Mental barriers: Giftedness and intellectual mental handicap.
- Chronic disease and infection: Malnutrition, asthma, HIV/AIDS and TB
- Autism: Severe disorders of thinking, communication and behaviour.
- Social behaviour: problems with social interaction and egocentricity.
- Emotional responses: Anxiety and aggression.
- Self-esteem: Low self-esteem.

**Psychosocial barriers**

Reber and Reber (2001:79, 243) define psychosocial as “the phenomena in the individual having a social bearing either in origin or in outcome”. The social, economic and political environments in which the learner lives may influence psychosocial barriers, which have a negative influence on the learners’ social and emotional wellbeing, therefore placing the learner at risk of learning failure (Department of Education, 1997:14).

The learner’s wellbeing is highly influenced by his self-concept. According to Hamachek (1995:326) self-concept refers to the “cognitive part of self-perception and self-esteem to the affective dimension of self-perception”. Mwamwenda (2004:315) contends that learners with a positive self-concept are more confident and perform better at school than those learners with a negative self-concept.
Physical disabilities as barriers

Ramphal and Ramphal (1998:253) refer to physical disabilities as “disorders of the skeleton, joints, muscles or health conditions that interfere with the learner’s educational progress”. According to Van Niekerk (1997:234) disability refers to “any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity, in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being”. Du Toit (1991:26,27) differentiates between a disability and restraints. He refers to disability as a recognizable deficiency in the learner’s given potential “such as sensory, neural, intellectual or physical deficiencies”.

2.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL DEPRIVATION

Le Roux (2000:12) and Pretorius (1998:301) refer to environmental deprivation as unfavourable circumstances in which learners or social groups have to contend with a low economic status, restricted community involvement, limited potential towards a higher mobility, unemployment or low income. This includes psychosocial disadvantages, poverty, general and cultural deprivation and material deficiencies.

According to Du Plessis (1995:51) deprivation is an occurrence that happens in modern communities more frequently than generally realized. To live in a deprived environment means to be exposed to an insufficiency, which prevents a learner from living a successful life. Jansen (1996:152) states that numerous learners display various problems, which are a consequence of environmental deprivation. It is evident that learners who receive insufficient environmental stimulation experience barriers to learning. Learners who live in such circumstances have a slim chance of success with regard to school and career expectancy because they have to endure serious impediments in relation to their self-actualization. These limit their chances in life.
2.2.2.1 Social deprivation

*Social deprivation* is defined by Le Roux (1994:20) as the social separation of an individual or the shortage of sufficient social interaction and reciprocal interpersonal contact. Townsend (1987), in Cooper, Lloyd-Reason and Wall, (2003:79) define social deprivation as that which produces a generalization of circumstances of individuals who do not or cannot partake in everyday relationships, such as friends and family.

When learners feel lonely or rejected in poor social relationships it can lead to feelings of anxiety and a low self-esteem (Christensen, 2001:136). Learners from deprived environments often lack cognitive stimulation by others that can cause barriers to learning (Lerner, 1993:255).

2.2.2.2 Educational deprivation

Pretorius (1998:302) defines *educational deprivation* as the type of education that will not empower learners to eventually make an acceptable contribution to society. Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994a:29) state that educational deprivation is directly linked to the occurrence of deprivation in poor societies.

According to Grossman (1995:26) it is noted that educationally deprived learners have “special difficulty in developing concepts of an abstract nature and generalization.” Their thinking processes are more literal rather than theoretical and imaginative. It is also taken for granted that deprived learners have low educational and career aspirations and their personal ambitions and expectations are correspondingly low (Grossman, 1995:28).
2.2.2.3 Material deprivation

Pretorius (1998:307) defines *material deprivation* as living in poverty, large families, ill health, unsatisfactory care, a shortage of books and educational toys. Richter (1994:36) states that most *economically deprived* children grow up in environments that are often harmful to their optimal physical and psychological development. These circumstances often remain in existence and are established over generations. According to Du Plessis (1995:64) it has been established that the learner cannot actualize his full potential when he lives in poverty or if there is a lack of learning material.

3. MANIFESTATION OF BARRIERS

3.1 Examples of systemic barriers

3.1.1 Lack of access to basic services

One of the most important barriers to learning is denial of access to the existing educational provision and learners’ incapacity to access other services, which promote the learning process. The learner’s incapacity to access education arises as the actual consequence from *facilities* and *services* that are unsatisfactory or non-existent, which are essential for involvement in the learning process (Department of Education Directorate, 2002:132). For example, in many disadvantaged areas learners are not able to reach schools because there are no transport facilities available and some learners have to bring their own water, and “the department has not delivered on its promise to transport children” (Matomela, 2006:10).

Basic services, which must support learners, and the system to reduce and remove barriers, or to prevent them from emerging, are often non-existent or limited in poor communities (Department of Education (1997:17). The school
system often suffers from inadequate management, absenteeism and repeating of grades, poor work attempts and substantial deficits in basic infrastructure and support materials. This is regardless of the fact that a disproportionate share of public money resources is being directed to poorer schools (Cheru, 2001:512).

According to Slavin (2003:106) this lack of access to basic services can have an important affect on a learner’s achievements. In deprived environments crime, insufficient social and health services, a lack of positive role models and other factors can generate an environment where a learner’s motivation, mental health and achievement can be impaired.

3.1.2 Lack of human resources and development strategies

Teacher shortages are a real problem in South Africa. Pillay (1990:37) stated that the South African educational system is currently experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers. This problem regarding the current state of affairs is reiterated when Esbend (2003:2) points out that “around 9 000 learners have their schooling severely disrupted as the province (Eastern Cape) remains short of as many as 3 000 teachers”. The Report on Education in South African Rural communities (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:84) states that teachers find it difficult to achieve quality in education because of a shortage of teachers, a lack of teaching aids and poor infrastructure.

With regard to the above statement, Day (1993), in Wa Mosili (2001:14), points out that it is self-evident that any effort to enhance a child’s learning depends on some form of teacher development. A priority in many countries is the necessity to enhance schooling by improving the status, authority and working conditions of teachers. Jansen (2002:18) states that environmentally deprived schools are at a disadvantage because of the present pupil-teacher ratio. It is expected from educators at these schools to teach large classes, while the educators and learners are negatively affected by the educational and administrative workload
of the teachers. Circumstances in deprived environments are appalling. They are characterized by a lack of sanitation, insufficient or no textbooks, no electricity and poor parents.

Marrian (2006:11) reports that Professor Mary Metcalfe said that South Africa is facing a critical time in “planning for and improving an adequate supply of teachers.” This problem derives from a growing number of teachers that are leaving the profession. The decrease in teacher morale is due to poor working conditions and job stress that arise from teachers resigning and changing careers.

According to Wa Mosili (2001:14) is it important to recruit, develop and support teachers in the educational system. Their work conditions should be improved and they should be paid better salaries. Support systems are necessary to help teachers to deal with their personal and work-related problems.

3.1.3 Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services

According to the Department of Education (1997:17) the inappropriate or inadequate support services in some deprived contexts play a part in learning breakdown. For example: where the essence of the service is based on problems in the learner, instead of on the system where the barrier may exist, such as poor teaching methods, the intervention may lead to an increase in a breakdown of learning.

Themane and Mabasa (2002:278) conducted research on the system of supply of learner support material in the Northern Province in South Africa and found that there was a serious shortage of textbooks in particular in spite of the fact that the Department of Education is always increasing the budget for the purchase of books. They found that the books are wrong, inefficient or not delivered at all.
3.1.4 Inflexible curriculum

According to Ramphal and Ramphal (1998:248) an inflexible curriculum does not meet the various needs of all the learners in a class and it may lead to learning breakdown, because what is being taught through the curriculum may not be relevant to the learner’s life situation. The curriculum itself can often be the cause of barriers to learning and development, because it relates basically to the inflexible characteristics of the curriculum, which hinders it from meeting various needs among learners.

Learning breakdown happens when learners are not able to access the curriculum (Department of Education Directorate, 2002:137). The inability of the curriculum to accommodate the diversity of a number of different learners is also resulting in barriers to learning. Learner failure is a stark fact that is associated with an inflexible curriculum (Department of Education 1997:29).

With the implementation of Curriculum 2005 teachers had to be trained and new textbooks and learning materials had to be produced. Many schools in disadvantaged environments experienced problems either due to the lack of resources or the desire to invest in OBE. Schools, especially those in remote areas, encountered various problems with the late delivery of textbooks. There was also no certainty that learners from environmentally deprived schools in those areas would be able to have access to any textbooks (Asmal and James, 2002:177).

3.1.5 Language and communication

Language plays a pivotal role in education because it is the most important way through which knowledge is transferred and learning takes place. The issue of language in education in South Africa has always been a political one. Mda (2000:156) states that language was used by the government as a support to
enforce racial segregation in communities and as the basis of apartheid education policies. In South African society and schools language has been used as a means to isolate different language groups. The different languages in South Africa have never had the benefit of equal status (Chick, 1992:272). Therefore, Prinsloo, et al. (1996:322), state that education in the predominantly black schools in the new South Africa is faced with the enormous task of teaching learners with a restricted competency in English.

Bernstein, in Silver and Hagin (2002:363), states that there are differences in “language facility” between the “middle class – elaborated” and the “working class – restricted” kind of language. The restricted code has a limited form of language usage, which includes short sentences, considerable use of indirect meanings and a lot of repetition, which limits the user to ‘descriptive rather than abstract concepts’. According to Pretorius (1998:308,309) learners from deprived environments have poor speech usage and hindered reading and writing skills and reading tendencies. They also depend mostly on non-verbal communication. Bernstein further states that the elaborated code has a considerable vocabulary, uses longer sentences, assists with verbal elaboration and explanation of meaning, and is conscious of syntactic alternatives.

Lemmer (1996:335) states that linguistic deprivation is prevalent in learners from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. The use of language and communicative styles of the home and the school are not similar due to the fact that learners are not exposed to books, educational radio and television at home. Regardless of the fact that minority learners are in the process of obtaining language skills and are cognitively challenged, there is a possibility that they may also go through emotional difficulties and social trauma. This may have an adverse effect on the development of self-esteem that is necessary for an unscathed actualization of the self. A learner’s attitude, motivation and level of anxiety can either improve or hamper language acquisition (Lemmer, 2002:51).
Alexander (2002:18) states that the unavoidable results of the current policy are that “learners will continue to lack self-confidence, will be limited in their creativity and spontaneity, virtually untrainable and doomed to mediocre performances,” unless they receive devoted and valuable, additional training in their functioning area, which is their mother tongue.

3.2 Examples of societal barriers

3.2.1 Socio-economic barriers

Kruger and Adams (1998:248) describe socio-economic barriers as factors, such as lack of access to basic services, poverty and underdevelopment that have a negative influence on learners. Prinsloo (2005:27) maintains that the changes in social structures will have a negative effect on education, the community and socio-economic development. Du Toit (1991:30) observes that a learner’s development and learning may be impeded to such an extend that he cannot develop to his full potential, because of poor socio-economic circumstances and a shortage of opportunities.

According to Chisholm and Vally (1996:41) the socio-economic environments within which the schools are situated affect the dynamics within these schools. The harsh material deprivations that learners are confronted with daily are problems that they bring with them to school. Contributory factors to social problems, such as vandalism of the school buildings, theft, drug trafficking and gang violence are due to the high unemployment rate and the contention over scarce resources.

According to McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter (2004:23) and Donald, et al. (2002:205), it is obvious that poor learners are more at risk to health and safety problems that are associated with injury, malnutrition, neglect, violence, racism, economic deprivation, community insecurity, disease and
infection than those who are not poor. The results of these health risks develop into physical, intellectual, and individual disabilities that culminate as barriers to learning.

The Department of Education Directorate (2002:131) state that it is important to become aware of the association that exists between education provision and the socio-economic conditions in any society. To meet the needs of any society effective learning is essentially influenced by the availability of educational resources. In South Africa we find that there are not enough learning centres and other establishments to meet the needs of deprived people.

3.2.1.1 Poverty

Reber and Reber (2001:552) explain poverty as a somewhat low standard of living with regard to goods and materials. Gribble and Rennie (2003:234) refer to poverty as a “multidimensional” inadequately low level of income that is looked upon as generating severe suffering in terms of the community’s general living standard, whereby they are excluded from common resources, safe physical and social environments as well as cultural insignificance. According to Mcwhirter, et al. (2004:22), there is a mutual relationship between family stress that is closely linked to poverty and school failure.

It is evident that poverty in South Africa manifests itself in undesireable conditions, such as poor housing (informal settlements and squatter camps) with limited or no privacy, parental absence, backlogs in education, inferior occupations, insufficient or unsuitable food supplies, deficiencies in communication and language and a negative view of the future, with a limited potential for social status. Factors such as deprived environments, violence, crime, substance abuse, overpopulation and psychological depravity increase and intensify the culture of poverty, and therefore, contribute to an escalating culture of deprivation (Prinsloo, 2005:28; Le Roux and Gildenhuys, 1994a:29).
3.2.2 Negative attitudes in society

An attitude consists of a person’s affective, cognitive and conative reactions involving his way of thinking, behaving and feeling towards a psychological object (Colman, 2001:63). According to Bennett (1995:212) an attitude may be defined as interconnected beliefs that assess, give an account of and support action with regard to an individual, object or a situation. Three components are derived from this definition, namely an idea or thought, a feeling or emotion and a readiness to react or an inclination to action. Finestone (2004:70) also notes that attitudes are beliefs and opinions that can favorably influence an individual to behave in particular ways. Attitudes are obtained through experience and they can influence behaviour directly.

Damaging and adverse attitudes in society towards diversity in our contemporary society continue to be a judgemental barrier to learning and development. Attitudes that discriminate as a result of intolerance against people on the basis of race, class, gender, religion, disability, culture, ability and sexual preference display themselves as barriers to learning when such attitudes are directed to learners in the education system (Department of Education Directorate, 2002:136). Le Roux (2000:5) also states that an attitude can have a positive or a negative emotional relationship towards an object, establishment or a person.

Foster (1994), in Donald, et al. (2002:271), explains that the impact of power and control in intergroup associations in our South African society have been damaging historically. They have a continuous effect on the attitudes of prejudice and discrimination with regard to race, gender, class, language, age, religion and disability in society.
3.2.3 Child abuse

Du Preez (2004:57) defines *child abuse* as behaviour in relation to another person, which is not within the norms of moral behaviour, and it brings about considerable risk, which can result in physical and emotional abuse. Child abuse is described by Sciarra, (2004:380; Le Roux, 2000:5 and McCown, Driscoll and Roop 1996:82) as behaviour where children are physically, sexually or emotionally harmed or threatened by the adults who are responsible for their wellbeing.

According to Prinsloo (2005:34) and Beckmann (1994:227) child abuse is an ongoing occurrence that is on the increase in our contemporary society in South Africa. Donald, et al. (2002:267), share this concern and warn that educators should take particular note of this issue, because it is a worrying, frequent and alarming social problem in South Africa. Similarly, Slavin (1991:417) believes that the chances of child abuse are increased due to certain social and cultural factors. It is believed in the deprived environment factors such as poverty, poor schooling backgrounds, parent’s history of being abused, physically violent environments, young parents, large families and low socio-economic status are the causes of child abuse (Prinsloo, 2005:34).

Typical consequences of abuse on children are low levels of self-esteem, violent behaviour, emotional problems, pessimistic vision of the future, mistrust, hostility and having difficulty starting and maintaining healthy relationships (Prinsloo, 2005:35; Sciarra, 2004:387). Another cause for concern is that it is possible that learners who are faced with barriers to learning are more likely to be abused than their typical peers (Lewis and Doorlag, 2003:424 and Slavin, 1991:417).
3.2.4 Teenage pregnancies

According to Mokgalabone (1999:55) circumstances that are associated with teenage pregnancy and having their school career disrupted, are a global phenomenon. With regard to South African society, Donald, et al. (2002:257), state that the incidence of teenage pregnancies is very high. Olivier and Bloem (2001:1) state that it is an acknowledged fact that teenage pregnancies are on the increase, because adolescents mature earlier and have become sexually more active.

If a girl becomes sexually active at a very young age, the chances of falling pregnant are much more likely (Bee and Boyd, 2002:288). Mokgalabone (1999:56) notes that the immediate microsystemic influences, such as the family beliefs and the macrosystemic influences, such as the community, culture and also the environmental factors, are having an indirect influence, and explain why socio-culturally deprived female teenagers go through early transformation by being sexually active. The socio-economic status, culture and personal hopefulness in relation to the norms of society, such as marriage and having children, decide how long teens will delay their sexual activities.

The pregnancy rates are higher from teenage mothers who come from poor and low-income backgrounds, single-parent families, uneducated parents, dysfunctional families and those rejected by peers. The children from these teenage mothers are very likely to grow up in poverty, accompanied by all the adverse conditions that impede the child’s favourable development (Sciarra, 2004:289; Bee and Boyd, 2002:288,289; Mokgalabone, 1999:57).

According to the (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2005:60; Lewis and Doorlag, 2003:422; Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy, 1998:349 and Van der Merwe, 1996:284) teenage mothers are most likely to discontinue their education by failing or dropping out of school. Their babies are prone to be at high risk for
neglect, because of the possibility of emotional, health and nutritional problems. Children born to teenage mothers usually grow up in families, marked by controversy and instability (Lewis and Doorlag, 2003:422 and Sciarra, 2004:290). To be a mother furnishes a person with an intuitive awareness of importance and usefulness, but this is absent in teenage mothers when they live in deprived circumstances (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:60).

3.2.5 HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a dreaded human disease of the twenty-first century and has developed into one of the most consequential health risks. Fear, an unpleasant emotion, is connected to Aids as a worldwide pandemic (Prinsloo, 2005:31 and Swart-Kruger and Richter, 1994:2590. Coombe (2000), in Baxen and Breidlid (2004:9) proposes that an essential approach in fighting the pandemic is to include an intersectoral viewpoint, which makes use of the health, education, social welfare systems and structures.

It is evident that learners who are most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS are at risk of having their education disrupted. Research within the educational sector with regards to HIV/AIDS has proposed that it has failed to acknowledge the “social and cultural embeddedness of the disease”. This in itself is a definite motive for an investigation of the type of AIDS-related barriers to learning that learners are confronted with (Van der Riet, Hough, and Killian, 2005:76). The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:58) supports this statement by referring to HIV/AIDS as a problem that is not on its own, but a problem that is mysterious, harmful and it increases existing gaps in the education system.

The effect of the social and emotional influence of the stress of illness on the learners should be recognized. According to the Department of Education Directorate (2002:136) negative attitudes and labelling of learners can be categorized as a consequence of fear and a lack of understanding about the
specific needs of learners or the possible barriers, which they may face. The negative presumption and wrong notion that is associated with the disease have resulted in learners who are HIV positive being prohibited from attending school. Varma (1996:4) states that a learner who is suffering from HIV/AIDS may be susceptible to stress for various reasons, such as preconceived opinions and biases. Learners who are faced with barriers to learning are already subjected to negative viewpoints from society and concerned professionals, and their stress levels intensify when they are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Likewise, Ramphal and Ramphal (1998:254), state that learners can be absent from school for long periods at a time because of illness.

4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Although the school has a considerable influence on a learner’s behaviour, it is evident that learners with barriers to learning bring to school with them a greater consciousness of environmental factors. The reason for this consciousness may be brought about by their deprived environments, where basic needs were not met, or the fundamental social and academic skills were not learned, or they may be affected by health problems (Jones, Dohrn and Dunn, 2004:33). If barriers to learning are recognized and addressed by the school and the teachers have a better understanding of the learners’ environments they might be able to motivate them to rise above their circumstances. Some useful theories on barriers to learning will be reviewed in the following paragraphs, which will serve as a theoretical framework to bring about an understanding of the effects of a deprived environment that will guide the formulation of directives for addressing barriers in a deprived environment.

4.1 Ecological theory

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory explains how people develop with regard to their relationships and their environments. He tries to organize the
interrelationships between the different systems that influence a person’s development and to specify how they act reciprocally. According to Meyer, Loxton and Boulter (1997:110) this theory emphasizes how important it is to understand self-development with regard to the daily environment in which children grow up. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model consists of four systems, namely, the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecosystemic model layout

![Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic model layout](image)

(Swart and Pettipher, 2005:11)

The *microsystem* consists of the immediate contexts, such as the family setting in which the developing individual experiences roles, functions and interpersonal relations in which he is regularly involved. The *mesosystem* refers to the more formal interrelationships, such as the school, peer group, church and the
The exosystem consists of social structures, such as the school board, mass media, local government and the parents' workplace. They never experience these structures directly but they may affect their development (Reid, 2005:41; McWhirter, et al., 2004:21; Bee and Boyd, 2002:46). The macrosystem refers to the attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies that are essential to the systems of a specific society and culture and which may have an effect or be influenced by any of the above systems (Donald, et al. 2002:51-53; Meyer, et al. 1997:111 and Schaffer, 1993:61).

According to Swart and Pettipher, (2005:12); McWhirter, et al. (2004:23); Donald, et al. (2002:53,56), children have their own understanding of their environments and how they interact within these contexts. The environment does not merely have an impact on the child, but children are actively involved in their own development. These different systems function in the educational process at different levels of the system. We can for example see how various factors may influence learning at family levels, such as the family’s resources and the home language, with regard to the medium of instruction at school, family values and the motivational and cognitive support a learner receives from the family for the effort of learning.

Meyer, et al. (1997:111), maintain that a child’s development should not be studied in isolation, but in the contexts of his micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems. According to (Swart and Pettipher 2005:11 and McWhirter, et al. 2004:29), the systems of the ecological theory interact with one another, modifying each of the systems. For example, a learner who is not getting the emotional support that he needs in his home environment (microsystem) and school (mesosystem) could be at risk of developing barriers to learning. The learner’s social and economic environment (exosystem) in which he grows up is clearly linked to various problems in his deprived environment that may cause barriers to learning.
4.2 Erikson’s theory

Erikson, a developmental psychologist, based his theory of psychosocial development on the assumption that individuals have various needs as they mature (Jones, et al., 2004:39). Hamman and Hendricks (2005:72) view Erikson’s theory as an explanation of how learners are trying to understand and relate to their world. Their particular developmental task requires identifying, evaluating and choosing values and roles for their adult life. According to Kruger (1998:20) Erikson’s emphasis was on the development of identity and a healthy self-concept.

Erikson divided human psychosocial development into eight stages, whereby each stage is described by a crisis in which the individual reaches an essential psychosocial understanding or develops an emotional barrier (Jones, et al., 2004:39). Carr (2004:158) states that the effortless manner in which consecutive difficulties are handled is decided to some extend by the favourable outcome with which previous difficulties were overcome. Laubscher and Klinger (1997:62) note that although the developmental course is an individual one, Erikson claims that influences from society play a conclusive role in the way in which the developmental stages are managed.

*Trust versus mistrust* is the first important psychosocial developmental phase to be determined during the first 18 months of life. The trust that children develop of their parents will depend on their relationship with them. They will experience feelings of security and develop a sense of trust if their physical and emotional needs, are met by their parents (Kruger, 1998:20). Abused, abandoned or ignored children in deprived environments may fail to develop a sense of dependability on others for support (Jones, et al., 2004:39; Hamachek, 1995:56). A merging of trust and mistrust is necessary for beneficial psychosocial development (Kruger, 1998:20).
The second stage is identified by Erikson as *autonomy versus shame and doubt*. According to Carr (2004:160) autonomy will develop if parents provide the framework for children to learn functions and routines. Kruger (1998:22 and Jones, *et al.* 2004:39), note that it is a period of inquiry and exploration and if their confidence is broken they develop a sense of shame and doubt, when for example laughed at or being impeded in exploration, even more so in the case of the deprived learner. According to Hamachek (1995:58) this may lead to a continuing shortage of self-confidence in their ability to take care of and control their world.

The third stage, namely *initiative versus guilt*, according to (Kruger 1998:22), is depicted by developing a sense of independence and a desire to take the initiative and establish a level of freedom. Erikson (1963:255) in Jones, *et al.* (2004:39), state that “Initiative adds to autonomy the quality of undertaking planning and ‘attacking’ a task for the sake of being active and on the move.” The child will become more proficient, with a positive self-esteem and motivated through positive support and influences from adults. Similarly, a lack of support or excessively restrictive limits, such as in the case of the deprived learner, may lead to a sense of guilt and constraints (Jones, *et al.* 2004:39; Hamachek, 1995:58).

According to Carr (2004:161) the fourth stage, namely *industry versus inferiority*, is an important psychosocial dilemma. The child has required an understanding of trust, autonomy and initiative, and at this stage the child’s need to develop skills and participate in significant work appears. Kruger (1998:22) states that having success in resolving this crisis depends to a great extent on how parents, teachers and peers react to their achievements. If the learners feel that they are successful and commended for their attempts, they develop healthy self-concepts, but learners from deprived environments may develop permanent inferiority complexes if they are faced with difficult challenges that result in unsuccessful attempts over and over again (Hamachek, 1995:59). Those who
succeed in resolving of the crises between inferiority and industry will develop feelings of proficiency.

The fifth developmental stage, namely identity versus identity diffusion is described by Erikson as a search for an identity. There is a noticeable increase in self-consciousness and a decrease in self-esteem (Jones, et al., 2006:40). Adolescents constantly question everything starting with who they are and progressing to things that they had earlier obtained. They are constantly looking for a self-image and for an agreement between their self-image and what society expects of them. Identity diffusion is a frame of mind whereby the deprived learner feels uncertain about who and what they really are and how to react to the demands of society. Feelings of trustworthiness are developed if they come through these crises successfully (Kruger, 1998:23; Hamachek, 1995:60).

The next three phases of Erikson’s theory, namely intimacy versus isolation, productivity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair describe conflicts that take place during adulthood and old age (Kruger 1998:23). These phases do not form part of the boundaries of the school years and will therefore not be discussed here.

Erikson’s theory is discussed because of the possibility that learners who are faced with barriers to learning may experience crucial gaps in fulfilling essential milestones of psychological development. The emphasis in the past was primarily on control and skills development without an awareness or response to important barriers in the social and emotional development of the learners (Jones, et al., 2004:39).

4.3 The self-actualization theory of Maslow

Maslow’s model is of interest to teachers because of its common sense and the way it is explained. His hierarchy of needs ranges from lower-order needs to
higher-order needs (Steyn, 2002:90). The notion behind this hierarchical order is that the needs at each level have to be satisfied before the needs on the following level can be satisfied (Steyn, 2002:90). According to Slavin (2003:332) Maslow differentiates between deficiency needs and growth needs. Deficiency needs such as physiological, safety, love and esteem are those needs that are essential to psychological and physical welfare and must be satisfied first. If they are not met an individual’s motivation to satisfy them dwindles. But on the other hand, growth needs, such as the need to know and understand things, to value beauty or to grow and learn to appreciate others can never be satisfied completely.

Child (2004:188) observes that self-actualization in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs refers to the longing to fulfil one’s potential. Self-actualization cannot be realized without self-realization. It is important to know what we can do before we know that we are doing it effectively. Self-actualization can take many forms and it will depend upon an individual’s judgement about his abilities because self-actualization is growth motivated rather than deficiency motivated. According to (Hamachek, 1995:47) transcendence is the highest level in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Transcendence refers to a person’s spiritual needs for a broader universal identification. A self-actualized person’s ability to strive, reaching beyond oneself, anticipating and transcending the familiar earthly ways of living are significant dimensions of the self-actualization model (Hamachek, 1995:45) (See figure 2.2).

According to Prinsloo, et al. (1996:317), the magnitude of South Africa’s educational problem can only be understood when you form an estimate of the conditions for proper guidance towards optimal self-actualization against the real existence of the current situation. In a deprived environment many learners’ physiological needs, such as food, drink, sleep and shelter are not met. Many learners are deprived of environmental security, safety and to be cared for by their parents and the community. The absence of respect, recognition and self-
esteem can be attributed to the collapse of family life, which gives rise to lack of love, acceptance, care and belongingness. The child who grows up in a deprived environment will find that most of his needs are not sufficiently met and his attribution of meaning to this world is therefore limited.

Figure 2.2 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

(Hamachek, 1995:47)
4.4 Constructivism

The basic principle of the constructivist theory is the notion that learners must individually discover and change complicated information if they want to make it their own. This theory perceives learners as continuously validating old rules against new information and then re-examining rules when they no longer work (Slavin, 2003:258).

According to Donald, et al. (2002:100), the significance of constructivism has changed to a great extent where human beings are seen as active instruments in an active position, responsible for their own development. The notion that knowledge is not submissively received is another associated and evenly dominant aspect to constructivism. Learners are actively involved in developing advanced and more intricate understandings of their world through participating in activities and discussions. These challenge them to make sense of their physical and social environment. Similarly, learners from deprived environments who have language problems may not feel comfortable in expressing themselves during activities and discussions, which may cause barriers to learning.

Maree (2004:401) states that Vygotsky’s constructivist theory believes that social development is generally caused by social influences. He emphasizes the important impact of social learning on development and feels that learning guides development instead of following it. His idea, which refers to the zone of proximal development (where a learner can gain from assistance) and his views on scaffolding (help provided to learners to complete assignments that they cannot complete on their own), is extensively received and respected (Bee and Boyd, 2002:45). Strydom (2005:97) explains the zone of proximal development as follows: Learners are capable of achieving a lot on their own, but they will not be able to break through their own personal “knowledge ceilings” without a mentor who will advise and assist them.
If learners from deprived environments are constantly subjected to belittling comments from their mentors their emerging view of themselves will not allow them to achieve a lot on their own due to their low self-concept (Christensen, 2001:150). Vygotsky believes that learners need to be assisted in breaking through to a higher level of development and overcoming their own barriers to learning.

5. ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Donald, et al. (2002:225), note how negative cycles of disadvantage may produce and support further disadvantage. In order to produce more positive cycles it is important to break the negative cycles. From an eco-systemic viewpoint it is important that interactions at all levels of the system, that include the individual learner, the classroom, to whole school development, cooperation between the school and the community and finally the wider issues of social transformation, need to be included in the prevention processes.

A detailed discussion of guidelines on the addressing of barriers to learning will follow in Chapter 5.

5.1 Prevention

According to Donald, et al. (2002:225), the costs of prevention to our society are not only in lost human potential but also in skills and in particular educational resources, expertise and the necessary efforts if we are to meet the needs of deprived learners and to re-integrate them back into society with any success. It is evident that a comprehensive approach, with several strategies, is required to meet this goal (Van der Merwe, 1996:301).
5.2 Life skills education

Strydom (2005:97) describes *life skills* “as tools the learner should be equipped with to successfully have insight into and manage life tasks, and that this equipment will favour the learner who has mastered these skills”. Eloff and Ebersöhn (2004:51) refer to life skills as a means of helping one to cope with problems, adjust to changes and competently confront crises and conflicts. Powell, in Van der Merwe (1996:285), defines life skills as those skills that are necessary to carry out the tasks at a certain age and sex in the following areas of human development: “psychosocial, physical, sexual, vocational, cognitive, moral, ego and emotional”.

5.3 Building self-worth

According to Donald, et al. (2002:227), an important component of disadvantage is how people’s understanding of *self-worth* may be increasingly undermined in these conditions. To address the matter of the self-worth of learners is a meaningful manner for striving to break into the deprivation cycles. Hamachek (1995:301) states that in order to assist learners to build self-worth it is important to communicate the idea that effort is something over which they have immense power.

5.4 Health education

Smith, et al. (1998:340), note that the learners’ learning is considerably influenced by poverty and this add to an increased risk of failure at school. Donald, et al. (2002:228), support this statement by pointing out that poverty cycles and their impacts on health issues include physical, social and emotional health as major issues. They advocate that health care studies should include a life-skills process where the needs of the environmentally deprived learners are addressed. It is important that an awareness be created that our attitudes and
behaviours have an impact on health matters and therefore the focus is more and more on health maintenance and on ways of preventing illness, promoting wellbeing and coping with stress (Myers, 1998:529).

5.5 Motivation

Motivation is derived from the Latin word which means ‘to move’, and this basically means that motivation is the study of action (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002:110). According to (Eloff and Ebersöhn 2004:73 and Mwamwenda, 2004:231) motivation can be seen as our inner desires or drives and the feeling of purpose that will help us to engage in certain behaviours that will assist us with our learning. Child’s (2004:176) working definition of motivation is that it “consists of internal processes and external incentives which spur us on to satisfy some need.”

Kruger and Adams (1998:139) point out that it is important for teachers to understand the different motivational processes that have an influence on learning. The educator plays an important role in assisting the learner to become a self-fulfilled person. However, it is obvious that teachers cannot exercise power over the learner’s world outside the classroom. Teachers cannot solve problems such as poverty, child abuse, family problems or a learner’s inability to make friends. Despite all this teachers are in an excellent position to help students to reach their full potential (Bennett, 1995:201).

5.6 Compensatory education

Pretorius (1998:312) defines compensatory education as the overall term that is being used for the combination of educational and social programmes, projects, procedures and practices that are intended for environmentally deprived learners, to make amends for their environmental shortcomings and psychosocial deprivations, which hamper and restrict self-actualization and opportunities of the
individual. According to Slavin (2003:317) these programmes are designed for learners from low-income communities and deprived backgrounds who, are struggling with their schoolwork or for those who are at risk of dropping out of school.

Compensatory education also refers to any support, deemed imperative to furnish the learner from a deprived environment in obtaining optimal support from the existing provision of education in the process of reaching adulthood (Le Roux and Gildenhuys, 1994b:57). Csapo (1996:35) states that there is a huge need for compensatory education in South Africa due to the fact that thousands of learners have been socio-culturally, economically and politically deprived by apartheid. A coordinated formal/non-formal/informal, non-racial compulsory educational system must be implemented, which will guarantee possibilities for all those who never or hardly ever experienced formal education before.

6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOSOCIAL BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEPRIVATION

Pretorius (1998:301) notes that from an educational viewpoint there is a close connection between the socio-economic environment and the academic accomplishments of a child. According to Pretorius (1998:301) the child who was not exposed to stimulation, such as that provided by pre-school and extramural activities, will encounter major social, cultural and educational barriers that need to be overcome for optimum academic achievement.

Jones, et al. (2004:33), postulate that even though school factors have a meaningful affect on learners’ behaviour, it is true that learners bring to school with them an increased awareness of their environmental factors. This awareness may result from years in deprived environments, where the child’s basic needs were not met and he did not learn important social and academic skills. Long and Morse, (1996) in Jones, et al. (2004:33), note “that many
students have already been damaged emotionally by the deliberating effects of poverty, neglect, abuse, divorce, drugs and rejection”. They have not internalized a sense of trust in other adults or developed the necessary prosocial skills necessary for group instruction and personal learning.”

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecosystemic model shows us how connected an individual’s psychological development is to the social context and the systems within it (Bee and Boyd, 2002:46). A child’s learning can for example be affected at the family level by a range of specific factors.

Furthermore, a learner spends a considerable portion of his day in school, and school experiences bring about dramatic effects. An essential part of the school experience is the learner’s relationship with his peers, teachers and the other staff. The learner is also exposed to the values and behaviours of his fellow students from the same environment. Learners who are experiencing barriers to learning not only experience academic difficulty but often have problems learning suitable school behaviour (Lerner, 1993:115,116).

Gouws (1998:47) states that the environment does play a role in a person behaving in a certain manner, because a person is born as a ‘blank slate’ with no inscriptions or experience to behave in one way or the other. Subsequently the environment moulds the individual into an adult with distinctive characteristics and ways of behaving.

7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a brief overview of the theoretical perspective on psychosocial barriers was provided, linking the relationship between barriers to learning to a deprived environment. A literature study was presented from an educational perspective. Descriptions of psychosocial barriers to learning and related
concepts, which are associated with the deprived environment of secondary school learners, were presented.

Four theories that seemed relevant to the secondary school learner’s barriers to learning and the deprived environment were briefly discussed namely: the Ecological theory; Erikson’s theory; the Self-actualization theory of Maslow and Constructivism. Finally a clear link was established between barriers to learning and environmental deprivation.

A theoretical explanation of the chosen research design and the method of investigation will be provided in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF THE CHOSEN RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 a synopsis of the study was presented, indicating that a qualitative investigation would take place. This chapter consisted of the problem statement, purpose of the study, clarification of concepts, research design, methodology and planned schedule. A literature study followed in Chapter 2, focusing especially on psychosocial barriers to learning and related concepts and/or aspects that are associated with the conditions of a deprived environment.

The aim of this chapter is to present a more detailed exposition of the research design that will be employed in this study of psychosocial barriers to learning experienced by learners in a deprived environment. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:25) describe the research design as a series of adaptable guidelines that link the theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and the methods for compiling empirical materials. The researcher is positioned in the practical world by the research design, which links him to particular people, groups and collections of related interpretive material.

The qualitative mode of inquiry is suitable for this study, because the purpose of qualitative research is not to explain or generalise human behaviour, but to understand and explain the meanings and intentions that are essential for everyday human action (Schurink, 1998:240). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), in Sathiparsad (2003:103) the basic aim of qualitative research is to acquire “in-depth descriptions and understanding of actions and events.” Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004:3) state further that “depth rather than quantity of understanding” is generally the focus for qualitative research.
The methodological process that Kvale (1996:14) proposes will be followed in this study, consisting of the following:

- Statement of the problem.
- Type of research design.
- Researcher’s role.
- Data collection procedures.
- Data recording procedures
- Data analysis procedures
- Data verification.

3.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.2.1 Orientation and problem formulation

A learner’s environment in which he grows up can have a deciding impact on the quality of his learning and what he becomes in life. Much attention has been given to the restrictions and the effect that the environment have on a learner’s learning ability. Environmental deprivation is a major problem in South Africa, illustrating why this field of inquiry is so important (Prinsloo, Vorster and Sibaya, 1996:208).

According to West and Pennell (2003:3) learners who are at risk of ‘social exclusion’ especially as a result of, for example poverty, constitute a relevant concern. There is also a connection between poor educational and economic outcomes and a number of disadvantages, such as “truancy, bullying, early motherhood and living in poor and/or non-working households.” West and Pennell, (2003:9) and Evans and English, (2002:1238), state that by exposing learners to many and various physical and psychosocial stressful circumstances, instead of exposing them to a singular stressful event, creates a unique aspect of environmental deprivation. It is the convergence of various demands from the
immediate environment, both psychosocial and physical that may cause barriers to learning.

According to Van Wyk (1991:140) a learner coming from a linguistically deprived environment would display a noticeable language deficiency and perhaps also speech deviations when compared with learners of the same age who come from a normal environment with many opportunities for language use. West and Pennell (2003:151) emphasise the significance of resources in conquering barriers between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. Robinson (1997b) in (West and Pennell, 2003:151) claims that it is doubtful whether educational methods can alleviate the affects of deprivation, and that the real targets should be social and economic deprivation.

Against the given background, the following research questions have been formulated for this study.

**Primary research question:**

- *To which psychosocial barriers to learning are learners from a deprived environment exposed?*

**Secondary research question:**

- *What guidelines can be provided to teachers to support learners from a deprived environment with regard to the barriers to learning they experience, in order to promote their effective learning?*

**3.2.2 Purpose of the research study**

The purpose of the study is in line with the formulated problem, namely to:
investigate the various dimensions of the relationship that exists between psychosocial barriers to learning and environmental deprivation.

provide guidelines based on the findings of the research and present them as recommendations for teachers to support learners from a deprived environment who experience barriers to learning.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design refers to plans that direct the arrangement of requirements for collection and analysis of data in a process that aims to combine aptness to the research purpose with economy in procedure (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006:34; Johnson and Christensen, 2004:275). The design indicates “which, where, when and under which conditions individuals or groups will be studied” (McMillan and Shumacher, 1993:157). The research design and methodology that was used in this study is of a qualitative nature (Flick, von Kardorff and Steinke, 2004:7; Willig, 2003:9).

According to (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:278 and Johnson and Christensen, 2004:362) qualitative research occurs in a natural setting and the researcher’s emphasis is on studying human action through the eyes of the actors themselves. The emphasis here is on a comprehensive explanation and the understanding of phenomena within the appropriate context. This means that the researcher is placed in the empirical world and he relates to persons, groups, particular sites, institutions and bodies of relevant interpretive material, including documents and archives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:25).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005:7) and Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) state that qualitative researchers are devoted to the naturalistic approach and to the interpretive understanding of human experience. Corbetta (2003:39) maintains that in qualitative research the naturalistic perspective is an essential requirement for empirical study.
The research design that will be used in this study is contextual, interpretative, exploratory, descriptive and holistic (Terre Blanche et al. 2006:44; Henning, et al. 2004:20,21; Babbie and Mouton, 2001:80,81; Goldenberg, 1992:32). The distinct characteristics of qualitative research will now be further explored.

### 3.3.1 Qualitative paradigm

Schurink (1998:240) defines *qualitative research* as a multiperspective approach that makes use of different qualitative techniques and data collection methods. Corbetta (2003:37) describes qualitative research as an open, interactive, inductive and naturalistic approach. Creswell (2002:648) maintains that qualitative research is advantageous when you need to investigate and understand an essential occurrence. The world consists of a number of “interpretive practices that make the world visible” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). According to Corbetta (2003:38) there is a reciprocal relationship in qualitative research between existing theory and research of the practice.

The focus of the phenomenological qualitative research design is to describe individuals' experiences of a phenomenon. The purpose of phenomenology is to relate to participants in their life-world and to give an account of their experiences of a particular phenomenon (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:364; Babbie and Mouton, 2001:28). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:153) phenomenological research strives to understand what people’s understanding, appreciation or viewpoint is of a specific situation. For this reason a qualitative approach will be followed in this study.

### 3.3.2 Naturalistic component

The *naturalistic approach* is seen as an essential requirement to empirical study in qualitative research. The aim of this approach is that the researcher must abstain from influencing, stimulating, impeding or upsetting the situation, and that
the participant is studied in his natural environment (Corbetta, 2003:39). In qualitative research the researcher is positioned in the natural environment of the participant in the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). A characteristic of this approach is that the researcher makes an attempt “to view the world through the eyes (perspective) of the actors themselves” (Babbie and Mouton 2001:271). According to Schurink (1998:240) naturalistic research suggests that the assumptions with which the researcher approaches the phenomenon that is being studied should be eliminated.

In this study, the participants were met in their natural environment at the school where I am teaching.

3.3.3 Contextual strategy

A widely accepted principle of qualitative research is to work with the data in context. When the researcher enters the research environment it is important that he does it with care and an open and empathic manner towards the participants (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006:287). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:272) the aim is to describe and understand circumstances in their natural contexts. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:982) state that the context is essential in establishing significance.

For the purpose of this study, the interviews will be conducted at school, which is a familiar environment for the learners. The learners who participated in this study come from different deprived environments in the northern areas and the townships of Port Elizabeth, but attend the same school. Greeff (2002:301) maintains that when people are placed in familiar contexts their behaviour becomes understandable and meaningful.
3.3.4 Interpretive approach

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:148) *interpretation* assists the researcher in obtaining an understanding of the nature of a specific phenomenon, to bring forth new ideas or theoretical viewpoints about the phenomenon and/or become aware of the problems that are present in the phenomenon. Qualitative research from an interpretive perspective assists the researcher in his study, because concepts such as ‘real world’ and ‘natural setting’ allow him to study individuals and groups as they go about their lives (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006:287).

The focus of this study will be the interpretation of what the participants communicated during the focus group interviews. Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2005:322) state that interpretation should take place during all the phases of the research process and not only during the writing-up stage. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004:252) it is useful to use ‘low-inference descriptors’ when the researcher writes his report “so that the reader can experience the participants’ actual language, dialect and personal meanings”. This will give the reader an idea of how the participants think and feel about matters and experiences.

3.3.5 An exploratory study

According to David and Sutton (2004:80) qualitative research shows a tendency to be *exploratory*. Babbie (2005:88) states that a large proportion of social research is conducted to explore a field of inquiry, or to provide the researcher with knowledge of that area. A characteristic of exploratory studies is that it usually makes initial investigations into unknown areas of research. As they attempt to look for new insights into subjects, they engage in an open, cooperative and explorative approach to research (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006:44).
Therefore, I attempted to explore and generate new insights through this study.

### 3.3.6 Descriptive nature

Terre Blanche, *et al.* (2006:44), state that the aim of a *descriptive* approach is to describe phenomena. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:80) the main aim of social research is to ‘describe situations and events’. This aspect of research produces a portrayal of particular aspects of a situation, social setting or relationship, and concentrates on ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. The researcher starts his research with a factual, descriptive topic and conducts research to describe it truthfully (Fouché, 2002b:105). In terms of this feature, the contextual information about the environment, individuals involved, the time, and the conditions in which the people experience the phenomenon is being described (Creswell, 2002:56).

Kvale (1996:32) contends that the aim of the qualitative research interview is to obtain nuanced descriptions from the particular qualitative viewpoints of an individual's life world; ‘it works with words and not with numbers’. The data that will be emerging from this study will be describing the actual circumstances that the participants are experiencing in their physical and social environments.

### 3.3.7 A holistic view

Johnson and Christensen (2004:46) assert that an important characteristic of qualitative research is that the entire phenomenon that is being studied must be understood as a ‘complex system that is more than the sum of its parts’. According to this view the complex link among the whole that consists of the parts cannot be reduced to the relationships between a few variables (Corbetta, 2003:43). Willig (2001: 84) describes the *holistic* perspective as a context that must be understood in terms of physical and social environments. McMillan and
Schumacher (1993:412) define the holistic approach as data that are associated with the whole context of the phenomenon studied.

This research will attempt to form a holistic picture of the problem under investigation.

3.3.8 Inductive approach

Qualitative researchers usually study a phenomenon in an open-ended manner, without previous expectations, thus relying on the inductive mode of the scientific inquiry. During the process of observing, the researchers ‘try not to draw attention to themselves’ (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:360). The researchers are interested in producing theory and are therefore depending on the inductive approach, whereas the theory develops directly out of the data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006:18). Creswell and Clark (2007:23) indicate that the researcher works from the “bottom up” using the participants’ views to build up themes and to generate a theory interconnecting these themes.

Through the use of the inductive approach this research will try to find the meaning of deprived learners’ situation, without imposing pre-existing expectations on the phenomena that are being studied. The researcher will start with particular observations and allow the themes to develop and emerge from the data analysis (Mertens, 1998:160).

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will be conducted in two phases.
Phase 1

This phase investigates and determines the psychosocial barriers to learning that learners are experiencing and are exposed to in a deprived environment. In an attempt to study, explore, describe and record the needs of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, because of their deprived environment, the following steps were taken during this phase.

3.4.1 Participants and sampling

Sampling refers to the process of selecting research participants from a population and it includes social processes to be observed, such as people, environments, events and behaviours (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006:49). Participants and settings are selected to assist the researcher in understanding the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2002:194). The availability of suitable participants and the accessibility of the potential participants can also cause logistical constraints for the researcher (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:220). For this reason, McMillan and Schumacher (1993:378) suggest that information be acquired about variations before the sample is chosen.

Qualitative researchers often use *purposive* sampling (also known as judgement sampling) (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006:78). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:254) define purposive sampling as a method where the participants are chosen because they allow the researcher to develop or test specific theoretical designs.

The researcher compiles a set of criteria, which is relevant in terms of the research question to select the participants that he wants to use in his study (Willig, 2001:58). Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel (1998:317) state that the selection of the participants will rely to a great extent on the purpose of the study.
The following criteria were used to select the participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:288).

- Thorough enculturation – participants who have been enculturated in a situation that is being planned for research, will be used;
- Current involvement – participants who are currently involved in the issues concerning the subject of research, will be sought out;
- Adequate time – sometimes the perfect participants are found but they are too busy to spend time with the researcher during an interview. Participants who can find the time to participate, will be included.

The participants were purposively selected according to the research questions regarding learners who are faced with psychosocial barriers to learning in a deprived environment. A norm that was used to select the participants and the environment is that they had to be able to provide ‘rich information’ so that they could make a valuable contribution to the research topic (Creswell, 2005:204).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected a homogeneous group of learners, because they shared the experience of a specific situation, namely a deprived environment (Willig, 2001:58) and they were from the same school. The participants were purposively selected, because they have experience of the main phenomenon that is being investigated (Creswell and Clark, 2007:112).

The participants were all from the same school and included learners from grade 10, 11 and 12 because they met the criteria. Their ages differed from 15 to 19 years. They represented different deprived environments of the northern areas and townships in Port Elizabeth, as well as different races and gender groups.

### 3.4.2 Method of data collection

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:158) maintain that data collection in qualitative research can be time consuming irrespective of the kinds of data that are
involved. The researcher should record any possibly useful data thoroughly, accurately and systematically, for example by using audiotapes, field notes, sketches and photographs. When we start collecting data in the qualitative paradigm, one important question that we need to ask ourselves is: “Where is the interview data going to come from?”

The data collection for this study took place by means of a series of focus group interviews with the participants from deprived environments (David and Sutton, 2004:94). The setting in which the research study took place was in one of the classrooms, a natural environment for them at the selected school. The participants were learners from this particular school. The interviews took place after school, so that we would have little or no distractions. The door remained closed throughout each of the interviews (Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel 1998:318).

In this study the focus groups consisted of 4-8 participants and the participants responded to an open-ended question. The question that was posed to the participants could promote a positive reciprocal action ensuring that there was a positive reaction from the participants and that they could freely and openly talk about their experiences (Kvale, 1996:130). The researcher used a voice recorder to capture the interviews, and an observer took field notes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim (Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel 1998:321).

### 3.4.3 Focus group interviews

Gubrium and Holstein (2001:141) define the focus-group interview as “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher”. Creswell (2005:215) describes focus group interviews as the process whereby data are gathered through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six.
An interview is described by (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:289) as a reciprocal action between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry. A qualitative interview is basically a conversation where the interviewer sets up a direction for the conversation and follows up particular topics that were mentioned by the respondent. Kvale (1996:27) states that the purpose of the qualitative interview is to understand the themes of the respondent’s own life-world from their own point of view and how they relate to them.

There are certain advantages and disadvantages that are attached to focus-group interviewing. According to Creswell (2005:215) one advantage of a focus group is that the interaction among the participants will probably generate the best information, because they are homogeneous and they will therefore interact well with one another. The main advantage is the opportunity to study a large amount of interaction on a topic in a restricted period of time that is based on the researcher’s competency to keep and direct the group (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:292).

Babbie and Mouton (2001:292) contend that the control of the group can also be a disadvantage if the group feels that they are in an abnormal social setting. A group can also be challenging if a researcher cannot control them. Furthermore, the transcriptionist may find it difficult to distinguish between the voices on an audiotape (Creswell, 2005:215).

In this study the focus groups consisted of four to eight participants and the following open-ended question was put to the participants:

What hindrances to learning are you experiencing in your specific physical and social environment?
According to Corbetta (2003:127) an open-ended question offers the advantage of ‘freedom of expression’.

3.4.3.1 Participation and observation

Participant observation is a characteristic of a qualitative approach to data, which means that data cannot be converted to figures (Babbie, 2005:295; Strydom, 2002:279). ‘Participant perspectives’ or the manner in which people make sense of their life-world is of interest to researchers who make use of participant observation. It is usually accepted that the life-world of the participants can only be evaluated when their exact words and expressions that they use in actual situations are disclosed (Schurink, 1998:279). Observation in the interpretive approach emphasizes that the phenomenon must be studied in a naturalistic manner and take on the form of participant observation.

In this study the observer took field notes during the interview. Babbie (2005:295) contends that the observer notes the number of different reciprocal actions of various participants within a field environment. The observer’s task was to take notes of the participant’s expressive movements, such as their eye movements and facial expressions and their interest in the topic under discussion (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:293).

3.4.3.2 Field notes

Strydom (2002:285) states that field notes must contain everything that the researcher sees and hears. An all-inclusive account of the participants, the circumstances, the real conversation and dialogue, as well as the observer’s viewpoint, understanding and feelings should be included in the field notes. The researcher’s notes should originate from the observer’s notes and the situation. These notes should contain essential information, such as the description of events, places and individuals and his interpretation of the events, as well as his
response, impressions and thoughts (Corbetta, 2003:250). According to Johnson and Christensen (2004:188) it is advisable, in addition to field notes, to use audiotapes, which was done during the interviews for this research.

3.4.4 Role of the researcher

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:416) the researcher has a role in the setting that he intends to study. Creswell (1994:145) states that the researcher in qualitative research is the primary instrument for data collection. While the researcher attempts to collect information from the participants it is important that he should strive to blend in with the setting, to minimize the disruption of the flow of events. An important quality of a researcher, is that he should be more of a listener and not try to control the setting (Schurink, 1998:260).

The researcher’s role in qualitative analysis specifically makes reference to the awareness of bias and putting preconceived ideas aside, since assumptions may hide the facts of data (Henning, et al., 2004:129). Therefore, the researcher as observer becomes completely engaged in the setting that is being studied (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006:308).

The researcher in this study was also part of the participant observation process during the focus group interviews.

3.4.5 Data analysis and description

Smit (2002:66) describes data analysis in qualitative research as ‘an ongoing, emerging and iterative or non-linear process’. Before you start with an analysis, all the interviews on the voice recorder must be transcribed verbatim, which means that they must be typed into word-processing documents (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:502). The researcher then analyses the transcriptions to
make sure that the information is accurate. Creswell (2005:231) describes data analysis as an inductive form starting with the detailed data, which include your transcriptions, to the coding into themes.

De Vos (2002:346) describes coding as the method by which data are taken apart, conceptualized and formulated into new ideas. It is the main process through which theories develop from data. According to Henning et al. (2004:128), ‘descriptions form the basis for analysis, and analysis forms the basis for further description’.

In this study, the eight steps of Tesch (Poggenpoel, 1998:343 and Creswell, 1994:155) were used for the analysis of the data:

- **Step 1:** The researcher read attentively through all the transcriptions and made notes of possible themes as they transpired.

- **Step 2:** The researcher selected one ‘information-rich’ interview. This interview was re-read with the intention to find the basic meanings that came to mind. Remarks of emerging themes were jotted down in the margin.

- **Step 3:** The researcher went through the interview again in order to draw up a list of all the possible themes. Related themes were grouped together and arranged in columns as main themes, categories and subcategories.

- **Step 4:** Themes were abbreviated and recorded as codes and were written next to the connecting paragraph in the text in an attempt to identify additional categories and subcategories.
• **Step 5:** The researcher identified the most descriptive language for the themes and grouped them together in related categories.

• **Step 6:** A final decision on abbreviation was made for each category, whereby the codes were placed in alphabetical order.

• **Step 7:** A trial analysis was conducted as soon as the data material was categorized.

• **Step 8:** The existing data was also re-coded.

An independent qualitative researcher did the re-coding of the data in order to give a true reflection of the findings, and to establish if a consensus of understanding about the themes and subthemes could be reached, confirming the findings (Creswell, 1994:155). Triangulation was thus used to improve the trustworthiness of this study (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:275), as well as gaining a more significant understanding of the research topic (Flick, et al., 2004:185).

### 3.4.6 Literature control

According to Creswell (2002:87) a literature control serves the purpose of comparing and matching the current study with other completed research studies. De Vos & Fouché (1998:104) state that through the literature study the researcher shows that he is well informed about similar research and the academic traditions that encompass and support the study. For this reason the findings were checked against the relevant literature.

### Phase 2

Recommendations and guidelines will be presented to teachers to deal with learners who are faced with barriers to learning.
3.4.7 Data collection, analysis and control

The results of the data analysis and literature control of Phase 1 formed the basis for formulating practical guidelines for teachers and other educationists. Professional role players were also consulted so that guidelines could be formulated for the use of teachers.

3.4.8 Data verification

Verification involves investigating the most frequent biases that can become an involuntary part in the process of drawing conclusions (Poggenpoel, 1998:351):

3.4.8.1 Measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the research

According to Schumacher and McMillan (1993:157) trustworthiness is the extent to which the results approximate reality and are judged to be trustworthy and reasonable. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:706) maintain that all the collected data should meet the standards of quality to be considered trustworthy, authentic and dependable.

Guba’s (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 290-296) model to ensure trustworthiness was used to develop an effective evaluation with positive results for this qualitative research study. The four strategies are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Their relevance to the research study will be discussed below:

- Credibility

The aim of credibility is (indicating truth value) to establish whether the research was done in such a way that will ensure that the subject was correctly identified and described (De Vos, 2002:351; Gay and Airasian, 2000:252). Babbie and
Mouton (2001:277) and Lincoln and Guba (1985:219, 301) state that credibility is achieved in qualitative research through the following procedures: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing and member checks.

- Prolonged engagement means that the researcher must spend enough time in the field to be able to build a trust relationship with the participants. The researcher has been working at this particular school for twenty-eight years. The participants were familiar with the researcher, because of the time that they had spent together and therefore a trust relationship developed between them. The researcher was also knowledgeable about the participants' environment and their needs and was fully involved in the research.

- Persistent observation constantly searches for interpretations in different ways as well as looking for various influences in the field of inquiry (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:277). Therefore, an observer worked alongside the researcher to ensure that he took notes about the different reciprocal actions during data gathering in the field.

- Triangulation refers to a variety of approaches and methods to collect their data (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:401). Field notes, based on observation, were taken during the focus group interviews, which enabled the researcher to be aware of the expressions, attitudes and reactions of the participants. A voice recorder was used during the interviews. Triangulation was also obtained through a literature control, which reflected on the data of corresponding studies. Examples of the transcribed data have been added as an addendum to this manuscript for further validation.

- Referential adequacy refers to the materials that the researcher has at his disposal to document his findings. A voice recorder was used during the focus-group interviews.
- Peer debriefing is done when a researcher has discussions about his interpretations and conclusions with another impartial colleague (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:250). An independent coder did the re-coding of the data.

- Member checks ensured that the researcher conferred with the participants to check whether the acquired data were correct (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:277). This was done after the investigation.

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the “applicability of inferences obtained in a study to other individuals, settings or methods of observation” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003:710). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) transferability refers to the extent to which the results can be put to practical use in other contexts or with other participants or groups. De Vos (2002:352) states that transferability is the alternative to external validity.

This study used the following strategies to attain transferability through the following:

- The researcher provided an entire, precise and detailed thick description of the research methodology. The participants gave detailed descriptions of their experiences, which were recorded by means of a voice recorder (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:277).

- Purposive sampling searches for the maximum range of information that can be gathered from and about a specific context and was therefore used to select participants for the research (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:277). All the participants were learners from the same school in a deprived environment.
- **Dependability**

  Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:120) describe dependability as “identifying acceptable processes for conducting the inquiry so that the results are consistent with the data”. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) this strategy refers to the consistency of the data, if the results were to be repeated with the same or similar participants in similar contexts with similar results.

  Dependability is viewed by De Vos (2002:352) as a strategy by which the researcher attempts to give an explanation for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study, as well as changes in the design made by a constantly refined understanding of the setting. Cohen, et al. (2000:120), state that audit trails allow the research to address the issue of confirmability of results.

  Dependability in this study was achieved through:

  - the collection of all the raw data by means of voice recordings and field notes. These recordings and field notes were stored and are available for checking.

  - The focus group interviews were coded and re-coded. The researcher and the supervisor ensured that they made sense of the data by continually checking the research data, explanations and interpretations.

- **Confirmability**

  Gubrium and Holstein (2001:14) refer to confirmability as *neutrality*. For all practical purposes the researcher takes the role of a facilitator during the interview process. He uses his interpersonal skills simply to encourage the expression, without helping to formulate the attitudes, opinions and information in
question. Poggenpoel (1998:350) points out that confirmability refers to freedom from bias in the research procedures and results.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), in Babbie and Mouton (2001:278), contend that confirmability should leave an audit trail to enable the auditor to establish if the conclusions, interpretations and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are verified by the research.

In this study, confirmability consisted of:

- a confirmability audit, triangulation, appropriate distance and the code-recoding procedure.

- appropriate distance was obtained because the researcher’s role was merely that of a facilitator. Triangulation consisted of data that were obtained from the interviews, which were then subjected to literature control (see Table 3.1).

3.4.9 Ethical measures

David and Sutton (2004:17) point out that it is important to consider the ethical implications when you are designing and implementing your research. Gathering information about the participants brings about ethical issues and it focuses the attention on the chosen methods that will be used and the manner in which the findings will be used.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher adhered to the following ethical measures:

- Informed consent. The participants were knowledgeable about the research procedure and their consent to partake in the study was obtained before data
collection took place (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:102; Willig, 2001:18; Kvale, 1996:112). The following information was given to the participants before the interviews started: The objectives of the research, the type of engagement expected and how their identities and privacy would be protected. I also obtained consent from the school principal and the Department of Education.

- Their participation took place on a voluntary basis.

- Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Ethical guidelines ensure that both the participants and the data’s anonymity and confidentiality be protected. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity are important to avoid associating the participants with harmful and embarrassing information (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:112). The participants’ privacy was guaranteed by completing a form, with their biographical data without having to mention their names, they thus remained anonymous. The participants in the focus group were briefed in advance and encouraged to maintain confidentiality and the confidentiality risks were explained to them (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006:76).

- Right to withdraw. The researcher made sure that the participants had the freedom to withdraw from partaking in the study without fear of being penalised (Willig, 2001:18).

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes the qualitative research approach that was used during this study. A variety of literature sources was consulted on this approach. Data collections, data analysis, strategies to ensure trustworthiness, as well as ethical considerations, were discussed.
Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the findings of the research inquiry. These results will be explained and interpreted by means of a literature control and direct quotations from the transcripts of the interviews.

Table 3.1
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Application</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Prolonged engagement</td>
<td>- I taught the participants and a trust relationship was formed prior to the research study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Persistent observation</td>
<td>- An observer took field notes alongside the researcher.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Referential adequacy</td>
<td>- A voice recorder was used during the interviews.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Peer debriefing</td>
<td>- Ongoing discussions were held with an impartial colleague.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Member checks</td>
<td>- I conferred with the participants to check whether the acquired data were correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Triangulation</td>
<td>- Field notes were taken during the interviews.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The interviews were voice-recorded.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- A literature control took place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transferability</strong></td>
<td>▪ Thick description and working contextually</td>
<td>- Participants gave detailed descriptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- All the participants were from the same school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purposive sampling</strong></td>
<td>Participants were selected with careful consideration.</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dependability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thick descriptions</strong> - A detailed description of the research methodology, the methods of data gathering and analysis were given.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dependability audit</strong> - Raw data (voice recordings and field notes) were available for cross checking. - Audit trails were checked to confirm the data.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Code-recode</strong> - Detailed focus group interviews were coded and recoded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Peer examination</strong> - Research data, categories, explanations and interpretations were continually checked by the researcher and the supervisor.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Appropriate distance</strong> - The researcher kept an appropriate distance from the participants, in order not to influence them.</td>
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CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings of the focus group interviews conducted with learners will be discussed. The purpose of this study was to investigate which barriers to learning learners from a deprived environment are exposed to. The findings will be discussed in a descriptive format. Direct quotations will be used from the verbatim transcriptions and no editing of the language used by the participants will occur. These findings will further be explained, compared and contrasted with the relevant literature to validate the findings.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data analysis generated meaningful findings that were familiar to the diverse group of participants. The results of the data analysis have been categorized in themes. These themes will be differentiated as main themes, categories and sub-categories. The discussion will be explained in terms of the challenges that learners from a deprived environment are exposed to.

The following four themes that have emerged from the data will be discussed:

Theme 1  A deprived home situation generates barriers to learning.
Theme 2  A deprived school situation creates barriers to learning.
Theme 3  A deprived environment causes barriers to learning.
Theme 4  Learner-related factors create barriers to learning.

In the current study the participants were able to speak freely and expressed themselves by identifying the home, school, environment and learner-related factors that create barriers to learning (see Table 4.1 for a summary).
In the following sections each of the main themes will be discussed in greater detail.

4.3 THEME 1

A DEPRIVED HOME SITUATION GENERATES BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The parents in a deprived home situation usually underachieved at school and they have a negative attitude and a lack of interest towards school, which is often carried over to the children (Pretorius, 1998:306). This statement is borne out by the participants, as well as by the observations of different authors. The following quotation is extracted from the transcript of one participant:

“Ouers moedig nie hulle kinders aan om skool toe te kom nie. Hulle sien die kinders by die huis, maar hulle gee nie om nie, kinders sien dat ouers stel nie belang nie en hulle stel ook nie belang nie.”
“Parents don’t encourage their children to come to school. They see the children at home, but they don’t care, children see that parents are not interested and they are also not interested.”

A deprived home situation generates barriers to learning through the following factors that have an influence on the learners’ learning: these include relationships with their parents, abuse, no privacy, no role models and poverty. The learner in a deprived home situation is susceptible to being at an increased disadvantage regarding positive developmental experiences, especially when he leaves home to take on responsibilities in contemporary society (Pretorius, 1998:303). Among others Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994a:29) highlight the following characteristics of a deprived home: neglect and rejection, parental absence and unsatisfactory parental care, which can be seen as characteristics of psychosocial barriers.
4.3.1 Relationships

*Relationships* were found to be an important aspect of the home situation and the first main category that has an influence on the home situation of the learners. Learners spend most of their time at home, where they have to form relationships and to bond with their parents. Pretorius (1998:41) states that family relationships form the foundation for all future social relationships. Some of these relationships are characterized by neglect, no interest in the child’s don’t care attitude and there being no parents at home. These unsupportive home relations experienced by the learners affect their attitude towards their schooling.

The participants were very outspoken about the relationships with regard to their home situation. From the transcriptions, the different sub-categories of home-related issues, such as neglect, rejection and no communication were identified.

4.3.1.1 Neglect

Unsatisfactory living conditions, personal hygiene, and the preparation of meals are general features of a neglected family. They experience significant problems with regard to order and organisation. Their family life is disorganised particularly the relationships among the family members (Pretorius, 1998:49). According to Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (2004:399), signs of neglect are displayed through behaviours such as leaving a child in unsupervised circumstances where he could get hurt or failing to furnish him with proper food, clothing or shelter. The general negative attitude of the people at home impacts negatively on the emotional and cognitive development of the learner. The comments of participants point at the parents’ *neglect* of their children at home:

“… ouers is nie meer lief vir hulle nie of hulle ouers goo of hulle weg.”
“… parents don’t love them any longer or their parents reject them.”
“... kinders hardloop weg van die huis af, omrede hulle word nie reg voorsien nie [sic].”
“... children run away from home because they are not properly cared for [sic].”

“Hulle kry miskien nie genoeg voedsel nie ...”
“Perhaps they don’t get enough food ...”

- No interest and don’t care attitude of parents

This relationship is not a happy one. The learners find it difficult to understand that their parents have no interest in them and do not care for them. The following are some of the comments the participants made in this regard.

“Ouers stel nie belang in hulle nie.”
“Parents are not interested in them.”

“... ouers wat nie ‘worry’ oor hulle kinders nie.”
“... parents who do not worry about their children.”

“... ouers stel nie belang in die kind se skoolwerk nie dan sê hulle dis ‘nonsense’ jy hoef dit nie te doen nie.”
“... parents are not interested in the child’s schoolwork, they say it’s nonsense, you don’t have to do it.”

- No parents at home

Children who are mostly on their own or have to come home to an empty house and who have to contend with daily needs and unexpected crises cause concern that these children will experience emotional and social damage. It is envisaged that these learners will suffer from low self-concepts, have little personal control, be bad scholars and perform poorly in achievement tests (Swart-Kruger, 1994:203).
Du Toit (1994:13) states that a learner's relationships have an impact on later relationships. Thus, the relationship that the learner establishes with his parents is of vital importance to his effective becoming.

The following quotation indicates how the participants feel about the absence of parents:

“… daar’s nie ouers in die huis nie. Die ouers is gedurig buitekant.”
“… there are no parents at home. The parents are always outside.”

According to Pretorius (1998:54), the family is the obvious environment where the learner's needs should be nurtured and in which he has to find loving advice in his inquiries. “Home” really means that the learner must be able to return to a “base of safety and security”.

4.3.1.2 Rejection

Considering the different forms of family disruptions within contemporary South African society such as family conflict, family violence and divorce, Ackermann (2001:114) observes that many learners have “to deal with developmental tasks regarding interpersonal relationships with very limited positive modelling available”. Often confused learners come from families characterised by rejection and aloofness. Myers (1998:104) states that rejecting-neglecting parents are detached from their children. They require little and invest little. This state of affairs is expressed in the comments of the participating learners:

“Hulle families stoot hulle weg. Hulle familie vertrou hulle nie.’
“Theyir families reject them. Their family don't trust them.”

Donald, et al. (2002:267), note that emotional abuse may have long-term effects on the learner’s emotional development. This includes parents (and teachers) who take part in patterns of behaviour that are often harmful to a learner’s
emotional and psychological wellbeing. Emotionally neglecting, rejecting, isolating and terrorizing are some of the more common patterns of child rejection.

4.3.1.3 No communication

Van der Merwe (1996:286) points out that effective communication skills entail, expressing oneself verbally and non-verbally in manners that are suitable to a person's culture and situation. This means that you must feel free to be prepared to ask for guidance in a time of need.

From the transcripts it became evident that there were serious issues around communication problems that caused dissatisfaction among the participants.

“... is miskien die kind het 'n probleem [sic] by die skool dan sal die kind nie eers met sy pa of ma kan praat nie.”
“... is maybe the child has a problem [sic] at school then the child will not even talk to his father or his mother.”

“Dan kan hulle nie oor die skoolwerk praat nie en die kind se werk kan moontlik agteruit gaan ...
“Then they cannot talk about schoolwork and the child’s work can maybe deteriorate ...”

4.3.2 Abuse

Child abuse, taking advantage of children and neglecting them are no new phenomena. Child abuse is in some way connected to other phenomena that are found within the family situation, such as violence, vulnerability and dysfunctionality (Pretorius, 1998:362). According to Smith, et al. (2004), child abuse happens in families from every socio-economic class, religion, race and ethnic background.

The following are some of the comments the participants made in this regard:
“Ouers wat hulle kinders slaan.”
“Parents who beat their children.”

“Kinders wat mishandel word by die huis.”
“Children who are abused at home.”

Swanepoel (1992), in Beckmann (1994:228), lists the following characteristics that abuse might cause in a child: “low self-image, self-blame, violent behaviour not shown before the incident(s), brain and other physical damage, emotional problems and death.”

4.3.2.1 Physical abuse

Learners are exposed to a number of serious life struggles, which originate within the interpersonal area and to which all learners may be exposed. These include risks such as those caused by physical abuse (Dawes and Donald, 1994:2). Smith, et al. (2004:398), state that physically abused learners are more inclined than non-abused learners to experience failing grades and to become discipline problems. They display physically aggressive behaviours, have difficulty with peer relationships and often are substance abusers.

The participant learners expressed their dissatisfaction in this regard:

“Slaan die kind met sambokke. ‘Child abuse,’ Juffrou. Miskien die ma en die pa is gedrink, Juffrou. Nou kom die pa miskien, Juffrou, uit die werk en hy is gedrink. Nou haal hy sy stres op die kinders uit Juffrou.”
“Beat the child with sjamboks. Child abuse, Teacher. Maybe the mother and the father are drunk, Teacher. Then when the father comes from work and he is drunk. Then he takes out his stress on the children, Teacher.”

“Kinders wat verhoudings met hulle ‘boyfriends’ het word geslaan …”
“Children who have relationships with their boyfriends are beaten …”
Pretorius (1998:44) states that the parents are the most influential people on whom the learners can depend to look after their physical and psychological needs.

4.3.2.2 Sexual abuse

Labuschagne (1998:4) describes child sexual abuse as occurring when a notable older person or one in a position of power has a reciprocal relation with a child in a sexual manner for the satisfaction of the older person. When the transgresser is a family member of the child, then this abuse is called incest. Sexually abused learners are not only at risk of manifesting problems during their school years, but also will commonly develop problems throughout their adulthood (Smith, et al., 2004:398).

The learners voiced their concern about this issue as follows:

“Ooms wat die kinders verkrag en sommige van die kinders hardloop weg van die huis af ... ”
“Uncles who rape children and some of the children run away from home ...

“Verkragting binne in jou huis. Miskien jou oompie, jou pa of jou broer, kry jy nie miskien ‘plug’ om jou skoolwerk te doen nie [sic] ... ”
“Rape within your home. Maybe your uncle, your father or your brother, then you don’t have plug to do your schoolwork [sic] ... ”

Families and communities pretend to deny the fact of child sexual abuse or they prefer to remain silent about it (Prinsloo, 2005:34).

4.3.2.3 Alcohol and drug abuse

Learners tend to think that by using drugs and alcohol they can become part of the ‘in crowd’. Alcohol use is generally a social activity that takes place in the company of their peers (Morojele, 1997:211). According to Myers (1998:237),
users of alcohol and drugs have experienced considerable stress and failure and are often depressed. According to him, alcohol is used as an escape to ease the pain of self-awareness and avoid having to cope with anger, depression, anxiety and insomnia.

With regard to the role of alcohol and drug abuse in the community, the participants expressed themselves as follows:

“Alkohol kan ook effek hê. As altwee jou ouers drink, dan gaan jy nie stilte het om te leer nie [sic].”
“Alcohol can also have an effect. When both your parents drink, then you won’t have silence to study [sic].”

“Hulle is alkoholiste. Die kind word daardeur beïnvloed, want die kind moet die heeltyd na die suster of die ouer of neef of niggie kyk. En dan het sy nie tyd vir haarsel om te leer nie, want as jy nie tyd vir jouself het nie, kan jy baie gestres raak.”
They are alcoholics. The child is affected by this, because the child must look after the sister or parent or nephew or niece. And then she does not have time for herself to study, because if you don’t have time for yourself you can get very stressed.”

“… en die … slegste van alles is dat my ma gebruik ‘drugs’ en dit maak vir my nog harder om te leer [sic].”
“… and the … worst of all is that my mother uses drugs and this makes it more difficult for me to study [sic].”

4.3.3 No privacy

Swart-Kruger (1994:215) points out that cramped living conditions make it difficult for the learner to have any privacy. Learners who come from deprived homes usually have a lack of privacy. This is due to the fact that the houses are small and there is not enough space for all the family members. This is how a participant expressed himself in this regard:

“Daar’s net twee kamers – waar kan jy gaan om stilte te kry? Dis baie swaar, Juffrou. Die huise is klein hier in ons (woongebied).”
“There are only two rooms – where can you go to get silence? Its very difficult, Teacher. The houses are small here in our (area).”

4.3.3.1 Sexual behaviour of parents

One of the participants expressed her dissatisfaction with her mother’s sexual preference for a much younger boyfriend.

“... die feit dat sy (my ma) met ‘n jonger ‘boytjie’ uitgaan, maak dit nog swaarder vir my.”
“... the fact that she (my mother) is dating a younger guy, makes it more difficult for me.”

Beckmann (1994:239) observes that the possibility of abuse occurring in families can place the learner at risk, because the privacy of family members is unsatisfactory and these conditions allow the children to observe the sexual intercourse between parents at a very young age.

4.3.3.2 Overcrowding

Overcrowding is a major problem for learners in a deprived environment. They have no space to study or to do their homework. Dawes & Donald (1994:2) confirm this statement by referring to the increasing number of learners who are being raised in impoverished and overcrowded conditions that are high-risk environments to the learner in general.

“En nog ‘n faktor in die omgewing is ook oorbevolking, miskien in die huise want dis so, [sic] as daar te veel mense in die huis is gaan die persoon miskien nie reg leer nie.”
“And another factor in the area is also overcrowding, maybe in the houses because it is so, [sic] if there are too many people in the house then the person won’t be able to study properly.”

Prinsloo, et al. (1996:209), note that learners in deprived environments have no private place to study or the basic necessities to do their homework. It is difficult
for parents to spend quality time with their children in homes where overcrowding occurs. Children spend more time on the streets, because of the lack of space at home.

The remarks of participants about the lack of space and overcrowding were as follows:

"By ons kan ek nooit leer nie, want daar is altyd te veel kinders in die huis in [sic] en lawaaiery. Dan moet ek altyd by my skoonmense of by my ‘antie’ hulle gaan leer. Ek kan nie konsentreer met baie mense rondom my nie."

At our house I can never study, because there are always too many children in the house in [sic] and noisiness. Then I must always go to my in-laws or my aunty to study. I cannot concentrate with a lot of people around me."

Magwaza (1997:165) observes that overcrowded household circumstances, such as where family members must share a room, are common in deprived environments.

4.3.4 Poverty

Poverty is a major problem for many families in South Africa. Poverty with its detrimental effects causes deprivation that impedes a learner's psychological development. The effect that continued poverty has on the learners, the learning process and the education system, is closely linked to the absence of access to basic services. These conditions adversely affect these learners negatively, because they are subjected to emotional stress, which in turn affects learning and development (Department of Education, 1997:13).

According to McWhirter, et al. (2004:23) and Donald, et al. (2002:205), it is obvious that poor learners are more at risk of health and safety problems associated with injury, malnutrition, neglect, violence, racism, economic deprivation, community insecurity, disease and infection than those who are not
poor. The results of these health risks are that they develop into physical, intellectual, individual disabilities that culminate as barriers to learning. Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994a:33) support this statement with their viewpoint that in a poverty culture learners find themselves trapped in an environment that has an impeding effect on their attempts to actualize the hidden potential that is distinctive to each individual.

The learners were eager to share how poverty impacted on their lives. They experienced poverty at first hand and noted how the lack of money and resources affected their chances of favourable outcomes in life. The learners are also aware of the limited options and support that they can get in their deprived homes.

The participants unanimously expressed concern about the manifold and diverse ways in which poverty affected them.

“... poverty is one of the biggest problems that we have, because you sometimes feel that you are not going to school, everybody, when you are suffering from poverty, so when everybody around you [sic], everybody else is richer than you, you feel so, so poor and you don’t feel up to studying, learning anything, because you feel like you the only person [sic] you don’t actually realize that there are so many people going through ... suffer from poverty and things like that.”

“Armoede speel ook ‘n rol … daar is baie kinders wat swaarkry, hulle het nie kos om te eet nie.”

“Poverty also plays a role … there are a lot of underprivileged children, they don’t have food to eat.”

4.3.4.1 Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the biggest problems in South Africa. In view of the injustices of the apartheid era many South Africans are not educated and therefore most of them are not skilled for certain jobs (Cheru, 2001:514). Pretorius (1998:306) states that the fathers as the breadwinners often have to
rely on casual jobs or jobs whereby they earn very low incomes. Unemployment affects learners directly: they have no food to eat; they have no school clothes; they are not able to pay their school fees and that makes them stay away from school.

The following quotations indicate how the participants perceive unemployment in their home environments:

“En arbeid, dit speel ook ‘n groot rol op onse skool [sic] want daar is baie kinders wat onvoooorreg is om baie goete te het [sic] …”
“And work, it also plays a major role at our school, because there are a lot of children who are not privileged to have a lot of things [sic] …”

“En werkloosheid uhm... werkloosheid dan is daar niks geld nie, die skuld word ook nie betaal nie, die bank of ander mense vat die huis en dit kan lei dat die ma, die pa, die kinders op die straat lewe.”
“And unemployment uhm … unemployment then there is no money, the accounts cannot be paid, the bank or other people take the house and that can lead to the mother, the father and the children living on the street.”

“Hulle kan nie skool toe kom nie want hulle voel moedeloos. Ja, almal het trueie aan en hulle kry koud, dan voel hulle uit.”
They cannot come to school because they feel despondent. Yes, everyone has jerseys on and they are getting cold, so they feel out.”

4.3.4.2 Cannot afford school fees – learner is suffering

Most of the families who find themselves in poverty-stricken areas cannot afford to pay school fees, let alone to provide food for the family. That is why some families according to Donald, et al. (2002:209), expect their children to work over weekends so that their families can survive.

This is what some participants had to say:
“Some of us want to learn, but the school fees are a problem for us you always get some schools and in the other schools especially in our schools you don’t get to write exams [sic], and school fees, that is not our fault, its our parents’ fault.”

“Uhm ... uhm ... daar kan nie meer skoolfooie betaal word nie, dan bly ek by die huis, kom ek nie meer skool toe nie.”
“Uhm … uhm … school fees cannot be paid, so I stay at home then I don’t go to school anymore.

“Sommige kinders kan nie meer skool toe kom nie en die meeste van hulle het nie eers skoolfonds om te betaal nie.”
“Some children cannot come to school anymore and most of them are unable to pay school fees.”

4.3.4.3 No electricity - affects homework

It is obvious that learners will find it difficult to do their homework if they do not have any electricity. If the teacher is not aware of the learners’ circumstances at home then it can cause more distress for the learner.

This was the response of one of the participants:

“En miskien as jy wil leer innie aand, jy maak skoon innie middae dan slaan die elektrisiteit af [sic] dan kan jy nie fokus terwyl daar net ‘n kers is. Of dit is te donker om te lees, jy kan nie reg sien nie as die krag miskien afgeslaan het [sic].”
“And maybe when you want to study at night, you tidy in the afternoons then the electricity goes off [sic] then you cannot focus if there is only a candle. Or if it is too dark to read you cannot see properly when the electricity is off [sic].”

4.3.4.4 No breadwinner

According to Pretorius (1998:306), the father who is usually the breadwinner in a deprived environment is often brought into disrepute because he is regularly unemployed. He is generally work-shy, poorly trained, with a low job status and
low wages. The learner experiences economic deprivation due to the fact that the breadwinner is mostly without work.

The following are examples of the comments that they made in this regard:

“Werkloosheid – miskien kinders wat swaarkry, daar is nie geld nie. Hulle voel nie om skool toe te kom nie, want andere het dinge, [sic] maar hulle het nie.”

“Unemployment – children who experience difficulties, there is no money [sic]. They don’t feel like coming to school because others have things, [sic] but they don’t have.”

“… nie meer ‘n broodwinner in die huis nie. Daar gaan nie meer inkomste is nie, dan moet die kind miskien onnodig skool los om uhm … agter die anders te kyk, by die huis ja. En die kind sal moet gaan werk dan kry die persoon, dan verdien die persoon ‘n minder inkomste … [sic].”

“… no breadwinner at home. There won’t be an income any longer. Then the child will have to leave school unnecessary uhm … to look after others, at home yes. And the child will have to go and work then the person, then the person will earn a lower income … [sic].”

4.4 THEME 2

A DEPRIVED SCHOOL SITUATION CREATES BARRIERS TO LEARNING

A considerable part of a learner’s day is spent at school. The school environment comprises more than teaching and learning of subject matter. Some learners from schools in deprived environments are often thought to regard schools with antagonism and bitterness. According to Christensen (2001:101) schools in these environments are commonly characterized “as having high levels of student aggression and violence, drug abuse, gang membership, crime, frequent truancy and poor achievement.” The communities in which these schools are located usually experience high levels of crime against persons and property, poverty, drug abuse and teenagers belonging to gangs.
As discussed below the participants were of the opinion that their deprived school situation generated barriers to learning for them. They were very vocal about the social relationships, physical factors, lack of resources, racism and the distances that some of them had to travel to school.

4.4.1 Social relationships
Learners who live in deprived environments obviously mirror the broader society in which they live. Learners from these communities are described as socially disadvantaged (Christensen, 2001:101). Prinsloo, et al. (1996:152), point out that there should be a close bond between the home and the school in order to improve the social relations instead of a lack of understanding and suspicion from the parents.

It is evident from the above discussion that teachers cannot regard themselves as separate from the learner's environmental influences.

4.4.1.1 Peer pressure
Parents sometimes fear that their children might get involved with friends who would influence them in a negative manner. The peer group has a huge influence on a learner's social development and sense of self. The peer group succeeds in shaping the behaviour and self-attitudes of young people because it is “dangerous and exciting and requires real skill because it is not based on such things as class distinctions and it is based on the idea that the individual should be judged in terms of personal attributes and accomplishments” (Hamachek, 1995:116,117). Prinsloo, et al. (1996:155), state that the teachers must keep in mind that peer group viewpoints have an overwhelming influence on the value that the learner ascribes to education.

The peer group can easily become a negative influence when they want to gain peer approval more so if they are not sure of their status in the group. Conflict
between moral code and behaviour can be followed to the peer group. Carelessness in sexual morals, substance abuse, violence and vandalism can often be ascribed to peer pressure (Prinsloo, et al. 1996:154).

The following quotations indicate how the participants perceive peer pressure:

“Party kinders is bang om skool toe te kom, hulle is bang vir die ‘peers’, want ‘peer pressure’ is baie groot, want rook is die inding, hulle glo om vroeë seks te het [sic] is die inding. Verstaan, ‘peer pressure’ speel ‘n groot rol by die skool.”

“All children are afraid to come to school, they are scared of their peers because peer pressure is very influential, because smoking is the in thing they believe that to have sex earlier [sic] is the in thing. Understand, peer pressure plays a big role at school.”

“... maar dan is dit weer by die skool is ek weer depressief [sic], jy moet doen wat jou tjommie vir jou sê anders is jy nie daai een se vriend nie ...”

“... but then if I’m at school again then I’m depressed [sic] you must do what your friend tells you otherwise you are not that one’s friend …”

“A.g.v. alles wat rondom jou gebeur: dwelms, drank en alles dit maak jou uhm … dat jy uhm … sukkel om jou sukses te behaal, want jy’s tussen mense wat drink, rondom mense wat rook, rondom mense wat jou beïnvloed, ‘peer pressure’ is, is … daar en dit maak jou dat jy nou bietjie sukkel om nou uit te kom waar jy eintlik wil uitkom [sic].”

“In terms of everything that happens around you: drugs, alcohol and all that makes you uhm … that you … struggle to be successful, because you are among people that drink, among people that smoke, among people that influence you, peer pressure is, is … there and this makes you struggle to achieve what you want to achieve [sic].”

“Nog ‘n probleem wat leer belemmer is die groepsdruk [sic].”

“Another problem that interferes with learning is the peer pressure [sic].”

- Drugs and cigarettes

The use of drugs and cigarettes can be attributed to the physical and social environments in which the learners find themselves. Myers (1998:237) sees that social influences are passed on mainly through the peer culture. Peers influence
the use of drugs by their words (slang phrases) and examples. Peers also provide the drugs and the parties for their use. Prinsloo, et al. (1996:168), maintain that cigarette smoking has been condemned because it is seen as a health hazard. Unfortunately, in the process, children often embrace harmful tendencies.

“Kinders wat ‘pos’ staan vir ander mense [sic]. Dit het ook ‘n invloed op die skoolwerk.”
“Children who sell drugs for other people. It also has an effect on their schoolwork.”

“Kinders wat sigarette verkoop by die skool Juffrou, dit moedig kinders aan om te rook, want as hulle nie verkoop nie dan gaan die kinders nie rook nie.”
“Children who sell cigarettes at school, Teacher, this encourages children to smoke because if they don’t sell then the children won’t smoke.”

“Drugs’ ... die kinders kom met ‘drugs’ by die skool, effekteer ook hulle skool [sic], want hulle gedagtes is meer by die ‘drugs’ as by die skool.”
“Drugs ... the children who come to school with drugs, it also affects their schooling, because they think more about the drugs than school.”

“Die kinders wat so dagga rook hier op die skole, dit effekteer ook op leerwerk. Want dan kan hulle nie konsentreer op die werk nie, want hulle is nou so hoog gerook aan die goete [sic].”
“The children who smoke dagga here at school, it also affects their learning. Then they cannot concentrate on their work because they are so high from smoking those things [sic].”

- Dropping out of school

Dropping out of school is a major problem in South Africa. It is a problem because of the many learners affected and of the loss of potential for what are necessary preventable reasons (Donald, et al. 2002:209). Many girls who fall pregnant hope to return to school to complete their education, but unfortunately due to circumstances some of them drop out of school. Sometimes they find it difficult to return to school, because they are confronted with problems such as
caring for the baby. Van der Merwe (1996:284) notes that there is a close relationship between teenage pregnancies and dropping out of school. Research shows that girls who drop out of school often do so due to pregnancy.

Comments in this regard were as follows:

“Meeste van hulle voel om met die skool klaar te maak, omdat hulle ‘teenage pregnancies’ het is dit ‘n struikelblok in hulle lewe [sic]. Hulle voel om klaar te maak, maar dit kan nie vervul word nie, al hoe hard probeer hulle [sic]. Hulle moet maar net bly, want daai is hulle lewe [sic]. Hulle kom net nie terug skool toe nie.”

“Most of them feel like finishing school, because they have teenage pregnancies it is a stumbling block in their lives [sic]. They feel like finishing but it cannot be fulfilled, even how hard they try [sic]. They must just stay, because that is their life [sic]. They just don’t come back to school.”

- Unsafe school environment

Violence seems to be escalating in schools. Various articles have been written about how schools that are supposed to be places of safety and care have become places where violent crimes are occurring on a daily basis. According to (Hayward, 2006:1), the Human Rights Commission (HRC) noted that the problem of unsafe school environments is due to drugs and violence. The findings in the report of the HRC state that the levels of violence and abuse in schools are unacceptably high (Fitzpatrick, 2006:208). This is how some of the learners have responded:

“... die kinders hier op skool wat in ‘gangster’ groepe is wanneer hulle buitekant die skool baklei dan baklei hulle weer binne in die skool jaar [sic]. Dit affekteer ook leer, want hulle baklei, dan wil die kinders almal gaan kyk, dan word iemand miskien raak geskiet of raak gesteek.”

“... the children at school who belong to gangster groups is when they fight outside the school then they fight in the school yard again [sic]. It also affects learning, because they fight, then all the children want to go and look, maybe somebody might get shot at or stabbed.”
Douglas (2002:18) points out that for many reasons bullying is becoming a cause for concern. It is now believed that bullying is closely connected to societal violence. This is what one participant had to say about bullying:


“Most of the ‘skollies’ bully. They want money from you and if you don’t have, they want to beat you and all those things [sic] or they talk about protection fees. They threaten you. Or you must do their homework for them, then you don’t get time to do your own homework. Then you don’t feel like coming to school, because you must do their homework. Now you cannot succeed but you must let somebody else succeed [sic]. It makes you miserable, Teacher. They want to beat you, they are at you all the time.

“Vrinne by die huis. Ja, ‘bad company’. Miskien as jy nie wil iets doen nie. Jy wil rérig jou aandag sit by jou skoolwerk [sic] … dan kom jou vriend daarso en sé sy vir jou ‘kom aan man, ek en jy gaan miskien gaan rook.’ En jy wil jou skoolwerk doen dan sé sy jy is miskien bang jou ma gaan jou vang of iets soos dit [sic].”

“Friends at home. Yes, bad company. Maybe if you don’t want to do something. You really want to concentrate on your schoolwork … then your friend comes and says to you ‘come on man, let us go and smoke’ [sic]. And you want to do your schoolwork then she says that you are afraid that your mother is going to catch you or something like that [sic].”

4.4.1.2 Relationships with teachers

The emancipation of the learner towards his independence brings an unwillingness to be guided by teachers. It is typical of learners who want to make their own decisions to question teachers on a regular basis. Prinsloo, et al. (1996:140), point out that they always want to know why things have to be done
in a certain manner and not the way they think it should be done. This generally leads to conflict between the teacher and the learner especially if the teacher is not prepared to regard the learner’s urge for emancipation in a sympathetic manner.

- **No respect for teachers**

Certain learners have reached a point where they do not have any respect for teachers or for authorities at school. How learners address teachers and the manner in which they talk to them are shocking. According to Prinsloo, et al. (1996:207), an inadequate teacher-learner relationship can also cause barriers to learning. A requirement of effective learning is that the learner must accept the teacher as someone who deserves to be respected.

This is what some participants had to say:

“*Selfs die taalgebruik ook, ja ... uhm... ook in die klas in [sic]. Daar’s die meisie wanneer sy ... Sy weet nie hoe om met die meneer te praat nie. Sy ‘Jissus’ soos sy wil en sy ‘f’ hulle soos sy wil. En dis baie belangrik dat ons ons onderwysers respekteer. Ek dink dis nie nodig om so rou te praat en daardie lelike woorde te gebruik nie.”*

“*Even their language usage also, yes ... uhm... even in the class in [sic]. There is this girl when she ... She doesn't know how to talk to the teacher. She will ‘Jissus’ and ‘f’ as she wishes. And it is important that we should respect the teachers. I don’t think that it is necessary to be so rude and to use those rude words.”*

“*Geen respek vir onderwysers nie. Bv. kinders op die skool wanneer hulle aangespreek word oor dinge wat hulle verkeerd gedoen het, wil hulle net terug praat.”*

“*No respect for teachers. For example, children at school when they are reprimanded for things that they have done wrong, then they want to backchat.”*

Fitzpatrick (2006a:209) confirms this when she says that “teachers also suffer at the hands of violent children” and Dave Balt of Naptosa in Fitzpatrick
(2006a:209) says that he “knows of at least six teachers who were assaulted by learners this year.”

- **Teachers who degrade learners**

Participants referred to the manner in which teachers degrade the learners in front of the class. According to Nieto (2004:43), a clear sign of the power of words is to either make or break a student’s attitude to school. One of the participants shared her experience of how a teacher humiliated and de-motivated a learner.

“Ja, en iets wat baie kinders, hoe sal ek nou sê, demotiveer is ‘n onderwyser wat vir die kind sê: ‘Ag, jy is dom.’ Ek ken sulke onderwysers, maar ek gaan nie name noem nie. Hulle sê vir die kind: ‘ag jy’s dom.’ Jy dink miskien jy kan nog dit bereik in die lewe, dan is die kind gedemotiveerd. Dan het die kind ook nie meer lus om te leer nie.”

“Yes, and something that most children, how shall I say, demotivate is when a teacher says to a child. ‘You are stupid.’ I know such teachers, but I’m not going to mention any names. They say to the child: ‘you are stupid.’ You think that you can achieve something in life, then the child is demotivated. Then the child don’t feel like learning any longer.”

According to Prinsloo, et al. (1996:165), learners are sometimes made to feel rejected and no good and look for approval in other areas such as crime. The absence of reassurance and praise from teachers who expect the worse from learners, does not reinforce motivation.

4.4.2 **Physical factors**

Frustrations with the physical conditions of the school were noted in each of the interviews. In describing their frustrations they mentioned the broken windows and roofs, lack of water, electricity and lights, the condition of the school grounds and ablution facilities, fences and over-crowded classes.
This is what some had to say about what gave rise to the dilapidated physical structures of the school:

“Inbrekery – skole word afgebreek, vensters word gebreek en as dit reënt, reën ons nat in die klas. Op die einde van die dag ‘suffer’ die klas, want dit reën dan in [sic].”

“Burglary – schools get vandalized, windows get broken and if it rains, then we get wet in the class. At the end of the day the class suffers because it rains in [sic].”

A teacher at a particular school stated that the wooden floors were a safety hazard because they had gaps and she had to be careful when she used the blackboard because of the gaps. Complaints were also received from residents near the school about the loud banging of the broken windows that had no hooks, which made it difficult for them to sleep especially on windy nights (Matyu, 2006:6).

Chisholm and Vally (1996:13) maintain that the view in many educational circles is that the enhancement of school buildings and facilities will not have a significant effect on school quality. The people in these circles also believe that the essence of school lies in the classroom method of teaching and learning. This may hold some substance, but in deprived environments the school buildings and facilities make a vast difference to the atmosphere of learning and teaching in these schools. The physical environment significantly affects the learners’ and teachers’ attitudes towards learning and teaching.

4.4.2.1 Broken windows and roofs

The learners complained that it was cold if they sat next to a broken window. It was even worse when it rained because they got wet and the roofs were also leaking. Participants complained that they felt very unhappy about the conditions at school.
According to a report published by Matyu (2006:6) what happens at a certain school in Port Elizabeth during winter when it rains, is that the teachers have to cover the broken window panes with cardboard and newspaper to keep the children safe.

4.4.2.2 Water, electricity and lights

The water problem usually occurs on a Monday when learners get to school. What happens is that over the weekend thieves steal the copper pipes to sell them. If the principal is not informed about the running water at the school, then it runs the whole weekend. Obviously when learners get to school on the Monday they do not have any water, because it has been turned off and much needed funds must be used to repair the damage.

“As die water ook af is … Ja, want by die laerskool is dit so dan het hulle nie skool nie. Dit het ook ‘n invloed op die kinders.”

“And if the water is off … Yes, because at the primary school it’s like that then they don’t have school. It also has an effect on the children.”
The classrooms are sometimes not well lit, because of a shortage of fluorescent lights. This state of affairs is noted in the participants’ comments:

“The ligte wat stukkend is en ons kan ook nie reg sien nie.”
“The lights that are broken and we cannot see properly.”

“Daar’s klasse hier by die skool ook wat ’n bietjie donker is, jy kan nie sien nie, dan is dit te donker as jy daar van agter af sit.”
“There are some classes here at school that are a bit dark, you cannot see, then it is too dark if you sit in the back.”

4.4.2.3 School grounds and ablutions

Learners are not very neat with regard to the use of the toilets and they are too lazy to use the bins that are provided for their rubbish. Sometimes the washbasins in the toilets also get stolen over weekends.

“Die toilette wat stukkend is. Die kinders rook in die toilette, gooi hulle sigaret stompies in die ‘zinke’ dan ‘blok’ die ‘drain’ [sic].”
“The toilets that are broken. The children smoke in the toilets, throw their cigarette butts in the sinks then the drains are blocked [sic].”

“Hulle rommel wat hulle ‘all over’ op die skoolterrein gooí [sic].”
“Their rubbish that they throw all over the school grounds [sic].”

4.4.2.4 Overcrowded classes

The participants voiced their opinion about the overcrowded classes. They felt that the large classes were a disadvantage for them because they were not comfortable in having to share a desk. This is how they responded:

“… daar’s te veel kinders by die skool. Ja en dan kan ons nie lekker op die bank sit nie [sic].”
“… there are too many children at school. Yes and then we cannot sit comfortably at the desk [sic].”
The class sizes in environmentally deprived schools are significantly large and the learners have to struggle to find a place in them (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:49). According to Pretorius and Lemmer (1998:41) South African teachers will have to endure the physical and emotional constraints that overcrowded classrooms have for both teachers and learners.

4.4.3 No resources

Donald, et al. (2002:239), maintain that the differences in South African communities with regard to their resources and values have particular influences on social and interpersonal problems. *No resources* have a specific influence on such problems especially in deprived environments. The learners usually complain about the lack of resources at schools situated in deprived environments.

“I would say the biggest problem at school is uhm … lack of resources.

4.4.3.1 Libraries

There are situations where the school used to have a library with very old, outdated books or the library is not in use any longer because when some of
teachers were redeployed and therefore the school could not afford to have a
teacher full time in the library due to staff shortages.

“We have no library here at school.”

According to Donald, et al. (2002:241), a school with inadequate or no library
resources will struggle to help its learners to achieve.

4.4.3.2 Counselling centre

One of the participants suggested that it is important to have a counselling centre
at school, because of all the crime and rape that learners are exposed to. She
was talking from her own perspective as a rape survivor. She felt that the centre
would be a great help to support learners who are victims of crime and abuse.

“There is no support for children, for children who have been raped [sic].
Support is supposed to be there, uhm ... uhm ... Peer educators,
counsellors and therapists are supposed to be there for us available [sic].
And maybe they will see a difference in our results as the support that we
have available for us at school [sic].”

4.4.4 Racism

Racism is a system of advantage and punishment based on one’s race,
containing two aspects: a belief in the innate supremacy of some people and the
innate inadequacy of others, and the acceptance of how goods and services are
divided in line with these judgements, as well as the right to respect and dignity
(Goduka, 1999:37). Foster (1994:221) refers to racism as having consequences
for the life opportunities of oppressed learners, for example, poor health, poverty,
nutritional problems, disadvantaged education, overcrowding and interpersonal
violence, as well as damaged self-concepts, altered identities, and looking down
on your own group and accepting the other group as superior.
This is how the participants expressed themselves with regard to racism:

“Soos ‘n uhm … uhm … ‘racism’ by die skool. Daar is miskien ‘African’ kinders en daar is Kleurling kinders by die skool Juffrou. Die Kleurling kinders gaan die ‘African’ kinders ‘different treat’. Hulle gaan hulle uitmaak, Juffrou.”

“Like uhm … uhm … racism at school. There are maybe African children and there are Coloured children at school [sic] Teacher. The Coloured children are going to treat the African children different. They are going to make fun of them, Teacher.”

“Uhm … uhm … soos uhm … hier’s verskillende rasse op die skool en dan handel ons nie mekaar dieselfde nie [sic]. Soos daar gaan altyd ‘n groepie wees soos hulle, die ‘African’ kinders is alleen en ons is alleen dan gaan ons op hulle neerkyk. Dan gaan ons hulle nie die respek gee wat ons vir anders sal gee nie. Ons kyk neer op hulle.”

“Uhm … uhm … like uhm … here are different races at school and then we don’t treat each other the same [sic]. Like there will always be a group like them, the African children are alone and we are alone then we will look down on them [sic]. Then we will not give them the respect that we will give to others. We look down on them.”

Nieto (2004:46) asserts that racism, classism and other forms of discrimination are important factors in creating and supporting inappropriate learning environments for many learners.

4.4.4.1 Language issues

It is obvious that when people of certain race groups are together that they will speak their mother tongue. They will speak the language that comes naturally to them and that they feel comfortable with. Goduka (1999:107) asserts that language is inevitably connected to culture. It is a basic manner by which people make their cultural values known and it is the lens through which they view the world.

The remarks of participants about the language issues were as follows:

“The black learners don’t understand a lot of Afrikaans [sic]. They speak their language, Teacher. Use abusive language towards the teacher in their language and the teacher doesn’t understand them [sic]. We don’t always understand what they talk about, Teacher, because when they speak their language then we tell them, because how must we understand what they are saying [sic].”

“Uhm … and the language, especially for us black children, we have Afrikaans here, we are having it as a first language at school, which is actually our third language, but doing it in higher grade first language, its, its such an obstacle, that you can’t you don’t know why there isn’t any things set aside for us to help us in that Afrikaans, because you get your question paper and you see the eh … strongest Afrikaans that you have ever seen and that you don’t understand it and I think that the fact that you can address all doesn’t mean that you know Afrikaans that good and you are suppose to be helped in some or other way [sic].”

4.4.4.2 No mixing of races

When people from different races and cultures are together then they prefer to mix and associate with their own race groups. It is likely that cultural separatism will take place, which Goduka (1999:101) describes as those responses associated with staying within the limits of the main culture, while resolutely denouncing the dominant culture.

The following are some of the comments participants made in this regard:

“… miskien soms van hulle wil nie, dingese, [sic] met ander kinders meng nie. Hulle wil net in hulle, in hulle groep sit en dit is nie reg nie.”

“… maybe some of them don’t want to, what-ya-call it, [sic] mix with other children. They only want to sit in their own group and it’s not right.”
4.4.5 Distances to school

The learners stated that they had to travel long distances to get to school. They have to get up early in the morning to be in time for school and in the afternoon they get home late from school. According to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:47) the distances to school increase the chance of road accidents and encountering criminals who intimidate the learners. Learners also identified the distance from school as a reason why some children drop out of school.

“En wat ook ‘n probleem is, is dat die kinders so myle vêr bly, en as hulle hier is en teen die tyd wat hulle hier by die skool aangestap kom, is hulle baie nat, is hulle papnat en kan hulle ook nie uhm … leer nie. Dan moet die hoof maar net die kinders huistoe stuur.”

“And another problem, is that the children stay miles away, and when they are here and by the time when they get to school, then they are wet, they are very wet and they cannot uhm … study. Then the principal must send the children home.”

Swart-Kruger (1994:211) points out that some learners spend up to two hours travelling daily to and from school. They also do not feel safe while they are waiting for buses and taxis.

4.4.5.1 Costly

Compounding the difficulties caused by the distance and expensive experience of going to school is the cost of transport (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:47). Learners find it very costly to get to school because their parents don't always have money for bus or taxi fare. This is what some of the participants had to say:

“Geld. Ek sal sê geld het ook ‘n rol op leer [sic]. Meeste van ons is minder bevoorreg en so en ons moet elke dag ‘taxi’s’ ry. Ons, ek praat van myself wat so ver bly. Is ek en my suster wat hier is en dit is net my ma wat werk, en my ma is die enigste broodwinner in die huis en ons moet omtrent R20.00 ‘n dag vir taxi geld spandeer. As daar nie geld is vir taxi geld nie dan kan ons nie skool toe kom nie [sic]. Ons mis baie werk.”
“Money. I will say that money also has a role in learning [sic]. Most of us are underprivileged and so we must take a taxi every day [sic]. We, I’m talking about myself that stays so far away [sic]. It’s myself and my sister that’s here, and it is only my mother who works, and my mother is the only breadwinner in the house and we must spend approximately R20.00 for taxi fare daily. And if there is no money for taxi fare then we cannot come to school. We miss a lot of work.”

4.4.5.2 No time for homework

Travelling to and from school has many disadvantages for the learners because they must get up early and get home late and do not always have time to do their homework. Some have to do their daily chores when they get home from school. This really has a harmful effect on their motivation to study. This is what a participant had to say:

“… hulle kom eers weer vieruur vanmiddag by die huis aangestap en dan moet hulle nog eerste ontspan voor hulle moet begin om die huis aan die kant te maak en kos te kook. Hulle kry nie saans tyd om hul tuiswerk te doen en om te studeer nie omdat hulle te moeg is.

“… they only get home at four in the afternoon and than they must first relax before they must begin to tidy the house and to cook food. They don’t get time at night to do their homework and to study because they are too tired.”

4.5 THEME 3

A DEPRIVED ENVIRONMENT CAUSES BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Reber and Reber (2001:190) describe deprivation as denying a person certain opportunities, food or an object. It usually refers to a loss and in this instance refers to a lack or loss in the environment. This means that a deprived environment is usually visualized and measured by the belongings and assets in the community. Similarly, Le Roux (1994:9) defines deprivation as a loss of whatever is needed to meet a person’s psychological, physical, emotional and social needs.
Learners from deprived environments usually experience language deficiencies that limit their communication with other learners from the dominant culture (Booyse, 1991:122). Pretorius (1998:301) refers to environmental deprivation as reflecting social groupings that show reciprocal characteristics in spite of their differences, such as low economic and social status, a low educational level, doing inferior jobs, restricted community involvement and limited potential towards upward social movement.

The interviewed learners stated that poverty (as discussed earlier under 4.3.4), Aids and TB, a community not conducive to learning, an unsafe community and overpopulation are factors in their environment that contributed to barriers to learning.

4.5.1 HIV/AIDS and TB

HIV/AIDS and TB are becoming common phenomena in South Africa. If the parents die at an early age, the children must take care of themselves. Child-headed families are becoming the norm in South Africa. Swart and Phasha (2005:220) note that the structural changes that HIV/AIDS and TB bring about in communities add to the diversity that educators have to cope with in schools. The diversity in itself is not damaging, but the interruptions in care and support related to family violence, abuse, substance abuse, poverty and unemployment might have harmful effects on learning and development of the children in such a community.

This is how the learners expressed themselves about the effects of HIV/AIDS and TB in their communities:

“Ek voel dat HIV ook uhm … iets groot is in ons se ‘community’ [sic]; ‘cos’ voorheen, ek sal nie sê daar was nie so iets nie, en nou, nou is die grootste krisis dit wat ‘happen’ in onse ‘community’ [sic].”
“I feel that HIV is also uhm … something big in our community [sic]. Because before, I will not say there wasn’t something like this, and now, now it is the biggest crisis that is happening in our community [sic].”

“HIV/AIDS … As jong kinders/tieners seks het, dan kry hulle miskien nou Aids en dan ‘worry’ hulle nou meer oor die siekte as wat hulle gefokus is op die skoolwerk. Wat gaan hulle maar doen, gaan hulle nou dood …?”

“HIV/AIDS … If young children/teenagers have sex, then they get maybe Aids and then they worry more about the illness then what they are focused on their schoolwork. What are they going to do, are they going to die …?”

“Dis ook ‘n ander faktor is, is TB. TB tas die persoon se lewe aan. Dit maak die persoon moeg.”

“Another factor is TB. TB affects the person’s life. It makes the person tired.”

4.5.1.1 Taking care of parents

The children are expected to take care of their parents when they are sick. This affects their learning because they don’t get enough time to do their schoolwork.

“ … want daar kan TB voorkom wat miskien die mense in die huis se gesondheid aantas en dan kan die persoon nie reg leer nie, effektiief leer nie [sic]. En daar gaan gedurig miskien gevra word, dat die ma vra die kind: ‘Doen gou dit’ maar die kind is besig om te leer of miskien die kind moet besig is om uhm … miskien kos te maak maar die kind kan nie fokus op die werk nie want almal moet eet in die huis in [sic].”

“ … TB can occur that might affect the health of the people at home and then the person cannot study properly, not study effectively [sic]. And there will always be asked, that the mother asks the child: ‘Do this quickly’ but the child is busy studying or maybe the child must be busy to uhm … maybe making food but the child cannot focus on his work because everybody must eat in the house [sic].”

4.5.1.2 Tiredness and illnesses

When learners suffer from TB then they tend to become very tired and suffer from severe weight loss. According to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:57), a direct effect of HIV is a weakened immune system that gives rise to
other infections. Sufferers sleep a lot because of the effects of the medication. This causes the learners’ schoolwork to suffer because they cannot study properly.

“The person is not interested in his schoolwork anymore, because the person is very tired. Yes, because one of the symptoms of TB is because the person sleeps very little because then the person maybe … will not be able to focus on his schoolwork.”

4.5.1.3 Discrimination against them

People in communities tend to discriminate against people who suffer from infectious diseases. The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:58) asserts that information should be handled carefully because of the stigma connected with the disease and the taboos that surround talking about it. Especially learners at school can be very cruel towards others who are sick. This is how a participant responded:

“Een ding is nou diskriminasie. Die kinders gaan nou uhm … die persoon gaan skaam voel oor die siekte, want die persoon se vriende gaan nie meer lus het [sic] om tyd te spandeer saam met daardie persoon nie. Of hulle sê: ‘Ag nee, jy’t ‘Aids’, jy moet nie meer saam met ons kom rondloop nie’ of daai [sic].”

“Another thing is discrimination. The children is going to uhm … the person is going to be self-conscious about the disease, because the person’s friends won’t feel like [sic] spending time with that person. Or they are going to say: ‘Oh no, you have Aids, you must not hang out with us any longer’ or so [sic].”

4.5.2 Community not conducive to learning

According to Swart and Phasha (2005:213), there must be a reciprocal working relationship between families and the community and how they can promote
school achievement and development, better attendance, positive self-concepts and homework completion. This is something to strive for in any community but in deprived environments one will find that the community has a don't care attitude and is not very helpful.

This is how some of the participants experienced learning in their communities:

4.5.2.1 Don’t care

The participants described their communities as environments where people have a don’t care attitude towards education and it does not mean much to them. This is what one of the participants had to say:

“In die gemeenskap … Ons bly in so ‘n gemeenskap wat leer is nie eintlik belangrik nie [sic], want almal is … hulle gee nie om nie, en almal ‘just doesn’t care’."

“In the community … We live in such a community where education is not really important [sic], because everybody is … they just don’t care, and everybody just doesn’t care.”

4.5.2.2 Not helpful: each one for himself

The participants mentioned in this regard that the communities where they live are not very helpful and supportive. They felt that the people were only concerned about themselves. This is how they expressed themselves with regard to their community:

“… en dan is dit net die een wat jou miskien gaan help, die ander gaan nie wil help nie. In die meeste gevalle gaan hulle jou nie wil help nie.”

“… and then it is just this one that will perhaps help you, the others will not help. In most cases they will not help you.”

“… as jy informasie by hulle soek dan gee hulle ook nie daai [sic] informasie wat jy nodig het nie. Ek sal sê in ons gemeenskap is almal vir hulleself.”
“… if you want information from them then they will not give you that information that you will need [sic]. I will say that in our community everybody is for themselves.”

4.5.3 Unsafe communities

It is evident that where poverty, crime and violence prevail, the community will not be very safe. According to Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994a:46), violence forms an integral part of the daily existence and lifestyle of the people living in a poverty culture. One finds that gangsterism, drug abuse and vandalism are common in those areas. If learners do not have positive role models in the community they can easily be influenced to become involved in drugs and gangsterism.

“Hier’s ook nie veiligheid hier by die skool nie, Juffrou, want daar’s buitemense wat inkom, Juffrou. Dis nie veilig, want as daai mense met messe inkom en steek jou dood [sic] of hulle ‘rob’ die outjies, dan gaan die kinders nie veilig voel om skool toe te kom nie. Hulle gaan dink: wat as so ‘n ding weer gaan gebeur met hulle.”

“Here is no safety here at school, Teacher, because there are outside people that come in, Teacher [sic]. It is not safe, because if those people come in with knifes and murder you or they rob the boys, then the children will not feel safe to come to school. They are going to think: what if something like this is going to happen to them again.”

4.5.3.1 Crime

According to Tshiwula (2002:116,117), the crime rate in South Africa is considered to be one of the highest in the world. In the communities where gangs are busy with their activities they cause fear and instability. Drug trafficking has become a means of making quick money. According to a report by Stephen (2006:33), teenagers that were interviewed “linked getting into crime with taking drugs”. Communities with a general high crime rate may experience limitations with regard to their mobility that affect their personal and social life.
The following are examples that the participants mentioned in this regard:

“Crime is, is really big in our communities, especially in the disadvantaged communities, it’s in our way, you can’t do anything about it.”

“In onse omgewing moet daar iets … Daar moet iets opstaan daar want daar is te baie goete nou daar [sic] … dwelm misbruik wat hulle daar gebruik. Die ‘gun’skietery, dit stel ons lewe in gevaar want daar is kinders wat laat buiten is en dan is daar kinders wat van miskien ‘n ouma af huistoe kom. Hulle kry seer. Hulle kan nie eers in die ‘jaart’ staan nie dan word hulle doodgeskiet of hulle word weggevat of verkrag.”

“In our community something must be … Something must get up there because there are too many things there now [sic] … drug abuse that they are using there [sic]. The gun shooting, our lives are in danger because there are children that are outside late and there are children that maybe come home from a grandmother [sic]. They get hurt. They cannot even stand in their yard then they get murdered or they are taken away and raped.”

“In, in die omgewing waar ek in woon is ‘n baie geweldige omgewing want die jong ‘gangsters’, hulle skiet op mekaar. Dis meestal oor probleme wat hulle doen. Byvoorbeeld dis meestal die ‘drug lords’. Want daar waar ons bly nê, in die omgewing, daar word ‘drugs’ verkoop, daar word alkohol verkoop …”

“‘In, in the area where I live is a very violent area because the young gangsters, they shoot at one another. It is mostly about problems that they do [sic]. For example it’s mostly the drug lords. Because there where we live, in the area, drugs are sold there, alcohol is sold there …”

4.5.3.2 Ineffective police services

The police services are not very effective where there is a lot of crime. They do not respond when they are needed in areas where there is perhaps a gang fight. In a survey done by Daniel, Southall and Dippenaar (2006:35) on the reflections of the tenth anniversary of this country’s democracy, they stated that the lowest levels of trust were recorded for the police services.

“The crime in our community is too much, it’s out of order. I just feel that the police is definitely not doing anything about it.”
“Juffrou as daar nou miskien iets hier buite gebeur Juffrou uhm … daar’s miskien ‘n brand of iemand baklei of is dood Juffrou, dan is die diens, die polisie of ‘ambulance’, ‘fire brigade’ [sic]. Hulle diens is swak, Juffrou. Die polisie, daai mense, is nalatig [sic]. Paar van die polisie is bang ook vir mense, Juffrou. As hulle hoor dis ‘n skietery of mes stekery, sal hulle nie sommer kom nie. Hulle sal na die tyd kom. Hulle kom nie vir regte dinge nie. Hulle vat die mense se goete of dan verkoop hulle dit Juffrou [sic].”

“Teacher, if maybe something happens here outside, Teacher, uhm … there’s maybe a fire or somebody is fighting or is dead, Teacher, then the service of the police or ambulance, fire brigade [sic]. Their service is bad, Teacher. The police, those people, are negligent [sic]. Some of the police are also afraid of the people, Teacher. If they hear it’s a shooting or knife stabbing, they will not come immediately [sic]. They will come when everything is over. They don’t come when they are needed. They take the people’s things or then they sell them, Teacher [sic].”

4.5.4 Over-population

Occurrences of violence usually happen in overpopulated and socially deprived environments, because of the frustrations, loneliness and inferior conditions experienced by the people living there (Le Roux and Gildenhuys, 1994a:46). This was the comment of one of the participants.

“Daar’s baie mense in ‘n huis. Jy kry nooit kans om reg te leer nie.”
“The houses are overcrowded. You never get a chance to study properly.”

4.5.4.1 Noise and loud music

Noise and loud music are typical stereotypes that are associated with deprived environments. People tend to put up a front to portray an image of happiness. Music is played to help them to forget about their hardships. Pretorius (1998:306) states that there is no atmosphere of stability and peace in the environmentally deprived environment. The working young people are generally responsible for the noise and partying after work, which is by no means an example for the younger children. This was the participants’ comments with regard to the noise:
“En ook ‘n probleem is in die sogenaamde ‘coloured areas’ waar ons bly is
daar te veel geraas van buite af a.g.v. die mense van buite af [sic].”
“And also a problem in the so-called coloured areas where we live there’s
too much noise from the people from the outside [sic].”

“… die Sondag kan ek nie leer, want die musiek is te hard en die mense
baklei en hulle stry en die polisie kom en ambulans en dis te deurmaat
[sic]. Maandag as ek by die skool kom het ek nie eers rêrig geleer nie.
So ek sal sê dit affekteer ook my leer.”
“… on Sunday I cannot study, because the music is too loud and the
people are fighting and they argue and the police come and the
ambulance and it is too confusing [sic]. Monday if I get to school I did not
even really study. So I shall say that it also affects my learning.”

“En ook as mens hier in die skool is, dan speel die mense aan die oorkant
klipharde musiek. En as die juffrou ‘n verduideliking gee … hulle speel
baie harde musiek dan kan ons nie leer nie in die klas nie [sic] en kan ons
ook nie luister wat die onderwyser sê nie.”
“And also if a person is here in school, then the people on the other side
play loud music. And if the teacher is busy with an explanation … they
play loud music then we cannot learn in the classroom [sic] and we also
cannot listen to what the teacher is saying.”

4.6 THEME 4

**LEARNER-RELATED FACTORS THAT CREATE BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

Substance abuse by learners is a problem that is increasing at an alarming rate.
A major concern is that the learners get involved with alcohol, drugs and
cigarettes at a very young age. According to Prinsloo, et al. (1996:168), the
educator is responsible for creating an awarenes about the dangers of substance
abuse.

Factors such as teenage pregnancies and the youth’s susceptibility to cigarettes,
drugs, alcohol, taverns, discos, taxis and gangs are causally interlocked. Being a
teensage mother gives the girls a sense of purpose and importance that many
young people lack in deprived environments. Certain teenagers’ frame of
reference is that they feel it is a positive and rational choice, especially if they feel
that education has little to offer for their future (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:60).

As discussed below, the participants expressed similar sentiments to those presented in the literature, identifying early pregnancies and the susceptibility of the youth to the above factors as creating barriers to learning.

4.6.1 Early pregnancies

Teenagers are often not aware of the responsibilities that come with a baby. It is only when the baby is born that they realize the impact that that child would have on their lives. De Villiers (1985), in Müller (1998:81), is of the opinion that the demographic disaster that South Africa is confronted with in the future is to a great extent dependent on the high rate of teenage pregnancies.

4.6.1.1 Detrimental to education

Teenage pregnancies are detrimental to education, because most of the learners drop out of school and they do not complete their education. Bee and Boyd (2002:289) state that teenage pregnancies are lower in girls who have educational aspirations. This is how some of the participants reflected on education issues of teenage pregnancies:

“As hulle swanger is, kan hulle mos niks, kan nie rërig hulle [sic], hoe kan ‘n mens nou sê, dan kan hulle nie eendag iets word nie, Juffrou. Hulle het nie ‘education’ of sulke goed nie, Juffrou [sic].”

“If they are pregnant then they can do nothing, they cannot really [sic], how can a person say, they cannot become something one day, Teacher. They don’t have an education or such things, Teacher [sic].”

“'Teenage pregnancy’ is ook ‘n probleem want sommige kinders hulle word swanger op die skool en dan los hulle sommer die skool …”

“Teenage pregnancy is also a problem because some children they become pregnant at school and then they just leave school …”
4.6.1.2 Baby-sitting - not studying

Bezuidenhout (2002:34) maintains that the teenage mother, who decides to raise her own baby and return to school to finish her studies, may find such a lifestyle difficult. The reason for this is that the mother will not have enough time to study because she must baby-sit.

“Ja, en die stres ook wat dit kan gee van die kind, want jy moet jou aandag by die kind sit en jou aandag by die skoolwerk ook sit [sic]. Jy moet leer, dan huil die kind of so, of in die aand is die kind siek, jy kan nie slaap met die kind en dan moet jy nog die ‘next’ dag skool toe ook gaan. Dit affekteer ook jou leer.”

“Yes, and the stress that it can cause for the child, because you must apply your mind to the child and your mind to your schoolwork also [sic]. You must study, then the child cries, or the child is sick at night, you cannot sleep with the child and then you must still go to school the next day. This also affects your learning.”

4.6.1.3 Sexual abuse and rape

Sexual abuse and rape also constitute a phenomenon that is on the increase in South Africa. What is so disturbing is that they are occurring on a daily basis and the perpetrators are targeting younger children (Meyer and Kotzé, 2000:145). Finkelhor (1984), in Magwaza (1997:165) notes that the following external factors could contribute to sexual abuse and rape: unemployment and overcrowded households, where everybody is sleeping in the same room (which is common in deprived environments). This is what participants had to say about abuse:

“Verkragtings speel ‘n baie groot rol. Verkragting … Umm … speel ‘n baie groot rol.”

“Rape plays an important role. Rape … Umm … plays a very important role.”

“But it is not easy, not easy. Ask me, ok, I’ve been through a rape, where I stay and it is not easy and I am still struggling with it [sic]. For years I have been struggling, and I am still struggling with it. Putting it at the back of my mind, every day I’m telling myself that tomorrow will be a better day
and to work hard and to achieve for what I want, and believe me, it’s not so easy [sic].”

4.6.2 Susceptibility of youth creates barriers to learning

The fact that today’s learners are so easily influenced is a very worrying factor. Learners allow themselves to be influenced by their peers so that they can become part of the group. Prinsloo, et al. (1996:168), maintain that learners who experiment with drugs, alcohol and cigarettes only want to show their independence from their parents and school. The following quotations came from the participants with regard to the following topics mentioned below.

4.6.2.1 Cigarettes, drugs and alcohol

According to Prinsloo, et al. (1996:168), the percentage of boys using drugs compared with girls is significantly higher and the use of illegal drugs is generally experimental. The young drug abuser often drops out of school and on realizing that his future job chances are limited, is further isolated from the conventional world. Participants referred to the youth’s susceptibility to cigarettes, drugs and alcohol as follows:

“A.g.v alles wat rondom jou gebeur: dwelms, drank en alles dit maak jou uhm … dat jy uhm … sukkel om jou sukes te behaal want jy’s tussen mense wat drink, rondom mense wat rook, rondom mense wat jou beïnvloed, ‘peer pressure’ is, is … daar en dit maak jou dat jy nou bietjie sukkel om nou uit te kom waar jy eintlik wil uitkom.”

“In terms of everything that happens around you, drugs, alcohol and everthing it makes you uhm … struggle to achieve your success because you are surrounded by people that drink, surrounded by people that smoke surrounded by people that influence you, peer pressure is, is … there and it makes you struggle to achieve what you actually want to achieve.”
Combrink, in Mohlala (2006:6), states that the extent of the drug problem is a specific cause for concern because the “age-group of children using drugs is getting younger.” Children as young as eight years old are into drugs.

4.6.2.2 Taverns and discos

According to Chisholm and Vally (1996:41) the physical location of the schools near taverns and discos also has an influence on learning in schools. The participants mentioned the following with regard to taverns and discos:

“Yes, even the taverns, Teacher. It’s a problem. Yes.”

“En die ‘disco’ lopery van jong kinders. Hulle gaan ‘disco’ toe Juffrou, dan drink hulle.”
“And the young children going to discos. They go to the disco, Teacher, then they drink.”

Mokgalabone (1999:63) states that the lack of social facilities and the popularity of taverns and the permissiveness of young people pave the way for many teenagers to get involved in sexual activities.

4.6.2.3 Taxis

Taxis are an important means of travelling for the learners. Unfortunately, some of the girls get involved with irresponsible taxi drivers, who allow them free rides in their taxis and later get involved in relationships with them:

“Ek het ‘n vriendin nê, uhm … sy kry baie raas by haar huis, maar sy wil nie hoor nie. Nou weet ek nie waar lê die probleem nie. Lê dit by die ‘taxi’ mense of lê dit by haar nie. En elke middag as sy uit die skool uitkom moet sy met dië ‘taxi’ ry. Dan kom sy laat huis toe. As haar pa uit die werk uitkom dan’s daar nie gekook nie, en dis ook ‘n remmende invloed [sic].”
“I have a friend, uhm … she’s always in trouble at home but she doesn’t want to listen. Now I don’t know where the problem lies. Is the problem with the taxi people or is it with her [sic]. And every afternoon when the school comes out then she must ride with this taxi. Then she comes home late [sic]. If her father comes home from work then she did not cook food and this is also a hampering influence [sic].”

“… hulle ry met die ‘taxi’ dan kom hulle terug wanneer die skool uitkom.”
“… they ride with taxi then they come back at the end of the school day.”

4.6.2.4 Gangs

Donald, et al. (2002:239), state that youth in poor communities experience feelings of hopelessness and anger that may add to their joining gangs, sometimes as a sheer means of survival.

“Juffrou soos die uhm … ‘gangsterism’, Juffrou, die mense, die mense wat mekaar steek en roof, Juffrou, kinders word doodgemaak in die strate … Dit hinner my die meeste in my omgewing.
“Teacher like the uhm … gangstersim, Teacher, the people, the people who stab each other and rob, Teacher, children are murdered in the streets … It bothers me the most in my area.”

“Die omgewing is nie ‘n lekker plek om in te bly nie. Die omgewing waar ek nou in bly is ‘n weldadige omgewing [sic]. Net dat hulle so ‘n bietjie die ‘gangsters’ moet verwyder word van ons omgewing [sic].”
“The area is not a nice place to stay in. The area where I’m living in now is a violent area. Just so that they can remove the gangsters a bit from our area [sic].”

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the four themes that emerged were explained and substantiated with literature relevant to the identified categories and subcategories. Quotations relating to the theme from the research participants’ transcriptions have also been included. Finally a summary of the themes with the categories and subcategories follows in Table 4.1. All these factors will be taken into account in the next chapter, in which conclusions and recommendations will be presented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN THEME</th>
<th>CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THEME 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A deprived home situation generates barriers to learning</strong></td>
<td>4.3.1 <strong>Relationships</strong>&lt;br&gt;4.3.1.1 Neglect&lt;br&gt; - No interest and don't care attitude of parents&lt;br&gt; - No parents at home&lt;br&gt;4.3.1.2 Rejection&lt;br&gt;4.3.1.3 No communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THEME 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A deprived school situation creates barriers to learning</strong></td>
<td>4.4.1 <strong>Social relationships</strong>&lt;br&gt;4.4.1.1 Peer pressure&lt;br&gt; - Drugs and cigarettes&lt;br&gt; - Dropping out of school&lt;br&gt; - Unsafe school environment&lt;br&gt;4.4.1.2 Relationships with teachers&lt;br&gt; - No respect for teachers&lt;br&gt; - Teachers who degrade learners&lt;br&gt;4.4.2 <strong>Physical factors</strong>&lt;br&gt;4.4.2.1 Broken windows and roof&lt;br&gt;4.4.2.2 Water, electricity and lights&lt;br&gt;4.4.2.3 School grounds and ablutions&lt;br&gt;4.4.2.4 Overcrowded classes&lt;br&gt;4.4.3 <strong>No resources</strong>&lt;br&gt;4.4.3.1 Libraries&lt;br&gt;4.4.3.2 Counselling centres&lt;br&gt;4.4.4 <strong>Racism</strong>&lt;br&gt;4.4.4.1 Language issues&lt;br&gt;4.4.4.2 No mixing of races&lt;br&gt;4.4.5 <strong>Distances to school</strong>&lt;br&gt;4.4.5.1 Costly&lt;br&gt;4.4.5.2 No time for homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEME 3</td>
<td>CATEGORIES AND SUB CATEGORIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A deprived environment causes barriers to learning | **4.5.1** HIV/AIDS and TB  
4.5.1.1 Taking care of parents  
4.5.1.2 Tiredness and illnesses:  
4.5.1.3 Discrimination  
4.5.2 Community not conducive to learning  
4.5.2.1 Don’t care  
4.5.2.2 Not helpful: each one for himself  
**4.5.3** Unsafe communities  
4.5.3.1 Crime  
4.5.3.2 Ineffective police services  
**4.5.4** Overpopulation  
4.5.4.1 Noise and loud music |
| THEME 4 | Learner-related factors create barriers to learning | **4.6.1** Early pregnancies  
4.6.1.1 Detrimental to education  
4.6.1.2 Baby-sitting – not studying  
4.6.1.3 Sexual abuse and rape  
**4.7.2** Susceptibility of youth creates barriers to learning  
4.7.2.1 Cigarettes, drugs and alcohol  
4.7.2.2 Taverns and discos  
4.7.2.3 Taxis  
4.7.2.4 Gangs |
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS, SHORTcomings AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

An analysis of the research data, as well as the research results, assisted by direct quotations and a literature review, was presented in Chapter 4. This gave an overview of the barriers to learning that learners in a deprived environment are experiencing. This chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the research inquiry. Recommendations, derived from the results of this study, will be proposed to help the teachers in understanding learners from deprived environments. Various limitations of the study, as identified by the researcher, will also be presented. Finally, suggestions for further research will be made.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.2.1 Conclusions: the global picture.

This study on psychosocial barriers to learning in a deprived environment reveals that there is a reciprocal relationship between the learners’ school, home and environmental contexts and the learners themselves. The following broad conclusions are based on the research findings:

- A deprived home situation generates barriers to learning.
- A deprived school situation creates barriers to learning.
- A deprived environment causes barriers to learning.
- Learner-related factors create barriers to learning.
5.2.2 A differentiated picture of psychosocial barriers and their implications

It can be concluded that the following specific factors lead to psychosocial barriers to learning in a deprived environment as discovered and described in Chapter Four.

5.2.2.1 A deprived home situation generates barriers to learning

The findings in this study substantiated the reality that barriers to learning could be ascribed to certain occurrences in a deprived home situation. Learners who are exposed to poverty-stricken living conditions, dysfunctional schools and deprived environments might show unsatisfactory scholastic progress and socially unacceptable behaviour.

(i) Relationships

A learner spends most of his time with people with whom he has formed a certain relationship. It is evident that his relationship formation would have an impact on his wellbeing and his learning.

- A neglected relationship, where there is no interest and the parents demonstrate a don’t care attitude or parents who are not at home, is not conducive to learning.

- Learners in deprived environments often find themselves in dysfunctional families. In some dysfunctional families children might feel rejected, which could make it difficult for the learner to form lasting relationships, which in turn impedes learning. It can further create distrust in others.
Where there is no proper communication at home, the learner will not be able to make informed decisions about important matters, such as schoolwork and healthy friendships or habits.

(ii) Abuse

It stands to reason that the following forms of abuse could have an effect on the learner’s learning:

- **Physical abuse** is a common occurrence in a deprived environment and is reflected in the learner's inability to communicate with adults and teachers. Abused learners can become frightened of their parents and start to avoid home. This has negative implications for the learner’s interest in learning.

- Learners who have been **sexually abused** sometimes withdraw from reality and adopt hostile and aggressive attitudes (Lewis and Doorlag, 2003:426). These attitudes can have detrimental implications for a learner’s relationship formation with others, such as the teachers or his peers at school, with negative implications for learning.

- Learners in a deprived environment might become oblivion seekers, using **drugs and alcohol** to escape from realities, trying to get away from unhappy home situations (Prinsloo, Vorster and Sibaja, 1996:168). Unfortunately, their substance abuse or dependence is brought with them to school. This has negative consequences for the learner and has adverse effects on his learning.

(iii) No privacy

The home is a place where a child needs to feel safe, loved and cared for, but unfortunately this is not always possible in a deprived environment with the
increase in unstable homes. Poor, large families, who live in poverty-stricken conditions do not always have the privacy that they need. Their interactions with their children and their physical and moral behaviour affect their children as follows:

- **Sexual behaviour of parents**

  A parent’s moral behaviour has a major impact on the learner's relationship with his parents. The privacy of the parents is inadequate in a deprived environment and this can result in children having to observe the sexual behaviour of their parents. This can influence the learner to become sexually active at a very early age and can give rise to teenage pregnancies, which results in barriers to learning.

- **Overcrowded homes**

  Overcrowded homes allow little or no privacy for the child and the parents. Children spend so much time outside the home that normal interaction between parents and children is inhibited. Children who grow up in these conditions are bound to grow up with negative character traits. It is difficult for these children to relate positively to authority because they are not taught proper societal values (Chinkanda, 1994:180). Unfortunately this behaviour is carried over to the school, creating barriers to learning.

(iv) **Poverty**

Poverty and its adverse conditions affect the learner’s ability to learn. Poor educational and social conditions often strengthen one another. Living in impoverished conditions may lead to barriers to leaning (Donald, et al., 2002: 205).
- **Unemployment**
  Children from families where the parents are unemployed are more likely to leave school at an early age to go out to work to provide for the family. This can have negative implications for the learner because it continues the cycle of limited skills and fewer work opportunities, creating further unemployment, ongoing poverty and exclusion (Department of Education Directorate, 2002:133).

- **Cannot afford school fees – learner is suffering**
  People living in poverty are always characterized by conditions such as inadequate education, unemployment and low wages. These outcomes usually have a negative effect on the learner, such as not being able to pay school fees. Learners might suffer emotionally and intellectually because of the pressures of unpaid school fees.

- **No electricity – affects homework**
  A child who grows up in an unsupportive and unsympathetic environment, such as in a neighbourhood that lacks the essential basic services (such as electricity and water) fails to make a healthy start in life. If the learner has no electricity at home then there is a possibility that his achievement might be affected at school because of not being able to do homework or study due to the lack of electricity.

- **No breadwinner**
  Financial constraints in families where there is no breadwinner often lead to discouragement and alienation of the children. Unemployment is a contributing factor in learners who are experiencing behavioural problems. Their parents are unemployed and the learners turn to criminal activities, such
as selling drugs in order to satisfy their financial needs. These learners come to school with their challenging behaviour towards their peers and the teachers, which can be detrimental for their progress and school career.

5.2.2.2 A deprived school situation creates barriers to learning

The school and the community in which the school is located have a reciprocal influence on one another, which has a strong impact on the learners’ development (Donald, et al., 2002:160). The school reflects the values, norms and conditions of the broader society. It therefore stands to reason that schools in a deprived environment with all its social factors, such as poverty, insufficient housing, crime and substance abuse, will contribute to a deprived school situation creating barriers to learning. These factors would have the following impact on the learners:

(i) Social relationships

The most significant influence on all educational contexts in a learner’s life is his family. Learners who have disharmonious relationships with their parents tend to feel upset and rely on their friends for acceptance. This can have negative implications for their learning if they are not encouraged at home, or if their friends lure them away from their schoolwork.

- Peer pressure

The influence that peer group pressure exerts can be supportive of learning and academic achievement or it can contest the teacher’s authority and undermine learning. Unfortunately this is what is happening in a deprived school situation, where learners belong to gangs in order to be socially accepted. Loose sexual morals, drug taking, violence and
vandalism can often be promoted by peer pressure. The influence of the peer group can have negative implications on the learners’ learning when they spend most of their time on peer related activities instead of doing homework or studying.

- **Drugs and cigarettes**

  In order to be socially accepted by their peers learners get easily influenced by their peers to experiment with cigarettes and drugs. In this instance the peer exerts a negative influence, which is not conducive to learning.

- **Dropping out of school**

  Once pregnant, learners from deprived environments often have to drop out of school, because they fear being ridiculed by their friends. Sadly, the negative cycle of poverty is repeated and creates further psychosocial barriers to learning.

- **Unsafe school environment**

  The learners’ security is violated by the high levels of violence and abuse in schools that are situated in deprived environments. The schools are branded as unsafe due to the ‘skollie’ elements that form part of the school culture. Some learners get mixed up with wrong friends, which adds to the bullying that takes place. Learners come to school with weapons, which threaten the safety of the learners and teachers, creating further barriers to learning.
▪ **Relationships with teachers**

If there is not a healthy *relationship* between the learner and the teacher then the learner can feel disillusioned which could lead to depression or rebelliousness with a tendency towards violence (Prinsloo, et al., 1996:141). This can lead to truancy with negative implications for the learner’s future.

▪ **No respect for teachers**

Teachers have to cope with poor pupil behaviour that includes overt indiscipline and unmotivated learners (Hornby, Hall and Hall, 2003:153). The learners are rude and they have *no respect for teachers* in the manner that they address and talk to them. This lack of respect can give rise to a learning breakdown on the part of the learner, which can create further barriers to learning.

▪ **Teachers who degrade learners**

*Teachers who degrade* or belittle *learners* in front of the class make the learners feel de-motivated and not like learning any longer because they are labelled as ‘stupid’. This type of behaviour can contribute to emotional disturbances and behavioural problems in the learner, which has a negative impact on learning. Learners sometimes “drop out of school because of poor educational experiences and discouragement from their teachers” (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:61).

(ii) **Physical factors**

Most schools in deprived environments are vandalized on a daily basis. Inadequate *physical factors* have an adverse effect on the learning situation:
- **Broken windows and roofs**

  *The broken windows and roofs* of schools in a deprived environment have a negative impact on learning. When it is cold or when it rains the learners are exposed to these elements. The rattling windows and leaking roofs are not conducive to learning.

- **Water, electricity and lights**

  Many schools in deprived environments desperately need the most basic infrastructure, such as *water and electricity*. Deprived schools which lack these basics cannot function properly because it means that they do not have telephones and computers or running water, which can also become a health hazard for the learners and teachers. The lack of these basic services can create barriers to learning.

- **School grounds and ablutions**

  *School grounds* and *ablution blocks* in deprived environments are not kept tidy, because there are no general assistants to help with these tasks, and the situation can become problematic. Learning can be affected negatively because the learners are robbed of their tutoring time having to clean the toilets and school grounds during school hours instead of being in a classroom busy with schoolwork.

- **Overcrowded classes**

  *Classes are overcrowded in deprived schools*, because of the large numbers that have to be accommodated. This has a negative impact on the learner, because some of them have to share desks. Overcrowding affects the learners' learning because it prevents the teacher from getting
to everybody or giving individual attention to the slow learner (Prinsloo, et al., 1996:165).

(iii) No resources

Most schools in disadvantaged areas have no resources at their disposal. This state of affairs is discouraging for the learners, because they cannot do research for assignments. They are disadvantaged by the absence of:

- **Libraries**

  Most schools in disadvantaged communities have no libraries or media centres. Learners are deprived of knowledge and information, which could assist them in completing their assignments.

- **Counselling centres**

  *Counselling centres* are lacking in deprived schools. Learners who are exposed to violence and acts of violence such as abuse or rape on a daily basis are traumatized by these violent acts and do not receive any counselling to deal with these issues. They tend to become aggressive and this boils over to the class and school situation, creating further barriers to learning.

(v) Racism

*Racism* happens on a daily basis in deprived schools. Some race groups look down upon other groups. One group may sometimes make derogatory remarks about somebody from a different group. These remarks can be very hurtful and some learners may become self-conscious and withdrawn.


- **Language issues**

A school’s language policy can create barriers to learning for learners whose mother tongue is not the spoken language. Some learners understand the language of learning on a conversational level but they struggle with reading and answering examination questions and this can lead to some learners dropping out of school.

- **No mixing of races**

Some of the Coloured learners do not mix with the African learners and vice versa. The learners feel more at ease and comfortable with friends from their own race groups. Both race groups miss valuable opportunities to learn from each other regarding their language and culture. This could have negative implications for some learners because they can feel isolated and it can influence their learning.

(vi) **Distance to school**

Travelling long distances to and from school can have a negative impact on the learners’ motivation to study. They leave home early in the morning and get home late in the afternoon. They are usually tired on arrival at school, or when they arrive home after school.

- **Costly**

Having to travel on a daily basis to school is very costly for the learner who comes from a disadvantaged background. They are confronted with problems such as poverty and long distances to school. Some of them therefore drop out of school because of travelling costs that they cannot afford.
• **No time for homework**

They have *no time to do homework* and spend less time studying, because they spend most of the day away from home. This leaves the learner feeling tired and frustrated when the teacher expects him to do his homework.

5.2.2.3 **A deprived environment causes barriers to learning**

Learners are in daily contact with poverty-stricken conditions, dysfunctional schools and a lack of positive role models, in their deprived communities. These adverse conditions contribute to a great extent to their behavioural, social and learning problems.

(i) **HIV/AIDS and TB**

HIV/AIDS and TB are taking their toll in our contemporary society, and even more so in deprived environments. According to Prinsloo (2005:31) many parents, grandparents, and caregivers in the extended family die as a result of HIV/AIDS. These conditions have a negative impact on the learners’ learning, because they have to:

• **Take care of their parents**

Learners have to miss school to *take care of their parents*. Because of the deprived environment the parents cannot afford home care from a professional nurse. That is why it then becomes the child’s responsibility. The consequence of this is that the learner falls behind with his schoolwork, due to being absent from school.
Tiredness, illnesses: cannot study

The members of a poverty culture are frequently bogged down by ill health and hopelessness (Le Roux and Gildenhuys, 1994a:40). Taking care of his parents can have adverse effects on the learners’ learning, because of tiredness and illnesses and not being able to study. This can take its toll on the learner due to the fact that he cannot concentrate on his work.

Discrimination against them

Many times learners hide their illnesses from their peers and teachers because they fear that they will be discriminated against. This can have serious implications for the learner, the teacher and other learners if it is an infectious disease. Learning can be affected if the learner is absent due to illness. This means that the learner will miss out on continuous assessment.

(ii) Community not conducive to learning

Influences in the community, such as the high levels of violence, gangsterism, crime, drugs and alcohol create a community that is not conducive to learning. Learners come to school not interested in what is going on around them.

Don’t care

The learners highlighted the fact that they live in communities where people don’t care for each other. People have become so selfish that they do not want to share whatever resources they have with learners in the community. This type of attitude can de-motivate learners from pursuing learning goals.
- **Not helpful: each one for himself**

  The spirit of ‘ubuntu’ no longer prevails in communities where poverty is very rampant. The people are *not helpful to each other*. This can frustrate the learner if he needs information or help from somebody in the community and no one is prepared to help him.

(iii) **Unsafe communities**

Safety is not a priority in deprived environments any longer. People get mugged and attacked by gangs on a regular basis. Learners can also be responsible for these *unsafe communities*, because they are sometimes members of such gangs. Learning is affected negatively, because learners spend more time on the streets than with their schoolwork.

- **Crime**

  Parents of learners, who come from poor, large families, are likely to be burdened with troubles and problems and they have little or no time for their children. These children join gangs and get involved in *crime and vandalism*, where they experience feelings of acceptance and belonging. Crime causes these learners to be less interested in learning activities and therefore become unmotivated.

- **Ineffective police services**

  People in deprived communities usually do not have much faith in the police services. They feel that the *police services are not effective* and do not see to their needs when they need them, especially during gang fights. The lack of these services makes the learners feel discouraged, frustrated and unsupported in learning.
(iv) Overpopulation

The areas where deprived environments are located are usually overpopulated. The people live in adverse conditions that usually give rise to:

- **Noise and loud music**

  *Noise and loud music* are typical of disadvantaged communities. People try to escape from reality by listening to loud music and when the learners get home from school they usually join in. The consequence of this is that the learners concentrate more on knowing the lyrics of songs instead of doing homework or studying.

5.2.2.4 Learner-related factors create barriers to learning

It is evident that the learners themselves are also responsible for creating barriers to learning. They get involved in drugs, crime, truancy, violence and abusive relationships. These traits result in behavioural problems that a learner brings with him to school, which impacts negatively on his academic progress.

(i) Early pregnancies

*Early pregnancies* have a detrimental effect on the lives of teenagers. Their bodies have not developed fully and they are emotionally immature. They have to cope with their changing bodies and the fact that they will become a mother. They are usually unprepared for this role and are likely to terminate their education by failing or dropping out of school (Lewis and Doorlag, 2003:422).
- **Detrimental to education**

  The teenager’s pregnancy puts her education in jeopardy, because she has to leave school at a certain stage of her pregnancy. Such girls normally become dropouts, because some of them cannot face their peers again as a mother of a baby.

- **Baby-sitting – not studying**

  Their roles change from those of a carefree adolescent to those of a mother. Such a learner does not have all the freedom that she used to have. If she decides to continue her education then she will have to divide her time between her baby and schoolwork. Her schoolwork will eventually come second to the needs of her baby and she will be *baby-sitting* instead of *studying*.

- **Sexual abuse and rape**

  Sexual abuse and rape are rife in poverty-stricken communities. Learners become targets of sexual abuse and rape in their communities. Overcrowded homes and substance abuse contribute to these adverse conditions. The sexually abused learner’s schoolwork can be negatively affected.

(ii) **Susceptibility of youth creates barriers to learning**

  The fact that the *youth are so susceptible* to conformity with his peers can easily create barriers to learning. They experiment with drugs, cigarettes and alcohol and get addicted to them. These addictions can be harmful to their health and can also have negative implications for the learners’ interest in studying.
- **Cigarettes, drugs and alcohol**

  The abuse of cigarettes, drugs and alcohol by young learners is a problem that is increasing at a frightening rate. Of specific concern is the tendency for increasingly younger learners to become involved with cigarettes and drugs in the form of inhalants and alcohol (Prinsloo, *et al.*, 1996:167). Unfortunately, these addictions are carried to school with them, which has negative implications for their self-esteem and their enthusiasm for learning.

- **Taverns and discos**

  The disadvantage of discos and taverns is that they are situated in the community. Learners do not need to travel to get to these places. *Taverns and discos* play loud music, which attracts the learners. Learners bunk school to sit at the taverns, which is not conducive to learning.

- **Taxis**

  *Taxis* are a prominent mode of transport in disadvantaged communities. Unfortunately, some taxi drivers abuse their power by getting involved with the learners, they allow them free rides and drive around in the taxi the whole day. The learners become truants, get pregnant and become school dropouts.

- **Gangs**

  Learners become members of *gangs* to escape the realities of their home situation. They conform to these groups, where they feel a sense of belonging. Gangs influence their members in a negative way, because they are subjected to the rules of the gang, which can be very detrimental to their education.
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS SUPPORTING LEARNERS FROM A DEPRIVED ENVIRONMENT WITH REGARD TO THE BARRIERS TO LEARNING THEY EXPERIENCE, IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THEIR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Recommendations that can serve as guidelines for teachers working in deprived environments are presented below:

5.3.1 THEME 1 - A deprived home situation

5.3.1.1 Recommendations regarding the home

It is recommended that children should grow up in a _loving and caring home_ and not to be afraid to explore the world and to develop relationships (Prinsloo, et al., 1996:151). They must develop a sense of industry in school and the ability to work together with their peers. Children who are loved and accepted slowly develop self-discipline and _inner control_. There is _mutual trust_ and _understanding_ between the parents and the children, they are supportive and treat their children with respect and allow them to freely express their opinions. The parents _assist_ their children _towards independence_ to become responsible adults.

(i) Relationships

It is suggested that a teacher should try to understand the learner and the factors that add to his behaviour if a learner is very disruptive. In doing so, the teacher will establish a more _positive relationship_ with the learner. By showing _interest_ and _concern_ rather than animosity and anger, the teacher can form the foundation for the development of a healthy _supportive relationship_. Christensen (2001:112) states that a learner's disobedience can be caused by a series of factors unknown to the teacher.
Teachers must be wary of learners who seem to be neglected at home, chronically hungry, lethargic and lacking cheerfulness. Such symptoms necessitate closer investigation (Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg, 1993:84). The teachers must monitor the learners to see if they show any of the above characteristics and support the learner in this regard. A buddy system can be introduced where learners who are in a better position can share with learners who are in need. According to Sciarra (2004:388) chronically truant learners are also the victims of neglect. The teacher can arrange a meeting with the learner to establish if there is a problem of neglect at home. If there are problems then the school social worker should be informed so that she can do some home visitations.

The permissive family’s no interest and don’t care attitude lead to neglect of the child’s socialization, stubbornness and egocentricity in the choices the child has to make in life. The most effective parenting type is the democratic family that accompanies the child towards independent self-choice and self-decisions (Pretorius, 1998:53). Parents should have more open conversations with their children. It is therefore important that parents must accept and love their children unconditionally.

Having no parents at home means that there is nobody to help with homework. The parents can ask the older siblings to supervise and help the younger siblings with their homework. Teachers must be sensitive to the needs of these learners and allow them to do their homework in class so that they can have more time to study at home.

The most hidden and the most common form of neglect is rejection. The teacher can assist the rejected learner by giving him individual attention and to ask him to help with tasks in order to help him with his self-esteem.
A learner’s ability to communicate is an important aspect of the whole process of education (Donald, et al., 2002:346). No communication is another hindrance in the life of the poverty-stricken learner. Proactive measures need to be undertaken to reduce the communication gap between the learners and their parents. The school can arrange motivational workshops on communication, in which the parent and child can participate in as well as family days where the whole family has to participate.

(ii) Abuse

It is recommended that physical, sexual, alcohol and drug abuse prevention programmes be implemented as part of the compulsory Life Orientation curriculum at schools. The fundamental goal of these programmes is to stop abuse from happening and to assist disclosure of past and ongoing sexual and physical abuse. These prevention programmes should be adjusted according to the age and cognitive development of the learner. Another goal of such a programme is to include the parents with their children as participants or to present special workshops for the parents (Sciarra, 2004:404,405). Christensen (2001:113) states that suspected abuse should be brought to the attention of the principal of the school, who should consider it important to report the case to a local welfare organisation.

(iii) No Privacy

It is suggested that the home is regarded as a place that makes provision for all the family members. Unfortunately, this is not the case in deprived homes where there is no privacy for family members.
The family home is the primary place where a child, according to Maslow, need to express himself sexually, feel loved, safe, and experience a sense of self-worth (Hamachek, 1995:47). Unfortunately, this is not always happening in deprived environments. The *sexual activities of the parents* under these circumstances can sometimes be very embarrassing for their children. It is therefore suggested that the older siblings rather live with their extended families if possible.

Families who live in *overcrowded homes* that are trying to made ends meet or who are subjected to insecurity at work do not always have the time to spend with their children (Chinkanda, 1994:187). Parents should build a relationship with the teachers to keep them up to date with their children’s progress in school and to inform them about any problems.

(vii) **Poverty**

It is advised that in order to assist the parents to withstand the stress linked to poverty it is important to build social network support services. These support services can include family members, a spouse, caring neighbours, friends and people in the community (Donald, *et al.*, 2002:208). The parents can apply for a social grant to alleviate the hardship of poverty. The school can introduce a feeding scheme (funded by the Department of Education) to feed the hungry children.

Learners from poverty-stricken homes usually cannot *afford to pay school fees* and therefore *the learner is suffering* in school. Parents must find out from the school how they can be subsidized by the government (Prinsloo, *et al.*, 1996:272). Parents can also arrange with the school to find out how they can pay-off their school fees by using their skills, such as helping to paint the school or to clean the school grounds.
Learners who find themselves in a deprived home situation will struggle to do their homework because there is *no electricity* and this *affects* their *homework*. They can arrange with their class teacher to stay after school so that they can complete their homework.

When there is *no breadwinner* at home then it is really difficult for the learner to concentrate in class. The child might come to school hungry because he had nothing to eat. Teachers should be aware of the learners’ needs and a soup kitchen can be introduced at school with the help of the community.

### 5.3.2 THEME 2 – A deprived school situation

#### 5.3.2.1 Recommendations regarding the school

It is advised that schools should play an important role in the lives of deprived learners by contributing to a stable and structured environment to offset the lack of stability and structure in the home environment. School counsellors must ensure that everything possible is done to stabilize the home environment by helping the families to have access to the required support services (Sciarra, 2004:392).

(i) **Social relationships**

According to Pretorius (1998:309), the deprived learner has a low self-concept that influences his social behaviour. His communication skills are limited because of his unsatisfactory social and communicative experiences. He often feels socially isolated at school and in the wider social community. It is therefore recommended that:
The peer group should be used to an advantage, such as in peer co-counselling. Equal peers counsel each other without having more ‘expertise’ or ‘status’ than the other. Donald, et al. (2002:244), maintain that the peer group can have a strong impact on behaviour.

The school must become an institution where a positive learning environment prevails and not a place from which learners want to escape. The school must not be an unsafe environment where the learners feel threatened. Donald, et al. (2002:255), make the following suggestions in relation to the intervention in the case of drugs and cigarette abuse: Teachers must talk and discuss the issues, a policy of ‘zero tolerance’ with regard to substance abuse should be implemented or organisations such as SANCA or the AA should be invited to come and talk to the learners.

It is important that there must be a healthy reciprocal relationship based on respect between the learner and the teacher. In our contemporary society, the learners have no respect for the teacher. It is important that the teacher must set clear and definite boundaries of behaviour in the classroom and to apply them firmly and fairly (Pretorius and Lemmer, 1998:40).

(ii) Physical factors

It is recommended by the HRC, in Fitzpatrick (2006b:15) that the government must urgently furnish all the schools in the deprived environments with the minimum levels of infrastructure. This includes “buildings, access to water and electricity, basic electrical equipment, proper toilets and perimeter fencing.” Parents and teachers can help to raise funds to alleviate the problems at school.
(iii) No resources

The learners expressed their needs in regard to resources and the fact that there are no resources at the schools. They mentioned libraries and counselling centres as needed to fulfil their needs. The HRC in Fitzpatrick (2006b:15) also emphasized the importance of libraries in disadvantaged schools. The counselling centres will help the learners who are abused or traumatized as a result of crime and violence in their communities. Teachers can bring magazines to school to help the learners with their assignments. The school can liaise with the public libraries (if any) in the community to assist the learners. Existing counselling centres in the community can be co-opted to assist the learners who are in need of counselling.

(iv) Racism

It is suggested that where racial friction occurs (Christensen, 2001:133), teachers who have received training in the handling of fragile situations between different racial groups, can help to improve the language issues and allow time for the mixing of the different racial groups. The arts and culture teacher can utilize the arts and culture periods to allow the learners to share their traditional and cultural activities with the rest of the class. The school can even host a talent competition at which learners are encouraged to sing and dance traditional songs. Teachers can also upgrade their skills by empowering themselves to study specific distance education programmes enabling the teachers and learners to cope better with inter-personal relations (Prinsloo, et al., 1996:158).

(v) Distances to school

Travelling long distances to and from school is very costly for the learners. Where parents struggle with the travelling costs it is recommended that they apply for a government subsidy to help them with the transport costs. Travelling
on a daily basis allows the learners no time for homework because they leave early in the morning and arrive home late in the afternoon. The school can devise ways of assisting the learners by introducing a study hour in the morning.

5.3.3 THEME 3 - A deprived environment

5.3.3.1 Recommendations regarding the environment

Neglectful parents are in all likelihood unemployed, live in deprived environments and believe their community is not supportive (Sciarra, 2004:391). Learners who grow up in deprived environments and who do not receive the necessary stimulation from an early age will have a definite disadvantage when they go to school.

(i) HIV/AIDS and TB

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a serious issue that affects both learners and teachers in our schools. It is not only a health issue but affects teachers and learners directly, many of whom are dying of the virus. It is recommended that Soul City through its radio and television programmes conscientise communities about what they can do to support vulnerable children (Dlamini, 2006:22). According to Donald, et al. (2002:258), the National Education Policy Act (RSA, 1996) requires that a continuing HIV/AIDS education programme be introduced in all schools. This should be part of the life-skills programmes at all appropriate age levels in schools.

People who live in deprived environments are also more susceptible to health risks such as TB, due to poor nutrition and unhealthy conditions.
Learners must sometimes stay at home to take care of their parents who are sick. There is a need for psychological services and school social workers to support learners in deprived environments. Social workers can do house visitations to see how the learners are coping. Teachers should be more tolerant towards these learners and allow them to do their homework at school.

(ii) Community not conducive to learning

Living under circumstances of poverty has many negative effects on the community (Donald, et al., 2002:239). People tend to adopt a don’t care attitude towards their environment and the school. If help is requested from the schools they are never available. Community or advice centres which could address more than the educational needs of the community can be established. These centres can combine other resources and skills from which the community as a whole can also gain (Chisholm and Vally, 1996:43).

(iii) Unsafe communities

With the high levels of crime in South Africa we are confronted with very ineffective police services. Crime in the community especially between the young children usually spills over to the schools. The schools should work with the local community police forum so that they can ‘adopt a cop’ to come and talk to the learners about crime. Police must be more visible in the community so that they can do more random checks to ensure a safer community.

(iv) Overpopulation

Overpopulation is a common phenomenon in deprived environments. People are living in close proximity and are exposed to much noise and loud music. Some of the learner participants complained about the noise level over weekends
because it is affecting their studying. Learners are generally unmotivated by the circumstances in their communities. Teachers should be more aware of the learners’ needs and try not to schedule tests on Mondays because it is difficult for learners to study in their noisy environments over weekends.

5.3.4 THEME 4 - Learner –related factors

5.3.4.1 Recommendations regarding the learner

According to (Prinsloo, et al. 1996:160), the formation of an own identity is a life task. As adolescents become more competent, they change and extend their self-images. It is during this phase of experimentation and emancipation that learners create their own barriers to learning.

(i) Early pregnancies

It is important that the schools, families and communities get involved in planning prevention strategies for the youth. Non-governmental organisations and people in the helping professions such as nurses and social workers can hold motivational workshops for learners.

The following are examples of how prevention strategies can be planned and implemented by schools, families and the community:

- Learners need to develop social abilities and social skills such as taking responsibility for their actions and resisting negative peer pressure. Peer discussion groups can be used to open up issues and to discuss these issues (their own issues) further with added information (Donald, et al., 2002:260).
The school must promote positive behaviour by creating a positive learning environment where learners can see themselves as supported and connected. It should be compulsory that learners from deprived schools participate in extramural activities. The learners with help and support from teachers can do the task of organising these activities.

It is important that the parents, educators and community form a partnership that will furnish the learners with skills, information and support (Van der Merwe, 1996:301,302). Workshops can be organised where learners are taught about self-awareness and assertiveness and how to make informed choices that will benefit both them and the community in which they live (Akhurst and Ntshangase, 1998:262).

(ii) Susceptibility of youth creates barriers to learning

Woolfolk (1993:360) recommends the following guidelines on how to encourage the development of a learner’s self-worth: Give special recognition to a learner’s progress in a specific area. Specific suggestions can be made for improvement and grades can be re-examined when improvements are made. Emphasise the relation between past efforts and past achievements. The school can send a quarterly progress report to inform the parents about their child’s progress. A monthly newsletter can inform the parents about their children’s achievements. A prize-giving evening can be arranged where the learners are rewarded for their academic, sporting and drama achievements and community work.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

In this research study the following limitations have been identified:

- The learners were selected from one secondary school only, because of the required limited scope of a treatise and the research paradigm.
Although at one school, the learners came from various deprived environments in Port Elizabeth. The findings of the research cannot however be generalized.

- Psychosocial barriers to learning are affected by so many different factors that it was interesting and challenging to select which themes, categories and subcategories are appropriate in this study.

### 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO FURTHER RESEARCH

- Further research could be undertaken regarding the inadequacies forming barriers to learning found in privileged environments.

- It would be significant to investigate what knowledge the teachers have about the deprived learners in their classes and the barriers to learning these learners are exposed to. This would give an encompassing outline of the results of the study.

### 5.6 CONCLUSION

This research study focused on the psychosocial barriers to learning that learners in deprived environments are experiencing. These learners were interviewed using focus group interviews. The researcher found that there were significant barriers that these learners were confronted with, brought about by their deprived homes, deprived schools and deprived environments, as well as the learners themselves.

In this chapter conclusions and recommendations were presented, as well as the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.


Hayward, B. 2006. Pupils are out of control, say desperate teachers. Weekend Post. October 21(1)


http://www.Visualthesuarus.com


TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Permission is hereby granted to Ms L. Mack, to conduct research with the grade 10, 11 and 12 pupils at David Livingstone Secondary School.

Yours truly,

A. VAN HEERDEN
EDU/CIRCUIT 9

3 October 2006
To whom it may concern

Permission is hereby granted for Ms. Esmé Mack to do the necessary research for the completion of her Masters Degree in Education.

Dr. D. Grove (Principal)
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Biographical data of grade 10, 11 and 12 learners participating in the psychosocial barriers to learning in a deprived environment research project:

Date: ……../……../2006

Focus interview: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Language: Afrikaans and English

Institution: David Livingstone Secondary School

Age __________

Date of birth _________________

Grade __________

Gender _________________

Home Language _____________________________

Language of instruction at school __________________________
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Eerstens wil ek vir julle almal welkom heet en dankie sê dat julle vanmiddag gekom het om deel te wees van die besprekingsgroep. Die vraag wat ons vanmiddag gaan bespreek is die volgende:

What hindrances to learning are you experiencing in your specific physical or social environment? For eg. at home and at school.

As ek die vraag in Afrikaans stel dan is dit as volg:
Watter hindernisse of stemminge in jou spesifieke fisiese en sosiale omgewing ervaar jy wat jou leer kan affekteer bv. by die huis of by die skool.

Byvoorbeeld by die huis … byvoorbeeld ek is persoonlik is my storie nou wat by die huis aangaan. Ons is 5 kinders, my oudste, my suster is die oudste en die … slegste van alles is dat my ma gebruik ‘drugs’ en dit maak vir my nog harder om te leer en die feit dat sy met ‘n jonger ‘boytjie’ uitgaan maak dit nog swaarder vir my. Die enigste tyd wanneer ek beter voel is wanneer ek by die skool is. Wanneer ek by die huis is, partykeer doen ek eers party dingetjies soos ek voel en as ek by die skool is dan gaan dinge vir my beter maar dan is dit weer by die skool is ek weer depressief jy moet doen wat jou tjommie vir jou sê anders is jy nie daai een se vriend nie, of jy pas net nie in daardie kurrikulum van, van die wat die vriend sê as die vriend so sê jy moet dit doen dan moet dit so wees. En dan kry jy, jy wil nie eintlike dinge doen by die skool nie jy wil die regte ding doen maar dan is daar altyd iemand wat jou wil afdruk.

Is daar nog enige iets anders wat julle wil byvoeg?
Ja Juffrou. Ek voel daar by die huis is nogals ‘n problem vir meeste van ons. Ek voel party ouers ondersteun nie hulle kinders soos hulle moet nie. My ma sal nie omgee of ek leer of wat nie. Sy sal net sê doen dit, dan moet ek dit doen. Sy sal
nie omgee wat ek doen nie. Meeste ouers is uhm … uhm … is ‘n struikelblok (iemand anders voeg by) “she is not supportive and it makes you tired too”.

At school teen pregnancies uhm … private schools don’t allow it, and they actually, you for eg. you in a private school and jy raak pregnant en dan stuur hulle jou weg van die skool af nou kom jy na ‘n Coloured skool toe en dan aanvaar ons dit, maar die mense wat van buitekant af kyk hoe sien hulle dit en sien hulle dit ons is die maternity ward of dat ons aanvaar maar net almal en die jongere, soos die standerd sesse wat nou hier kom skool loop vir hulle en ons moet ‘n voorbeeld wees vir hulle wat ouer is en in hulle oë is dit nou reg nou, en ‘because’ onse skool ‘allow’ dit en dit lyk soos ‘n nuwe fashion almal loop met dit en so aan.

En in ons skool is dit ook, dit is ook iets groot, want almal probeer iets daaromtrent te doen maar ‘teenage pregnancies’ vermeerder net per dag, so vermeerder ‘teenage pregnancy’ en op die einde van die dag is dit is uhm’… net 10% of 20% of sé maar 50% van die skool wat ‘teenage pregnancy’ het en dis die hele skool, die helfte van die skool moet afgaan. Meeste van hulle voel om met die skool klaar te maak omdat hulle ‘teenage pregnancies’ het is dit ‘n struikelblok in hulle lewe. Hulle voel om klaar te maak maar dit kan nie vervul word nie, al hoe hard probeer hulle. Hulle moet maar net bly want daai is hulle lewe. Hulle kom net nie terug skool toe nie.

Personally I don’t see anything wrong with teenage pregnancy as long as it doesn’t affect your schoolwork. As long as you continue doing your schoolwork then I don’t see anything wrong with it. I don’t see it as a problem. ‘I see teenage pregnancies’ as hulle het die probleem in gevalle eintlik, daai een persoon. Die persoon wil leer die persoon gee sy alles. Die persoon is nou ‘n moeder en het verantwoordelijkhede, groot verantwoordelijkhede. En dis nie maklik om skool te loop en te leer en huis toe te gaan en te leer nie. Onthou! Jy’t nou ‘n kind. Jy moet tyd maak vir jou kind ook, want as jou ma nie daar gaan


The way I feel. It doesn’t affect say if a person is pregnant in a class it does not affect me it doesn’t affect the whole class it affects you so it’s your problem, especially if it didn’t come in a violent way you weren’t raped or anything if you did it to yourself fine, deal with it. It doesn’t affect us. I would say the biggest problem at school is uhm … lack of resources. We have no libraries here at school. The community is very big and things like those. I would say the biggest problem that we have is the lack of resources.

En … ’en ‘by right’ is dit die rede waarom ons nie daai goete het nie is ons wat binne in die skool is, ons weet te min van ’n ding maar ons is besig om af te breek wat ons het wil onse kinders wat hier is nog afbreek dis waarom ons nie gou weer aan ’n ding kan kom nie. En wanneer ons aan dit kom gebeur daar iets, as hulle nie by die klasse moet inbreek nie, by die library moet inbreek nie dan word iets weg.

The problem is not us, as a whole it’s a few people, a few people, you see the problem is most of us children of David Livingstone are very good people we want to study. We want to study, we want the resources. We try to support the school in every way that we can but it is just a handful of people and I think that something should be done about it because it is really affecting us and our studying. (In die agtergrond uhm … uhm …).

I think the fact that we don’t have a school library doesn’t, just end there, either you can make an effort to go the library, but when you go to the library you find that the people who work there are very rude and everything and they are not supportive and they don’t help you to get whatever you need.
As ek kos vir my ‘n beter lewe kon gehad het op David Livingstone sou ek sê die grootste struikelblok is respek. Respek is … respek is totaal nie op die skool nie en dis wat ek verlang op die skool. Ek gee my respek en ek verwag dat mense my respek moet terug gee maar ek dink nie dat ek dit kry nie. Dit is amper ‘I give respect and take it back in your face’. Die wat my respekteer, ek is tog te bly dat hulle my respekteer.

Die persoon weet nie wat gaan in julle huis in aan nie of jy kry stry nie, weer ‘disrespect’ wat in onse klasse in meeste gevalle gebeur.

Partymaal moenie dat jou huisprobleme skool probleme word nie, ‘cos’, wat by die huis gebeur (groep beaam) bly by die huis. Ja, en ‘ok’ ek sal nie sê bly by die huis nie. Jy gaan afvoel … moenie dat dit jou skoolwerk beïnvloed nie.

Enige ander aspekte wat julle aan kan dink?
En die gemeenskap … Ons bly in so ‘n gemeenskap wat leer is nie eintlik belangrik nie, want almal is … hulle gee nie om nie, en almal ‘just doesn’t care’. En ek voel waar ons bly, almal los net skool so as jy sukkel en jy loop die heel tyd rond en jy soek nou informasie en alles, en mense druk jou af. Ek is nou in matriek. Ek loop nou rond by ander matrikulante ek vra rond; “Kan jy my met dit en dit help want onse se skool is nou agter met dit, so kan jy my help” en almal sê hoekom moet jy so ‘worry’ en alles. I feel that our community is, is just not helping us in any way it is just putting us down uhm … as you are trying to survive and pass matric and the exams.

Ek bedoel in ons omgewing is daar mense wat sukses behaal het, nie groot sukses nie, want so na matriek klaargemaak gaan studeer en as jy informasie by hulle soek dan gee hulle ook nie daai informasie wat jy nodig het nie. Dis in baie gevalle dis nie baie mense wat nie suksesvol is nie, so 3 uit 5 miskien en dan is dit net die een wat jou miskien gaan help, die ander gaan nie wil help nie. Die
meeste gevalle gaan hulle jou nie wil help nie. Hulle gee jou die informasie wat jy moet nodig het en so. Ek sal sê in ons gemeenskap is almal vir hulle self.

I think it’s a matter of not wanting to see another person’s child successful (Almal uhhm ... ja...).

Goed, watter ander aspekte kan julle nog aan dink?
A.g.v alles wat rondom jou gebeur dwelms, drank en alles dit maak jou uhm ... dat jy uhm ... sukkel om jou sukses te behaal want jy’s tussen mense wat drink, rondom mense wat rook rondom mense wat jou beïnvloed, ‘peer pressure’ is, is ... daar en dit maak jou dat jy nou bietjie sukkel om nou uit te kom waar jy eintlik wil uitkom.

Soos in meeste gevalle is mense ... (iemand anders wat verder praat) Meeste van ons is nie sterk genoeg om deur daai goed te gaan nie (giggel). En ek voel ook om verder te gaan studeer is een van die struikelblokke want jy moet ... jy moet ... sukkel, daardie plekke is ver jy moet daardie plekke toe gaan, jy moet toets gaan skryf, mense verstaan net nie hoe ons in die... wat in die ‘disadvantage communities live they just don’t understand us they just think that they have cars, our fathers don’t have cars’. They don’t understand that you struggle to post those letters they don’t have easier ways to make things easier for us as black children and other children in the disadvantaged communities.

Wat is daar nog?
Daar is nog, soos in die meeste gevalle is daar leerlinge wat hulle beste probeer op skool om te leer om klaar te maak en om verder te gaan studeer. Maar dan kom jy op varsity dan kry jy die werk is ver verskillend van dit wat jy op skool gedoen het.

Ja, in die gemeenskap uhm ... ‘Social grant’, daar is party mense wat dit nie werklik nodig het nie, want hulle gebruik dit vir onnodige redes waar hulle daai geld kan gevat het en uhm ... uhm ... vir minderwaardige kinders gegee het, wat
wil verder gaan studeer of iets bereik in die lewe wat dit rêrig nodig het. So ek voel hulle … eh … misbruik uhm … vir skoolfooie.

Some of us want to learn, but the school fees are a problem for us you always get some schools and in the other schools especially in our schools you don’t get to write exams and school fees, that is not our fault, its our parents’ fault. I don’t understand why we should be punished for something that we didn't look for and I feel that the government should do something about that.

It's just not on, but I mean that you can tell your parents that you need to do this in order for me to go to get the money in order for me to pay.

Some of our parents … You can’t expect the government to pay for us all. They will never get a better school than this because …

Ek dink dat ons nou al so lank sukkel en sukkel dan nog steeds. In ons gemeenskap na matriek as jy vorms gaan ingee as jy werk wil gaan soek is daar nog steeds ‘n probleem. Die probleem kom mos nie nou aan. ‘n Probleem wat lank aankom, en nog steeds aankom, en ons weet nie wat om te doen om dit beter vir ons almal te maak nie.

Reg, is daar ander faktore wat julle aan kan dink?
Crime is, is really big in our communities, especially in the disadvantaged communities, it’s in our way you can’t do anything about it. The police … I feel like its … Its another uhm … disadvantage that’s happening there.

The crime in our community is too much its out of order. I just feel that the police is definitely not doing anything about it.

In schools, it's in schools even, I don't understand those kind of things, people get scared at school and these things are not supposed to happen at school.
You are supposed to feel safe at school. Uhm … in our communities, child abuse and nobody is doing anything about it and it is affecting our school life.

_Wat nog?_

Ek dink child abuse en rape is die grootste crime wat kinders se skoolwerk kan affekteer. Jy kom van sub A af, graad een en jy moet nou opkom en agter in jou kop jy is verkrag gewees of jy was ‘abuse’ toe jy klein gewees het, is ‘n struikelblok vir jou jy kan nooit konsentreer nie en as jy nie’n oplossing kry nie, jy gaan nooit konsentreer nie vir jouself. As jy gaan dink vir jouself, jy lê en jy dink wat gebeur het, en more gaan jy weer skool toe met dieselfde gedagte, want dit is net ‘n bietjie beter want jy sien net jou toekoms voor jou. Want jou kom jy in matriek en jy weet jouself dat jy is nou klaar met matriek, jy voel nou bly want jy het alles deurgemaak dit het by jou geby en elke aand het dit alles teruggespeeel. En jy is klaar met skool en jy kry nog steeds nie ‘n werk nie, niks nie, jy voel dat jy alles verniet gedoen het. Ons begin nou ander kinders ook te ‘abuse’ want jy begin nou ook om hulle lewe te ‘dismissal’, is, is baie, dis groot, groot … (_selfbewuste giggelry_)
I think that when it comes to rape it is only a matter of telling yourself that I am brave and that I am going through that and this is too going to pass by. I think it’s a matter of just telling yourself that.

But it is not easy, not easy. Ask me, ok, I’ve been through a rape, where I stay and it is not easy and I am still struggling with it. For years I have been struggling, and I am still struggling with it. Putting it at the back of my mind, every day I’m telling myself that tomorrow will be a better day and to work hard and to achieve for what I want, and believe me it’s not so easy.

My question is, what is there to support a person, is the lack of resources that we have in our communities. There is like … no resources, especially no resources available for us. Especially, at David Livingstone, we are supposed to have a counselling centre, especially for kids who have been raped and abused. Aids in our community. Aids is playing a big role in our community.

There is no support for children, for children who have been raped. Support is supposed to be there uhm … uhm … Peer educators, counsellors and therapists are supposed to be there for us available. And maybe they will see a difference in our results as the support that we have available for us at school.

_Nog iets anders, ander asoekte?_

Uhm … and the language, especially for us black children, we have Afrikaans here, we are having it as a first language at school, which is actually our third language, but doing it in higher grade first language its, its such an obstacle, that you can’t, you don’t know why there isn’t any things set aside for us to help us in that Afrikaans because you get your question paper and you see the eh … strongest Afrikaans that you have ever seen and that you don’t understand it and I think that the fact that you can address all doesn’t mean that you know Afrikaans that good and you are suppose to be helped in some or other way.
Or it may be better at a Xhosa school. *(Iemand voeg by)* better education?

No, no, you find at the Xhosa schools you can’t speak English fluently because, the teachers, teaching in English when they don’t understand something, they turn to uhm … to uhm … explain it in Xhosa and at the end of the day you find out that you can barely speak English. You find out that “I can’t speak English” Your English is like … No, you don’t understand. I cannot afford the white schools so that is why I came to the coloured schools at least the teachers here won’t eh … when they explain something they won’t translate it to Xhosa or Afrikaans. They are saying it in English.

English is an international language. Everybody understands it.

*Anything else that you would like to add?*

Dit is dan die volgende aspekte wat julle genoem het wat hindernisse is: Armoede, kindermishandeling, werkloosheid, taal as ‘n remmende invloed vir die swart leerlinge, tienerswangerskappe, vigs gebrek aan hulpmiddels, verkragtings, geweld in die omgewing. Dit is basies die dinge wat ‘n remmende invloed kan het op leer soos wat dit in die omgewing en hier by die skool plaasvind. Is daar nog enige iets wat julle wil byvoeg? As daar niks anders is nie dan wil ek vir julle dankie sê vir die tyd wat julle opgeoffer het om deel uit te kon maak van hierdie besprekingsgroep. Baie dankie. Ons mag maar verdaag.
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Eerstens wil ek vir julle almal welkom heet en dankie sé dat julle vanmiddag gekom het om deel te wees van die besprekingsgroep. Die vraag wat ons vanmiddag gaan bespreek is die volgende:

What hindrances to learning are you experiencing in your specific physical or social environment? For eg. at home and at school.

As ek die vraag in Afrikaans stel dan is dit as volg:
Watter hindernisse of stremminge in jou spesifieke fisiese en sosiale omgewing ervaar jy wat jou leer kan affekteer bv. by die huis of by die skool.

Is daar enige iets wat julle aan kan dink of voorbeelde wat julle kan noem?

Eerstens hier in ons omgewing in is dit die dwelmgebruik en selfs die pregnancies, ja.

Kom ons kom terug na die dwelm gebruik. Brei eers meer uit omtrent dit.

‘Ok’ soos nou daar waar ek bly uhm … die drie ‘teenagers’, hulle gaan nie skool toe nie. Daar’s ‘n meisie, sy’s al groot al, ek weet nie hoe oud sy is nie, wat se ouerdom is sy nie en die twee jong kinders. Nou hulle gaan nog skool. Elke keer as ek hulle kry op die hoek, dan staan hulle daar en rook. Dan rook hulle. Ek weet nou nie watter soort tipe ‘drug’ of dinge wat hulle gebruik is dit nie, maar dan rook hulle. En selfs jy kan sien dit mors hulle op. Hulle gesigte verander en selfs hulle word al skraler. En dit gaan aan. Elke Vrydag doen hulle dit en ek weet nie hoekom nie.

En ek voel ook alkohol misbruik dit uhm … tas jou brein aan want die alkohol gaan veroorsaak dat van die breinselle nou bv. kan doodgaan. Dan kan die
persoon nie, nie effektyf leer nie. Dit kan veroorsaak dat miskien dagga of enige pil wat gebruik word dat dit die liggaam se gesondheid uhm ... aanraak. Die persoon sal nie gesond wees om te kan leer nie. Die persoon sal gedurig siek wees en die persoon sal dan nie kan leer nie.

Stilte

Selfs, soos ek sê ‘pregnancy’. ‘Pregnancy’ is ‘n baie groot invloed Juffrou, especially op ‘n ... jy’s nog baie jonk enne. As ek nou kyk na my vriendin, haar suster, sy’s verwagtend en sy’s baie jonk. Alles verander in die huis. Sy wil nou groot wees en daar’s nie meer ‘rules’ in die huis nie want sy’s nou, sy voel sy’s nou ma en sy’s groot genoeg. En daar’s baie dinge wat verander in die huis as die persoon die meisie nou ‘pregnant’ word of wat die seunskind nou ‘n kind het en so aans. Daar’s baie invloede wat ‘n ‘pregnancy’ het.

En nog iets: As die meisie wat verwagtend is, hulle het nou klaar kind gekry het, nou sy wil nou die Vrydag of Saterdag aand uitgaan. Jy’s nou haar suster of broër, dan sit sy die kind by jou. Sy gaan ‘tavern’ toe en geniet haar terwyl jy agter die kind moet kyk.

Dan kan jy ook nie leer nie Juffrou.

En selfs eenkeer hier in ‘Durban Road’ by ‘n’... “het julle gehoor van daai stukkie wat hulle die kind agter ‘n bos gesit het? Sien julle dis sulke dinge wat gebeur. Hulle word verwagtend nou kan hulle nie agter die kinders kyk nie”.

En nog ‘n faktor in die omgewing is ook oorbevolking, miskien in die huise want dis so as daar te veel mense in die huis is gaan die persoon miskien nou nie reg leer nie. Want daar kan TB voorkom wat miskien die mense in die huis se gesondheid aantas en dan kan die persoon nie reg leer nie, effektyf leer nie. En daar gaan gedurig miskien gevra word dat die ma vra die kind: “Doen gou dit”
maar die kind is besig om te leer of miskien die kind moet besig is om uhm … miskien kos te maak maar die kind kan nie fokus op die werk nie want almal moet eet in die huis in.

En selfs op die skool ook, dit speel ‘n groot rol ook. As ons kyk na die ruite uhm … die kinders wat die ruite stukkend gooi en op die mure skryf. Dis ook ‘n baie lelike invloed. En selfs die toilet, as ons kyk, die toilet … (word onderbreuk deur iemand anders).

Ja, ek voel by die skole, daar’s te veel kinders by die skool (agtergrond – in die klas). Ja en dan kan ons nie lekker op ‘n bank sit nie.

‘Sorry’ …

Want ‘n paar wil luister na die onderwyser en ‘n paar wil gesels en dan straf die onderwyser die kinders wat hulle werk doen, maar hulle straf nie die ene wat nie die werk gedoen het nie. Almal word … (ouduidelik – almal beaam). Soos in wiskunde toe het die meneer ons vir twee weke nie saam met ons gewerk nie want daar was … gewees (baie onduidelik).

Ja en kyk nou as die juffrou miskien die boeke op die bank sit dan is dit een persoon se boeke te groot en die ander een kan nie miskien sy boeke ook op die bank sit nie en … (word onderbreek deur iemand in die agtergrond) Ja dis die waarheid.

En hulle breek die banke en die ‘handles’ van die deure. En selfs die kinders van buite wat inkom en kom baklei. Ja, bakleiery kom maak in die skool en dan verwag onse ouers dat uhm … die hoof moet verantwoordelik wees vir die dinge maar ons weet self wie die buite mense is.
Dit ook. Miskien die stukkende ruite dis baie koud en dan kom die wind in en miskien soos hier by die skool iemand kap die ruite dan kan jy nie lekker leer nie uhm … effektief leer nie. En dan ook as jy die heeltyd koud kry en die kind gaan die heeltyd gefokus is op die koud kry i.p.v. uhm … uhm … om sy skoolwerk te doen.

Selfs die heinings wat hulle so stukkend maak, gate maak om daar deur te gaan om by die huis te gaan bank.

Ja die bankery is ook ‘n problem.

Soos die stukkende dakke. As dit reën, dan reën dit in die klasse in.

Ja want dit is die ding … Die kind se ouers kan ook ‘n problem wees soos die uhm … die ouers bly die kind mishandel of die kind aanhou slaan en die kind gaan kwaad is vir sy pa of is miskien die kind het ‘n probleem by die skool dan sal die kind nie eers met sy pa of ma kan praat nie. Dan kan hulle nie oor die skoolwerk praat nie en die kind se werk kan moontlik agteruit gaan want die persoon gaan uhm … psigologiese, ja (word onderbreek deur iemand).

Die persoon gaan meer fokus op die probleem i.p.v. die skoolwerk.

Stilte …

Enige ander probleme?… stilte …

Is daar enige iets nog in die omgewing?

Ek het ’n vriendin nê uhm … sy kry baie raas by haar huis maar sy wil nie hoor nie. Nou weet ek nie waar lê die probleem nie. Lê dit by die ‘taxi’ mense of lê dit by haar nie. En elke middag as sy uit die skool uitkom moet sy met dié ‘taxi’ ry. Dan kom sy laat huis toe. As haar pa uit die werk uitkom dan’s daar nie gekook nie, en dis ook ’n remmende invloed.

Ja, en daai kinders, soos die ander kinders sê, hulle draai stokkie. Hulle wil nie skool toe kom nie want hulle is nou die sogenaamde “Taxi Queens”. En dan agterin die taxi in, hulle noem die uhm … ‘sliding door operators of guartjies’, gaan die meisie nou agterin die ‘taxi’, die ‘taxi’ gaan hoekies en draatjies ry. Nou gaan die kind nie reguit skool toe nie, want hulle is meer ‘geworry’ oor hoe sal ek nou sê ander uhm … hulle ander … uhm … ‘opponents’ want hulle uhm … hulle gaan nou miskien baklei. My broer het eenkeer gesê hy was oppad universiteit toe gewees en hy was in die ‘taxi’ gewees. En toe het die ‘taxi drywer’ nou agter die ander man gery en hom gaan steek met ’n mes. Toe kom hy baie laat by die klas aan. Toe verloor hy ’n hele les daardeur.


En nog ’n probleem by die skool is daar is ’n tekort aan elektrisiteit ook. Daar is nie elektrisiteit nie want dis baie donker. As die weerstoestand hier buite ongustig is dan is dit baie donker in die klas en dan kan die ligte nie aangeskakel word nie dan kan ’n mens skaars die woorde op die boek sien.

As die water ook af is … (word onderbreek). Ja, want by De Vos Malan is dit so dan het hulle nie skool nie. Dit het ook ’n invloed op die kinders.

En ek dink ook miskien iemand van buite af kom breek in by die skool. Hulle breek, hulle dief nou miskien al die ‘files’ soos laas jaar het dit gebeur in Juffrou X se klas het die persoon deur die dak geklim, die dak stukkend gemaakt en deur
die klas gekom en die juffrou se ‘files’ deurmekaar gemaak. En hulle het ook lelike goed geskryf in die kinders se boeke. Toe moet die kind die boeke weggooi en weer van oor af begin skryf.
Maar die mense is so oulikie s by die skool want dis mense wat hier by die skool skoolgegaan het of nog besig is op die skool om skool te loop wat die skool so afbreek.

Ja wat ek … uhm … miskien nie wil leer nie uhm … uhm … dit reën in by die klasse a.g.v. die oop vensters wat daar is soos die dan is dit baie nat in die klas in of miskien soos ek weet nie was dit ‘n tyd gelede toe was daar nie skool gewees van al die skade van die reën.

A.g.v. die reën. By onse skool kom daar baie reën in.

En zelfs daar waar ek bly, ek sien hulle maak nou ‘n ‘taxi rank’ daar en dit is baie … dis ‘n probleem. Eenkeer ek het ek kom van die winkel af, nou loop ek lekker, die man kom na my toe en hy roep my. Ek vat hom nie kop toe nie en agterna skel hy my en sê ek hou my lekker. En ek dink daai ‘taxi rank’ gaan baie probleme daar bring want dis naby die winkels en die mense gaan nou miskien goete gaan steel en aan die ‘taxi’ mense gaan verkoop en zelfs daai mense in die ‘tax’i in … (woord onderbreek en word onduidelik).

Hulle word ‘nvolved’, miskien nou betrokke in die saak.

Ja, die ma’s … Ek het ook gevoel my pa moet weet as dit weer moet gebeur, dan sal ek my pa sê.

En wat ook ‘n probleem is, is dat die kinders so myle vêr bly, van Kwadesi, en Motherwell af kom hulle hier na Schauderville toe en as hulle hier is en teen die tyd wat hulle hier by die skool aangestap kom, is hulle baie nat, is hulle papnat
en kan hulle ook nie uhm … leer nie. Dan moet die hoof maar net die kinders huistoe stuur.

Maar jy kry van daai kinders wat 'aspris' is. *(Agtergrond – ja).* Hulle doen dit van 'aspris' ook. Hulle loop op hulle tyd uhm’… om hier by die skool te kom. En die bont aantrekkery skool toe, dit gaan nie uitwerk nie. Dit werk ook nie uit nie.

En selfs die laatkomery skool toe. *(Agtergrond – ja).* Daaar's baie wat kan vroeg kom maar hulle kom opsetlik laat om huistoe gestuur te word. En die bont klere het te doen met hulle gedrag. Die kind voel miskien hy is in bont klere by die skool gaan die kind voel nee hy’s maar net so goed soos iemand anders. Hy hoef nie te luister as die onderwyser sê doen dit nie. Hy hoef nie te luister na die onderwyser nie … Ja …. Stilte.

En ook 'n probleem is in die sogenaamde 'coloured areas' waar ons bly is daar te veel geraas van buite af a.g.v. die mense van buite af. Waar daar miskien in die 'suburbs' is dit miskien baie stil. Daar kan 'n mens beter leer as wat 'n mens nou hier in die sogenaamde 'coloured areas' kan leer.

En ook as mens hier in die skool is, dan speel die mense aan die oorkant klifharde musiek. En as die juffrou 'n verduideliking gee *(word onderbreek)* Ja, hulle speel so … hulle speel baie harde musiek dan kan ons nie leer nie in die klas nie en kan ons ook nie luister wat die onderwyser sê nie.

En selfs by die 'library', die kinders maak van dit 'n speelplek. Die anders wil leer en die anders kom kyk watse meisies en watse ouens is hier. Dis ook 'n probleem.

Nog 'n probleem wat leer belemmer is die groepsdruk. As jy nou miskien vir die ander kind sê: "Nee moet nie, ek gaan nie vandag soontoe nie, bly maar by die huis". Of hulle wil miskien nou die ander persoon beïndruk en hulle sê miskien
nou ... Die meisie sê nou, nou net, hoe sal ek nou sê, sy hou nie van ‘n man ... ‘n ‘boytjie’ wat (in die agtergrond) wat nie karre het nie. Nèè! Wat ‘nie slim is hier by die skool uhm ... (agtergrond – ja) en dan gaan die persoon hom miskien nou dom hou om met die persoon uit te gaan, soos daai en dit gebeur baie in onse klas in. Soos ek gaan nie name noem nie, maar daar's een seun in onse klas in. Sy vriende sê vir my vandat hy in graad 8, 9 en 10 was, was hy ‘ok', was hy ‘oraai’t in sy werk. En toe hy in graad 11 met die vriende betrokke raak, nè, en toe het hulle hom verlei, dat hy nie meer aandag aan sy skoolwerk skenk nie en hy het van ‘n B na ‘n E toe uitgesak wat baie sleg is.

Maar baie kere nê dan hang dit van jouself af. ‘Ok’, vriende kan jou beïnvloed maar as jy tussen jou vriende is, moet jy jou ‘limits’ ken. Wanneer is dit tyd vir jou boeke en wanneer is dit nou tyd vir ‘party’ en so. En ‘basically’ vir my’... ek drink nie en rook nie. Dan vra hulle vir my: Rook jy, drink jy nie?” Ek sê “nee”. En ek sal tyd met hulle spandeer en as ek sien hulle gaan nou drink en ‘party’ dan gaan ek liewer huis toe. Dit hang van jouself af.

En nog iets. Ek sien nou daar is tippex, korrigeer vloeistof op die bord. Nou kan die onderwyser miskien nou iets skryf op die bord ... stilte ... Ekskuus? .... Stilte ... Nou skryf die juffrou nou op die bord nou kan die kind nie uitmaak wat is op die bord geskryf nie want daar is nou tippex op die bord soos daai. En dit kan die kinders se werk miskien nou ... laat ons baie stadig skryf ... en soos daai ... En selfs die mense wat hulle vuilgoed op enige oop vlak gaan goo. Dis ook ‘n ‘environmental’ uhm ... ding uhm ... besoedeling man.

Of miskien is daar kinders in onse klas, dit gebeur nou nog. Die kinders steek mekaar met naalde en nou ‘n person kan Aids daardeur kry. Wat nie eintlik reg is nie. Dis nie te doen net met die fisiese omgewing nie, maar ook die gedrag van die kinders.
Stilte …

_Nog enige iets anders?_

En selfs mixit word ’n fashion nou. Ja, ’ok’, ek gaan nie name noem nie, maar daar’s ‘n meisie in onse klas, en ek glo, ek glo uhm … sy kan uhm … nou daaraan verslaaf is. Sy kan my getuie wees daarso … Een keer toe … (stilte). Die kinders sê sy was besig met mixit op haar selfoon. Nou ons weet dis kletskamers waarmee die kinders besig is. Nou sy is meer uhm … bekommerd oor die Mixit as met haar skoolwerk. Hulle gedrag gaan agteruit. Miskien nou die kinders het … wat hulle ook genoem het oor die televisie die ander dag is miskien nou die een meisie sy was agtervolg deur ‘n ander man en nou is sy meer bekommerd oor die man wat haar agtervolg i.p.v. haar skoolwerk. En die meisie het ook nie haar werk by die huis gedoen nie, want sy is nou meer hoe sal ek sê? Jy is te geïnteresseerd in mixit ja, en nou wil sy nie leer nie want dit gaan te lekker aan by mixit i.p.v. met die skoolwerk.


My vriend se oë het seer geraak van al die mixit. Sy kan nie eers haar oë … Jou oë is mos gedurig op die foone. Toe beskadig dit haar een oog. Die een oog kan nou nie meer so lekker sien nie. Stilte … Deur die mixit, ja.

Selfs die taalgebruik ook, ja uhm … ook in die klas in. Daar’s die meisie wanneer sy … Sy weet nie hoe om met die meneer te praat nie. Sy Jissus soos sy wil en sy “f” hulle soos sy wil. En dis baie belangrik dat ons, ons onderwysers respekteer (_agtergrond – stem saam_). Selfs soos onse vriende ook. Ek dink dis nie nodig om so rou te praat en daardie lelike woorde te gebruik nie.
En een probleem wat miskien nou leer ook kan belemmer is nou, miskien nou die kind bly baie ver van die skool af. Die kind kan nie skool toe stap nie. Die kind moet sesuur uit die huis uitgaan in die oggend en dan kom die kind miskien soos, ek weet nie, daar's vier in onse klas. Dan sê hulle vir my hulle kom eers weer viertuur van middag by die huis aangestap en dan moet hulle nog eerste ontspan voor hulle moet begin om die huis aan die kant te maak en kos te kook. Hulle moet kook soos sy sê (agtergrond – moet kook en die huis regmaak). Hulle kry nie saans tyd om hul tuiswerk te doen en om te studeer nie omdat hulle te moeg is.

Ja. En 'n probleem nou ook daar's nie ouers in die huis nie. Die ouers is gedurig buitkekant. Hulle is alkolist. Die kind word daardeur beïnvloed want die kind moet die heeltyd na die suster of die ouer of neef of niggie (agtergrond beaam alles) kyk. En dan het sy nie tyd vir haarself om te leer nie want as jy nie tyd vir jouself het nie, kan jy baie gestres raak (Agtergrond: is ja). Dan kan jy nie uhm … fokus op jou skoolwerk soos daai nie.

Want jy voel nou so moeg en jy voel net jy moet 'n ‘break’ vat om skuins te lê en so aan. Nou kan jy nie jou skoolwerk doen nie.

En dan wanvoedig ook want as jy nou kyk daarso daar's meerderheid van die kinders wat miskien nie kos kry by die huis nie. Kom hulle honger skool toe en dan kan hulle miskien nou voel … En miskien die kind het nou nie genoeg vitamiene en minerale in die liggaam nie en die kind gaan miskien nou siek word. En dan moet die kind onnodig skool los of miskien nou afwesig bly net om dokter toe te gaan. Stilte …

_Is daar nog enige iets wat julle wil byvoeg?_

Stilte …
HIV/AIDS … stilte … As jong kinders/tieners seks het, dan kry hulle miskien nou Aids en dan worry hulle nou meer oor die siekte as wat hulle gefokus is op die skoolwerk. Wat gaan hulle maar doen, gaan hulle nou dood?

Ja, en iets wat baie die kinders, hoe sal ek nou sê, demotiveer is ‘n onderwyser wat vir die kind sê: “Ag jy is dom”. Ek ken sulke onderwysers maar ek gaan nie name noem nie. Hulle sê vir die kind: “ag jy’s dom”. Jy dink miskien jy kan nog dit bereik in die lewe, dan is die kind gedemotiveerd. Dan het die kind ook nie meer lus om te leer nie. Die onderwyser, miskien nou beledig hy hom in die klas ook. Ja …

Kom ons kom weer terug na HIV/AIDS. Hoe affekteer dit die gemeenskap waar julle is?

Stilte …

Een ding is nou diskriminasie. Die kinders gaan nou uhm … die persoon gaan skaam voel oor die siekte want die persoon se vriende gaan nie meer lus het om tyd te spandeer saam met daardie persoon nie. Of hulle sê “ag nee, jy’t Aids, jy moet nie meer saam met ons kom rondloop nie” of daai.


En miskien as ‘n ouer in die huis doodgaan van Aids dan gaan die kinders … daar’s miskien nie meer ‘n broodwinner in die huis nie. Daar gaan nie meer inkomste is nie, dan moet die kind miskien onnodig skool los om uhm … agter die anders te kyk (agtergrond praat saam) by die huis ja. En die kind sal moet gaan werk dan kry die persoon dan verdien die persoon ‘n minder inkomste vir die uhm … ja … En dan word hulle armoede … dan word hulle arm en dan gaan
hulle miskien nou nie meer voedsel kan bekostig nie. Hulle gaan langs die strate bly soos daai.

Dis ook 'n ander faktor is, is TB. TB tas die persoon se lewe aan. Dit maak die persoon moeg. Die persoon kan nie meer miskien nou hoe kan ek sê? Die persoon stel nie meer belang in sy skoolwerk nie, want die persoon is baie moeg.

Ja, want hulle slaap baie min. Ja, want een van die simptome van TB is ook dat die persoon baie slaap want dan gaan die persoon nie miskien nie … Want as jy die oggend nie genoeg slaap gaan kry nie, sal jy nie kan fokus op jou skoolwerk nie. Dan is jy die heeltyd afgetrokke van jou skoolwerk af. Jy's meer gefokus op dit. En wat ek opgelet het al is baie kinders is bang om kliniek toe te gaan. 'For instance' as hulle nou TB het of vir 'family planning'. Hulle is altyd bekommerd wat gaan hulle vriende sê (agtergrond beaam … as hulle, hul daar sien).

Ja, selfs ek het baie mense deur TB verloor. My 'aunties', hulle wil nooit 'like' vir 'treatmen' gegaan het nie. Ek weet nou nie slaan dit oor na Aids nie, maar het dit oorgeslaan na iets toe en toe kan hulle niks meer doen vir my 'aunties' nie. Dis waarom ek dink dis belangrik om te gaan al wat sê die mense.

En dit vat baie … dit wat gewoonlik 6 tot 8 maande tot … (word onderbreek).

Ja en jy moet reg eet ook. Jy kan nie sommer enigiets eet nie.
Ja, en as jy arm is dan kan jy nie die regte kossoorte in die huis aankoop nie. Want miskien jy moet die geld gebruik vir iets anders i.p.v. kos. Miskien nou die wat baie ver van die skool af bly dan moet jy meer geld uithaal vir vervoer i.p.v. kos by die huis.

*Dit is dan die volgende aspekte wat julle genoem het wat hindernisse is: Armoede, kindermishandeling, alkohol en dwelm misbruik, werkloosheid, omstandighede by die skool, taalgebruik van leerlinge, moderne tegnologie,*
kinders wat ver van die skool af bly, groepdruk, swangerskap veral m.b.t. tieners en vigs. Dit is basies die dinge wat ‘n remmende invloed kan het op leer soos wat dit in die omgewing en hier by die skool plaasvind. Is daar nog enige iets wat julle wil byvoeg? As daar niks anders is nie dan wil ek vir julle dankie sê vir die tyd wat julle opgeoffer het om deel uit te kon maak van hierdie besprekingsgroep. Baie dankie. Ons mag maar verdaag.