Let me give children the healing wisdom
   That there is a better way, a more beautiful way
       To live each day of their lives
   And to face life's struggles and strife.
       A physician I am not,
   but healing is part of my profession.

Let me give children hope for eternity,
   Peace in this life, confidence in what will come.
Let me lead children to friendship with God,
   and let me teach them to pray.
       I am not a member of the clergy,
   but faith is part of my profession.

Let me given children a hunger for justice,
   A sensitivity for right and wrong;
   A love of truth and abhorrence of evil.
       A legal advisor I am not,
   but justice is part of my profession.

Let me bring children relief from pain of
disappointment and disillusionment;
   A balm for an injured spirit;
   An escape from the ravages of self-pity;
       A psychologist I am not,
   but the healthy mind is part of my profession.

Let me open treasures of knowledge for children,
   help them to appreciate their cultural heritage,
   and be enthusiastic participants in the human family.
       For I am a teacher.

I challenge negativity, fear, prejudice, ignorance and apathy
   with the Good News of God's kingdom.
   I have a past that is rich in memories.
I have a present that is challenging, adventurous and fun
   because I spend my days with the future.
I take my inspiration form the greatest teacher of all,
   Jesus Christ.

-Anonymous-
ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM AS A TEACHER OF ENGLISH USING ACTION RESEARCH

VIRGINIA CHARMAINE DIDLOFT

2010
ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM AS A TEACHER OF ENGLISH USING ACTION RESEARCH

by

VIRGINIA CHARMAINE DIDLOFT

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Educationis at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Promoter/Supervisor: Professor Bill Holderness

November 2010
DECLARATION

Full Name : Virginia Charmaine Didloft

Student Number : 207090655

Qualification : Doctor Educationis

Title : Enhancing self-esteem as a teacher of English using action research

In accordance with Rule G4.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned thesis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another university or for another qualification.

SIGNATURE : __________________________

DATE : __________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I possess an innate awareness of the significance, power, blessing and gift of the precious relationship I have developed with my Heavenly Father and also of the innumerable ways in which He creates opportunities for significant others to inspire, encourage and strengthen me in my educational endeavours. I also discovered that no meaningful endeavour is ever done in isolation. When any worthwhile venture is brought to fruition, there are always collaborators who offered and rendered inputs, assistance and support. The encouragement and inspiration I have benefited from are almost incomprehensible or immeasurable and the individuals who contributed, however trivial, almost innumerable. I am therefore deeply indebted and eternally grateful to all who have so unselfishly given of themselves and their time to render assistance, or offer advice, to realize my objective of developing the self-esteem of my marginalized learners for self-actualization.

Acknowledging and giving recognition to all my collaborators thus seem to be the most logical method of paying honour and tribute, for without them, the completion of this study would not have been possible. These deserving individuals all portrayed pivotal roles in my life. I am who I am because of their respective roles in my life. Recognition and acknowledgement therefore go to all who have contributed in meaningful and different ways.

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I have been blessed to have an extraordinary support structure in the form of an amazing husband, wonderful children and an efficient housekeeper. They are the wind beneath my wings, the ones who pick me up when I fall, my safe havens, my sunshine, my inspiration and my everything. Thank you, most sincerely, Dudley, Chardy, Chadwin and Beverley for your unwavering belief in my potential, your
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My technical advisor, Juanita Botha, your technical expertise, guidance and valuable advice have made this journey so much easier. I thank you for your valuable contribution. You are a treasure.

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A special tribute to the principals and colleagues of my respective schools who allowed and accommodated my intervention programmes so willingly. I appreciate your cooperation in this regard.

Deep gratitude and greatest thanks also go to my research participants. Your willingness to share your personal experiences will help to bring about improvement in the lives of others. Please accept my soul-felt gratitude for your meaningful contributions. I shall never forget your generosity of heart and mind.
I would also like to express warm gratitude to the Department of Education in general and the District Director in particular for granting permission to conduct this study.

I am also eternally grateful to the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Research Ethics Committee (Human), for approving my application.

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ABSTRACT

Title:

ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM AS A TEACHER OF ENGLISH USING ACTION RESEARCH

Virginia Charmaine Didloft

This thesis offers a critical reflection of a study I initiated to enhance self-esteem for self-actualization. The research process involved enhancing my own self-esteem before facilitating the enhancement of the self-esteem of my participants. This endeavour included the simultaneous exposure given to researcher and researched, with the aim of helping to attain the respective transformative potentials of the latter.

An action research methodology was used, intending to improve my own practice and to involve and learn from the participants in order for all relevant stakeholders to capitalize from the learning experience. Whilst undertaking this study, I learned to reflect on my values, attitudes and relationships with my learners. I also became aware of how individuals' perceptions of themselves can influence other aspects of their development.

This awareness enabled me to become more sensitive to the emotional needs of the learners in my care and also led to a greater understanding of their individuality. I came to comprehend the impact of a positive self-esteem on the learning process that aided me in developing an understanding of the positive impact an enhanced self-esteem has on how my learners view themselves.

In the course of the research, I developed an awareness of the need to create a caring practice centred on values of gentleness, respect, kindness, awareness and recognition of individual strengths. These afore-mentioned values are premised on the recognition and acknowledgement of basic human rights, inclusivity, equality and social justice; principles reflecting my own living standards. This heightened
awareness influenced the ways I organized the learning and teaching process in my classroom.

Enhancing my own self-esteem and those of my learners basically involved interchangeable interventions such as encouraging involvement, allocating responsibilities, creating opportunities for assertiveness and being generous with affirmation, praise and motivation. These endeavours occurred within a social constructivist approach, enabling participants to construct their own epistemologies within their respective ontologies.

My findings offer new conceptualizations about how an enhanced self-esteem can help individuals realize their fullest potential.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELRC</td>
<td>Education Labour Relations Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCS</td>
<td>National Curriculum Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNCS</td>
<td>Revised National Curriculum Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACE</td>
<td>South African Council for Educators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 : A hierarchy of basic needs 16
Figure 2(i) : Intervention 27
Figure 2(ii) : Learning and Teaching Model 27
Figure 3 : The introductory phase 28
Figure 4 : The intervention phase 29
Figure 5 : (i) The application of acquired knowledge 30
(ii) Complete intervention diagram 31
Figure 6 : Major aspects of the self-concept 49
Figure 7 : The interrelated relationship between components of self-concept for self-actualization 53
Figure 8 : Reciprocal effects of self-esteem and achievement 58
Figure 9 : Factors affecting self-efficacy 60
Figure 10 : Diagram illustrating reactions of emotionally intelligent individuals 68
Figure 11 : Table representing possible dramatization scenarios 71
Figure 12 : Action research cycle 106
Figure 13 : Data collection methods 112
Figure 14 : A reflexive approach 123
Figure 15 : An advertisement (positive affirmation) 139
Figure 16 : News wall 140
Figure 17 : Positive Bombardment 141
Figure 18 : How learners perceived themselves after intervention sessions 142
Figure 19 : Learners’ self-perceptions 142
Figure 20 : Learners’ self-perceptions 143
Figure 21 : A typical information profile 146
Figure 22 : Photo taken at leadership camp (July 2009) 153
Figure 23 : Photo taken at leadership camp (July 2009) 153
Figure 24 : Photo taken at leadership camp (July 2009) 154
Figure 25 : Photo taken at leadership camp (July 2009) 154
Figure 26 : New learning & growth 158
Figure 27 : New learning & growth 158
Figure 28: A representation of the process of conceptualizing and carrying out a research project 167
Figure 29: Strategies to increase self-efficacy to develop self-esteem 169
Figure 30: Intervention strategies to develop self-esteem of learners 186
Figure 31: A more complex representation of the relationships between different parts of a change process 199
Figure 32: My road to success (self-reflection) 211
Figure 33: The road to success (self-reflection) 212
Figure 34: Children's rights (involvement) 213
Figure 35: Classroom rules (involvement) 214
Figure 36: Classroom rules (involvement) 215
Figure 37: Developing personal growth (self-esteem enhancement) 216
Figure 38: Feelings and feedback (involvement – evaluation) 218
Figure 39: Symbol of fruits and seeds of learning, personal growth and development 223
Figure 40: Self-esteem enhancement 229
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 : Application for Approval: NMMU Research Ethics Committee (Human) 279

Appendix 1(a) : Research Methodology 284

Appendix 1(b) : Informed Consent Form 285

Appendix 1(c) : Written Information 286

Appendix 1(d) : Oral Information 288

Appendix 1(e) : Letter to School Principal 289

Appendix 1(f) : Letter to District Director 290

Appendix 2 : Validations 291

Appendix 3 : Letter of approval of application 294

Appendix 4 : Letter from Acting District Director granting permission to conduct research 295

Appendix 5 : Letter from Acting District Director granting permission to conduct research 296

Appendix 6 : Questionnaire 1 297

Appendix 7 : Questionnaire 2 298

Appendix 8 : Questionnaire 3 299
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Acronyms</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Appendices</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER ONE
MY EDUCATIONAL CONCERN AND THE RATIONALE THEREOF

1.1 Introduction 1
1.1.1 Background and context of study 3
1.1.2 Personal background 7
1.1.3 My educational values 8
1.2 My educational concern 11
1.2.1 What is my concern? 11
1.2.2 Why am I concerned? 12
1.3 Purpose of undertaking this study 14
1.4 Theoretical context 18
1.5 An action research design 21
1.6 Modification of my practice 26
1.6.1 My intervention strategy 26
1.6.1.1 The introductory phase 28
1.6.1.2 The intervention phase 29
1.6.1.3 The application of acquired knowledge 30
1.7 Validation of my account of learning 32
1.8 Ethical measures 33
1.9 Significance of my research 34
1.10 Conclusion 36
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>What is educational psychology?</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>How does educational psychology apply to teaching?</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>The self-concept</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>The physical self-concept</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>Psychological self-concept</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>The social self-concept</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4</td>
<td>The gender self-concept</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5</td>
<td>Cultural identity</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.6</td>
<td>The ideal self</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.7</td>
<td>The moral self-concept</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.8</td>
<td>The intellectual (academic) self-concept</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>The self-image</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>The ideal self</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>The self-esteem</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.1</td>
<td>High self-esteem</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.2</td>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.3</td>
<td>The effect self-esteem has on education</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8.1</td>
<td>Factors affecting self-efficacy</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8.2</td>
<td>Types of behaviours that are affected by self-efficacy</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Motivation – what is motivation?</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9.1</td>
<td>Intrinsic (internal) motivation</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9.2</td>
<td>Extrinsic (external) motivation</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9.3</td>
<td>How can motivation be increased?</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9.4</td>
<td>Why is motivation important for education?</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>What is emotional intelligence?</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10.1</td>
<td>What is the significance of emotional intelligence to learners?</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10.2</td>
<td>How can emotional intelligence be developed by educators?</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11.1</td>
<td>What is assertiveness?</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CHAPTER THREE
#### METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>What is learning and what constitutes learning?</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Theories of learning</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>What is a theory?</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1.1</td>
<td>Classical conditioning</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1.2</td>
<td>Operant conditioning</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1.3</td>
<td>Connectionism</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1.4</td>
<td>Social learning theory</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>The theory of social constructivism</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>The qualitative research design</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1</td>
<td>The nature of research</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER FOUR
#### DATA COLLECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Reflective practice</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Data gathering process</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Written reflection</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>Interviews and questionnaires</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.4</td>
<td>Photographs, drawings and pictures</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Interpretation of data</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>The validation process</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Ethical measures</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE
DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction 163
5.2 Analyzing the data 163
5.3 Presentation of the findings 168
5.3.1 Theme One: Mastery experiences – its influences on the development of self-esteem on learners 169
5.3.2 Theme two: Vicarious learning: How it affected the development of learners’ self-esteem 174
5.3.3 Theme three: Verbal persuasion: How it affected the development of learners’ self-esteem 179
5.3.4 Theme four: Emotional and physiological arousal: How it affected the development of learners’ self-esteem 183
5.4 Other factors that affected the development of my learners’ self-esteem 186
5.4.1 How the social learning approach and social context affected the development of learners’ self-esteem 186
5.5 Modified behaviour 188
5.6 Conclusion 191
# CHAPTER SIX
EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF MY CLASSROOM-BASED INQUIRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>What is reflective practice?</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>The dynamics of transformation</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Motivation for transformation</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Transformation within my own context</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Challenges of the transformative process</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>My rationale for exploring the transformative potential of my study</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Linking theory and practice</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>My international context</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>My primary school context</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10.1</td>
<td>My road to success (self-reflection)</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10.2</td>
<td>The road to success (self-reflection)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10.3</td>
<td>Children’s rights (involvement)</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10.4</td>
<td>Classroom rules (involvement)</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10.5</td>
<td>Classroom rules (involvement)</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10.6</td>
<td>Developing personal growth (self-esteem enhancement)</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10.7</td>
<td>Feelings and feedback (involvement – evaluation)</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>Reflecting on my endeavours to influence improvement</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Reviewing the research question and objectives</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Factors influencing the development of learners’ self-esteem</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1</td>
<td>Environmental influences</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2</td>
<td>Learners themselves contribute to their own self-esteem development or stagnation</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>What I learned regarding the development of self-esteem for self-actualization</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>What was the significance of my actions?</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Implication for policy makers</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Implications for schools</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>The limitations of this study</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>Recommendations with regard to further research</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>General reflections</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>Reflecting on insights gained</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td></td>
<td>279-299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
MY EDUCATIONAL CONCERN AND THE RATIONALE THEREOF

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a narrative account of my learning journey as I developed my living educational theory in the form of an emergent epistemology of practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:26). This is an emergent process for me as my thinking developed and as my embodied ontological values became clarified during the course of my research which commenced when I initiated my Master’s dissertation two years ago (Didloft, 2008). These values will ultimately be transformed into my own living critical standards of judgement (Pollard, 2005:97). In this study, I am undertaking yet another educational journey as a classroom-based practitioner. I will be conducting a reflective self-study into my own practice whilst creating my own living theory of practice as I go along.

I shall be giving this account against my historical background which served as the rationale for initiating this study and also the one I have taken prior to this (in my Master’s dissertation when I investigated ways to improve reading abilities) (Didloft, 2008). I plan to outline the relevance of this particular research in terms of the contexts of my current ontology and the wider educational field. Subsequently, I am endeavouring to help my marginalized learners to enhance and develop their self-esteem for self-actualization. I am hoping the emerging epistemologies will simultaneously enhance my own comprehension and improve my own self-esteem towards the possible attainment of my own self-actualization. This will then hopefully lead to an improvement in my own teaching practice and resultantly an improvement in the learning and teaching process in my classroom initially and ultimately in the classrooms of my colleagues and other educators.

Contemplating a positive influence on other educational stakeholders, motivates me to share my classroom experiences which, according to Oriah Mountain Dreamer (2003:6), reveals the meaning in our lives that lead us to a deeper connection to ourselves and the purpose we are intended to fulfil. This is reiterated by Covey
who advises that our own significance should inspire us to live so that that which come to us as seeds, goes to the next as blossom, and that which come to us as blossom, goes on as fruit. Our teaching is the seed we daily sow and will blossom as fruit to be reaped for the benefit of a wider society. Realizing how much I have benefited from the research of others such as Dewey, Vygotsky, Bruner, Skinner, Pavlov, Bandura and Others (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1992:56-387), makes it easier for me to be generous and to make my own contribution to education. Maxwell (2005:145) comments, “You do yourself the most good when you are doing something for others”. The Chinese say it so well: “A little fragrance always clings to the hand that gives roses”. This strengthens my motto that it is in giving that we receive.

In my endeavour to help my marginalized learners develop their self-esteem for self-actualization, I made a conscious decision to believe in my learners even more than they believe in themselves or have proven themselves. I will aim to help them reach their full potential and the words of Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe will guide me. He advises, “Treat people as if they are what they are capable of becoming and you will help them become that”. These words will serve as my guide when I will create in my classroom, an environment where my learners will accept, love and embrace unconditionally, the many parts of their unique gift, themselves (Hay, 2004:xiv) and the enormous power they have within themselves.

One way of helping my learners to enhance their self-esteem will be to help them accomplish small, realistic goals they have set for themselves, like attaining the desired outcomes for a specific assignment or task. My role will be to constantly remind them to exercise patience and tolerance and also to realize that some things take longer than others. My learners need to realize that an immediate lack of success does not imply that they are incapable; it simply means that for some it takes longer to attain their goals than for others. I will need to frequently remind my learners of the good in each of them and the value each individual possesses. They are all capable of giving something of themselves to improve the lives of others. That giving may not necessarily be something constructive, it may come in the form of listening, caring, sharing or just morally supporting another individual. What we often
fail to realize, is that giving is the beginning of receiving and that the act of giving enriches the giver more than it does the receiver (Maxwell, 2005:143).

Therefore, in my efforts to prepare learners who will be worthy citizens, (Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), 2002:2), I need to advocate that I intend sowing worthy seeds into society in order to reap fruits which will be enjoyed by future generations.

These endeavours do not happen overnight and may take years to realize, but the journey towards achieving anything worthwhile may be tedious at times, but the rewards will be priceless, especially if I was instrumental in helping to uncover those hidden potentials in my learners and adding value to their lives. Being true to myself and the values I hold dear, move me to action which will commence in my own classroom and hopefully continue in the classrooms of my colleagues and the lives of other educational stakeholders. Guided by an awareness of discovering my own level of self-actualization, coupled by my passion to make a difference in the lives of my learners and whoever I encounter on this educative journey, I aim to help others reach their own levels of self-actualization as well. This will help me to become the kind of educator envisaged by the RNCS (2002:2), which is an educator who is confident and independent, compassionate and able to participate in society as a critical and active citizen.

In order to achieve of the afore-mentioned goals however, I first need to consider the background and context within which my study will be situated as one needs to understand where you originate from in order to know where you are heading to.

1.1.1 Background and context of study

In this chapter I plan to outline my theory of education in relation to the development of self-esteem towards the possible attainment of self-actualization in the classroom context. This study will demonstrate how that theory developed through my research journey and how it is impacting on my practice. I hope to find answers to my research question: **How can I assist my marginalized learners to develop their self-esteem for self-actualization?** I will also offer a rationale for endeavouring to
examine this particular topic whilst simultaneously giving an outline of my theory of self-esteem for self-actualization. I aim to set out the objectives of this study while reflecting on my own role regarding the enhancement and limitations of the self-esteem of the learners in my own classroom.

This account is given against my historical background, which is intended to serve as the rationale for undertaking this educational journey. To fully comprehend my current ontology, it is essential to recapture the compelling story of an education system which was born from the ashes of an apartheid system designed to divide and segregate. South Africa managed to capture the imagination of the world when it succeeded, in 1994, in peacefully transferring political power from the white minority to the black majority. The resultant new democracy signified a global symbol of the struggle for human rights and racial equity (Fiske & Ladd, 2005:ix). Remarkably, this successful transfer of political power was only the initial step towards the construction of a multiracial, sustainable social order.

South Africa’s new democracy also required a transformation in institutional structures built on the values embodied in the country’s progressive new constitution, which would ensure equal rights for all its citizens, irrespective of race, colour or creed. The new government had as its primary task, the transformation of an unfair and unjust apartheid system into one that reflected the values of the new democracy, and to do so in a political and social context shaped by the historical legacy of apartheid.

The story of education transformation in post-apartheid South Africa is also significant as it was motivated by a quest for equity and fairness for all individuals. South Africa’s new democracy, rising from the ashes of apartheid is especially interesting due to the initial disparities and its accompanying changes. Few, if any, new democratic governments could have been compelled to work with an education system as egregiously and intentionally inequitable as the one that the apartheid government left to the new democracy in 1994. The apartheid system clearly delineated socially constructed racial classifications which provided a solid basis for a move towards racial equity. Moreover, few governments could have ever accepted power with as strong a mandate to pursue racial justice. It can therefore be
concluded that the South African experience offers an opportunity to examine both the possibilities and limitations of ultimately attaining a racially education system in a context where such equity is priority (Fiske & Ladd, 2005:x).

South Africa has made significant progress towards equity in education which can be considered as equal treatment of persons of all races. The South African Education Department therefore needs to be commended for this achievement. However, much still needs to be done where equal opportunities for all learners are concerned. We can evaluate South Africa’s reform strategies according to three basic standards of racial equity: equal treatment, equal educational opportunities, and educational adequacy. These concepts originate from the basis of education reform and form a useful framework for analyzing the country’s progress towards a more racially equitable education system. Rawls (2001:42-50) defines equal treatment as the first principle of justice; namely, that each individual has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of basic liberties where such liberties include the right to be treated as an individual rather than as a member of a racial group.

The new Constitution of 1996 rests on principles of equality. According to its Bill of Rights (Chapter 2, Section 9(1)), everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefits of the law. Furthermore, equality includes equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms (South African Constitution, Chapter 2, Section 9(2)). Basic education is explicitly included among those rights which signalled the end of racial discrimination (South African Constitution, Chapter 2, Section 29(1)). However, starting out on an unequal footing and seriously hampered by decades of under-investment in school facilities and under qualified educators, implied an inability to level the playing field which signified the provision of equal opportunities for all (Loury, 2002). Jagwanth and Kalula (2001:ix) so aptly encapsulate the current situation educators find themselves in when they state that the substantive realization of equality is a prerequisite for transformative change in South Africa.

In spite of this, the biggest challenge facing development and transformation in contemporary South Africa is still inequality. Given the history of apartheid, this can be expected due to the fact that extreme poverty, discrimination and inequality are considered as three principal consequences of apartheid’s economic growth strategy
and policies of social control. Much has been done to address the disparities in the past few years, but the consequences are still visible in our classes and in the negative attitudes of our poverty stricken and previously disadvantaged learners, especially at the school where I currently teach. The current state of affairs in my classroom prompted me to initiate this investigation and heed the advice of Fiskides and Ladd (2005:248) who recommend initiating our own actions to offset the legacies of the past. They suggest moving away from a system in which individuals are treated differently due to any difference to a system where everyone is treated equally. Educators can reap the benefits if they promote equity in the form of equal educational opportunities in their own classrooms.

I matriculated in 1979 under the Nationalists’ apartheid regime. The career choices of a non-white South African matriculant were limited to a few professions of which teaching was the most popular. Financial constraints compelled me to choose teaching as it was a career where one could earn while one studied. My teacher training occurred in the shadow of an authoritarian education system as mentioned by Fiskides and Ladd (2005:47). The situation remained unchanged for many years. This behaviourist teaching practice was not questioned, as it was merely a continuation of the learning style I was subjected to as a child. I can still vividly recall reciting by rote, chanting tables and vocabulary. Compliance was a given, deeply ingrained into my value and belief system by my oppressed parents and my equally oppressed authoritarian role players. This status quo obviously prevailed until the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996) heralded a transformation in education (Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), 2003:h-45).

This legislation, according to Oosthuizen and Rossouw (2003:10-26) encompasses the rights of all learners. It also endeavours to embrace the eradication of inequality, poverty, social injustice and discrimination. This provided the foundation for curriculum transformation and development in contemporary South Africa. The long overdue attempt to heal the injustices of the past through a Constitution aimed at establishing democracy, social justice and equal human rights, signalled a change in education. It also epitomized the unleashing of each person’s potential and a
general improvement in the quality of life for all citizens (Jagwanth & Kalula, 2001:36).

However, education policy is likely to remain an inert set of intentions if it is not accompanied by a vibrancy of teaching actions that interpret the aims of the new policies, adapting and bringing to life their expressed values. This vibrancy is dependant upon educators who possess a deep understanding of the nature of their respective classroom practices. These educators understand how to translate their expectations for learners into pragmatic classroom action and are sensitive to the unique situation of their particular learners, schools and communities. My understanding stems from my own background which seems to have had various similarities with those of my learners.

1.1.2 Personal background

My teaching career commenced at a previously disadvantaged school located in the outskirts of the city. This geographical location can be directly attributed to the apartheid legacy in general and the Group Areas Act in particular (George & Hendricks, 2003:25). The school buildings were “prefabricated buildings which were hurriedly constructed” and were initially intended to serve as “only temporary structures seeing it had a 15 year life span”. The original intention was that it would soon be replaced by face brick buildings (George & Hendricks, 2003:55-58). However, 34 years later, the buildings still boast their original structure albeit in a bad state of dilapidation.

The staff establishment consists of 32 staff members. There are 1078 learners enrolled which results in a teacher-learner ratio of approximately 1:45. This ratio is a direct contradiction of a decision made in early 1996 by the National Department of Education and the teachers’ unions who agreed to a policy of “rightsizing” the Public Service. The intent was equalizing learner-educator ratios aiming for 1:40 in primary schools and 1:35 in secondary schools (Fiske & Ladd, 2005:105). This poses a challenge as classes which were originally designed for a maximum of 30 learners, now had to accommodate 45 learners and in some cases up to 50 learners in the lower grades.
The overcrowded classes often lead to learners displaying disruptive behaviour and the associated disciplinary problems. The school is situated in a residential area and is therefore surrounded by sub-economic, semi-detached houses that lack basic facilities like bathrooms and running water. Most of these dwellings host shacks which accommodate extended families. These shacks sometimes serve as a means of augmenting limited or non-existent income. The home owners erect shacks in their backyards which they rent out to tenants in order to generate a means of income.

This occurs because most of the inhabitants are either unemployed or dependent on government social grants due to the fact that most of them are either semi-educated or illiterate. These socio-economic conditions are often the direct or indirect cause of an increase in school dropouts, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse, promiscuity and a general decay of morals and values. How do my own values influence my role as an educator and my perception of issues relating to education in particular and life in general?

### 1.1.3 My educational values

My goal as a caring educator and contributor to educational transformation in South Africa encompasses various roles. These roles include being a mediator of learning, interpreter and designer of learning and intervention programmes, leader, administrator, manager, life-long scholar, researcher, assessor and learning area specialist (RNCS Policy, 2002:9). Portraying and fulfilling these multiple roles enable me as an educator to demonstrate my engagement with the expressed intentions of the policy. I view this as the mandated responsibility of my own development as an educator. This repertoire of teaching and learning strategies, which I am already implementing in my classroom practice, can be considered as a reflection of my inherent values.

These values, according to Whitehead and McNiff (2006:85), serve as the living standards by which we judge our own practices, and because our theories are created from within our practices, they are also the standards by which we judge our theories. Pollard (2005:93) is of the opinion that teaching tends to attract caring,
compassionate individuals who care about the learners with whom they interact in the classroom. He gives an apt description of the type of teacher I am. The values of caring and compassion are enforced through the South African Council for Educators’ (SACE) code of conduct with whom each educator is registered. SACE requires of educators to respect the rights of learners, acknowledge their uniqueness, encourage the realization of their full potential and to exercise compassion (ELRC, 2003:E-17).

These values reflect and are also the embodiment of my own value and belief system which determine my actions both inside and outside of my classroom. Williams (2004:185) embodies these values so aptly when he notes that real self-acceptance is a challenging and liberating dimension of our journey through life. If you truly accept who and what you are and stand for, it becomes easier to show compassion to others. As an experienced educator, I can endorse this statement by stating that those who feel comfortable being themselves and confident about themselves, generally achieve more, while those who lack confidence in themselves achieve less. Those who believe that they are capable of succeeding are more likely to do so, because a person’s image of themselves largely determines what action they take.

Self-image is therefore a motivating factor. Moreover, those with high self-esteem not only tend to achieve more, they tend to lead more satisfying and fulfilling lives (Hawkins, 2007:11-13). I have accepted myself for who and what I am and have also come to realize my own worth which results in perceiving myself as an individual who can add value to the lives of others. My own positive self-image conveys a positive message of a “can do” attitude to the learners in my care. The value I attach to caring and compassion enables me to honour the rights of my learners whilst simultaneously acknowledging their uniqueness and encouraging the realization of their full potential. As an educator, I have a significant role to play in both caring for the learners I teach and endeavouring to create a caring, compassionate classroom environment where values of kindness, mutual respect and a sense of purpose are promoted. It is my conviction that this atmosphere will assist me in my endeavour to holistically develop well-rounded learners.
If we as educators wish to create caring environments, we need to focus on getting to know each learner as a person as well as his or her strengths and weaknesses or areas of concern. Caring educators need to interact constantly with all the learners, engage in genuine communication with them, listen, make eye contact, respect their opinions, display warmth and concern and exemplify appropriate behaviour (Fox, 2005:267-270). I have learnt that an awareness of the needs of my learners is a prerequisite for a caring environment as children learn to trust by being treated with care and by witnessing care being shown to others. Experience has taught me that an environment of trust encourages a willingness and readiness to share and confide. Generally, children follow actions, not words. Educators therefore have a responsibility to act responsibly as learners view them as role models (Fontana, 1995:383).

I am claiming to embrace the values contained in the South African Constitution; hence I am compelled to address these afore-mentioned social issues. These issues frequently manifest themselves in my daily interaction with learners originating from these dire social conditions. I have voluntarily committed myself to facilitate a change in the negative attitudes displayed by most of my learners. This attitude refers to how they perceive themselves as well as how they feel about themselves. I plan to orchestrate this by giving recognition to their basic human rights, promoting equality and social justice and developing a practice which reflects my own and these afore-mentioned values. By incorporating my own values into my daily practice, I shall be contributing to social transformation in my own classroom (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:46-47). Through my practice, I am afforded the power to influence a change in how my learners perceive and feel about themselves.

I have already begun utilizing that power by facilitating transformation in the attitudes of my learners towards their reading abilities in my Master’s dissertation (Didloft, 2008). Our authorities as educators enable us to address social issues which serve as obstacles in producing the kind of learners envisaged by the RNCS Policy (2002:8). These are learners who will be imbued with the values based on respect for democracy, equality and human dignity. In order to do this, we as educators need to develop the full potential of each learner as a worthy citizen of a democratic South
Africa (RNCS Policy, 2002:8). To achieve this goal though, we first need to identify the concerns hindering learners from reaching self-actualization.

1.2 MY EDUCATIONAL CONCERN

1.2.1 What is my concern?

As an educator, I am driven by my commitment to fairness. I have always given recognition to basic human rights, promoted equality and advocated social justice both inside and outside of the classroom. These principles have been incorporated into my daily practice ever since I have commenced my teaching career. My background experiences, coupled with my Christian upbringing, led me to my deeply rooted commitment to be a champion for justice and equal opportunities for all the learners in my care.

The Constitutional principle (in Section 28) of the best interest of the child always being “of paramount importance” has become my own mantra. My own exposure to discrimination and unfair treatment influenced my decision to find a platform from which I could fight for the rights of marginalized and under-privileged children. As a child, I was exposed to a pattern of failure which ultimately resulted in the learned behaviour of anticipating failure. In addition to this, educators led me to believe that children from disadvantaged backgrounds were not as good as those from more affluent backgrounds.

Submission and subservience were the rule rather than the exception in the classrooms of my childhood. The learning atmosphere was controlled and intense and the learners were passive observers and empty vessels waiting to be filled with prescribed knowledge. This teaching style inhibited and restrained my motivation for learning. I basically just went through the motions with no significant or memorable incidences worth holding on to. When this pattern was repeated in my own classroom, I made a conscious decision to interrupt the pattern of domination and subordination by developing pedagogies that would encourage transition without imposing my authoritarian power onto my learners.
I decided that, instead of treating my learners as passive recipients of knowledge, which will be a “living contradiction of my values”, according to McNiff and Whitehead (2006:46-47), I will be developing a pedagogic approach which is both emancipatory and collaborative. My concern however, is the perceptions and feelings my learners have of themselves and their own worth as individuals. Most of my learners display signs and symptoms indicative of a low self-esteem and self-concept which are manifested in their reluctance to participate in discussions or offering their opinions. Often, shyness or a lack of confidence, which are symptoms of a low self-esteem, are used as justification for not complying to instructions or failing to hand in assignments.

Child (2007:241-242) describes “self-concept” as the impressions you have of yourself and “self-esteem” as the extent to which you like and value yourself. He substantiates that our self-concept and self-esteem operate in such a way that they often manifest in a self-fulfilment prophecy. This prophecy occurs when you expect or anticipate certain responses from others. It basically implies that the behaviour of an individual leads to the fulfilment of his or her expectations. Individuals who expect to be treated in a certain way – most often negatively – often are, but the opposite is also true. This expectation can be utilized positively if educators gain knowledge on how to use it to the advantage of their learners.

### 1.2.2 Why am I concerned?

I am concerned when I recognize most of the symptoms of a low self-esteem and negative self-concept described by Barnard et al. (2001:119) displayed by the majority of learners in the classes I teach. These include, to mention only a few, **an over-dependence on the approval of others, fear of taking risks** which prevent them from making changes that may be necessary. Other signs include **a negative attitude**, causing them to see only bad things for their futures, a “yes-but” outlook that causes them to doubt sincere intentions, so much so that they become cynical. They also tend to **build a shield of “protection” around themselves** which give them an appearance of indifference. This impacts negatively on all potential relationships as it creates distance and pushes others away. Another symptom is the
negativity, always predicting worst-case scenarios which lead to failure, loss and disapproval, making learners believe the worst again, resulting in a negative cycle.

All the afore-mentioned symptoms are visible in my classroom, making attaining simple goals an almost impossible task as the barriers need to be addressed before learning outcomes and assessment standards can become the focus. Overcoming the barriers has therefore become my primary objective as it needed to be eliminated before learners are expected to attain any outcomes expected of them. The effects of a low self-esteem as identified by the ELRC (2003:H-28), are struggling to cope with challenges, self-critical thoughts, becoming passive and withdrawn, sometimes even depressed, reluctance to try new things, giving up easily and being generally pessimistic. I am concerned when the characteristics of a low self-esteem, according to Stewart (1999), cited by Barnard et al. (2001:116), seem to be displayed by most of the learners in my care. These include, amongst others, learners finding it difficult to see the positive in anything, the tendency to be overly-anxious, being complacent in their comfort zone, reluctance to be adventurous, feeling inferior, discontented and prone to suicidal thoughts.

The above-mentioned characteristics, which I identified in my learners, caused me to take action in order to help my learners to develop a positive self-esteem which will later develop into their self-actualization. My beliefs and values are central to my profession and have become an integral part of who I am. They have also shaped the kind of educator I have become. So has my historical background. My values and beliefs are the standards by which I judge my practice. I refuse to allow my educational values and those of my learners to be denied or even violated by a low self-esteem and self-concept. I now needed to negotiate intervention strategies to overcome this barrier. The fact that a self-concept is learned implies that it can be unlearned (Gerdes, 1988:77). It also signifies that a negative self-concept can be changed into a positive self-concept through innovative intervention strategies and appropriate learning and teaching strategies.

My challenge is to design and develop strategies which will address the needs of my learners and help them become what they are capable of becoming. Embarking on this educational journey will help me to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge.
which will enable me to facilitate the enhancement and development of a positive self-esteem and self-concept in my learners. Hopefully, I will ultimately lead them towards the realization of their full potentials whereby they will attain self-actualization. This is the primary rationale for initiating this study.

1.3 PURPOSE OF UNDERTAKING THIS STUDY

Reflecting on my current practice, I realize that I need to become an agent of change. I hope to find solutions to my research question, “How can I facilitate the enhancement and development of the self-esteem of my learners towards the possible attainment self-actualization?” In my endeavour to find possible answers, I aim to set myself the following objectives:

- To determine the immediate needs of my learners in order to make a needs analysis;
- To reflect on the impact my relationship has on the self-esteem of my learners;
- To understand my ontological stance;
- To identify the effects of a low self-esteem;
- To create an awareness among learners of the significance of a positive self-esteem;
- To assist my learners to determine their own levels of self-esteem;
- To involve learners in relevant decision making procedures in the classroom;
- To encourage learners to take on greater responsibility in and outside of the classroom;
- To give positive verbal and written feedback regarding their own growth to my learners;
- To make allowance for learners to accept more responsibilities in the classroom and beyond;
- To add to the body of knowledge in the area of self-esteem within the classroom context;
- To ultimately improve my learners self-esteem and self-concept.
In order to attain these aims I have set for myself, I will be compelled to accommodate the emerging questions:

• Are my learners coping with challenges confronting them in the classroom?
• Are they harbouring any self-critical thoughts?
• Are my learners sometimes passive, withdrawn or depressed?
• Are my learners eager to try new things?
• Are they generally pessimistic?
• Are they persevering with difficult tasks or do they give up easily?
• Are they offering their opinions during lessons or class discussions?
• Am I addressing their most important needs according to Maslow’s hierarchy?
• Am I equipping my learners with new skills on a regular basis?
• Am I affirming those learners who deserve to be affirmed?
• Am I creating equal opportunities for all my learners?
• Am I encouraging participation and discouraging exclusion?
• Am I creating opportunities for all my learners to take on responsibilities?
• Am I making allowance for my learners to make their voices heard where spirituality, politics and religion are concerned?
• Am I making my learners part of decisions being made in the classroom?

Maslow (1970), cited by Louw and Edwards (1994:434-436), ascertain that human action is prompted by needs which may be arranged in a hierarchy. As the more basic physiological needs are met, higher levels of needs characteristic of increased degrees of mental health, surface. Viale, Lysaght and Verenikina (2005:167) elaborate on this by explaining that the needs lose their preference as they are met at each level, but they are still necessary for continuing satisfaction to allow the higher levels to emerge and to be accommodated.

Child (2007:241-242) cited Maslow, who is of the opinion that individuals have two types of “esteem” needs. Firstly, there is the desire for competence, achievement, adequacy, confidence in front of peers, independence and freedom. Secondly, he posits the desire for recognition, reputation and prestige, attention, significance and
appreciation by others. The former refers to the desire for confidence in oneself; the latter is a wish for prestige and respect from others. These desires, depending on whether they are met or not, can possibly lead to feelings of inferiority, weakness or helplessness.

This pragmatic view of needs can be best demonstrated using the pyramid shape (Figure 1) of the hierarchical arrangement showing the broad base of physiological and safety factors necessary before other possible needs are likely to be considered (Child, 2007:239).

**Figure 1: A hierarchy of basic needs**
Mwamwenda (2004:240-243) explains the above-mentioned pyramid shape as follows: the first four needs in the diagram are known as deficiency needs and their fulfilment is largely dependent on other individuals. The second section of needs mirrors Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1762) theory. Rousseau was of the opinion that people are naturally good and happy. In view of this, people ought to learn through their experiences with nature, to learn to depend on entities existing within their environment, whilst learning to depend on themselves and be independent of others.

**How does the hierarchy of needs fit in a school setting?**

With regard to its application in a school and classroom setting, the educator needs to ensure that learners receive adequate nutrition, are comfortable and appropriately dressed for weather conditions. The fulfilment of their safety needs is also essential to their sense of security. The educator ought to protect them against bullying, chastising, humiliation or even severe and unfair discipline. It is also important for educators to establish good relationships with learners. Furthermore, educators should instil a sense of pride and belonging in learners to be part of the class and include them in the teaching and learning process. Another significant aspect is that educators should assist learners to develop a positive self-concept by always treating them with as much dignity as possible. They should assign learners tasks that match their intellectual abilities, since work they can handle boosts their self-esteem (Mwamwenda, 2004:242). Finally, the goal of educators should be to enable learners to develop their potential fully and to find fulfilment in life. This could be attained by encouraging learners to pursue their objectives by doing and being the best they can. This will help them reach self-actualization.

Self-actualization, the ultimate point in Maslow’s hierarchy, refers to the desire to fulfil one’s potential. As Maslow so aptly puts it, “*What a man can be, he must be*”. Self-actualization is actually dependent on self-realization. In other words, we have to know what we are able to do before we can do it efficiently. It can therefore be inferred that self-actualization is growth-motivated and not deficiency-motivated. It can also depend upon a person’s perception of his or her competencies. In the light of the afore-mentioned statements, it can therefore be concluded that it is important for educators to observe, discover, identify, encourage and enhance the capabilities of each learner in order to ultimately help them reach self-actualization. The
realization of this can signify positive interaction, the attainment of the full potential of learners and possible improvement in academic achievement (Barnard et al., 2005:120-122). The rationale behind this study can therefore be viewed as the desire to eliminate the low or negative self-esteem and self-concept of learners and transform them into a positive self-esteem and self-concept for self-actualization.

Most of my learners experience a lack of physiological needs which makes it difficult for them to progress to the self-actualization level. I therefore need to strategize in order to facilitate development in the lower order needs with the intention of helping them have their higher order needs met and ultimately seeing them attain self-actualization. In my endeavour to find solutions to my concerns, I will reflect on the principles underpinning the values I attach to inclusion, justice and basic human rights. My methodology, as suggested by Whitehead and McNiff (2006:23), will be influenced by my ontological and epistemological assumptions. In order to find answers and solutions to my research questions, I now need to find a theoretical framework within which to situate this investigation.

1.4 THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Delamater and Myers, cited by Child (2007:8) mention that theoretical perspectives establish a vantage point from which educators can study a range of social behaviours. Due to the fact that any perspective over-emphasizes certain features and downplays others, educators are able to determine more accurately certain aspects or features of social behaviour. The fundamental value of any theoretical perspective lies in its applicability across a range of situations. It provides a frame of reference for interpreting and comparing a wide scope of social situations and behaviours. What is a theory? Sullivan (2001:30) refers to a theory as a set of interrelated, abstract propositions or statements that offers an explanation of certain phenomena. He further explains that there are three basic aspects in this definition that are significant to comprehend what theories entail.

Firstly, theories are constituted of propositions, which are statements about the relationships between some components in the theory. Secondly, theories are abstract systems, which mean they link general and abstract propositions to specific,
testable occurrences or phenomena. In order for a set of propositions to constitute a theory, deducing further relationships between the components must be possible. The third aspect of theories is that they provide explanations for phenomena being examined. Ultimately, a theory explains WHY something occurs. Knowledge is accumulated through the development and verification of theories. It commences with observations which are normally associated with reality or what is true.

Child (2007:172) warns that no single learning theory provides us with all the answers, just as all the theories added together do not provide all the answers. An important point to remember is that a theory can sound valid whilst it may be devoid of scientific meaning unless it withstands the rigors of experimental tests (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1992:16). As a research tool however, a theory cannot be proven right or wrong; it is either useful or not useful. If a hypothesis generated by a theory is confirmed, the theory is strengthened; if rejected, it is weakened and must either be revised or abandoned. In my endeavour to search for answers to why most of my learners suffer from a low self-esteem and a negative self-concept, I will be theorizing by examining the commonalities of phenomena and experiences.

I will also formulate generalizations after recognizing and grouping together common elements I observe in my classroom. The theory I formulate will form the basis of my theory of teaching and the theoretical underpinning which will form the foundation of my learning and teaching approaches. Aiming to use theory to bring about social change compels me to choose social constructivism as an obvious choice on which to base my study. Why constructivism as a theoretical context?

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:98-101) postulate that constructivism is a current and significant theoretical perspective that influences all aspects of teaching and learning. According to these writers, it is also a perspective that is central to and underpins the outcomes-based education (OBE) approach which entails a social, developing, learner-centred teaching and learning environment. Constructivism views knowledge as actively constructed and not simply transferred. The emphasis is shifted to ACTION where individuals are seen as active agents, being actively involved in their own development. Developmental psychologists Piaget (1953) and Bruner (1966) emphasize that knowledge is not merely absorbed, but actively
constructed and developed to progressively higher levels in individuals. Through engaging in experiences, activities and discussions which challenge them to make meaning of their social contexts, learners are actively engaged in building progressively more complex comprehensions of their surroundings. Russian theorists such as Vygotsky and Bakhtin reiterate this when they view knowledge as a social construction, developed and learned through social interaction.

As a classroom-based practitioner, the afore-mentioned statements made me realize that my learners are not objects who are passively influenced by the forces around them. They are active agents who are making meaning of their lives through their social context. These afore-mentioned theorists helped me to see that my learners are active agents within their own development, irrespective of whether that development is positive or negative. However, I need to bear in mind that the power to make changes depend on the personal characteristics of individuals. Some learners may, for example, have a strong internal “locus of control” despite their social context. This implies that such learners can make a difference in what happens to them as control is internal. By contrast, those learners who have an external “locus of control” will feel that control over what happens to them comes from outside of themselves, so that they have no control over it.

Developmentally, the “locus of control” originates in the family system, but peers, the classroom set-up and other social situations, like poverty, may also have an influence on the “locus of control”. The practitioner-researcher, like myself, can use this knowledge to develop the internal “locus of control” to enable learners to become active agents in their own development process. The learners can also be helped to deal effectively and appropriately with external “locus of control”. This exercise of control will enable them to control and determine their own personal growth. Thus, aiming to facilitate the development of a positive self-esteem and self-concept of learners, the Constructivist approach is the most logical choice as it is a means of allowing my learners to orchestrate their own improvement and empowerment.

The theorists who encapsulate my own value and belief system and who use theory to bring about social change are Ebersohn and Eloff (2003:9). They are also known as critical theorists or action researchers. These two advocate an asset-based
approach which is basically an approach focussing on the attributes or positive characteristics of learners. Most of my learners suffer from a low self-esteem and negative self-concept and thus need to be affirmed for the good qualities they possess in order to enhance their self-esteem and self-concept.

Ira Shor and Paulo Freire (1987) are two more critical theorists who mention, in their book, *A pedagogy for liberation*, that outcomes can only be achieved if educators create situations where learners feel comfortable enough to open up to express their authentic feelings. They further advise educator-researchers to challenge the curriculum and to be resistant to its demands if these contradict their aims or values. In order to accomplish this, educators will have to exercise restraint and allow co-operative learning where learners become partners and the learning process reciprocal. Democratic principles which will undoubtedly lead to learner improvement should be encouraged. John Dewey (1916:193-204) promoted democracy in schools. He basically defined democracy as emancipating the mind for independent effectiveness. This implies freedom of thought which eventually leads to freedom of action.

Classroom-based practitioners such as myself promote democracy of education in our classrooms as we give our learners voices through our democratic learning and teaching strategies which include activities encouraging emancipatory thoughts, actions and expressions. Which design will accommodate this social constructivist approach most effectively? And which design will be used to the benefit of my learners so desperately in need of transforming their low self-esteem and negative self-concept into a positive self-esteem and self-concept?

### 1.5 AN ACTION RESEARCH DESIGN

Stringer (2004:3) states that action research is essentially qualitative or naturalistic in nature, aiming to construct a holistic comprehension of the complex social world within a classroom context. My research methodology will therefore mirror my subjective experience and the way I aim to construct meaning, interpret and respond to my issue of concern. This issue of concern is the low self-esteem and negative self-concept of most of the learners in my care. In striving to develop a positive self-
esteem and self-concept in my learners, I will employ the cyclic approach to action research as suggested by McNiff and Whitehead (2002:92) and others such as Frost, Bassey, Hopkins, Dick and Bell (cited by Costello, 2003:5).

This will be done in my classroom with my learners experiencing a low self-esteem and negative self-concept. As a classroom-based practitioner, I will be examining my own practice, using my learners as my research participants and my school as my research population. My research approach will be qualitative in nature as I will be focussing on a “phenomena occurring in a natural setting” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:135). A qualitative approach also involves examining phenomena in all its complexity, rarely attempting to simplify what is observed. Instead, it recognizes that the issue examined has many dimensions; therefore it is the endeavour of the researcher to portray it in its multi-faceted form. My “natural setting” will be my classroom and my learners my “complex, multi-faceted” participants on whom my research will be conducted. Their many dimensions have to be recognized and acknowledged in all their complexity (Didloft, 2008:54).

MacIntyre (2000:xi-xii) reiterates the above-mentioned views by indicating that the classroom is a complex social environment consisting of diverse individuals from different backgrounds and different levels of experience. Adapting to anything new is no easy task as innovations which “work” in one situation may be of limited use or even a futile exercise in yet another. It is imperative therefore, that educators become involved in classroom research, as they can accumulate a bank of learning and teaching strategies which they may find helpful in their own context.

Moreover, these educator-researchers will have evidence to prove that they have kept abreast of current developments and tested them or that the “imposed” changes do not benefit the learners in their own classrooms. Furthermore, such findings, based on evidence, are significant beyond the classroom, for only through being made aware of the advantages and disadvantages of change in different contexts can policy makers be informed and make informed decisions regarding classroom practices.
Why should classroom-based practitioners choose action research in which to situate their studies? Bryant (1996), cited by MacIntyre (2000:xi), analyses action research as a method which “fits” the parameters and ethos of the classroom as it allows educators and learners to become active agents in issues concerning them. They are no longer mere observers watching other researchers making decisions and implementing policies which concern them. Educators and learners are now fully involved in conceptualizing and implementing transformation. This transformation is important, for it means that changes can be designed for specific learners within a specific context.

Why should educators become action researchers? Are the complexities of teaching not demanding enough? Is action research not too time-consuming or difficult (Nitsch, 2008:80, 250-252)? Can it improve teaching? McNiff and Whitehead (2006:7) justify this type of research as a form of enquiry that enables practitioners to investigate and evaluate their work in their own classrooms. When asking themselves such questions as, “What am I doing? What do I need to improve in my classroom? How do I go about improving it?” Their account of practice will demonstrate how they are endeavouring to improve their own learning while influencing the learning of others. These accounts will serve as their own theories of practice from which others can learn if they desire to do so.

Frost et al. (cited by Costello, 2003:5) describe action research as “an enquiry and action... to improve some educational practice... a personal attempt at understanding... which allows change... a critical reflection and practical, problem-solving enquiry... a cyclic process...".

McNiff and Whitehead (2006:7) agree with afore-mentioned writers as they also consider action research as an enquiry enabling practitioners to be self-reflective. The practitioners’ accounts demonstrate their attempts to improve their own learning whilst influencing the learning of others. There are three basic movements within the action research design, namely:
• **The Interpretive Action Research**, espoused by Elliot *et al.* (1991) as a facilitator for assisting others in doing research and which has as its aim to understand and not necessarily act on that understanding.

• **Critical Theoretic Action Research**, viewed by Carr and Kemmis (1986) as a tool for examining and challenging positions of power in social settings.

• **Living Theory Action Research**, described by McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996) as a LIVED practice - not merely a rhetorical or theoretic exercise.

The latter is my chosen methodology within which I would situate this study as I deem it the most appropriate means of seeking improvement and development within my practice. My classroom practice is also a LIVED practice in which I am central. It is therefore not a rhetorical or theoretical case study. This methodology will provide the opportunity to form a reflective and personal educational theory about developing a positive self-esteem towards attaining self-actualization in my classroom practice. Action research can be a powerful and emancipatory form of professional enquiry – as I have discovered when I investigated my own practice, endeavouring to find ways to improve the reading abilities of my learners in my Master’s dissertation (Didloft, 2008).

McNiff and Whitehead (2002:8) consider such accounts as practitioners’ own theories of practice. Whitehead and McNiff (2006:20-21) substantiate this by stating that these theories are often tested against the critical responses of others to test their validity. To determine the validity of their theories, practitioners need to verbalize the standards of judgements used. This is done to evaluate whether the theories actually reflect the values underpinning their practices.

I aim to establish validity in my own perspective by developing my own emerging theories. This will be done within the framework of a qualitative approach. There are many qualitative research designs as stated by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:149). The five most common are: **case studies** (single case), **ethnography** (particular person, programme or event), **phenomology** (perceptions and understandings of a situation), **content analysis** (examination of material) and **grounded theory study**
(theory emerging from study). The latter is my chosen design as it will be most suitable for my inquiry and the one least likely to begin from a particular theoretical framework.

On the contrary, the main purpose of a grounded theory approach is to begin with the data and to use them to develop a theory of one’s own. The term “grounded” refers to the notion that the theory that emerges from the inquiry is “grounded” in data collected in the field rather than taken from the research literature. Data collection is field-based, flexible and likely to change over the course of the inquiry. Anything of potential relevance to the investigation may be utilized. However, the theory needs to be tested ultimately in order to qualify as grounded theory. Data gathered must include the perspectives, views and ideas of individuals being researched (Strauss & Corbin, 1994:273-285).

My data collection techniques will include diary entries, journals, observations, questionnaires, interviews and discussions as it presents a particular version of what occurred, was observed and comprehended by the practitioner (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003:172). McNiff and Whitehead (2002:94-97) emphasize this when they note that data collection is a means of “increasing our understanding of an issue under investigation”. The strength, however, of qualitative research, lies in using multiple sources of data, referred to as triangulation by Stringer (2004:57). This data will later be turned into evidence to ensure validity, accuracy, reliability and trustworthiness of phenomena studied (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005:61). I will base my study on the Social Constructivists’ Learning Theory as it is central to, and underpins, the outcomes based approach to education (OBE).

According to Epstein (2002:4), Social Constructivism is based on the following general principles of learning:

- Learning is an **active** process
- Learning is a **developing** process
- Learning is a **social activity**
- Learning activities **involve thinking**
- Learning takes place in **relation to existing knowledge**
• Learning involves language
• One needs knowledge to learn
• It takes time to learn
• A key component to learning is motivation.

All the aspects mentioned above can be viewed as the deciding factors behind my choice of design, approach, methodology and strategies. How do I go about applying these in my classroom situation? How do I modify my current practice to address my issues of concern?

1.6 MODIFICATION OF MY PRACTICE

1.6.1 My intervention strategy

Aiming to develop my own strategy regarding the improvement of the low self-esteem and the negative self-concept of my learners towards attaining self-actualization, I plan to adopt the cyclic methodological action research approach as illustrated in Figure 2 (i) and (ii).
Figure 2(i): Intervention (V. Didloft, 2009)

1. Introductory Phase
   - Activating prior knowledge taking social experience into consideration (learner, social context and environmental influences)

2. Intervention Phase
   - Intervention phases used interchangeably (learner involvement, responsibilities and drama-in-education)

3. Application of Acquired Knowledge

4. Observation, Reflection and Reviewing of learning and teaching strategies

Self-Actualization

Involvement and Responsibility

Drama in Education

Learner

Social context

Environmental influences

Figure 2(ii): Learning and Teaching Model (V. Didloft, 2009)
My diagram is divided into three basic phases: (1) an introduction phase, (2) an intervention phase and (3) application of acquired knowledge. It is cyclic in nature and the phases are meant to be used inter-changeably. The reflection, planning, evaluation/action and modification processes are done throughout the teaching and learning process. In order to explain the diagrams, it is necessary to describe the phases respectively:

1.6.1.1 The introductory phase (Figure 3)

Learners bring their own knowledge, skills, values and understanding to the learning and teaching situation from their respective social contexts and environmental influences (Donald et al., 2002:90). Teaching and learning can therefore be seen as reciprocal and a continuous interaction between the learner and the facilitator. The three important factors present in the situation are therefore the learner, the facilitator and all relevant role players and their personal experiences stemming from their respective social contexts and environmental influences.

Each of these commodities has a role to play in the learning and teaching process. The learner is expected to participate, the facilitator initiates the learning process and the social contexts and environmental influences serve as the foundation on which to build the newly acquired knowledge.

The rationale behind the triangle is one of gaining different perspectives of the learning process (Sagor, 2000:93). The triangle is placed with the base as starting
point to demonstrate the foundation of prior knowledge the learner brings into the learning context. During this phase, the facilitator taps into the prior knowledge of the learners and creates contexts, considering their social contexts and environmental influences. Prior knowledge, according to Rozmiarek (2006:22) assists learners in mastering the skill of making associations. Hanekom (2008:2) supports this statement by stating that it is a commodity needed to reach a point of understanding. Once a learning atmosphere is established, and learning is active and in relation to existing knowledge, phase two can commence.

1.6.1.2 The intervention phase (Figure 4)

This is the phase which is also known as the intervention phase. Cycles one, two and three are presented interchangeably. It involves learner involvement, learner responsibilities, drama-in-education and affirmation and motivation. Basically, the learner involvement entails getting learners involved in decisions relating to classroom policies and management. Their opinions are sought and used in order to make them feel valued. They are encouraged to be involved in all matters concerning them and motivated to help with choices where relevant. This will help to develop and design a classroom policy based on their own values and beliefs. This will give them a sense of worth and hopefully boost their self-esteem and self-concept.

The responsibilities given to learners will include the Grade Twelve learners adopting a Grade Eight class situated right next to my classroom. This choice was made due to practical reasons as it will make validation and control measures easier. The Grade Twelve class is my registered class and the Grade Eight class is the
registered class of my English colleague and validator. Each Grade Twelve learner will be allocated a learner for whom they must take responsibility. This includes keeping record of their charges’ personal profiles, academic progress, aims, strengths and weaknesses. The mentor has to take full responsibility and get validation about their charges from friends, parents, teachers and any relevant role players. This will form part of the data collection process and used as evidence later. Learners are also involved in decision-making processes in the classroom. They are encouraged to give inputs in matters pertaining to them such as classroom rules, code of conduct, seating arrangements, classroom setting and topics of discussion.

The second cycle will be the incorporation of drama-in-education by means of role-play and dramatization strategies (Athiemoolam, 2008). Here learners are given the opportunities to step out of their shells and own circumstances in order to develop them into confident and expressive speakers. They are given the opportunity to take on the personas of any character. The purpose of this exercise is to help them to express their feelings and thoughts through the situations of others. This will hopefully assist in the development of a positive self-esteem and self-concept. The three cycles are implemented interchangeably whilst reflection, planning, evaluation/action and modification occur. The third cycle involves affirmation and motivation. During this cycle, the learners are affirmed and motivated when they show evidence of accomplishment of any kind (verbal or written). Their contributions are valued and displayed in the classroom. They are encouraged to rise to the educators’ and their own expectation. This leaves the last phase:

1.6.1.3 The application of acquired knowledge (Figure 5 (i))
This phase is also known as the **application phase** of the teaching and learning process. The triangle pointing downwards indicates the application of acquired knowledge. The phase involves unlimited learning opportunities and possibilities. It encompasses acquired knowledge which will be applied to various social settings. The triangulation consists of the facilitator and all other relevant role players, the learner, the social context, and environmental influences. If newly acquired knowledge can be applied appropriately, then the learning process was successful. In this case, a change in the way the learners perceive themselves, (from negatively to positively) and also in the way they feel about themselves (valued, positive, etcetera), will be an indication that the intervention strategies helped to develop what was intended to. The complete diagram as illustrated below is used interchangeably:

**Figure 5(ii): Complete intervention diagram**

These three above-mentioned phases are not the only intervention strategies which will be implemented in my classroom. My entire learning and teaching approach will be focussed on the enhancement of the self-esteem and self-concept of my learners under examination. The enhancement programme will be built into my normal daily learning and teaching methodology and will be a natural process. Firstly, I will establish the level of self-esteem and self-concept of each learner by means of questionnaires (Barnard et al., 2005). Once that is established, my next step will be to develop spontaneity and self-acceptance among the learners by demonstrating through oral lessons how to express their emotions, strengths and weaknesses. They will do this by acting out emotions, describing themselves and expressing their likes and dislikes as well as strengths and weaknesses (Barnard et al., 2005).
The next step would be to teach them how to portray confidence through their body language, by means of non-verbal communication. Again, they are trained, through oral exercises, to look confident, make direct eye contact, have relaxed shoulders, an audible voice and no irritating mannerisms. In another session, learners can be taught to be assertive in their social interaction with others by staging mock situations. During these exercises, learners are shown the differences between aggressiveness, arrogance and assertiveness by creating imaginary scenarios in class.

Another important skill that learners need to be equipped with is how to cope with stress. They can be shown how to relax, how to channel their pent-up frustrations through doing fun activities or participating in sport. Additionally, they can also be shown how to use positive affirmations by telling themselves that they are relaxed, happy, confident or without worries. Lastly, learners are shown how to strengthen themselves by acknowledging and verbalizing one another’s attributes. Afterwards they are asked to discuss how they felt after receiving compliments and then encouraged to write down their strengths and to embrace them.

These enhancement strategies will be implemented in my classroom and adapted to suit the needs of my learners. It will be incorporated into my daily learning and teaching strategies. It will also be interchanged with the three cycles of involvement and responsibility, drama-in-education and affirmation and motivation, in no particular order. How do I show validation of my account of learning?

1.7 VALIDATION OF MY ACCOUNT OF LEARNING

Once the evidence is gathered, it is essential to show the validity thereof. Validity, as established by McNiff and Whitehead (2006:157), refers to establishing the truthworthiness of a claim, its authenticity and its trustworthiness, which is a rigorous methodological process. Mills (2003:77) confirms this by describing validity as a “degree to which scientific observations actually measure or record what they purport to measure”. Whitehead and McNiff (2006:95) reiterate these views by concluding that validity is about establishing the trustworthiness of a claim to knowledge.
I hope to produce authenticated evidence to indicate the validity of my claim to enhance the self-esteem and self-concept of my learners. I aim to do this by producing evidence in the form of completed questionnaires, diary entries, journals, observations and validations of critical friends, colleagues, parents and validation groups. The advice of Whitehead and McNiff (2006:103), who suggest that both personal and social validation be used, will be heeded throughout this study. Both these processes will reflect the value and belief system of myself, as well as those of my learners. My own social validation will be established through regular meetings with my colleagues, critical friends and validation groups. The social validation of my learners will be captured by their mentors, through interviews with their parents, friends and teachers.

The claims to enhancement or transformation in the self-esteem and self-concept of learners will be reviewed and assessed in relation to the evidence produced. These data can be used in the data analysis to determine or establish the validity of claims to knowledge.

In addition to offering personal and social validation of my own inquiry and those of my research participants who act as mentors, I aim to focus on my own ontological, epistemological, methodological and pedagogical standards of judgements. By doing this, I will be justifying how I maintain epistemological and methodological rigour. However, validating my account of learning necessitates certain ethical procedures to protect the rights of all involved in this research.

1.8 ETHICAL MEASURES

Mills (2003:90-91) states that ethics in action research can be explained in terms of the way we treat those with whom we interact. Smith (1990) cited by Mills (2003:91) elaborates on this by stating that caring, fairness, transparency and truthfulness should be the most important values to be considered when conducting an inquiry. The rights of participants should always take preference and be protected when doing research. Their permission should always be sought before research commences. I will ensure that my research protects the integrity of those with whom
I will collaborate. This will be done by assuring participants of **confidentiality, integrity** and **transparency** at all time (Mills, 2003:93).

The principles of democracy, social justice, equality and emancipation will guide my ethical considerations in my endeavour to find ways of developing the self-esteem and self-concept of my learners. Letters of permission to conduct my study and to do a classroom-based investigation will be written to the Department of Education (DoE), the parents of my research participants and the principal and governing body of my school. These letters are attached as appendices. Only once permission has been granted will I proceed with my investigation. How will others benefit from this investigation?

### 1.9 **SIGNIFICANCE OF MY RESEARCH**

Individuals need to acquire self-awareness in order to cope in a world of accelerated change. To do this, we need to find answers to the following questions: “Who am I? How did I become this kind of person? Who do I want to be? Where do I want to go?” Without clarity of who you are currently, and how you came to be that person, there is very little possibility of growth, modification or even change. You cannot easily modify or undergo a transformation unless you can visualize and see things from different perspectives.

The process of examining yourself and deciding what about yourself you would like to keep and strengthen, and what about yourself you would like to change, modify or discard, is the process of self-awareness. In the current National Curriculum Statement (NCS) learners are taught very little about themselves as human beings; about their feelings, their needs, sexuality, how to relate, how to achieve goals, how to be assertive and true to their values, and other such issues which really concern them. The Teachers’ Guide Life Orientation (NCS, 2006:43) touches on this important aspect in the first learning outcome which states that “a learner should be able to achieve and maintain personal well-being when they are able to apply various strategies to enhance self-awareness and self-esteem, while acknowledging and respecting the uniqueness of self and others...”. This is the only learning area which accommodates this very important issue.
Why is the development and enhancement of self-esteem and a positive self-concept such an issue? How is it going to benefit the learners? What is the attainment of self-awareness going to give the learners?

This can be answered in simple terms: If we understand what it is in our personalities that restrict us from attaining our goals, we can begin to discard these barriers and utilize all our potential for success and achievement or even to start living a more fulfilled life which will leave us totally contented. The sooner we have the courage to confront the realities of our own shortcomings and accept the risks, fears and discomforts inherent in change, the sooner we can discard the negatives and painful baggage of the past. When we begin to strip away the “masks” and “illusions” and start to discover who we really are, we can begin with self-confrontation in our personalities, perception of self and self-esteem.

Research has consistently shown a positive correlation between how people value themselves and the level of their academic achievement (Barnard et al., 2005). The development of a high self-esteem should therefore be a valuable goal for educationists as the development of intellectual skills. These two aforementioned entities are inextricably linked with both affecting and influencing each other. It is impossible to separate the emotions from the intellect. The learner who is over-anxious, for instance, is not able to think clearly. Education therefore needs to be concerned with the learner as a whole person and not just the part known as the intellect.

Appreciating and acknowledging the important role of emotions and the development of a positive self-esteem and self-concept help me to put into practice that which I claim will assist my learners to realize their full potential. Addressing my own professional concerns about the lack of a healthy self-esteem and a negative self-concept, enable me to facilitate the enhancement of that which is needed to motivate my learners and myself to self-actualization. I hope to create a living theory through the development of my own self-awareness enhancement learning and teaching strategies.
By integrating my ontological, spiritual and ethical values within practice-based knowledge, I will possibly improve my own professional learning while simultaneously developing new strategies to transform low self-esteem and negative self-concepts in my learners into positive self-esteem and self-concepts. I also hope to contribute to new epistemologies regarding these issues. This will hopefully lead to more educators being motivated to explore and find ways to overcome similar barriers in their classrooms.

I hope that the articulation of my concerns will help me and others to comprehend our situation better and encourage fellow educators, especially at my school, to practise more compassionate and supportive teaching approaches. Focussing on the HOW and not the WHAT with regard to curriculum content, will hopefully lead to the developing of my own theory in practice which can possibly be used to help others with similar concerns in their classrooms. What do I hope to accomplish by developing my own theory regarding enhancing self-esteem for self-actualization?

1.10 CONCLUSION

When asking myself: “Why am I a teacher and why do I do what I am doing?” the words of Ayers (1989) remind me WHY I chose this profession when he writes: “Teaching involves a search for meaning in the world. Teaching is a life project, a calling, a vocation that is an organizing centre of all other activities. Teaching is past and future as well as present, it is background as well as foreground; it is depth as well as surface. Teaching is pain and humour, joy and anger, dreariness and epiphany. Teaching is world building. It is architecture and design; it is purpose and moral enterprise. Teaching is a way of being in the world that breaks through the boundaries of the traditional job and in the process redefines all life and teaching itself.”

When Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe advises, “Treat people as if they are what they ought to be and you will help them become what they are capable of becoming!” I again ask myself, “How do I as a teacher manage to do that?” Eichhorst (2001) manages to help me answer my own question when she suggests that we daily plant seeds of confidence in our learners, urge them forward, encourage them, lift them
and believe in them more than they believe in themselves. If we do this, she argues, we endeavour to unlock their untapped potential, because what is important is not what our learners are, but more about what they are capable of becoming! If we continually tell our learners that they are great, they will rise to our expectations. All these learners sometimes need is someone who believes in them and the seed of greatness, which is inherent in all individuals, will take root and grow (Covey, 2006:ix). When we daily plant seeds of confidence in our learners, we actually help them to bring to realization the potential they already possess.

There is little more gratifying than knowing you were instrumental in transformation, and have made a difference, added to the self-worth or even helped to develop a positive self-esteem and self-concept in a fellow human being. We ought to make our learners feel valued by empowering them, emancipating their thoughts, illuminating their assets and unlocking their hidden potentials.

In the endeavour to help them ultimately attain self-actualization, these learners will be equipped to engineer their own improvement and personal growths. Eichhorst (2001) remarks that it sometimes takes someone else to believe in you before you will start believing in yourself. Most of my learners have a limited believe in themselves and their abilities and potentials. This greatly restricts them from achieving what they are really capable of. We as teachers need to daily motivate our learners by constantly reminding them of the great potential each one of them possesses.

Our belief in our learners can ultimately lead us to unleash their untapped potential and help them achieve what Mahatma Ghandi intended when he said, “Be the change you want to see in the world!” These words are echoed by Barack Obama, the first American black president, who said in his Inauguration Speech, “Yes, we can!” The greatest philosopher of all, Jesus Christ, reminds us in one of His scriptures, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!” This is my inspiration which I hope to transfer to my learners suffering from a low self-esteem and negative self-concept.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Johnson (1995:3) states that in order to become our true selves, we must have the courage to be ourselves and follow our own goals and dreams. If we are unable to do that, then the life we are living, is not our own. That is a frightening thought – that the life we are living is not our own! How can we ever be self-fulfilled or reach self-actualization when we are lying to ourselves? Being honest with yourself implies bridging the gap between “Who I am” and “What I do” and between “Ought to be” and “Is”. In essence it is being what you believe in; allowing your every action and behaviour to be an expression of you are inside.

It can not be done unless we recognize, acknowledge and realize to what extent our lives are being restricted, and how many of our actions are motivated by external forces rather than inner desires. McGraw (2006:221) reiterates this when she reminds us that there will always be people who want to tell you who you ought to be and what you should do, but no one can tell you how to live your life, simply because there is no one on earth like you.

You only need to look inside yourself to discover who is really in there – not your mother or father, your friend, boyfriend or girlfriend, husband or wife, but you. We need to go beyond the labels of daughter, son, brother, sister, wife, husband, mother or father, until we find the essential person inside, the unique individual God created. We need to recognize that individual, embrace him/her, and honour him/her by insisting on our right to choose the life we are meant to live. We need to bring into our lives whomever we cherish and whatever we desire by deciding precisely who we are and what we need to be fulfilled.

This can be brought to realization when we perceive our lives as a vast array of choices that can bring us closer to the persons we long to be. It is all in the choosing, if we choose wisely and well, the possibilities are endless. These
possibilities can only become realities though if we escape our comfort zones and view our situations in true perspective. Johnson (1995:4) sums it up so well when he remarks that we can see the lush green fields and mountains of the world that lie beyond our comfort zones only once we have broken down the high castle walls that imprison us.

We seem to be afraid of the void beyond – the unknown world, simply because it seems more comfortable to stay where we are instead of confronting and risking change. Unless we recognize the fortresses we have built around ourselves, unless we confront our own honesty, unless we recognize that risk, pain and death of the familiar and comfortable are necessary companions to the inescapable process of growth and change, and should therefore be welcomed and embraced, we cannot even begin to break down the restraining walls and lower the drawbridge to a transformative and self-fulfilled existence.

West (1977:7) expressed it so appropriately in his book, The shoes of the fisherman, when he writes, “It costs so much to be a full human being that there are very few who have the courage to pay the price. One has to abandon the search for security and reach out to the risk of living with both arms. One has to court doubt and darkness as the cost of knowing. One needs a will stubborn in conflict but apt always to total acceptance of every consequence of living and dying.”

The afore-mentioned words, written so long ago, still rings true as it really encapsulates what escaping our comfort zones is all about. We need to abandon our search for security and uninhibitedly reach out to the risk of living, not merely existing, to get to know our true selves and realizing our true potentials (Dyer, 1997:x). If we are not prepared to do that, if we prefer keeping our security realm of rationalizations, illusions and self-deceptions intact rather than confront the truth and our own honesty, if we are not prepared to take risks and face the consequences, we will struggle to reach self-fulfilment and self-actualization. **What then, bars us from attaining our fullest potential?**

Sharma (2004:15) indicated that clinging to safe shores in our lives is nothing more than making choices to remain imprisoned by our own fears. Courage is then
required to break free, feel the fears and then move ahead anyway. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to walk through your fear in pursuit of a goal that is important to you. It is essential that you know who you are and what you are capable of. Without determining that, you will probably not become your best self and ultimately attain self-actualization (McGraw, 2006:2).

What then, is self-actualization and of what significance is it to an individual in general and my learners specifically? In order to fully comprehend the importance of self-actualization, it is necessary to understand the concepts of self-concept, self-image, ideal self and self-esteem towards ultimately reaching self-actualization, from the perspectives of various researchers, present and past. In order to fully comprehend the teaching and learning processes it would entail, we as educators need to first investigate the influence of psychology in education, to help us deal with relative issues such as low self-esteem and poor self-images and self-concepts.

These aspects can often impact negatively on academic progress (Lawrence, 2000:xiii) and need to be understood and overcome to help learners reach their fullest potential. We therefore need to initiate an in-depth study of the role of psychology in education before we can implement intervention learning and teaching strategies in our classrooms. This will serve to assist learners displaying low self-esteesms and poor self-images and self-concepts. To understand the impact psychology or the comprehension thereof has on educators, we as educators first need to define and analyze educational psychology.

2.2 WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY?

Long (2000:2) determines that psychology involves the logical study of people’s thoughts and actions. Mwamwenda (2004:2) strengthens this view when he explains that psychology is when human behaviour and the human mind are scientifically examined. This study can be subjected to a process involving observation and experimentation. Traditionally, psychology has been described as the science of both human and animal behaviour. In this definition, the key words are science, behaviour and animal. By definition, a science is a body of systematized knowledge gained through observation and verified by experimentation with an objective, critical
and universal approach to knowledge as its primary premise (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:33). Its main aim is to seek and find the truth.

Likewise, psychology obtains its information by means of careful observation and measurement of behaviour. This information is formulated into a theory used for descriptive and predictive purposes. This, in brief, is why psychology is often referred to as a science.

We are concerned with behaviour in psychology because, scientifically, we are unable to observe feelings or thoughts. However, we can observe, record and study human behaviour. It is possible to listen to what learners say and to record it, although the role of the brain or mind can only be inferred by means of behaviour.

The study of animal behaviour is partly based on the premise that the exploration of knowledge through science is limitless. The knowledge gained through the study of animals can be applied to comprehending human behaviour. Similarities between human and animal behaviour have been scientifically observed by psychologists such as Skinner. Resultantly, animals were used as guinea pigs in psychological experiments where human beings, for ethical reasons, cannot be used (Long, 2000:4). However, the results of these experiments may possibly be of benefit to humankind.

2.3 HOW DOES EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY APPLY TO TEACHING?

Having defined and described the nature of psychology, it is now necessary to look specifically at educational psychology and its significance, especially in the classrooms of educators. Education, according to Long (2000:x), is possibly the largest area of study where psychology is applied. Once the role of educational psychology is clearly understood, educators will be able to determine to what extent their knowledge meets the objective of preparing them for their roles of bringing out the best in their learners. According to Mayer (1999:5), educational psychology can be defined as a section of psychology which deals with comprehending how the teaching environment and the characteristics of the learner interact to produce cognitive growth in the learner.
Educational psychology places emphasis on the scientific study of techniques for manipulating human cognitive processes. Similarly, Zanden and Pace (1984) state that educational psychology focuses on the creation of a body of knowledge directly associated to the educational process and the application of this particular knowledge to effective classroom teaching. Biehler and Snowman (1999:3) reiterate Mayer (1999) when they illuminate the scientific nature of educational psychology in their definition of educational psychology defined as “…a scientific discipline that is concerned with understanding and improving how students acquire a variety of capabilities through formal instruction in a classroom setting…”.

Educational psychology may also be defined as the study of psychology related to teaching and learning within a classroom and school milieu. Based on what psychology says about human behaviour, how can I, as educator, apply the knowledge I acquire to improve or develop learning and teaching strategies in my own classroom? Zindi, Peresuh and Mpofu (1997) supply a possible solution to my educational concern, “How can I enhance the self-esteem of my learners to help them ultimately attain self-actualization?”

They remind educators that the scientific aspect of educational psychology is based on the fact that educators and students utilize psychological approaches to comprehend, predict and control the learning opportunities that schooling offers. Educational psychology identifies effective learning and teaching conditions and strategies, making it ideal for educators to find ways to situate their areas of concern within this discipline.

Mwamwenda (2004:5) ascertain that educational psychology provides educators with a theory that enables them to adapt to any possible situation which they may be confronted with in the classroom, and to come up with appropriate solutions to classroom-related problems (Long, 2000:2). Educational psychology focuses on children and aims to equip educators with the necessary tools to comprehend the learning behaviour of children in various social settings, including the classroom. The information that the educational psychology provides, places educators in a position to better comprehend and appreciate the principles involved regarding the
processes of learning and teaching. These principles are vital in the education setting.

Educators, equipped with this knowledge, are in a better position to apply the much-needed principles in the classroom setting (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:2). Their work then becomes more effective in the classroom specifically and society in general. The application of effective teaching will automatically facilitate the understanding of learners of what is being taught, resulting in their own cognitive, social and emotional improvement.

Otaala (1995) exclaims that the study of educational psychology contributes to education in terms of what educators can learn from scientific principles such as measurement and evaluation. Educators are able, using measurement and evaluation, to monitor and assess both the progress of learners and their own effectiveness in transmitting knowledge and information through learning and teaching processes. This can be done by monitoring the tests results, abilities, diligence and performance of learners. These measurements may also be used to measure the effectiveness of the educator.

The current NCS (2008) dictates certain prescribed objectives and goals that should be achieved by the education offered. The RNCS (2002) envisages that educators produce “…a learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate and able to participate in a society as a critical and active citizen…”.

The curriculum was designed on the basis of the afore-mentioned requirement. Educational psychology can now aid educators to prepare lessons suitable to age groups, needs and interests of learners required to follow a specific course of study. This implies maximizing its benefit for the learner and society into which the learners will take their rightful place, fully prepared for the demands required of them.

Educational psychology contributes to the theories of child and adolescent development in that it enables educators to identify the different stages of growth and development and the kind of teaching likely to be effective at each respective stage.
(Slavin, 1997:99). It also assists educators in understanding the role of the social context in the development of the child. As educators, we can now apply this knowledge and information to better understand why certain learners behave the way they do in our classrooms (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:100-107).

Due to the fact that learning is probably the most important commodity in the school set-up, it has a central role in education (Long, 2000:10). The primary role of educators is therefore to facilitate the learning process in the classroom situation. Educational psychology assists in this regard by providing educators with the much needed information about how learning is acquired, which circumstances are required for effective learning to occur and also the effect learning has on learners and society. Educators need such information if they endeavour to attain objectives set by the curriculum and their personal teaching goals as guided by the curriculum (NCS, 2008).

Educational psychology contributes to our understanding of diversity in our classrooms through information made available as a result of research into the areas of various levels of intelligence, different learning styles, abilities, creativity and characteristics of learners (Long, 2000:7). Such information enables educators to prepare differentiated lesson planning to accommodate diversity whilst simultaneously addressing equality, human rights and human dignity, issues I am very concerned about and which I endeavour to address in my daily interaction with others. Alternatively, such information can help educators to enable learners to meet the required expectations by adapting or modifying their teaching approach according to the specific needs of the learners (NCS, 2008).

This poses a challenge to educators to make provision in their lesson planning for learners with different learning styles and abilities (Ramsay, 2006:13). Educators should then employ a variety of learning and teaching strategies to help keep learners motivated and interested. Differentiated assignments can help learners to be challenged, but not overwhelmed by tasks given. Assignments can be different in their level of difficulty or they can encourage different approaches to the same objective.
As educators, we are mainly concerned with influencing the behaviour of the learners in our classrooms. To achieve this objective, we need to have a sound knowledge of the learners we teach. Through educational psychology, we as educators are offered an awareness into the dynamics of the behaviours of all the stakeholders involved in the teaching process. This helps educators to administer their teaching tasks more effectively (Fontana, 1995:xiv). Educational psychology enables educators to study the causes of their learners’ behaviour, the study-related problems they encounter and also to determine why such problems occur.

The study of educational psychology also teaches educators to know more about their learners in terms of how they think, respond and feel, why they behave the way they do and also what triggers and sustains the behaviours they display within the classroom setting. This aids educators in determining how learning occurs and it also provides them with knowledge of personality development. Educators will find this useful in helping learners attain a positive self-esteem for self-actualization, considered to be essential for academic achievement and social adjustment (Lawrence, 2000:xiii).

Mayer (1999) concludes that the significance of educational psychology for the future of education is to improve current educational practices as well as to advance psychological theories. He argues that, where subject matter is concerned, the focus of study is development, learning instruction, as well as cognition of any teaching subject or learning area. Regarding the cognitive analysis of learner knowledge, the focus will be on recognising specific cognitive processes and knowledge for engaging in academic tasks (Fontana, 1995:143). In terms of subject matter, educational psychology concerns itself with examining how individuals learn, develop or think. This can play an important role in developing theories related to the learning of any subject area.

Traditionally, educational psychology has endeavoured to apply the findings of general, social, developmental and child psychology and individual differences, to facilitate an improved comprehension of learning processes, including social and moral, as well as academic learning. It also aims to discover, by studying the behaviour of individuals, the factors influencing their learning and academic progress.
(Child, 2007:7). To education, educational psychology provides an account of how individuals operate in academic matters such as learning, motivation, development, personality, memorizing and classroom management (Mayer, 1999). Knowledge of these concepts contributes to educators’ systematic and comprehensive understanding of human behaviour, which in turn contributes to their effective transmission of knowledge. This then results in maximizing the possibility of learning and ultimately in attaining positive self-esteem for self-actualization (Mwamwenda, 2004:7). In order to apply this acquired knowledge, educators need to know the levels of their learners’ self-esteem which starts with their self-concepts.

2.4 THE SELF-CONCEPT

Lawrence (2000:1) identifies the self-concept of an individual as an awareness of the mental and physical attributes that make up that person, coupled with what they think about themselves. Bernard et al. (2005:113) describe the self-concept as “…what you think about yourself or your beliefs about your physical, emotional and social attributes”. Hawkins (2007:9) strengthens the afore-mentioned perceptions of self-concept when he defines it as “…an identity, a positive view of myself”. Mwamwenda (2004:308) reiterates this when he states that self-concept is how individuals perceive themselves either negatively or positively.

Self-concept is a combination of concept, beliefs, ideas, feelings and attitudes an individual has about him/herself. Winzer (1995) states that one is able to determine who you are, what you do, can do or wish to do through self-concept. Self-concept develops from childhood through adulthood through individuals’ interaction with external influences, which include peers, parents, educators and various tasks and responsibilities assigned and the way they are managed. If, for example, a task is managed exceptionally well, an educator may affirm the learner by remarking, “Look class, Peter has done it exactly the way it should be done. Excellent work, Peter! I am so proud of you. You should all do your tasks as Peter has done his”. This is a typical example of an external influence which may positively influence the self-concept of an individual. However, just as external influences can be positive, they may be negative too. An inexperienced educator may comment as follows on a poor piece of writing: “Peter, you delivered an essay of a very poor standard, you did not
even make an effort to plan your work. At this rate, you will surely fail this year!"

This negative remark will possibly lead to a negative self-concept as it will influence
the learner’s belief in him/herself negatively.

Whether individuals develop a positive or negative self-concept, depends on how
others treat them and how such treatment is perceived. Burns (1985) mentions that
people evaluate behaviour on the basis of reinforcement or lack thereof, received
from others they come into contact with. These “others” may be their peers, parents,
educators and other members of the community. He also exclaims that self-concept
is “the individuals’ percepts, concepts and evaluations about himself, including the
image he feels others have of him and of the person he would like to be, nourished
by a diet of personally evaluated environmental experience”.

Having a positive self-concept can contribute positively to your academic
achievement as a learner’s self-concept affects his/her performance at school
(Lawrence, 2000:xiii). It is therefore essential to know how your self-concept is
formed and how to improve it. The fact that a self-concept is learned; that we are not
born with it and that it can be changed as we grow, instils a sense of hope (Bernard
et al., 2005:113). Educators can, in the light of this, endeavour to improve and
develop a positive self-concept in their learners. The motivation should be that a
positive self-concept enables learners to get on well with others, reach their full
potential in life and gives them the courage to use new opportunities and tackle new
challenges (Barnard et al., 2005:112).

Your self-concept is established by how you perceive yourself and also the ideas and
beliefs you have about yourself (Mwamwenda, 2004:308). You create your own
portfolio from which observations about you are made. This frame of reference,
which you yourself have created, provides a databank from which everything which
you believe about yourself is seen, experienced, heard, evaluated and
comprehended. All this influences what you think, feel and do. This then becomes
the image of what you think you are, how you feel about yourself, what you think you
can achieve, what you think others think of you and what you would like to be (Child,
2007:400). Each of us is unique, with unique skills, abilities and attribute. You need
to become your own best self, without comparing yourself with others or what you
think society would want you to be. Focus on your strengths, not on your weaknesses. If you experience success and positive interactions, a positive self-concept is formed, but if you often meet with failure and negativity, your self-concept may become negative (Delamater & Myers, 2007:99).

It is possible to change and develop a positive self-concept through self-reflection and to make a commitment to positive transformation. This can be achieved with the help of reflective educators who can facilitate change in their own practices. Louw and Edwards (1993:756-759) cite Rosenberg (1979), who encourages this transformation by means of an idealized self-concept which comprises of certain components. The first component is the desired self-image which is visualized as the ideal self, but it could also be a stereotype, for example, "popular first team rugby captain" who is idealized by all the boys and admired by most of the girls. The second component represents a committed self-concept that is taken rather seriously and one to which individuals aspire. The last component is a moral self-concept which is what one ought to be or should be according to the values and morals set by yourself and/or society.

This self-change or transformation, however, is dependent on intro- and retrospection, that involves the process of self-reflection and in the case of classroom-practitioners, reflective practices. Through reflection, one is able to view things in a new, more powerful way. The resulting new perspectives may then lead to the development of a new, positive self. In order to determine this new self, it is necessary to ask yourself what type of person you are, what type of person you would like to be, what people appreciate about you, what you do well and what sort of things you take responsibility for (Bernard et al., 2005:113).

In addition to analyzing this, it is also necessary that learners become familiar with the following major aspects of the self-concept in order to determine their own levels of self-concept. Gerdes (1988:77) illustrates these aspects in the diagram below:
2.4.1 The physical self-concept

This aspect refers to the physical appearance or body image and your attitude and feelings about it.

2.4.2 Psychological self-concept

The individual’s personality, emotional characteristics and temperament are entailed in this component.
2.4.3 The social self-concept

Humans are social beings, therefore this aspect relates to your involvement with others and their perceived reaction to you.

2.4.4 The gender self-concept

From an early age, society prescribed norms and values about what is un/desirable in fe/males and the value it attaches to wo/men.

2.4.5 Cultural identity

This component refers to a person’s sense of belonging to, identification with and appreciation of a particular cultural group.

2.4.6 The ideal self

Your ideal self is that which you aspire to which provides guidelines for your development.

2.4.7 The moral self-concept

The foundation of the moral self is locked in the desire for approval from significant people in your life. These people may be your peers, parents or educators.

2.4.8 The intellectual (academic) self-concept

An individual’s perception of his/her intellectual abilities and talents and his/her belief in his/her performance in a task, assignment or learning area is seen as the intellectual self-concept (Taylor, Peplan & Sears, 2006:99-111).

All of these above-mentioned aspects and the way my learners perceive themselves contribute to the development of their self-esteem and how they feel about themselves. Therefore, when Lawrence (2000:1) defines that self-concept is “…an
awareness of the mental and physical attributes that make up a person, together with their feelings about their attributes…” it causes me as a classroom-based practitioner to reflect upon my own practice. I then use the major aspects of Gerdes (1988:77) as mentioned above, to determine the levels of my learners’ self-concept.

In addition to this, educators also need to take cognisance of the fact that self-concept is not innate, but acquired through learning whilst simultaneously being subjected to external and pedagogical modification. Insofar as it can be learned, educators need to follow a few suggestions by researchers about how self-concept can be promoted and facilitated in our classrooms during the course of the education process. Purkey (1984) argues that the behaviour of individuals is determined by their beliefs. Therefore, educators and learners’ beliefs are imperative in effective learning. He also claims that the beliefs of educators are more important than their teaching strategies. It can therefore be concluded that an educator is compelled to have a positive, but realistic belief in him/herself and his/her abilities before he/she is able to reap any benefits.

I have discovered that if people believe in themselves and their abilities, appreciate, and accept themselves for who and what they are, they tend to instil similar attitudes in those with whom they interact. This encourages me as a classroom-practitioner, to portray a belief in myself, in order for my learners to emulate me, their educator. This can also be validated by my colleagues, who articulate similar experiences (I will elaborate on this in the data collection chapter).

People who appreciate and accept themselves for who and what they are, are likely to extend the same attitude towards others. This implies that when educators have a positive attitude towards themselves, they tend to build positive self-concepts in their learners (Purkey, 1970:46). The educator with a positive self-concept is likely to produce learners with a positive self-concept. However, educators are unable to give their learners more than they have to offer. If they do not have a positive self-concept themselves, they are unlikely to instil a positive self-concept in their learners. It is clear that educators can play a pivotal role in facilitating the self-concepts of their learners, which is likely to influence their academic performance. Outside the home, the responsibility for improving the self-concepts of learners belongs to the educator.
The way in which educators interact with their learners will help to determine their level of self-concept (Mwamwenda, 2004:313).

Self-concept can be facilitated within the classroom in a variety of ways. Educators can make allowance for learners with poor self-concepts to experience success by challenging them intellectually. Learners can also be given tasks that they will be able to manage and complete successfully. This will give them a sense of accomplishment. The efforts of learners with poor self-concepts should be acknowledged with positive comments. Learners should be given ample opportunities to contribute to the learning and teaching process in the classroom. Educators should show a warm and caring attitude towards all learners. A genuine interest should be shown in them and this should be displayed by learning each individual’s name and communicating with them about issues that invoke their interest. Empathy should be given where needed and praise bestowed on deserving individuals.

Learners who possess a positive self-concept tend to be intrinsically motivated. They are not so dependent on others to be motivated, but are naturally driven, focussed and inspired. This can be attributed to the fact that they have a high level of curiosity, are genuinely interested in their schoolwork and prefer challenging assignments (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:397). However, the self-concept is merely a foundation and only one component which is connected and interrelated to other, equally significant components. These are known as self-image, ideal self, self-esteem, self-efficacy and ultimately self-actualization as illustrated in the figure below:
Figure 7: The interrelated relationship between components of self-concept for self-actualization (Didloft, 2009)

The above-mentioned diagram illustrates how the self-esteem of individuals are dependent on the relationship between their self-efficacy and ultimately increases motivation, emotional intelligence, and self-image and their ideal self and how it influences the self-esteem, encourages assertiveness towards attaining self-actualization. These components and their relationships to one another will now be defined and its significance explained respectively:

2.5 THE SELF-IMAGE

Lawrence (2000:2) establishes that our self-image is the image we have of ourselves. When people are asked who they are, they normally list their mental and physical characteristics that make up their unique selves. Most people know who they are and what skills and abilities they have. The more experiences we have, the richer our self-image. As they grow older, individuals realize that they are competent
in some areas of their lives, but less so in other areas. Many of these impressions we have of ourselves were gained by comparing ourselves with others. Not all of these impressions are accurate though and sometimes we have false impressions of ourselves. If this occurs, we experience a “distorted self-image” (Delamater & Myers, 2007:89-92).

In the classroom setting, some learners may be under the impression that they are inadequate when in reality they are really competent. For example, the average learner may falsely believe that they are below average, because his/her friends are all well above average. The friends whom they compare themselves with were probably a small sample of the school population as a whole, therefore not representative of the general school population. The afore-mentioned learner will then have a distorted self-image of him/herself as it is not a true reflection or true representation of the general learners he/she is a sample of.

A distorted self-image may convey the message to learners that they are unable to perform as well or even better than their peers. It is therefore vital that individuals form a positive self-image of themselves, know themselves and become aware of their abilities. Until you know who you are, you will not know what you are capable of becoming (Bernard et al., 2005:117). What then, is the ideal self or that which you are capable of becoming?

2.6 THE IDEAL SELF

Learners may develop an awareness of their ideal self when their good behaviour is rewarded by others they come into contact with such as their peers, educators and parents. They attach importance to the feedback of these individuals because they consider them as important factors in their lives. For instance, when a learner displays good behaviour or performs well in a class test and the educator praises such a learner, the learner may realize that certain standards of behaviour and levels of achievement are valued. They learn that there are certain socially desirable things which are valued in the society they are part of and that it is these values which help them to form their ideal self. As the learners develop, these desirable values of society are unconsciously adhered to by them due to the fact that they are aware that
it will be rewarded. The ideal self is a set of ideal values, standards of behaviour and abilities to which an individual aspires (Jansen Van Rensburg, 1999:69-71).

These abilities include the ability to read, spell, perform academically and generally behave according to the expectations set by society. Later, ownership of these values is taken by individuals who realize that good relationships with others are just as important as progressing academically. After discovering who you are and who you would like to be, individuals need to discover how they feel about themselves.

2.7 THE SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is the evaluation we make of ourselves, our concern with what we are like and how we value those characteristics (Taylor et al., 2006:97). Some of the commonly used measures of self-esteem according to Rosenberg (1965), are those qualities you are good at, are proud of, not good at, your self-worth, how you compare with others, your contentment with yourself, your belief in yourself, to name but a few. These afore-mentioned items measure the general value individuals place on themselves, determining whether they are fundamentally good or bad people, possess talent or not, etcetera.

2.7.1 High self-esteem

Individuals who have a high self-esteem know exactly what their personal qualities are. They have a good opinion of themselves, set realistic and achievable objectives, make an effort to achieve and use criticism positively (Long, 2000:119). They also appreciate positive experiences (Wood, Heimpel & Michela, 2003), and manage to cope well with tricky situations. For example, when individuals with high self-esteem receive negative criticism, they are more likely than those with low self-esteem to retaliate by reminding themselves of their positive characteristics or they will simply persist at an alternative objective (Sommer & Baumeister, 2002). Individuals with high self-esteem remember their everyday experiences and interactions in a favourable light—a memory bias that serves to strengthen and emphasize their high self-esteem (Christensen, Wood & Barret, 2003).
Jansen Van Rensburg (1999:69-70) mentions that individuals with high self-esteem are reasonably consistent, have positive attitudes, accept themselves as they are and believe others also accept them in the same manner. These individuals are usually capable of controlling their emotions, view criticism as constructive feedback, interact well with others, have a fairly good sense of humour, have good relationships with others and accept others as they are. They also set realistic and attainable objectives for themselves and are prepared to face the consequences of the risks they have taken. Not all the learners in your classroom will have a high self-esteem, though some will display low self-esteem, especially those struggling to achieve required outcomes.

2.7.2 Low self-esteem

Individuals with a low self-esteem, on the other hand, lack clear self-concepts, do not think much of themselves, set themselves low goals to ensure success or unrealistically high ones to blame failure on difficulty-in neither situations will they go to much effort (Long, 2000:119). These individuals are also generally pessimistic; sometimes they do not even have objectives, focus mainly on the negative and tend to wallow in their negative moods (Heimpel, Wood, Marshall & Brown, 2002). They also respond emotionally to criticism or negative feedback, are concerned about the opinion others have of them and are generally vulnerable to depression when faced with setbacks or stress (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Individuals suffering from a low self-esteem, according to Jansen Van Rensburg (1999:68-69), display and will reveal some of the following characteristics. They appear to be shy, articulate negativity, are critical of their own abilities and appearances and achievements and believe others see them as negatively and over-critical as they see themselves. These individuals are often unable to control their emotions, often paranoid, generally aggressive, domineering and unapproachable. Another negative characteristic is the fact that they set unrealistic goals for themselves and others. A reluctance to accept responsibility for action taken is also evident in individuals displaying low self-esteem. What is the significance of a high or low self-esteem on learners in your classroom?
2.7.3 The effect self-esteem has on education

Fontana (1995:265) reminds educators of the relevance of equipping themselves with the afore-mentioned knowledge regarding high and low self-esteem. He ascertains that the information can reveal much about the development of the self-esteesms of the learners within their home environment. This information gives educators practical guidance on how to effectively influence this development to the advantage of learners within the classroom setting. Mwamwenda (2004:393) add to this by advising educators to foster positive self-esteesms in learners as it contributes to successful performance in school.

Lawrence (2000:xiii) stresses the importance of a positive self-esteem in the classroom when he explains that self-esteem is currently recognized as a major factor in learning outcomes. He claims that research has consistently shown a positive correlation between how individuals value themselves and their academic performance. We as educators should take cognisance of this, because if self-esteem does influence academic progress, then much more effort must be put into enhancing it in learners (Long, 2000:119). The influence of self-esteem on academic progress was investigated by Marsh and Yeung (1977) over a three-year study period, monitoring children’s beliefs in their own academic abilities in addition to their performance in Mathematics, Science and English. They discovered that academic self-concept and achievements in each of the afore-mentioned learning areas had reciprocal effects, but the influence of achievements was much stronger. The effects of self-esteem were linked to learners’ performance and educator evaluations which were frequently fed back to learners.

More tests were done by researchers such as Chapman and Turner (1997), Hay et al. (1997) and Dweck (1986) and they concluded that achievement is definitely related to self-esteem, even though the latter has less influence. Since self-esteem only has a limited impact on achievement, according to Long (2000:120), endeavours from educators to strengthen self-esteem of learners, are probably not going to be very effective in improving motivation and achievement. In the light of this, it is therefore most probable that praise would be futile if learners compare the achievement of others to theirs and discover that praise was not genuine or
undeserving. However, since self-efficacy is fairly specific, any kind of self-esteem is also unlikely to influence the efforts of learners in other areas. Learners who therefore excel at sports, might feel good, but it would not have much influence in other areas, such as academic efforts (Long, 2000:120).

If educators wish to enhance the self-esteem, it would be advisable to improve what they are good at whilst ensuring that they value their own achievements. This will have a reciprocal effect as illustrated below:

**Figure 8: Reciprocal effects of self-esteem and achievement**
(External sources = marks, feedback, others’ achievements) Internal sources = mastery, achieving goals, own performance) (Long, 2000:120)

Those who have positive self-esteem, generally perform better academically, while those with low self-esteem do not perform as well (Mwamwenda, 2004:393). Individuals have the tendency of behaving in terms of how they view or feel about themselves. Those who believe in their own abilities are more likely to meet with success, mainly because of their positive self-image and positive self-esteem (Lawrence, 2000:xiii). The self-image acts as an internal motivator. Moreover, those with high self-esteem, not only achieve more, they also lead more contented lives. The development of a high self-esteem, therefore, should be just as valuable a goal.
for educators as the development and nurturing of learners' intellectual skills and abilities.

Bernard et al. (2005:121) states that self-esteem is significant to learners as their success is not only based on intelligence, but also closely linked to self-confidence. The more confident an individual, the more positive they will feel about themselves and what they can accomplish, and the more likely they are to venture into unknown territory and to endeavour new things or set new goals. Having a positive self-esteem will help learners to interact positively, reach their potentials and utilize new opportunities like challenging tasks and assignments in the classroom. However, learners need to believe that they are capable of handling tasks given to them in the classroom (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:100), which takes us to the next important component on our way to self-actualization, and that is self-efficacy.

2.8 SELF-EFFICACY

Snowman and Biehler (2003:100) cite Albert Bandura (1986), a learning theorist, who coined the term self-efficacy to refer to how confident one feels in being able to meet the demands of a task or assignment. This can be interpreted as the evaluative judgements individuals make of how capable they think they are at organizing and carrying out a specific course of action. Wood and Oliver (2008) propose that individuals who wish to develop their self-efficacy “…develop their own life skills, take on a more internal locus of control and foster better social interactions…”.

These criteria, according to Ryff and Singer (2003) in Apinwall and Studinger (2003:277-279), are the foundations on which an individual's psychological well-being is built. They are of the opinion that it will definitely increase the general confidence of individuals. The term “locus of control” refers to the place where a person’s control is coming from - internally or externally (Johnson & Koopman, 1995:211).

A learner may have an excellent sense of self-efficacy for Mathematics (“I am great at geometry, nobody in class can beat me!”), a fair degree of self-efficacy for rugby (“I know I can play rugby as well as most other boys my age!”), and a low sense of self-
efficacy for interaction with peers ("I don’t make friends easily and never know what to say to them!"). These self-evaluative beliefs influence the choices and perseverance of individuals, and even more so when they struggle to cope or to make progress in class. Learners with a moderate to strong sense of self-efficacy will persist with the task at hand until they have achieved the required outcomes. However, learners with a low sense of self-efficacy tend to lack a sense of perseverance and give up easily. What strategies can educators then employ to increase self-efficacy of learners in their classrooms?

2.8.1 Factors affecting self-efficacy

Educators can explore strategies to increase the self-efficacy of their learners by following the suggestions as illustrated in the diagram below:

Figure 9: Factors affecting self-efficacy (Didloft, 2009)

The first factor is (i) vicarious learning (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002:4) – observing others do the same thing, followed by (ii) verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1997) – positive performance feedback, (iii) mastery experience (Labone, 2004:343) – personal achievement and (iv) physiological arousal (Bandura, 1986) – emotions in given situations. Educators can assist learners to develop strong feelings of self-
efficacy by encouraging modelling, imitating and using effective learning and teaching strategies. Snowman and Biehler (2003:246) suggest that educators develop a sense of learners’ abilities in various learning area by reminding them of past accomplishments. If, for example, a learner fails to achieve the desired outcomes in Mathematics, but does well in English (mastery), the educator should focus on that which the learner can do to increase such learner’s self-efficacy in that particular learning area. This can be done through praising or affirming the learner which may serve to motivate and encourage the learner to do even better and also to act as motivator to his/her peers in the classroom.

The learners’ increased efficacy and associated enhanced confidence may help to create confidence or overcome a lack of confidence in a learning area the learner finds difficult to handle. Other learners, observing this, may be influenced and encouraged to try harder at attaining the desired outcomes after witnessing this process. Educators can therefore conclude that self-efficacy is influenced by vicarious learning (Labone, 2004:347), verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1997), mastery experience (Monroe, 2002:3) and physiological arousal (Gibbs, 2003:6). These strategies can all be effectively applied to instil in learners a strong sense of self-efficacy and simultaneously increase their self-esteem for self-actualization.

2.8.2 Types of behaviours that are affected by self-efficacy

Snowman and Biehler (2003:246) cite Bandura (1986) who mentions that self-efficacy affects individual goals, thought processes, persistence and emotions. He states that individuals who have experienced a strong sense of self-efficacy for a long period, are likely to set many goals for themselves. They also tend to participate in various activities. Such individuals may consider a variety of career options, participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities, have a busy social life and have many friends. These individuals also tend to engage in meta-cognitive processes such as analyzing, synthesizing, comparing, discussing, contradicting and evaluating when endeavouring to solve or comprehend difficult problems in the classroom. Contrary to this, low self-efficacy learners may merely regurgitate facts as they do not believe they can engage in higher order thinking processes. Another difference is that high self-efficacy individuals predict personal accomplishments whilst low self-
efficacy individuals are more likely to visualize themselves failing at challenging tasks. High self-efficacy individuals have a tendency of persisting and persevering enthusiastically and eagerly when faced with a challenge, whereas individuals with a low self-efficacy easily become despondent, frustrated, depressed and stressed-out when faced with a difficult task (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:246-247).

The above-mentioned findings should therefore motivate educators to explore ways of increasing the self-efficacy of their learners to help them become goal-orientated, elevate their cognitive abilities, encourage persistence and give them a general sense of accomplishment and achievement. This can be done by increasing their motivation to bring them closer to self-actualization.

2.9 MOTIVATION – WHAT IS MOTIVATION?

Motivation refers to psychological processes such as values, passion, intensity, wants, needs, etcetera, that drive us to perform certain tasks or to do certain things. Some would regard it as that which energises people to do things. Others view it as an entity we have more of and which lead us to do something (Long, 2000:104). Hellriegel et al. describe motivation as “any influence that triggers, directs or maintains goal-directed behaviour”. Maehr and Meyer (1997) define it as “the forces that account for the selection, persistence, intensity and continuation of behaviour”. Child (2007:226) echoes afore-mentioned definitions when he so appropriately encapsulates motivation as “internal processes” and “external incentives” that “spur us on to satisfy some need”.

Whichever way we look at motivation, it affects the interests, abilities and levels of successes of our learners, therefore, we as educators should bear in mind that it is what gets our learners started. As educators, we therefore need to understand what motivates our learners and find ways of ensuring that our learners stay motivated, even if the tasks they are given are challenging. We need to bear in mind that motivation will influence how hard they try to succeed, what they strive for and how long they persevere at trying. We also need to take cognisance of the fact that all our learners, without exceptions, are capable of being motivated. Another important point to remember is that the motivation strategy will change from one situation to the
next; it depends on the objectives you as educator want to achieve. By being aware of what motivates learners, educators can help learners to accept responsibilities and to become more committed to the tasks at hand (Bernard et al., 2005:14-15). There are, however, two primary types of motivation. The basic difference between these two types of motivation lies in what drives you and what determines your behaviour (Reeve, 1996).

2.9.1 Intrinsic (internal) motivation

It is seen as a “push from within” (Child, 2007:243). This type of motivation comes from within; therefore it is a natural, inherent, spontaneous entity. It is a reflection of an individual’s personal goals, values and interests. Intrinsic motivation can be associated with an individual’s feelings and confidence levels. Internal motivation positively affects your behaviour, performance and well-being. It encourages the individual to engage in activities without giving consideration to extrinsic reward such as praise or positive feedback. Intrinsic motivation involves successful accomplishment and performance of individuals, increasing the motivation in the process of motivating individuals. It allows individuals to learn from their mistakes, optimises opportunities for success, which in turn increase motivation. Learning also tends to be more effective and meaningful if it is done because the individual wants to do it and also because personal satisfaction is experienced (Wlodkowski, 1994:4). For any learning to be effective, you need to have a desire to learn. Learning is more effective if it is self-directive and not dependent on extrinsic influences such as praise, rewards, incentives, etcetera. Typical motivators are interests in tasks, the desire to learn and self-improve and a genuine quest for knowledge (Child, 2007:243-244).

2.9.2 Extrinsic (external) motivation

Child (2007:243) regards external motivation as “a pull from without”. This type of motivation is strongly influenced by forces outside of the individual, such as bribery, good marks, praise, prestige, fear of parents, etcetera (Long, 2000:117). It is characterised by a general fear of failure, the drive to do better than others, material rewards and temporary changes. Learners experience success or personal
achievements as rewarding and therefore perform tasks with certain expectations in mind. This is known as achievement motivation which is strengthened after learners receive marks, grades, reports, tests results and educators' approvals (Lynn, 1991).

Fontana (1995:150) raises a few significant concerns regarding extrinsic motivation at school level. He argues that when some learners frequently meet with failure, they may tend to develop a low self-esteem, a dislike in the specific learning areas where they experience difficulties and a general negative attitude towards everything pertaining to school and the areas they tend to find difficult. They would then make remarks such as, “School sucks, it is boring!” or “This is a stupid assignment, I refuse to do it!” or even “I hate school!” To overcome this obstacle, educators have to create opportunities for success by making provision for differentiation that will enable everyone to achieve the required outcomes. If everyone experiences a sense of accomplishment, low self-concepts and poor self-esteesms can be transformed or developed into positive self-concepts and self-esteesms. In order to manage this, the educator needs to be resourceful and creative. By employing well-planned teaching and learning strategies, educators can accommodate all learners without compromising standards. Learners can be given more time, expanded opportunities, scaffolding, individual attention, peer-assistance, etcetera, to name but a few ways of accommodating those with less abilities than their peers in the classrooms.

Another concern is when educators tend to allow too long a time to lapse between marking assignments and giving feedback. The gap between results and performance then causes learning to become less efficient. The learners then also lose interest in the feedback and become less motivated. Fontana (1995:151) further warns if competition between learners becomes too intense, it can cause bad feelings amongst learners. This will impact their motivation levels negatively as well. Learners experience feelings of failure when they are unable to maintain the standard set by the rest of their peers in the classroom. When the pressures of extrinsic motivation become too strong, some learners may resort to cheating, absenteeism or bunking just to avoid failure or being ridiculed by their peers.
Snowman and Biehler (2003:406-407) cite Brophy (1981) who suggest that educators use behavioural techniques and social learning theories that include, amongst others, verbal praise. This can serve as positive reinforcement if it is done effectively. It should be done as spontaneously as possible, for example: “Why Peter, you have gone to great lengths to produce this great piece of writing!” or as compensation for criticism, “I like the neat layout of your project, Peter!” It can even be used as encouragement, “Wow Peter, you have persevered and you completed your task. Well done, I am so proud of the effort you have put into this. Keep it up!”

Desforges (1990) advises that we as educators use praise with discretion as it can be either rewarding or directive. However, if not given genuinely, it can be misleading and create false impressions of hope. If given fairly, it can help establish good relationships, but if used only for tangible things, and never for good effort, diligence, endeavours, etcetera, it can cause learners to only concentrate on what the educator will respond to positively. Some learners will then abandon their own original ideas and their creativity will be stifled. The motivation of such learners will then also be negatively influenced.

2.9.3 How can motivation be increased?

Learners need to familiarize themselves with what motivates them and how to ensure they stay motivated as it affects their interests, abilities and levels of success. By knowing what motivates them, they can start taking responsibility and control for some of the success they can achieve in the classroom and in their own lives. They can motivate themselves by having introspection and asking themselves: “How will I benefit from this learning process?” “Do the expected outcomes match my abilities or skills?” “Am I in control of my own learning or am I dependent on external influences?” “Can I apply my acquired knowledge to real life situations?” “Do I fear failure or see it as challenges or learning curves?” “Do I believe I can improve my self-concept and self-esteem by becoming more intrinsically motivated?” (Gilbert, 2009)
Educators can break down tasks into more manageable chunks for those learners who are unable to meet expectations. Learners’ attention should be focussed on their own achievements and not those of others. Praise should be given readily, but honestly. Strategies should be varied and learning and teaching methods differentiated to suit the needs of diverse learners in the classroom (Ellis, 1997:23). Educators should also encourage a positive attitude in learners as it influences the way they act and react to situations and other individuals. By adopting a positive attitude, learners can transform any experience or obstacle into a challenge or learning curve on their way to success. Motivation will lead learners to achievement which will ultimately lead to:

(a) A cognitive drive, that is task-orientated, referring to the desire to know and comprehend in order to discover new information.
(b) Self-enhancement, which is self-centred and refers to a need for prestige and status gained by excelling academically, and which ultimately leads to a positive self-esteem.
(c) Affiliation, which is a dependence on others to gain recognition and approval (Child, 2007:251).

The question which needs to be answered is:

2.9.4 Why is motivation important for education?

No teaching or learning process can be considered effective unless emphasis is placed on motivation which is the will to achieve or to take on the challenges of learning (Donald et al., 2002:122). Once learners are motivated, intrinsically or extrinsically, it is time to examine their emotional intelligence, another important factor influencing the attainment of self-actualization.

2.10 WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Emotional intelligence is being able to recognize your feelings and those of others and to control and manage it successfully in your interactions with others (Goleman, 1998:317). Elias (2003:3) refers to emotional intelligence as skills that assist us to
work with others and learn effectively while fulfilling our roles in society and within our family settings. It is also referred to as your non-intellectual competencies and skills that affect your ability to overcome the demands and pressures you are confronted with in life (Bar-on, 1997:14). The emotional intelligence can therefore be defined as the potential to differentiate, comprehend, control, learn from and comprehend feelings. It is also about turning negative emotions into positive ones. This occurs when you demonstrate your emotional intelligence in the way you acknowledge, give expression to, and take responsibility for, your emotions. This is therefore an intelligence that can be learnt and which educators can develop in their learners.

If learners are able to identify their feelings, differentiate between thoughts and feelings, are able to recognize what others are feeling, express their own feelings, reflect on their feelings and think rationally about your feelings and its effect on others, it is an indication that you are emotionally intelligent (Bernard et al., 2005:156).

2.10.1 What is the significance of emotional intelligence to learners?

Emotional intelligence is important as it will enable learners to:

- differentiate between their thoughts and feelings
- choose how they want to behave in certain situations
- view negative experiences as learning opportunities
- understand themselves better
- deal with anything occurring to them
- understand others better
- help others to deal with their emotions

In addition to the above-mentioned advantages, emotional intelligence can also bring about academic benefits as emotionally intelligent people are more successful and cope better with the demands of school. This is due to the fact that they can turn feelings of anxiety about difficult tasks into positive thoughts by motivating themselves and doing something to change the situation to their advantage (Goleman, 1998).
2.10.2 How can emotional intelligence be developed by educators?

Goleman (1995) states that individuals are in control of their own development. We all have potential, but it is up to us to use and develop it. We only need to differentiate between thoughts, feelings and behaviour and be able to express our feelings. It can be illustrated in the following diagram:

**Figure 10:** Diagram illustrating reactions of emotionally intelligent individuals (Didloft, 2009)

![Diagram illustrating reactions of emotionally intelligent individuals](image)

In the above diagram, a learner may experience a negative occurrence like failing a test. The learner may feel disappointed, but realize that the reason may be that s/he was not focussed and did not spend much time studying. Whilst realizing that s/he may have let his/her parents and educator down, the learner will accept responsibility and acknowledge his/her share in the situation. The learner will choose to overcome his/her initial disappointment and transform that energy into a positive attitude by convincing him/herself that s/he will attain success if s/he works harder and become more committed to the task s/he initially failed at.

Developing the emotional intelligence of learners will enable them to cope with the demands of day-to-day school activities. It also strengthens their self-concept, self-
esteem and self-efficacy. However, learners displaying afore-mentioned attributes need to be assertive before they can attain the ultimate goal which is self-actualization. What is assertiveness and what is the significance thereof?

2.11 ASSERTIVENESS

2.11.1 What is assertiveness?

Hopson and Scally (1981:69) mention that, “Many people fail to get what they want either by being afraid to ask for it or by setting about it aggressively. Being assertive means clearly stating a preference, but not at the expense of trampling over the rights of others”. Kennedy (2005) defines assertiveness as standing up for your rights and verbalising your own wants clearly whilst simultaneously showing respect for the rights and feelings of others. He also describes it as a sincere expression of an individual’s emotions, views and needs. I would conclude that assertiveness is basically demanding your rights whilst showing consideration for the rights of others.

Generally, learners find it difficult to stand up for themselves and to communicate their wants, needs, feelings and ideas voluntarily. They fear that educators might consider them rude if they, for example, disagree or confidently inform them that they do not like something that the educator did or have a different point of view. I have experienced educators not being approachable to this, which makes it more difficult for learners to offer criticisms on lessons in a constructive fashion. As learners, it is difficult standing up for your rights as it requires much courage and confidence. Gardner and Jewler (1992:295) advise that individuals stand up for their rights, because if they fail to do this, no one will do it on their behalf.

2.11.2 What are the advantages of being assertive?

Individuals who assert themselves responsibly, command the respect of others. Through assertiveness, individuals can satisfy their needs and have their preferences attended to (Lange & Jakubowski, 1978:7). Others appreciate assertive individuals as it leads to more meaningful relationships due to the fact that it is associated with trust, transparency, sincerity and honesty. Assertiveness reduces stress as it helps
the individual to unload that which is bothersome. It also builds self-esteem and strengthens the self-concept. Through assertiveness, individuals can be allowed to live by their own values (Gardner, 1992:269). Individuals who are assertive do not find it difficult to make their needs known. They usually possess a positive self-concept and a positive self-esteem and are naturally spontaneous and able to express themselves without reservations (Lawrence, 2000:78). This is what educators should encourage, as it will simplify their tasks if learners verbalize clearly what they understand and what they need to understand. How then, can educators encourage assertiveness in their learners?

2.11.3 How can learners be encouraged to assert themselves?

Gordon (1974), a famous American psychologist, promotes the use of “I”, “when” and “because” as it will teach learners how to express themselves unambiguously. It can be illustrated in the following sentence: “I feel upset when you use my pen without asking my permission because I need it myself”. The reason for using these three particular words is the following:

“I” is used in order to verbalize personal emotions clearly and take ownership of your opinion.

“When” is used as it suggests that it applies to those specific circumstances only.

“Because” is used to supply a logical explanation for the outburst.

Educators can provide many of these practical and verbal assertiveness exercises in imaginary drama-in-education scenarios to teach learners how to assert themselves, for example:
**Figure 11: Table representing possible dramatization scenarios**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIO</th>
<th>REACTION</th>
<th>FEELING</th>
<th>REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Friend borrows without permission.</td>
<td>“When” you borrowed ...</td>
<td>I felt upset</td>
<td>because I had to ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Someone who always borrows your pencils</td>
<td>“When” you always borrow ...</td>
<td>I feel upset</td>
<td>because I had to ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather than buying their own.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Educator always picks on you.</td>
<td>“When” you pick on me ...</td>
<td>I feel upset</td>
<td>because I do not ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the above, more dramatization can be used to act out imaginary scenarios to develop the assertiveness of learners (Athiemoolam in Fitchen & Nitsch, 2008:169). A four-step approach as suggested by Bernard *et al.* (2005:166) may also be implemented to develop the skill of assertiveness. This entails the following:

**STEP 1**  Acknowledging and recognising your feelings, thoughts, rights and skills.
**STEP 2**  Stop and reflect to analyse occurrence.
**STEP 3**  Give consideration to a plan of action.
**STEP 4**  Verbalize how you want the situation changed.

Now that there is an awareness of the advantages of being assertive, educators and learners have to evaluate their own levels of assertiveness. Once this is established, learners can focus on becoming **self-actualized**.

**2.12 SELF-ACTUALIZATION**

Child (2007:241) indicates that this process refers to an individuals' wish to fulfil his/her potential and is dependent on self-realization as we have to recognize and acknowledge our skills and abilities before it can be implemented efficiently. He further contends that self-actualization is ‘growth-motivated’ and multi-faceted, depending upon the individuals' self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Slavin
(1997) echoes this when he cites Maslow (1954:92) who states that self-actualization is “the desire to become everything that one is capable of becoming”.

Self-actualization is identified by characteristics representing personal wellness like self-acceptance, transparency, honesty, trust, spontaneity, respect for, and good relationships with others, and in total independence. Maslow places the endeavour for self-actualization right on top of his hierarchy of needs, which might suggest that psychological needs become more important once physiological needs are met (Mwamwenda, 2004:243). That does not necessarily imply that psychological needs cannot be met unless physiological needs are met, because in Southern Africa, just like in many other developing countries, there are millions of poor children exposed to famine, who excel academically in spite of dire circumstances. There are just as many street children whose safety needs and the need for belonging are not met. Yet, these children are still motivated by the need to be accepted and loved, as well as by needs to be valued and treated as worthy human beings (Donald et al., 2002:123).

Physiological needs such as hunger, safety and love are at the bottom of Maslow’s hierarchy, followed in ascending order by esteem and self-actualization needs. This order reflects the urgency of each need. The lower the need in the hierarchy, the greater its urgency, because when a lower level need is activated such as extreme hunger, the higher level need such as self-esteem, loses its urgency. The lower order needs are also referred to as deficiency needs because individuals are motivated to act only when they are not met. Contrary to this, the self-actualization higher level need, is known as a growth need due to the fact that individuals constantly endeavour to meet this need (Child, 2007:239-240).

I am taking my role as “in loco parentis” seriously (Botha, Mentz, Roos, Van der Westhuizen & Van Kerken, 2003:6); therefore I have a primary objective. This objective is to help my learners enhance their self-esteem in order to maximize their potential talents and capabilities (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:393). If a learner in my class feels s/he has the ability to write poetry, become a leader or obtain the highest required outcomes and such a learner is unable to meet those expectations, s/he will not feel self-actualized until the goals set are accomplished. It is then up to
me, the educator, to help that learner attain his/her personal goals. Higher level needs such as self-esteem needs are associated with the cognitive and aesthetic as individuals who are self-actualized, display the following characteristics according to Fontana (1995:219). These learners:

- Accept criticism without taking it personally
- Make friends easily
- Are spontaneous
- Happy with themselves
- Feel valued and needed
- Can assert themselves without fear or anxiety
- Are not dependent on others to feel good
- Are extremely confident
- Are sincere, transparent, trustworthy and approachable
- Admit mistakes openly

Educators may endeavour to develop the self-esteem of learners to such a level that it may lead them to become self-actualized in order for them to ultimately display as many of the afore-mentioned attributes as possible. These attributes will help them to interact positively with others and to reach their full potential.

2.13 CONCLUSION

Now that the views of various researchers have been examined regarding self-esteem for self-actualization, it is up to me, the classroom practitioner to help my learners become self-actualized. This will enable them to not only excel academically, but also to add value to society as they will become worthy citizens living fulfilling lives whilst making their own valuable contributions as they go through life. The more we accept responsibility for who we are and who we can become, the greater will be our progress and contribution to society. The ultimate quality of our lives and happiness are determined by the choices we make and also our attitudes. We may encounter difficulties along the way, but it is the way we handle those challenges, that determines who we ultimately become (Covey, 2006:76).
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In my endeavour to find solutions to my research problem, “How can I help my marginalized learners to develop their self-esteem for self-actualization?” I realized that I need to focus on the epistemological grounds on which my claims to knowledge will be based (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:26). This process encompasses a scrutiny of the methodological considerations underpinning this study and also the research approach, design and paradigm it entails. Consideration will be given to my current ontology to justify my preferred methodology. Comprehension of my chosen methodology will be enhanced if my study is placed within its appropriate learning context and the associated learning theories (Mwamwenda, 2004:170-171). The theoretical underpinnings will provide adequate explanations as to how and why learning occurred in the classroom. This contextualization, however, requires that I, as a classroom-based practitioner, commence this inquiry at its fundamental level, which is learning itself. This investigation will then be followed by learning theories, research approach, research design and research paradigm or tradition.

3.1.1 What is learning and what constitutes learning?

Mwamwenda (2004:170-171) emphasizes that learning is central to education and serves as a means by which socialization is effected. He further argues that without learning, individuals would be unable to know, read or verbalize information regarding biographies, articulate effectively in their vernacular or express whatever needs they may have. Human beings need learning to survive. Learning is a process, not a product, as it occurs from birth to death. It happens both consciously and subconsciously through normal interactions with others; as well as both formally at school and informally at home. Learning involves a change in behaviour as a result of significant experiences which are then manifested through action, thoughts and emotions.
Child (2007:160-163) reiterates the aforementioned description of learning when he posits that learning is essential for human beings as their survival depends on their learning capacity. He argues that learning occurs whenever individuals adopt or adapt current behaviour patterns in ways have some influence on future actions or attitudes. Without some influence, it would not be possible to detect that learning occurred. This behaviour transformation must develop out of past experiences and is distinguished from behaviour resulting from normal maturation or physical deformity.

Long (2000:11) expands on the above when he explains that learning is a relatively broad concept that can occur in numerous ways where education is concerned. He also mentions that learning in education can produce various outcomes. Howe (1984:8) elaborates on this by establishing that these learning outcomes include not only formal attainments such as verbal concepts and academic skills, but also the development of psychological skills such as independence and social interaction. When Kimble (1961:6) defines learning as a relatively permanent change in behavioural potentiality that occurs as a result of reinforced practice, he strengthens the afore-mentioned views regarding learning associated with a change in behaviour.

Hergenhahn and Olson (1992:2) emphasize this definition when they state that learning is basically characterized by a change in behaviour observable to others. This suggests that, after learning has occurred, learners are able to do something they could not do before. The behavioural transformation is neither transitory, nor is it fixed and the change in behaviour does not necessarily occur immediately after the learning experience. Although there may be potential to behave differently, this possibility to act may not necessarily be transformed into behaviour immediately. The behaviour potentiality results from experiences or practices that must be reinforced, implying that only those responses leading to reinforcement will be learned.

It is important to note that reinforcement serves as the strengthening of behaviour, so it occurs before consolidated learning has occurred and not after, as in a reward. Skinner (1986:569) substantiates the difference between reinforcement and reward when he explains that reward implies compensation or acknowledgement for effort or sacrifice and that people are rewarded in the form of medals, degrees and prizes.
Behaviour, and not people, is reinforced. If, for example, a learner is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated by being naturally goal-orientated or praised by an educator, the learner will display a positive attitude and his/her behaviour will reflect this as he/she will behave in a confident and independent manner.

In spite of its significance for education, there is no single definition that explains how learning occurs. Analyzing the factors that influence learning, is also difficult due to the various views of different theorists. This causes much confusion amongst educators who see learning as a highly complex activity. We often ask ourselves; “What makes some facts memorable and others not? Why does one particular issue prompt learning in one learner yet have no effect on another? Why does a learner learn from one educator but not from another? How is it possible to make sense of a past experience, putting the acquired knowledge to good effect when confronted by new, challenging situations?” Questions such as these make the task of comprehending the learning process even more difficult (Fontana, 1995:141).

Pritchard (2005:1) sheds some light on our understanding of what learning entails when he mentions that learning is an activity in which we all have participated. This participation is not exclusive to the classroom setting and can happen through conversations, walks, observations and in many other ways and settings – in fact, wherever interaction occurs. This interaction does not necessarily have to be with human beings, it can be with nature, animals or even non-living entities. According to Pritchard (2005:2), different theorists offer different definitions, each influenced by their respective approaches and experiences. These definitions include, “a change in behaviour as a result of experience”, “the acquisition of knowledge”, “knowledge gained through study”, “the process of gaining knowledge”, “to gain knowledge of or skill in something through study, teaching, instruction or experience, "a process by which behaviour is changed, shaped or controlled" and “the individual process of constructing understanding based on experience from a wide range of sources”.

All the afore-mentioned definitions of learning provide a frame of reference for educators to discuss various significant factors to be considered when endeavouring to define learning. These factors, which include behavioural change, experience and learning and performance, will be discussed in the learning theories which
follow hereafter. These theories are the study of behaviour which will guide me as a classroom-based practitioner to help my marginalized learners develop their self-esteem for self-actualization. The words of Hergenhahn and Olson (1992:470) encourage me in my quest for answers when they state, “... in the determination of human’s behaviour, there is no process more important than learning, and if that be so, one of the most worthwhile enterprises a person could engage in is to help unravel the mysteries of that process”.

Judging from the varying perspectives of all the previously mentioned researchers, there are no final solutions concerning the nature of the learning process. This may be so because knowledge evolves and evolution depends on variety. Where does this leave me as classroom-based educator? Once I have defined the epistemology of learning according to my own ontology, I aim to place the learning theories relating to this particular study in perspective to show the relationship between my chosen learning theory and my own educational practice (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1992:ix). Hence, the next step in my study, theories of learning.

3.2 THEORIES OF LEARNING

3.2.1 What is a theory?

Sullivan (2001:13-14) expounds that “observation” and “theory” are central to science. He states that science is empirical as it is based on observing occurrences. Science is not merely speculation, opinion, or philosophizing, although each of these components forms part of the scientific process. Scientists need to prove their claims by making observations that will serve as evidence for such claims. Failure of confirmed observations will result in incomplete scientific knowledge, or even knowledge based purely on experience, intuition or speculation. However, science goes beyond observation to develop theories. These theories represent a more abstract and general level of knowledge than that derived from merely observing.

We experience an observation as a unique occurrence, yet our social experiences are not experienced as a series of unique occurrences. We tend to categorize experiences according to patterns or trends. For example, you observe in your
classroom that most of the learners are frequently putting themselves down and verbalizing negative remarks about themselves and others. You could then generalize by concluding that those negative remarks are an example of a broad and abstract category known as “poor self-esteem”. Involved in this category would be other observations such as “boy grabbing girls’ pen out of her hand without asking her”, “boy pulling girl’s hair”, “boy pushing girl out of the desk so he could sit there” and “boy telling girl to shut up, because he has something more important to say”. These observations are placed in a general category, such as female abuse. The observable event formerly known as poor self-esteem is now no longer a unique occurrence, but an event of a specific type with a specific meaning. Instances of negative comments can be placed with more general categories, such as negativity, negative self-concept, low self-esteem or lack of confidence.

These general categories, such as low self-concept, could manifest in the form of negative remarks about themselves. It includes negativity such as, “I’m no good at anything, what’s the use of trying?”, “I have failed again, haven’t I?”, “I’d rather not try, I know I will not succeed!” or “You think I’m clever? No, the test was easy!” (Stewart, 1999). Other qualities of individuals falling in the above-mentioned categories include the following: being over-critical of their own abilities, unwilling to take responsibilities for actions, attitudes of mistrust, suspicion, jealousy and aggression. It also includes domineering attitudes, experiencing criticism as personal attacks, reluctance to cooperate or respond, avoiding eye contact, lack of communication and poor relationships with peers (Lawrence, 2000:15-21). These observations are then placed in a general category, such as poor self-esteem.

Besides the afore-mentioned observations, suicidal tendencies, poor academic performance and various other forms may also be observable (Donald et al., 2002:8). When we place the original observations into the more abstract context of “low self-esteem” and “negative self-concept”, we have a far more complex and sophisticated comprehension of social reality. From the examples mentioned, we can conclude that reality is multi-layered. As we move from layer to layer, we derive a more general and abstract comprehension of reality or what is known as the actual development of a theory. This theory is a set of interrelated, abstract concepts and statements offering an explanation for a certain phenomenon or issue (Delamater &
Myers, 2007:8). An observation tells us only **that something happened**; and the theory provides an explanation as to **why** it occurred. For example, the negative attitudes and remarks of learners observed in the classroom can be attributed to a poor self-esteem; a general explanation. The poor socio-economic circumstances can be offered as an even more general explanation.

The term **theory** is often misunderstood by those not involved in science. Some individuals are of the opinion that theory refers to mere speculation or opinion. This is why we sometime hear people say: “**Oh that is just a theory**”, when they want to let others know that a statement should not be taken too seriously. Related to this misunderstanding, is that a theory has to be proven in order to be accepted as true. A theory, or part thereof, especially when first formulated, might very well be based on speculation, and might be unverified. However, other theories have been thoroughly verified by research and may consist of very little or no speculation. What makes all of these things theories, irrespective of speculation or verification, is the fact that they are abstract explanations of phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:4). Another misunderstanding is that theories describe how things should be in reality. Theories are mere efforts to describe how things actually are. A theory needs to be verified though, before the description given can be considered a theory (Sullivan, 2000:14).

Theories are sets of related principles and laws that explain general learning and behaviour. The facts and principles that are discovered would be like mere pieces of a puzzle without theories to link the facts and principles together in order to provide the whole picture. However, the same facts and principles may be interpreted differently by different theorists. Due to the fact that theories are so significant in modern day research, researchers are expected to explain their research findings with the aid of theory. The problem with most theories however, is that, on their own, they cannot adequately explain social and scientific phenomena. Researchers, therefore, often have to resort to using multiple theories in order to arrive at meaningful interpretations of their data. Classroom-based practitioners can, using multiple theories, generate theories of their own to develop abstract theories and verify them (Sullivan, 2001:14).
The words of Lawrence (2000:xiii) motivate me to generate my own theory concerning the development of the self-esteem of my marginalized learners for self-actualization. He argues that an increased confidence leads to increased achievement. This suggests that there is positive correlation between how individuals value themselves and the level of their academic attainments. It also implies that the behaviour of individuals is directly related to how they perceive themselves. Those with positive self-esteem not only achieve more, they also tend to be more contented with themselves. Bernard et al. (2005:112) state that a positive self-concept can contribute positively to an individual’s success while simultaneously enabling them to reach their full potential. This prompted me to commence this journey of generating my own theory which would bring me closer to my goal.

When (not if) I manage to solve my own research problem by developing the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization through carefully planned intervention strategies, I will strengthen the theories of afore-mentioned theorists. Enhancing my learners’ self-esteem will enable them to reach their full potential, but what approach will I adopt to achieve this endeavour? There are many learning theories but I have chosen three because between them they form the foundation on which several views of learning and teaching strategies have been built. However, the contribution of learning theories up to now has only partially contributed to the successful formulation of educational programmes in general and no single theory can address all the educational challenges (Child, 2004:123). The major theories of learning appropriate to my study will be **behaviourism** and **social constructivism**.

(i) **The theory of behaviourism**

Pritchard (2005:6) remarks that the theory of behaviourism originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under the guidance of a proponent and founder of behaviourism, John B. Watson. Watson was of the opinion that consciousness could only be studied by means of introspection, which, according to him, was an unreliable measuring instrument or research tool. He reasoned that, since consciousness is not observable or measurable, it cannot be considered a true science. A process of a detailed objective observation and scientific measurement is therefore a basic requirement of any scientific study. Any consideration of an
unobservable mental process such as consciousness was deemed unreliable. However, behaviour can be seen and is stable enough to be measured, therefore it can be studied.

Behaviourisms are based on the idea of a stimulus eliciting a response. Behaviour is overt and can be learnt. For example, a performing dolphin will respond to a particular stimulus – the presentation of a fish – by jumping through a hoop. This stimulus-response relationship can also be observed in human beings. In the classroom, we observe how learners respond to the siren signaling the end of a period or school day. No matter how many times educators remind the learners that they should wait for a signal from the educator before collecting their belongings they can hardly restrain themselves and respond to the stimulus without fail. Also in the classroom, the learners might automatically respond to familiar questions without necessarily comprehending the particular question. For example, in the Mathematics classroom, the multiplication table is drilled into them and when asked a question regarding this, they would provide the “correct” response simply because it had been practised and reinforced over time. This basically implies that current behaviour is the result of past learning (Taylor et al., 2006:5).

(ii) The behavioural view of learning

Mwamwenda (2004:171) describes behavioural learning as a stimulus-response (s-r) model which advocates that learning occurs on the basis of associations made between the stimulus and response made to the stimulus as well as the presence of some form of reinforcement. These reinforcements may be intrinsic (goal-driven, motivated), or extrinsic (praise, approval, awards). There are four main behaviourist theories, namely classical conditioning, operant conditioning, connectionism and social learning.

3.2.1.1 Classical conditioning

Atkinson et al. (2000) are of the opinion that it would be difficult to put the present behaviourists’ position into perspective without reference to Ivan Pavlov (1927), who developed the learning theory known as classical conditioning. The word “classical”
means “of the first type” and “conditioning” refers to learning, or modification of behaviour. Classical conditioning gives us insight into how new behaviour is learned. Behaviourism is based upon the association between stimulus and response. This involves the reinforcement of a natural response or some other behaviour which occurs in response to a specific stimulus. A classical example of this type of conditioning is that provided by Ivan Pavlov, who conditioned dogs to salivate at the sound of a bell. The dogs learned to salivate to the sound of the bell by associating the sound of the bell with food being given. The dogs were later deprived of food and the mere sound of the bell still elicited the same response. Hunger was the motivation for the response. Food was the unconditioned stimulus and salivation the unconditioned response. The sound of the bell is the conditioned stimulus and salivation the conditioned response. The dogs did not learn to respond to food with salivation as that response already existed. What the dogs learned to respond to was the sound of the bell. This occurred as the two stimuli, the food and the sound of the bell, were associated. The food merely served to reinforce the new behaviour.

Pavlov identified four stages in his classical conditioning procedure that tend to follow the initial association between stimulus and response, namely acquisition, extinction, generalization and discrimination (Pritchard, 2005:8). The first stage, acquisition, simply refers to the initial learning of the conditioned response, the sound of the bell eliciting a response – namely salivating. Once conditioning occurred, the conditioned response will not remain indefinitely. The second stage is known as extinction, the disappearance of the conditioned response, brought about by the repetitive use of the bell (stimulus) without presenting food (reinforcement). This stage indicates that the newly acquired behaviour had been unlearned and that extinction occurred. The third stage, generalization, occurs after a conditioned response to one stimulus has been learnt and a response is shown to any similar stimuli without training. If, for example, a child is bitten by a dog, the child may not only have a fear of that particular dog, but of all dogs. The fourth and last stage in the process of classical conditioning is discrimination/differentiation. This process happens when a conditioned response is shown to one particular stimulus, but not to another similar stimulus. For example, a child bitten by a Rottweiler dog may show
fear not towards Rottweilers only, but may show no fear of any other dogs (Child, 2004:125-126).

Since classical conditioning as a theory gives us some insight into how new behaviour is learned, I should take cognizance of the concept of associating one factor with another and apply it to my own context.

(i) Educational implications of classical conditioning

How do I apply the classical conditioning in my own classroom to address my concern, the poor self-esteem of my learners? This theory is relevant to our understanding of human behaviour in general and the learners in my classroom in particular. If my classroom encounter with my learners is characterized by me, as their educator, smiling at them, greeting them cheerfully, identifying/recognizing them by name, making them feel loved, valued and special, and recognizing their uniqueness, then they will possibly look forward to coming into my classroom every day. This will strengthen our relationship and assist in developing a positive attitude towards their school career in general, improving their chances of academic performance (Zanden & Pace, 1984). Potential for learning through classical conditioning in schools is aptly summed up by Lindgren and Suter (1985:139) who argue: “… because stimuli in the school environment are associated with many emotional responses (unconditioned) ranging from fear, anxiety and discomfort to pleasure, joy and exhilaration, the potential for learning through classical conditioning is great …”.

There are various reasons why learners bunk classes, stay absent, play truant or drop out of school, but it is evident that some of these reasons can be attributed to the associations learners make between school and the effect it has on them. Some learners associate school with hostility, cruelty and indifference and even punishment, and for this reason many learners dislike school and have a negative attitude towards school. On the other hand, if learners experience school as a warm, loving institution where they are treated with humility, love and kindness, there should be no reason why they should be reluctant to attend school for as long as they need to.
The same principle of association could be applied to the various learning areas offered, some of which are hated and others liked. It is therefore evident that for every effect (stimulus) there is a cause (response). I agree with this because it somehow explains why learners sometimes display negative attitudes towards certain learning areas (Mwamwenda, 2004:173). I should ask myself, “Why do learners fail my tests, yet do well in another learning area? How do I relate to my learners in the learning and teaching process? Do I convey to my learners that they all possess unlimited potential?” I should do everything possible to help my learners attain their fullest potential. As classroom-based practitioner, I can implement the stimulus-response model in my classroom by using motivation as a stimulus. If I want to elicit a response (learning), I need to adopt a teaching approach that involves my learners, enables them to achieve some success, invokes their interest, challenges their intellect, arouses their curiosity and makes them feel valued, loved and respected. The reinforcement will be praise for good work, giving credit and recognizing effort shown. Without some form of reinforcement, learners may see no reason to apply themselves to the learning process.

The four stages of classical conditioning can be applied in the classroom context. As an educator, I should facilitate the transfer of learning (acquisition), by ensuring that learners are able to apply acquired knowledge within any social context. Reinforcement will ensure that new knowledge does not disappear (extinction) due to exercises being given but never looked at, marked or revised. Furthermore, learners ought to be assisted in distinguishing between concepts where they are taught to discern between exceptions to rules. Another important element that we as educators need to take cognizance of is that learners are likely to forget what they have been taught (extinction). This (response) can be eliminated by revision and practice.

These are some of the educational implications of classical conditioning that I would make an integral part of my learning and teaching process within my classroom context. My interest in classical conditioning is based on the fact that it has a bearing on how new behaviour is formed. The concept of associating one factor with another is important as it can help me to realize that my actions can positively or negatively influence the attitudes of my learners. Since behaviour can be learned
(Mwamwenda, 2004:174), it can also be unlearned. This realization will help me to facilitate and establish an interaction in my classroom that will encourage positive attitudes conducive to learning. The second main behaviourist theory is known as operant conditioning.

3.2.1.2 Operant conditioning

The term “operant” refers to the fact that a living organism, “works on” its given environment, and that as it does so, it is responsible for generating consequences. In a classroom context, this may be in the form of good grades, being promoted to the next grade, or simply a positive relationship with peers or educators. Since such consequences are rewarding, the behaviour of such organism will be repeated and strengthened. In other words, in the light of afore-mentioned, operant conditioning is a relationship between a response or behaviour and its consequence. Operant conditioning is also called “instrumental conditioning”, as the organism is instrumental in generating reward for its behaviour (Child, 2004:128).

Snowman and Biehler (2003:228) mention the valuable contribution of Skinner, a psychologist working in America in the 1930’s, who studied the behaviour of rats and pigeons, and made generalizations of his discoveries to humans. He used a device called a Skinner box that was a simple, empty box. Within the box was a food delivery mechanism which could release food when the lever in the box was pressed. A normal, almost random action by the animal, such as pressing a lever in the box, would result in a reward, such as the release of food pellets. As the rewards continued every time the action was repeated, the animal “learnt” that in order to be fed it must press the lever.

Skinner was of the opinion that rewards and punishments control most of human behaviours and that the principles of operant conditioning can explain all human learning. The key components of operant conditioning are positive and negative reinforcement and shaping. Reinforcement refers to anything effecting the strengthening of a particular behaviour. Positive reinforcements such as attention, praise and good grades strengthen behaviour. Negative reinforcements such as punishment decrease the repetition of an undesirable behaviour. This, however, can
have disadvantages within a classroom context as it is normally associated with negative emotional responses such as anger, frustration and aggression. The last component of operant conditioning is **shaping**, which involves reinforcing every time the behaviour nears the desired behaviour until the desired behaviour is mastered. This implies reinforcing the progress towards desirable behaviour. Educators can use shaping by breaking down the final complex behaviour that the learner is expected to master into smaller, more manageable skills. For example, if I want my learners to ultimately be self-actualized, I need to first develop their **self-concept**, then their **self-esteem** and finally, help them towards becoming self-actualized (Slavin, 1997:162-163). Where does operant conditioning fit into the classroom context?

(i) **Educational implications of operant conditioning**

Gage and Berliner (1986:275) emphasize the significance of operant conditioning by arguing, “... if the teacher is thought of as the person responsible for student learning, and learning is defined as a change in behaviour, then a primary function of a teacher is to change student behaviour...”. Learning is an important factor in behavioural transformation, but the emphasis of operant conditioning is the significance of reinforcement as the factor underlying the learning process. Learners tend to learn more effectively when their contributions in the classrooms are recognized and acknowledged, valued or rewarded in some way. These contributions may be any input, interaction, interest or a simple answer to a question.

There are many reasons why learners attend school. Some need education to fulfill a requirement for a career, to please their parents, to meet new friends, or simply because it is the right thing to do. According to Skinner (1953), the stimulus, or reason why learners come to school, is unknown, therefore we as educators should not focus too much on it. However, we should be concerned with the response of learners, which is their actual attendance. As educators, we should bear in mind that the way learners are treated at school determines whether they will sustain their initial interest in everything pertaining to school. I should ask myself, “How do I relate to my learners? How do the learners relate to one another? Are they able to cope with the academic workload, or are they struggling? Do they get negative feedback
from educators regarding their inability to attain the desired outcomes? Do they feel that their presence in class is a waste of time?"

Purkey (1970:2) advises educators in this regard by articulating that, “... many students have difficulty in school, not because of low intelligence, poor eyes, poverty, or whatever, but because they have learned to see themselves as incapable of handling academic work”. I will take cognizance of these words by reinforcing my learners when I comment positively on their efforts, rewarding them verbally, acknowledging their inputs, making them feel valued and recognizing whatever small contribution they make. I will employ continuous reinforcement for new forms of learning, especially when learners have mastered challenging tasks. My reinforcement strategy will include praise, positive comments, displaying learners’ work, giving verbal recognition, being kind, caring, warm, friendly, understanding and basically giving credit to whatever effort learners put into the learning process in class. After all, the emphasis of operant conditioning is the significance of reinforcement as the factor underlying learning. Since learning is defined as a change in behaviour, my general aim is to change the behaviour of my learners. More specifically, I am endeavouring to develop in them a positive attitude towards a positive self-concept and self-esteem for self-actualization.

Mwamwenda (2004:179-180) refers to a study in the United States of America of 74 secondary school teachers and 2139 learners where the power of reinforcement is illustrated. The learners were given a test that was labeled and divided into three groups. The labels were, “no comment”, “free comments” and “specified comments”. The “no comment” group had no comments other than the marks scored. The “specified group” had, apart from the scores, encouraging remarks written on their test sheets. In the “free comments” group, remarks were written freely, in accordance to learners’ performance. The test papers were returned to the learners who were given a second test at a later date. The results, consistent with operant conditioning, indicated that the score sheets containing “free” and “specified” comments, showed an improved performance in the second test. The “free comment” group scored the highest marks. However, there was no improvement among learners in the “no comment” group. Before the experiment, educators were requested to predict the learners’ responses to the comments. They predicted that
the responses of the more intelligent learners would be better than those with less intelligence. The results indicated that both the academically strong and not so strong learners responded favourably to the comments (Mwamwenda, 2004:179-180).

The educational implications of operant conditioning are closely related to reinforcement, because without reinforcement, learners will most probably not achieve their utmost potential. Educators can reinforce learners through creative, challenging and interesting learning and teaching strategies whilst recognizing, acknowledging and appreciating learners’ efforts. The mere presence of learners in the classroom is a response which deserves to be reinforced by the educator. This brings us to the third main behaviourist theory, connectionism.

3.2.1.3 Connectionism

Clifford (1981:13) encapsulates the efforts of Edward L. Thorndike, an American educational psychologist and the founder of connectionism as follows, “… his ambition was to find an accurate, precise, and quantifiable method of investigating and resolving problems related to learning…”. Thorndike is associated with the theory of connectionism, or stimulus-response (s-r), which states that learning implies establishing an association between occurrences. For example, the sound of a siren at school indicates the end of a period or school day. After studying animal behaviour, Thorndike (1932) developed three laws of learning, namely the law of effect, the law of practice and the law of readiness. The law of effect indicates that a response followed by reinforcement is strengthened, but a response followed by punishment is weakened. The law of practice indicates that mastery of skills or acquiring new knowledge can be achieved through practice. These two laws were later modified by Thorndike. According to him, the component of punishment in the law of effect is not so crucial to behavioural transformation as the reinforcement, to maintain the desirable behaviour. Regarding the law of practice, he argued that practice becomes effective if accompanied by results that assist in correcting errors and capitalizes on correct responses for mastery. The law of readiness stresses the significance of preparation before action; if an activity is prepared, it will be enjoyable, but if not, it will be frustrating. Thorndike also addressed other laws of learning, but
from his theory of connectionism, I have come to the conclusion that reinforcement is an important component in the learning process. Equally significant, are motivation, readiness, practice and application to any social learning context. How can Thorndike’s theory be applied in my own classrooms?

(i) Educational implications of connectionism

The emphasis of reinforcement as an important component in Thorndike’s connectionism is the same as that in Skinner’s theory. Due to the fact that learning occurs as a result of reinforcement, it is imperative that educators integrate reinforcement in their learning and teaching strategies. Reinforcement should be utilized whenever educators interact with their learners. Reinforcement should be encouraged and punishment discouraged. In order for learners to master or attain desired or required learning outcomes, the law of exercise should be applied. This can be implemented through revision exercises, discussions, practical applications, assignments and projects based on lessons completed. This should be followed by feedback to determine if outcomes were achieved. Learners’ readiness can be facilitated by elimination elements likely to affect effectiveness of learning such as noise or distractions of any kind. Learners need to be challenged, inspired, stimulated, motivated and encouraged by educators (Strom & Bernard, 1982). The fourth behaviourist theory under investigation is the social learning theory.

3.2.1.4 Social learning theory

Schau, Phye, Hudgins, Thelsen, Arnes and Ames (1983:301) provide an apt description of how social learning occurs. They argue that, “observational learning is ongoing and continuous. Children pick up behaviour, consciously and unconsciously almost everyday by watching parents, teachers, peers and others … Almost every action of a teacher or parents in the presence of children, therefore, has the potential of being modeled. Teachers can capitalize on this continuous modeling process by making every effort to be desirable models”. Hill (1985:154) reiterate this as follows; “the main thing that goes on in modeling is learning by observation. The observer sees what the model does, notes what the consequences to the model are,
remembers what he has learned, makes various inferences from it, and either then or later takes account of it in his own behaviour...”.

It can be inferred from the above description that social learning is an observational model or an imitation learning theory. It is called social learning primarily because the theory is based on what a child learns in his environment as he/she interacts with and observes others whilst interacting. Albert Bandura, a social psychologist, not only addressed social learning; he also played a learning role in the field of human behaviour (Lindgren & Suter, 1985). Social learning guides the behaviour of individuals so that it is in accordance with the norms, values and beliefs of society. This enables an individual to adjust successfully to society which in turn helps him/her to become socialized and live up to the expectations of his/her society.

Bandura argues that behaviour can be learned without physical participation, and that such behaviour does not necessarily need to receive reinforcement to be sustained. This learned behaviour is known as vicarious reinforcement. This type of behaviour occurs on the basis of observation of the actions of others and the consequences of their behaviour. Observational learning is significant for the survival purposes as it is virtually impossible to be actively involved in every learning experience. Moreover, it would be dangerous to experiment with some things which might endanger our lives. For example, finding out experimentally about touching live electric wires can be fatal, but observing electricians doing it, enables us to learn about electricity without putting our lives at risk (Gibbs, 2003:5). Why do learners need to facilitate social learning?

(i) **Factors influencing social learning**

There are various factors influencing social learning. Some of these are **attention**, **memory**, **motor skills**, **reinforcement**, **identification**, **the status of a model** and a **nurturant model**. Bandura states that paying attention to a model is vital for social learning and advises that intentional and well-planned attention will produce optimal learning, although learning can also occur incidentally or subconsciously. In the classroom, it is important that learners pay careful attention to the educator in order to comprehend what is being taught.
In addition to paying attention, learners also need to process and store what they have observed in their memories in order to reproduce the behaviour displayed by the model. This is possible if observation was processed successfully and the model observed with careful attention. Failing to remember what was observed will result in a failure to reproduce the observed behaviour (Long, 2000:18). Bandura further points out that behaviour that received attention and is remembered can only be reproduced effectively if it is applied and practised by the observer. For example, the pronunciation of difficult words learners are required to master, will only be managed with frequent verbal practice.

Reinforcement, as expounded by Delamater and Myers (2007:11), is an important part of observational learning. If a role model, such as an educator, is rewarded for a particular behaviour, the chances of the behaviour being emulated are higher, since the learner (observer) shared the role model’s reward vicariously. On the other hand, if the role model is punished for an undesirable behaviour, the observer is also punished vicariously and therefore likely to avoid similar behaviour. However, observational learning is not only restricted to human role models, but can also happen through reading activities or watching television, movies, surfing the Internet or merely playing games. Any learning occurs in response to reinforcement, so whenever learners display behaviour which is socially or academically desirable, it should be followed by reinforcement. This will encourage the learners to maintain the reinforced behaviour and possibly motivate the other learners observing, to display similar behaviour since they are vicariously reinforced.

When a learner identifies with another individual’s behaviour, attitudes, values and beliefs, the process is referred to as identification. Such an individual may be a parent, educator, peer, celebrity or a friend. Learners are likely to identify themselves with individuals they admire, and sometimes behave exactly like that person; either consciously or unconsciously. Identification enables learners to develop socially acceptable attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour. It also helps learners to develop a philosophy of life which may guide their decisions and general behaviour. In the classroom context, learners will identify with other learners who do well in the classroom; they tend to work harder to try to do just as well. Similarly, if learners identify with educators who display socially and academically desirable
behaviour, they also tend to strive towards displaying similar behaviour patterns in order to receive the approval of educators (Long, 2000:166).

According to social learning, individuals of high status, capable of rewarding or punishing, serve as good role models. Parents are such models, especially during the early childhood stage: as the child grows older, the parent as a model is substituted by an educator. The educator is capable of handing out rewards in the form of good marks and positive comments, but can also punish the children by giving them poor marks and criticizing them on their efforts. Educators and parents are therefore in a position to serve as models on which the children can model their behaviour. They can also develop and strengthen desirable behaviour and personality of children in their care. Individuals of high status are modeled more often than ordinary individuals. For example, learners are more likely to model a prefect or student leader instead of an ordinary learner. Likewise, depending on their status, educators are admired and respected by learners. Educators can use this status to influence behavioural change in learners by rewarding or punishing them accordingly (Mwamwenda, 2004:187).

The behaviour of a model who is nurturant and perceived to be kind, caring and considerate is more likely to be modeled than one who is indifferent and uncaring. This is partly so due to the fact that such characteristics are valued by society, therefore learners would be likely to develop similar values. There are some educators who believe that effective learning requires an impersonal, aggressive approach. However, such an approach can make learners hostile and rebellious (Slavin, 1997:172).

Contradictory to this, I have experienced that a warm, friendly, caring and kind approach is more likely to win the hearts of my learners. Learners tend to develop a positive attitude towards kind and caring educators and the learning areas they teach. This positive attitude can lead to positive interpersonal relationships and successful performance in the learning areas associated with such educators. It is therefore beneficial for educators to be nurturant models in order to develop desirable behaviour in learners (Taylor et al., 2006:7-8).
(ii) Results of social learning

Snowman and Biehler (2003:243-244) mention that social learning produce the following results: **modelling**, **eliciting** and **inhibiting**. **Modelling** occurs when an individual sees someone engaging, and, being rewarded for behaving in a desirable manner, then behaves similarly, hoping to be reinforced similarly. Often, this is how new, modified behaviour is formed (Delamater & Myers, 2007:12). Behaviour can be **elicited** in the sense that an individual may find it appealing to engage in a similar behaviour. This is often observed in the classroom, where desirable behaviour by a specific learner encourages other learners to follow suit.

When an individual refuses to engage in a certain behaviour because of seeing others go unrewarded for such behaviour, it has an **inhibiting** effect which causes the learner to feel inhibited to behave in a similar manner. For example, a learner may be reprimanded for misbehaving in class and others witnessing this will then refrain from engaging in such behaviour. Occasionally, learners may exhibit undesirable behaviour because the model did the same without being punished. For example, when a learner fails to submit an assignment before the due date and hands it in long thereafter without repercussions, the others will also start ignoring due dates and do the same when they hand in assignments again (Child, 2004:405-406).

(iii) Educational implications of social learning

During interaction with learners in the classroom, a considerable amount of learning other than the imparting of book-knowledge occurs. This learning is not prescribed by a syllabus, but occurs naturally. Learners can learn, just by observing the modus operandi of their educator about self-concept, self-discipline, dedication, loyalty, kindness, caring, respect, generosity, cleanliness and organization. This learning does not occur because learners are told about it, but because they see a living example of what is socially acceptable and desirable (Fontana, 1995:298-299). It is unrealistic to expect learners to have a positive self-concept when their teacher has a poor image of him/herself. It is equally unrealistic to expect learners to reach their full potential and become the best they can be when their educator has stagnated.
and just does what is expected. The educator has a responsibility to display desirable social behaviour as the learners learn vicariously. A child is unlikely to follow in the direction you point, but very likely to follow the direction you walk (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:242-245).

It is the duty of an educator to assist the learners in their care to become their best selves and the type of individuals society expects them to be. Educators can do this through the use of psychological principles of social learning, such as reinforcement, nurturing and identification to name but a few (Mwamwenda, 2004:186-187). Educators can utilize social learning by being models for the learners in their classrooms and beyond. They can influence the behaviour of learners by using other learners who display exemplary behaviour to serve as models for the rest. Davis (1983:144) sums it up so well when he says, “Learning by observing and imitating others (models) is a very effective method of learning and an effective method of teaching”.

As a classroom-based practitioner, I aim to apply the social learning theory. This approach will help me to facilitate a change in behaviour that can lead to attitude change (Hewstone & Stroebe, 2001:263). This will bring me closer to my goal of enhancing the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization. Due to the fact that children learn in a myriad of ways, and not only in one particular way, I shall be employing more than one learning theory within which to situate my learning and teaching strategies. Besides using the theory of behaviourism, I believe that the social constructivist approach will also help to address the challenges I face. These challenges present themselves on my personal, reflective journey whilst endeavouring to find answers to my research problem, “How can I enhance the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization?”

3.2.2 The theory of social constructivism

Snowman and Biehler (2003:301-303) state that constructivism entails meaningful learning that occurs when individuals endeavour to make sense of things by constructing interpretations of how and why things are and also by making sense of new knowledge and experiences through existing knowledge and experiences. This
implies that meaningful learning is the active creation of knowledge structures from personal experiences. Each learner builds a personal view of the world by using **prior knowledge** to interpret new information (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). This prior knowledge is the previously learned knowledge and skills that learners bring to the classroom and the foundation on which educators must build the newly acquired knowledge (Gelman, 1994).

The prior knowledge that learners bring with them into the learning context has had a powerful effect on the learning process for a very long time. This view is supported by Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian (1978) who wrote in his book entitled, **Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View**, “The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach accordingly”. Numerous research findings were based on Ausubel’s argument of prior knowledge being the most significant influencing factor in the learning and teaching process. A review of 183 research studies (Dochy, Segers & Buehl, 1999) concluded that a strong relationship exists between what learners already know and their academic performance. Almost all of the studies (91%) established a positive effect of prior knowledge on learners’ academic performance and in some cases most of the variation (60%) in learners’ scores on a test was attributed to prior knowledge. Prior knowledge, according to Rozmiarek (2006:22), helps learners to make connections to what they know and what they do not know. Hanekom (2008:2) reiterated this when she stated that prior knowledge is the point of understanding the learners need to reach, in order to make sense of a text.

Social constructivism emphasizes the role of social interaction in meaningful learning (Child, 2007:104). This basically implies that knowledge is not merely transferred from the educator to the learner. Knowledge is the result of personal interpretation of experience, which is influenced by culture, prior experience, age, gender and background. This is why some aspects of knowledge sometimes invariably get lost in the personal interpretation process (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:303). It can thus be concluded that knowledge is never fixed or constant. It is shaped, constructed and re-constructed through constant processes of social interactions and varies across different social contexts and historical times.
Knowledge is always in a process of construction, socially and individually, by the educator and the learners (Donald et al., 2002:72). The origins of constructivist theory originate from the work of Piaget who viewed the growing child as a “lone scientist”. This conjures up an image of a child alone, exploring the immediate milieu and forming conclusions about the nature and structure of the world. Social constructivism, however, focuses not on the individual, but on the interaction between the individuals and others - such as peers, parents, educators and society in general. This interaction is known as social interaction (Pritchard, 2005:30).

(i) **Educational implications of social constructivism**

The social constructivist learning theory is built around important features which can be beneficial to the educator and learner within the classroom. Pritchard (2005:41-42) mentions that one of these features is that the construction of knowledge and not the reproduction thereof is important. This is an important feature as it is the process and not the product that is essential to the learning process. The learner, by constructing knowledge, is actively engaged with, and in control of the learning process. This helps to develop a positive self-esteem in learners as the responsibility they take for their own learning can give them a sense of self-worth in the classroom (Barnard et al., 2005:118).

Epstein (2002:4) adds a few more significant features of social constructivism by mentioning that the process of learning within this theoretical framework is active, developing and a social activity. Learners are therefore active agents who experience personal growth whilst interacting with others. In order to facilitate this process, I need to **mediate** participation, **create** the context, **activate** their interest, **stimulate** and **motivate** my learners, **arouse** their interest and **instill** confidence in them. The best way of orchestrating this learning process, would be to model the desired behaviour in order to encourage vicarious learning behaviour (Gibbs, 2003:5).

Social constructivism will ultimately enable the learners to construct their own knowledge, implying that they will not merely absorb the information in the classroom, but will, by social interaction, learn through experience and self-discovery.
According to Epstein (2002:4), this is a perception supported by constructivist theorists such as John Dewey (learning by experience), Jean Piaget (learning through discovery), Lev Vygotsky (learning within social context, scaffolding and 2PD), Jerome Bruner (new concepts embedded in prior knowledge) and Benjamin Bloom (constructing new knowledge from existing knowledge). These aforementioned constructivists mirror my own conviction that learners should have an active role in the learning process in order for learning to become meaningful. By sharing the responsibility, I will help my learners to develop their self-esteem for self-actualization.

I have now situated my inquiry within the Behaviourist Theoretical Approach as well as the Social Constructivist Approach, considering that no single theory can address all the educational challenges we face in the classroom (Child, 2004:123). These theoretical approaches underpin my practice. Now that I have examined the research approaches appropriate to my study, I will examine the research design that I will be employing, which is the qualitative research design.

3.3 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Sullivan (2001:2) comments that when researchers make observations, or gather data pertaining to their research, it becomes necessary to decide whether they will be using a quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method research design (Cresswell, 2007). A qualitative design basically encompasses data in the form of words, pictures, descriptions or narratives. Quantitative design, on the other hand, involves numbers, counts and measures of things. The mixed-method design draws on both qualitative and quantitative strategies. My preferred method is the qualitative design due to the fact that it focuses on a phenomena in its natural setting and also because it involves studying those phenomena in all their complexities (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:133).

Whilst qualitative research involves itself with abstract characteristics of events, quantitative research is concerned with frequency. Qualitative researchers argue that many natural phenomena cannot be described in quantitative terms as they will lose their reality if expressed simply in terms of frequency (Kincheloe & Weil, 2001).
Knowledge of human beings involves the comprehension of characteristics that cannot be adequately described in terms of frequency or numbers. Qualitative researchers endeavour to attach meaning and sense to events, which implies that it is impossible to describe through the exclusive use of numbers. The understanding of human nature involves more than what a list of descriptions or a table of statistics could support. This does not mean that quantitative research has no place in educational research; as quantitative research serves as a check on qualitative data (Janesick, 2000).

Qualitative research concerns itself with context, because human experience is shaped in particular contexts and cannot be adequately understood if taken out of those contexts. Therefore, qualitative research attempts to be as naturalistic as possible, meaning that contexts must not be changed or modified. Research must be conducted in the normal, natural setting of the researched (Kincheloe, 2002:188-189).

Within education, the ontological and epistemological issues remain a given, irrespective of the research design (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:26). Being an educator, I am connected to the sociology of the learners in my classroom. We are social beings and therefore interdependent on others we impact, as well as our environment. The learners in my classroom are all unique, each with their own personalities, social backgrounds, abilities, skills and values. We interact and co-exist within a school setting. I have therefore chosen qualitative research, due to the fact that I have taken these ontological factors into consideration. The epistemological gains gathered whilst investigating how to help my marginalized learners develop their self-esteem for self-actualization will occur within the classroom context as it is the natural setting where the phenomena, “self-esteem”, in all its complexity, will be examined by me, the classroom-practitioner.

The qualitative design, however, comprises many approaches. The five most common are: case studies (studying a single case or event), ethnography (examining a person, programme or event), phenomenology (perceptions and understanding of situations), content analysis (examining material) and grounded
theory study (theory emerging from study). I have decided to choose the latter as it will be the one most suitable for my inquiry (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:149).

Sullivan (2001:321) so aptly provide the rationale for this choice when he argues that many qualitative methods are closely “grounded” in the data as they allow meaning, concepts and theories to emerge from the raw data instead of being imposed by the researcher. He elaborates by mentioning that grounded theory is a research methodology designed for developing theory. This is because theory emerges from the data, or the theory is “grounded” in the data. With grounded theory, data collection, data analysis and theory development are insequential and can occur simultaneously. In the absence of theory, researchers begin by making observations, and then develop concepts, propositions and theoretical explanations that would be plausible given the observants. Inductive research such as this can serve as a foundation for developing an emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994:283-285).

Now that I have chosen the learning theories, research approach and research design within which I would situate my inquiry, I need to choose the research paradigms within which I would situate my investigation. It would however, be unwise to embark on a research project within one particular paradigm of research without first examining the other major paradigms of research and assessing their suitability for my inquiry. How else could I show justification for my choice of any one particular research paradigm without examining the others? In order to examine the major research paradigms, I need to reflect on important factors relating to research paradigms in general. What is research?

3.3.1 The nature of research

Research is defined by Bassey (1990:20) as a systematic, critical and self-critical investigation directed at contributing to the advancement of knowledge. He describes a research paradigm as a network of closely related notions about the nature of the world and the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions their school of thought and underpins their research actions (Bassey, 1990:13). He further identifies three major research paradigms, namely:
the empirical (positivism), the interpretive and the critical theory (action research), each with its own epistemology (Sullivan, 2001:51). I will now take a closer look at each of the three respective main research paradigms to try to comprehend the implications of each paradigm and to recognize how they are similar to or different from one another in order to ultimately demonstrate the rationale for my chosen paradigm. The first one under scrutiny will be the empirical paradigm.

(i) The empirical paradigm (positivism)

In essence, empiricism or positivism uses traditional scientific methods in their endeavours to establish “the truth” about human behaviour. Underlying this method is an assumption that “the truth” is out there just waiting to be proven or discovered. This “truth” is also referred to as knowledge. The belief that the knowledge is out there, just waiting to be observed and proven, has led to what Paulo Freire (1970) has called the “banking” approach to education. This “banking” approach refers to a ‘chant-and-drill’ or “talk-and-chalk” approach, where learners are seen as empty vessels waiting to be filled up with knowledge (Donald et al., 2002:99).

Sullivan (2001:47) cite Blaikie (1993), Durkheim (1938) and Halfpenny (1982), who reiterate this argument when they hold that empiricists are of the opinion that the world exists independent of people’s perceptions of it and that new discoveries are done through objective scientific techniques. These researchers are of the opinion that human beings can be studied in terms of behaviour that can be observed and recorded using objective scientific techniques. This can be done by recording people’s gender, age, height, weight or socio-economic backgrounds, just like scientists measure temperature, volume, or velocity of liquids and solids. For the empiricists, quantifying these measurements is an accurate method of describing objective reality as it provides a solid and objective foundation for comprehending human social behaviour. Empiricists argue that, limiting study to observable behaviours and using objective, scientific techniques will most likely produce systematic, generalizable research results.

The natural and social world can be characterized by a law-like predictability (Held, 1980:160-161). The goal of research in the natural and social sciences is to discover
laws about how the world operates and to develop those discovered regularities in
deductive theories and propositions in relevant research topics. As research is
conducted, scientists move progressively closer to the discovery of new knowledge
which involves uncovering the laws and patterns that underlie objective reality. This
basically implies that empiricists have, as their goal, an objective research for
knowledge. This objectivity suggests that human values are a hindrance as they can
only interfere with the objectivity. If this suggests that there were “social facts” that
could be observed and used to discover social laws governing the social world to
control, explain and predict human social behaviour, then surely humans are equated
to objects or automats without complexities (Bassey, 1990).

My learners are diverse, complex and unique individuals and not “predictable”,
“generalizable”, “identical” or even “a body of neutral facts governed by immutable
laws” (Held, 1980:160-161). Therefore, I fail to see how I can treat them as value-
free experiments or subjects waiting to be “discovered or proven” by “objective
scientific techniques” (Sullivan, 2001:47). This would be implying that my learners
are mere objects and it would be stripping them of their humanity. The learners in
my care are also totally unpredictable and there is definitely no predictability or
certainty in their behaviour or abilities. They are spontaneous, impulsive and totally
unique in personality; therefore it is virtually impossible to be objective as subjectivity
is an integral part of my practice. This is because I am “in-loco-parentis” (Botha et
al., 2003:60), which literally translated, means, “in the place of parents”. I therefore
cannot examine my learners scientifically by treating them as experiments to be
“discovered” and “proven” in order to “control”, “predict” and “explain” their behaviour.
When I observe them in my reflective practice, I plan to do so, taking their
uniqueness, skills, values and abilities into consideration. This is why I plan to obtain
their permission to conduct this research and also when I use my data pertaining to
them.

In the light of afore-mentioned arguments, I therefore strongly refute Stringer
(2004:18) and the other empiricists’ views, who are of the opinion that the world is a
fixed and knowable universe operating in a fixed set of laws. When Stringer adds
that empiricists need to refrain from subjectivity and become value-free in order not
to interfere with the objective search for truth, I become more adamant to reject this
paradigm as I practice in accordance with my values. In doing, so, I remain true to myself and everything I hold dear. So, although the empirical paradigm has its functions with matters pertaining to scientific research like testing blood samples and searching for cures, it will not meet the needs of my inquiry. I aim to enhance the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization; therefore I need to give consideration to their values, beliefs, backgrounds, individuality, strengths and weaknesses. I need to recognize and acknowledge these entities in my learners and ensure them that they are valued and worthy. The empirical paradigm makes no allowance for subjectivity; therefore I have to disregard this paradigm, which leaves me with the remaining two, the interpretive paradigm and the critical theory (action research). Let us now examine the interpretive paradigm to determine its suitability to my inquiry.

(ii) The interpretive paradigm

Sullivan (2001:48-49) states that interpretive approaches view social reality as having a subjective component to it. They also see social reality as an occurrence arising from social interaction. Interpretivists argue that the objective, quantitative approaches of empiricism tend to ignore the very natural, subjective and personal human experience that individuals attach to themselves and their actions. Empiricists also see reality as an emergent component flowing out of the creation and exchange of social meanings through social interactions (Janse Van Rensburg, 1994:6). Interpretivists, on the other hand, do not see reality as separate from human perceptions; they see it as created out of human perception and the interpretation of meaning.

As a practitioner-researcher, I feel that we as researchers should not merely observe the actions of our learners, but we should also take cognizance of their thoughts and feelings about events occurring to them. This interpretive dimension cannot be recorded adequately through objective, quantitative measurement techniques. A subjective understanding is then needed to view the experience from the perspective of the individuals themselves (Goodman, 1992:119). In other words, researchers need to place themselves in the position of those individuals who experience the
events that occurred to them before they can claim to understand their respective experiences (Sullivan, 2001:49).

Researchers need to interact with individuals for long periods of time and to immerse themselves in their lives in order to share occurrences from their perspectives. It is necessary to observe individuals actually experiencing and giving meaning to what is happening to them before we as researchers can claim to understand and to attach meaning to events occurring. Interpretive research methods provide understanding through empathy, whereas empiricists provide understanding through abstract explanations. It can therefore be concluded that both methods provide an understanding of the world and that both could be considered a part of the scientific enterprise. Empiricists question whether the interpretive method of subjective understanding has any subjective validity. The interpretivists argue that pattern and predictability arise from mutually created systems of meaning emerging from social interaction and not from objective social laws that exist separate from human experience (Roscoe, 1995).

Regularity and laws are created and maintained by individuals, not imposed by external influences (Goodman, 1992:119). Interpretivists are of the opinion that the qualitative research designs enable the researcher to approximate an understanding of the subjective experiences of individuals. Actual access to such experiences is virtually impossible as thoughts and feelings are not observable and also confidential. Even when a thought or feeling is shared, the subjective experience has been objectified – transferring those innermost thoughts and feelings into words has changed the original thought or feeling. It is, however, possible for researchers to gain some insight into those subjective experiences by spending prolonged periods of time with individuals they study and become part of their lives.

By sharing the experiences of the researched, the researchers are in a better position to view issues from the perspective of those they study (Goodman, 1992:120). However, despite focusing on subjective experiences, such research still remains empirical since it is grounded in observation. The interpretive approach focuses more on inductive and idiographic theory construction rather than on the deductive and nomothetic, because of theories developing from individuals’
experiences rather than viewing them as abstractions developed by scientists. Understanding and truth emerge out of empathy for social meanings of a particular setting instead of from statistics and abstract generalizations.

As a classroom-based practitioner, I have to reject this afore-mentioned paradigm as it will be virtually impossible for me to spend long periods of time with individuals to gain insight into their subjective experiences (Goodman, 1992:120). My inquiry lasts for practically one full academic year with a specific group of learners. They are promoted after one year and then a different group is allocated to me. Individual interaction over a prolonged period would therefore be virtually impossible due to time constraints as I am also a full-time educator who has to complete prescribed curricula within a certain period of time. My inquiry does not form part of these curricula and has to be conducted separately from the required academic programme. I aim to involve the entire classroom of learners in my inquiry, therefore the interpretivist approach of empathy and experiencing the thoughts and feelings of my research participants will be difficult as I cannot experience what each of my thirty learners experience. I aim to observe and examine patterns of behaviour, therefore I will study typical behaviours and not individuals.

Both the empiricists and interpretivists maintain an approach of neutrality about social affairs and fail to concern themselves with social transformation. I cannot take a neutral stance regarding social issues in my classroom as I intend to facilitate behavioural changes in my learners. To do this, I will have to concern myself with issues of social transformation. The learners in my classroom are a rich complexity of diverse individuals, each with their own unique social backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances. How can I possibly ignore their social dilemmas and their daily struggles and how it influences their behaviour in my classroom and their interaction with others without contradicting my own living standards (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002:17)?

I cannot follow the interpretivist approach as it denies something which is so inherently part of my learners. When Popkewitz (1984:44) maintains that interpretivists concern themselves with “what is” rather than “why it is” or “what might be”, I concluded that they aim to merely understand and interpret and do not
intend concerning themselves with “what might be” or bringing about change. This made me realize that I needed to gain more than understanding and interpreting. I needed to change my current ontology and enhance the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization. To do this, I have to reject interpretivism as well. This leaves the third major research paradigm, the critical theory or action-research paradigm. This is also the paradigm on which my inquiry is based.

(iii) The action research paradigm

(a) What is action research?

Reason and Bradburg (2008:1) define action research as a family of practices of living inquiry aiming in various ways, to link practice and ideas in the service of human flourishing. This type of research is not so much a methodology as an orientation to inquiry, seeking to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues. Action research challenges much received wisdom in both academic and social change and practitioners aiming to facilitate development, as it is perceived to be a practice of participation, engaging those who might otherwise be subjects of research or recipients of interventions to a greater or lesser extent as inquiring co-researchers.

Schmuck (2006:28-29) simplifies the afore-mentioned definition when he states that action research entails an inquiry into your own situation to change the quality of processes and results within whilst simultaneously engaging in reflection and action with the aim of ultimately attaining your educational objectives. This is substantiated by Stringer, Christensen and Baldwin (2010:7-9) who mention that action research is merely a systematic routine enabling educators to keep track and take account of the many aspects of their work in the classrooms with learners. It is synonymous to our investigation into ordinary issues in our everyday lives. A simple example may be being unable to find a misplaced item. We tend to look for it by inquiring whether others have seen it, thinking, reflecting about where we could possibly have put it and finally act by orchestrating methods of finding it.
Similarly, action research enables educators to solve their basic instructional inquiries in the same fashion. If, for example, my fundamental research in question is, “How can I enhance the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization?”, my approach, using the action research paradigm will be LOOK > THINK > ACT in a cyclic manner as illustrated below:

Figure 12: Action research cycle (Stringer et al., 2010:8)

McNiff and Whitehead (2002:16-19) reiterate the afore-mentioned statements when they describe action research as a form of practice involving data gathering, reflection on action presented through data, generating evidence from the data, and making claims to knowledge based on conclusions drawn from validated evidence. When producing reports however, explanations are essential in terms of values, intentions and purposes for doing the research. For example, if I, as a classroom-based practitioner, make a claim that I have helped my learners improve their self-
esteem for self-actualization, the values that inform my work will include self-respect, acknowledging and giving recognition to human dignity and basic human rights.

McNiff and Whitehead (2005:2) remind us that if we, as classroom-based practitioners, believe we are justified in claiming to have influenced the quality of learners’ lives or personal development, we need to produce evidence to support and justify those claims to knowledge. This is done by producing authenticated and validated evidence and then making the claims public in order to subject them to critical evaluation. So when my learners demonstrate their improved self-esteem by asserting themselves or standing up for their basic human rights, I could then claim that I have lived out and fulfilled my values and that I have influenced the quality of my learners’ lives. These data and generated evidence however, need to be supported by others, such as fellow educators, parents and peers in order to be validated and authenticated. This brings me to the rationale for undertaking the action research paradigm.

(b) Why undertake action research?

Having offered an account of the nature of action research, I now aim to offer a response to my rationale for choosing this particular research paradigm. Wilson (2009:198-199) endorses my rationale for choosing action research when she states that educators gain a better comprehension of their practice and methods to improve it when they engage in classroom-based inquiries. She further mentions that this not only involves a high level of reflexivity and sensitivity to the role of the self in mediating the whole research process, but also encourages exploratory engagement with a wide range of existing knowledge drawn from psychology, philosophy, sociology and other fields of social science. Consequently, powerful learning occurs for participants through the process of combining research with reflection on practice. It is for this reason, that many educators who conduct higher degree work as part of their action research programme also mention experiencing a renewed sense of purpose and of feeling more autonomous, linked to an enhanced sense of professionalism.
Educators can also begin to comprehend their learners’ perspectives better, which results in the development of knowledge and comprehension of a unique type that, although limited in wider application, will nonetheless be significant and of great value to the classroom-based educator. McNiff and Whitehead (2005:2-3) echo the afore-mentioned researchers’ sentiment regarding the rationale behind the choice of action research by justifying it for two primary reasons: they are (i) to improve practices and (ii) to generate new theory. This is because it is done by individuals who are studying themselves and their practices whilst simultaneously reflecting on what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they can improve it – a practical, systematic form of enquiry, with the emphasis on what is occurring in their day-to-day practices.

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2005:4), educators are powerful creators of theory and should be recognized as such. This recognition however, implies that educators need to develop confidence in their capacity for doing research and contributing to knowledge creation. Dana and Yendol-Silva (2003:6-7) mirror these previously mentioned sentiments when they mention that all educators reflect on occurrences during previous lessons and lessons planned for the future whilst simultaneously reflecting on performance of learners as they assess their work. They also reflect on the content and the best methods available to teach subject content to their learners. My primary rationale however, is reiterated by McNiff and Whitehead (2002:17), who note that action researchers believe that individuals are able to create their own identities whilst simultaneously allowing others to create theirs. This is done whilst endeavouring to find ways of accommodating multiple value perspectives which can sometimes be a difficult exercise when one set of values is radically at odds with another.

Resultantly, attempts are made to try to search for ways to share the same space despite potential differences. Doing this successfully requires hard work and considerable effort to comprehend the others’ viewpoint which signifies developing their potential caring abilities and recognizing and considering their own prejudices. Wilson (2009:199) strengthens these preceding views about the reasons why educators engage in action research when she states that it not only involves a high level of intro- and retrospection in mediating the entire research process, but it also
encourages exploratory engagement with a wide range of existing knowledge drawn from various fields and disciplines. Consequently, powerful learning occurs for participants through the combination of research with reflection on their respective practices. Many educators may even experience a renewed sense of purpose as well as a clearer understanding of their learners’ perspectives. This renewed understanding and compassion may result in the development of knowledge and understanding of a unique type that will be of great significance to the classroom practitioner. In some cases, it may also be possible to make a significant contribution to education concerning the creation of new knowledge about learning and teaching in the classroom.

(c) How do we do action research?

(i) The process of action research

McNiff and Whitehead (2002:71) state that planning and undertaking an action research project or inquiry implies posing questions about what we are currently doing, why we are doing it and how we can evaluate our practices in relation to the values we hold. Educators should remain true to their values and adjust their practices accordingly, not compromise the values representing them. Many educators want to improve their practices as it is an essential part of developing their professional selves. They differ however, in their modus operandi towards attaining this objective. In the quest for insights into how they can continue to develop, some educators become critical readers of others’ research and ideas. Eventually, many of these educators conclude that the best way of understanding their own practices, is to embark on research journeys of their own.

In retrospect, it is hard to believe that, less than three decades ago, the notion of educators researching their own practices was seen as controversial. Lawrence Stenhouse, widely considered as the founder of educator research, identified numerous objections to educator involvement in research. Firstly, questions were raised regarding the accuracy of educators’ self-reports. Some argued that they often do not know what they do. Secondly, educators were likely to be “biased” as they had too much interest in the outcomes to be totally objective. Educators were
also seen as “theoretically innocent” and in addition to that, they also lacked the time as they apparently spent too much time on teaching to achieve the kind of intellectual distance that is required by research.

McNiff and Whitehead (2006:107) dispel this myth by suggesting the action plan required of a classroom-based practitioner. They propose that, in order to conduct action research effectively, it becomes imperative for the practitioner researcher to ask themselves the following questions:

- **What** is my concern and why am I concerned about it?
- **What experiences** can I offer to justify the rationale for my concern?
- **What can I do about it?**
- **What action** am I willing to take?
- **What** type of **data** do I plan to gather to show the situation as it unfolds in my classroom?
- **How do I validate** this data to **authenticate** it?
- **What methods** will I use to explain my educational influences in my own learning and those I research?
- **How do I plan to ensure that the conclusions** I reach are **reasonably fair** and **accurate**?
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After pondering these questions above, it then becomes necessary to put the action plan into action. In applying the above, I began by identifying my concern. When asking, “**What is my concern?**” I need to focus on the self-esteem or lack thereof of the learners in my classroom as well as identifying other related issues that have arisen in the meantime. The lack of self-esteem causes the learners in my classroom to suppress their opinions, refuse to interact socially, perform poorly academically (too shy to inform educator that they do not comprehend) and to be generally passive and uncooperative. These are but a few qualities displayed due to a lack of self-esteem.
In addition to identifying these qualities, I also need to ensure that I can improve the situation whilst being aware of the fact that though I cannot change the organizational system I work in, I can transform my own ontology as a classroom-based educator. This implies that though I am unable to influence change in the self-esteem of all learners, I am able to facilitate change in the self-esteem of learners in my care at least. My research issue, “Helping my learners develop their self-esteem for self-actualization”, then needs to be related to my own underpinning values. These values underpinning my practice are based on the same values as those on which the South African Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996) are based. These values are based on equality, recognition of basic human rights, acknowledging the uniqueness of all individuals, caring, compassion, kindness, fairness, justice and inclusivity. I need to ask myself if I am living out these values and displaying it in my everyday interaction with others. These values manifest themselves in the comments we make to our learners, the way we deal with difficult situations and our general interactions.

To ensure that any conclusion reached is reasonably fair and accurate, it is necessary to authenticate classroom-based evidence. This is done by inviting critical friends and validation groups to endorse or refute claims to knowledge. They do this by examining evidence, agreeing or disagreeing with claims made and making judgements about what was done. To implement this process effectively, it is necessary to follow the procedures in the discussion that follows:

(ii) Data gathering methods

Dana and Yendol-Silva (2003:63) are of the opinion that once the practitioner-researcher has located a specific inquiry, he/she should commence with the next step in the research journey which is data collection. This, they reason, should not be a separate exercise form their daily teaching activities, but a part of their daily work. Therefore, the choice of data gathering methods should be done in relation to the day-to-day classroom activities and how activities in the classroom can be naturally gathered as data. Triangulation, or a combination of data gathering methods, is advisable as it achieves a variety of goals (David & Sutton, 2004:27).
Wilson (2009:82) suggests the following data collection strategy as illustrated below:

**Figure 13: Data collection methods (Wilson, 2009:82)**

- **Record what is happening**
  - Direct observation
  - Video or audio tape
- **Ask about what is happening**
  - Interview participants
  - Use surveys and questionnaires
  - Use standardized tests
- **Other sources of evidence**
  - Visual
  - Documentary analysis

**Recording what is happening**

**Observations**

Baumfield, Hall and Wall (2008:107-108) note that observation is a normal routine for all educators as they are daily observing the activities in their classrooms when reflecting on occurrences. Systematic evidence gathered through observation will depend on the ability of the educator to gather data utilizing all their senses through the use of checklists, inventories or narrative descriptions as tools to help them with their data analysis. Educators need to decide what they are observing, how much data to collect, the rationale behind the observation, what the assumptions and expectations of the observation are, the influence of bias on their interpretation, when it will be, how long it will take and how to fit it into their daily schedule. After giving consideration to the above, the educator can take cognizance of the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. For example, with written observations, an immediate account is available, but there is no chance of “action replay”. With a video or audio tape, an “action replay” is possible, but some information is lost like expressions or smells (Wilson, 2009:83-87).
Asking people about what is going on

Surveys

Anderson, Herr and Nibten (2007:179-184) point out that surveys involve collecting information from participants using questionnaires. It can be descriptive or explanatory, involve large populations or only samples of populations, capture a moment or record trends and can be conducted in a myriad of ways. Another advantage is that this approach offers some degree of confidentiality and anonymity to the researched. Using surveys implies reaching a large number of participants whilst generating standardized, quantifiable, empirical data in the process. Using closed questions compels participants to select from a range of predetermined responses which are easier to code and analyze. Open questions make allowance for a variety of responses, but can be difficult to code and analyze due to the variation. Surveys can generate large amounts of data, but it is not always easy constructing the actual survey as it involves formulating questions, response categories, collecting background information and giving clear instructions. It is sensible to use a recognized standardized test to supplement your own data if the scoring system is available and you are able to analyze the data collected. Interviews are also used to gather detailed, qualitative descriptions and can involve note-taking, audio-recording or video-taping.

Other sources of evidence

Visual images may include filming or photography with the idea of using them to elicit information and analyze visual material. Diaries and journals can also provide a good source of data as they can contain rich descriptions of feelings, opinions and reflections of both the participants and the researcher.

(iii) Analyzing data

Data will accumulate rapidly once the research process commences, and it is easy to be overwhelmed by the vast amount of data collected. A systematic recording and storage system therefore becomes imperative to ensure effective analysis and interpretation of data (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:101).
(iv) **Validation procedures**

This process, according to Robson (2002:93), concerns itself with “*whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about*”. It is also necessary to test the reliability of the findings which, according to Robson, is the “*... consistency or stability of a measure; for example, if it were to be repeated, would the same result be obtained?*” Another factor to be considered when examining the findings is its generalizability which refers to “*... the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are more generally applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied*” (Robson, 2002:93). These validation procedures would be checked and authenticated by my critical friends, validation group and peers to ensure absolute validity, reliability and authenticity.

(v) **Triangulation**

McNeil and Chapman (2005:23) advise the use of triangulation which basically refers to the use of multiple methods to cross-check and verify the reliability and validity of data collected. The research approach is also triangulation as it involves a combination of *quantitative* (statistics) and *qualitative* (narratives) methods to check on the accuracy of data gathered.

(vi) **Ethical considerations**

McNiff and Whitehead (2005:9) remind researchers that our action research includes a self study of our learning; therefore we do not need permission to study our own learning as we ask ourselves, “*How do I improve what I am currently doing?*” However, we need to obtain permission to do research from those we are researching, especially if we intend to influence them through our educational relationships. We need to gain permission as we will involve them as sources of data or validation; therefore we have ethical and legal responsibilities to them which imply getting written permission.

As a classroom-based educator, I will need written permission from my principal, the DoE, the university, the parents of my participants as well as my participants to
conduct my research concerning them. Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality and protecting their rights at all times from any harm or risk are also prerequisites to conducting research (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007:113). The importance of ethics in research is stressed by Costello (2003:40-41) who advises that participants, especially if they are children, need to be shown special consideration through trust, respect, integrity, good faith and transparency. I have heeded all of these as it is part of good research practice and goes some way in ensuring my own credibility, good ethical practice and personal integrity (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005:35-36).

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented my methodological considerations, research approach, design and paradigm. In the next chapter, I will offer a description of how my situation was and how it unfolded. I will also share my own learning, my intervention strategies, as well as my learners' learning and their actions. This entire process will be unraveled under the subject heading, data collection.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA COLLECTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter encompasses an investigation of me and my learning, me and my actions, the learning of my learners and the action of my learners. It is therefore an indication of where I was before initiating this study and also where I am heading to during and after completion of this study. Given that this study is to investigate the possibility of the development of self-esteem for self-actualization, this chapter details how the relevant data was collected. The data collection takes the form of a narrative description of how my situation was and how it unfolded, it serves as a means to validate, authenticate and demonstrate the truthfulness of my claims made (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010:190). The data collected will be utilized to facilitate the critical analysis of practitioner performance in a classroom-based practice (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004.ix).

In education, we as teachers often fail to see the consequences of the legacy of our teaching. We are usually oblivious of the magical moments when we might be creating a pleasant memory or making a positive impact on our learners. We may never be aware of how we made a difference, with whom, or even when. In addition, we are often unable to repay what was given to us; we can only pass it on to those we encounter on our journey through life. Consequently, the potential to change lives positively (or negatively) is always present. This is an awesome responsibility that we as educators must never lose sight of. We should always take cognizance of the fact that, as educators, we possess the power to control the daily human interactions in our classrooms. This is due to the fact that positive human interactions, as well as negative human interactions, have the potential to leave a lasting legacy (Wink & Wink, 2004:13-14). Educators therefore have to capitalize on this potential influence to bring out the best in their learners by impacting positively whenever the opportunity presents itself in the classroom.
Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe, a famous philosopher, advises, “Treat people as if they already are what they ought to be and you will help them become what they are capable of becoming”. By displaying an unconditional believe in our learners, educators will help them to feel valued, emancipate their thoughts and actions, develop and enhance their stagnant assets and make allowance for them to meet and overcome whatever challenges they encounter. It is, after all, our duty to help our learners become what they are capable of becoming. This can be done by planting a seed of confidence, urging them forward, encouraging them, lifting them – especially when they are struggling, believing in them more than they believe in themselves and endeavours to unlock their untapped potential. I have come to realize that it is not about who the teacher is at the time, but rather about what the teacher can become in future! If I therefore make an effort to tell my learners they are great, they will rise to my expectations. All they need is the help of someone who believes in them more than they believe in themselves and the seed of greatness will take root and grow (Covey, 2006).

Eichhorst (2001) reiterates these views when she reminds educators that it sometimes takes someone else to believe in us before we start believing in ourselves. It therefore becomes essential that we as educators identify individuals in our classes who have limited beliefs in themselves and their abilities. Their limited beliefs about themselves restrict them from achieving what they are really capable of. It also limits their true potential. As educators we have a duty to help learners restore their belief in themselves. Individuals have a natural tendency of becoming what they believe they are – if repeatedly told you can, you will eventually start to believe it and behave accordingly. We therefore need to constantly remind our learners of their great potential until they start believing it themselves. As a caring, compassionate educator, I refuse to allow my learners to believe that they cannot achieve what is humanly possible. I endeavour to unleash the potential of each learner in my classroom by adopting the words of Barack O’Bama, who inspired everyone in his Inauguration Speech when he said, “Yes, you can!” as my personal mantra. These words have become my personal mantra.

There is nothing more gratifying than knowing you were instrumental and have made a difference or added to the self-worth of another individual. It is thus wise to heed
the words of Mahatma Ghandi who states, “Be the change you want to see in the world”. I do not intend to change the world, but fully intend to positively influence my learners by being the best I can be. Through **leading by example**, I aim to bring out the best in the learners in my care. This is the gift I am currently giving and also the legacy I intend leaving behind. The words of another philosopher, Henry Nouwen, cause me to cherish my giving spirit. He says so eloquently, “*When we refrain from giving or give with a scarcity mentality, the little we have will become less, but when we give generously, with an abundance mentality, what we give away will multiply*”. These words are strengthened by Maxwell (2005:143), who encapsulates my deeply ingrained value and belief system when he cites the poet, W.A. Dromgoale, who in his poem entitled *The Bridge Builder*, writes:

An old man walking a lonesome road,
Came at the evening cold and grey,
To a chasm vast and wide and deep.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The rolling stream had no fears for him,
But he turned when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man”, said a fellow traveler near,
“You are wasting your strength with building here,
Your journey will end with the passing day,
You never again will pass this way.
You’ve crossed the chasm deep and wide,
Why build you this bridge at eventide?”

The builder lifted his old grey head,
“Good friend, in the path I have come”, he said,
“There followeth after me today,
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
The chasm that was nought to me,
To the fair-headed youth may a pitfall be.
This poem signifies that individuals, who give unconditionally, are usually aware of the assistance they have received along the way. Such individuals recognize that they are standing on the shoulders of previous generations; in the case of classroom-based practitioners like myself, previous researchers. The progress we as classroom-based practitioners make can be attributed, at least in part, to the work and sacrifice of those researchers who have gone before them. Due to these sacrifices I am determined to do for the next generation what was done for me. I will start by constantly reminding my learners of the good in all of them and the value each of them possess. They are all capable of giving something of themselves to improve the lives of others. What we often fail to realize, is that “giving” is the beginning of “receiving”; more importantly, that giving enriches the giver. Educators in their efforts to prepare learners, who will be worthy citizens, need to sow worthy seeds into society in order to reap fruits that will be enjoyed by future generations (Covey, 2006).

These endeavours, however, do not occur overnight and can sometimes takes years to attain, but we as educators need to be reminded that the journey of a thousand miles commences with one small step. The journey towards achieving anything worthwhile may be tedious at times, but the rewards are priceless, especially if we were instrumental in helping to uncover the hidden potential in another human being. In a classroom situation, it is an opportunity which educators can use to add value to their own lives. After all, what can be more rewarding than the act of giving and adding to the self-worth of others? Van Heerden (2005:62) aptly cites Natalie Sleeth (1975) who sums up our endeavours as follows:

*If you can’t climb a mountain, then climb a hill!*
*That’s much better than standing still*
*There’s a way if you’ve got the will*
*And little by little you’re there.*
Every rose was once a bud
One small raindrop starts a flood
Acorns planted in the mud
Will grow, you know!

If you can’t walk a mile, take one long stride
Move ahead with a sense of pride
Step by step till you’re satisfied
And little by little you’re there!

Williams (2004:50) stirs a song in my heart when he calls me to remembrance of the deepest truth within myself, the self who is born and reborn and lives eternally in our minds. We realize we are significant when we live our lives fully, sharing, giving of ourselves, allowing our presence and actions to make a difference in the lives of others. This realization of our own significance should inspire us to live so that that which comes to us as seeds, goes to the next as blossom, and that which comes to us as blossom, goes on as fruit. Covey (2006:ix) arouses within me a passion for being the agent of transformation in my own classroom, one who breaks the flow of the bad – the negative traditions or harmful practices that are passed from generation to generation, or from situation to situation. Agents of transformation transcend their own needs and tap into the deepest, most noble impulses of human nature. In times of darkness and despair, they are lights, not judges, models not critics. In periods of discord, they are change catalysts, not victims, healers, not carriers. Our classrooms need their own agents of change to turn negative situations into situations that bring out the best in our learners. I trust myself to become one of the best agents of change and to watch my influence grow while I do that.

This narrative account of my discovery journey has served as a means to open gateways into my own ontology and those of others in similar situations. It has revealed the significance of adding value to my life and those of my learners. The importance of adding value to life has the potential of gradually being unfolded in the details and also in our conscious contemplation thereof (Dreamer, 2003:6). Taking cognizance of these words, this investigation has led me to a deeper connection to myself and the purpose I was intended to fulfill. This was not always an easy task.
When it became too difficult, I was reminded of what I already know, that as a classroom-based practitioner, I could do this! The courage to go further and deeper, was found in allowing my desire to grow larger than my fear; that strength is found in our longing to live fully, and in our willingness to settle for nothing less than the best! Brophy and Evertson (1976:139) liken the role of the classroom-based practitioner to that of an orchestra conductor. They note that “Effective teaching involves orchestration of a large number of factors continually shifting teaching behaviour to respond to continually shifting needs”. They also noted that “The most successful teachers looked upon themselves as diagnosticians and problem solvers”. Taken together, these two comments emphasize my belief that to be effective, I need to continually observe, evaluate, act and modify my actions in the classroom if I wish to accommodate and meet the needs of my diverse group of learners.

The contemplation of being true to myself and the values I hold dear, move me to action. I am also guided by an awareness of discovering my own level of self-actualization, coupled by my passion to make a difference in the lives of my learners. In order to help my learners attain their full potential, I need to consider that social researchers, such as classroom-based researchers, initiating social inquiry, have a personal connection with their daily setting (Lofland, 2006:9). Social researchers view these connections as avenues to potential research. The notion of an inquiry into the self-esteem of my marginalized learners originated as a result of my daily interaction within this natural social context. As a result, my inquiry fostered a pronounced willingness, together with a determined commitment and intellectual curiosity to search for solutions to address my concern. Pursuing this however, required methodological rigour that commenced with my own learning (Stringer et al., 2010:2), which included a reflective practice that preceded my journey of learning.

4.2 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Pollard (2008:4) defines reflection as teachers engaging in a “Reviewing of practice, searching for improvements, turning to reading and research for fresh insights, and relating these to the classroom and the school. He/she will bring to his/her work more sophisticated forms of critical scrutiny, demonstrate a heightened capacity for self-evaluation, and a marked disposition to be innovating and to improvise”. Dana
and Yendol-Silva (2003:vii) further elaborate on this when they state that a reflective practice entails, “Building on an awareness that teachers have an enormous amount of knowledge that they have accumulated through their years of teaching”. This knowledge can be displayed by teachers studying their own practice, expand on it, critique it, learn from it and build on their capacity to better understand or improve their practice. De Lange, Mitchell and Stuart (2007:150) sum it up so well when they state that engaging in reflexivity involves “looking” and “looking at” which become central to “looking into”. Leaman (2008:5) explains these views when she states that reflection is about “Seeing the bigger picture – not just viewing each problem in isolation, but from within – in the context of the whole system”.

In essence, reflective practice involves considering our own experiences and then applying that knowledge to practice (Buyse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003:264). This basically involves connecting what we know with what we do and trying to improve it. Once we as educators explore the possibilities of improving our existing strategies to meet our respective needs, we will clearly see how they fit into a constructivist classroom by fostering collaboration among all role-players, by taking a reflective stance in their classrooms. By incorporating a reflective strategy into our practices, we will not only continue to learn about ourselves and our learners, but we will also transform our classrooms by modeling inclusive behaviour and attitudes (Heath in Glasgow, McNary & Hicks, 2006:xii). After all, we as educators are life-long learners trying to continually find new ways to meet the needs of our diverse learners. Reflexivity is the vehicle that will transport us to the destination we wish to reach on this discovery journey.

In my endeavour to help my marginalized learners develop their self-esteem for self-actualization, I have employed a reflexive approach which could best be explained by means of a diagram illustrated as follows:
Figure 14: A reflexive approach

**STEP 1**
- What is my concern? Why am I concerned?

**STEP 2**
- How can I address this concern? What intervention strategies do I need to overcome it?

**STEP 3**
- Setting up a reasonable timeframe to achieve objectives.

**STEP 4**
- How will I measure my success in achieving my goal, or lack thereof? What do I do next?

(Diagram adapted from Wilmore, 2007:94)
These 4 steps demonstrate the intervention strategies I employed to help me overcome the barriers normally associated with the poor self-esteem of the learners in my classroom. After Step 1, identifying my concern, which was the poor self-esteem of most of my learners, I applied my own intervention strategies to help me enhance the poor self-esteem of my learners. These strategies in Step 2 included 3 phases, namely: introduction phase (activating prior knowledge and creating context), intervention phase (learner involvement, responsibility, affirmation and praise) and an application phase (implementing required knowledge to different social settings). Step 3 entailed the setting of a reasonable timeframe within which to implement and complete the process. The last step, Step 4 followed, where validation of peers, colleagues, validation groups and critical friends offered validation of observations.

This reflexive process enabled me to measure the success or failure of my initial goal which is developing the self-esteem of my marginalized learners for self-actualization. This entire process, encapsulated by the diagram, captures the vision I have for my learners suffering from poor self-esteem and low self-concept. Vision, according to Wilmore (2007:107), is not where we are today, it is where we want to be in the future. It is the knowledge, skills and attitudes we want our learners to display and be equipped with when they exit our classrooms at the end of a grade. My adapted, reflexive diagram, designed for my specific needs, illustrates what is needed to get me and my learners from where we currently are (our reality), to where we want to be (our ideal). To achieve our shared vision, my learners and I needed to work collaboratively to empower ourselves through social constructivism and behaviourism theories, to ensure the achievement of an enhanced self-esteem. The process of a reflexive self-discovery approach allows me to share my reflections of my own classroom experiences in a process that will help me to find possible solutions and common ground upon which to build these discoveries. These discoveries will be situated within the parameters of a data gathering process.

4.3 DATA GATHERING PROCESS

I started gathering data at the beginning of 2007, about four years ago. I was the focus of my inquiry; the data was about myself, monitoring my practice and my
actions. I also carefully monitored my learners’ actions towards the various approaches I employed over the years. My data gathering methods included the use of journal entries, diaries, field notes, questionnaires, unstructured interviews with participants and photographs. My sources included research literature, feedback from research participants, observations and social interactions. These data collection strategies, constructed by me, presented a particular version of what occurred, as observed, comprehended and recorded (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003:172). McNiff and Whitehead (2005:61) emphasize the significance of collecting and interpreting data with the aim of turning it to evidence at a later stage.

I collected data through written reflection, observation, unstructured interviews, questionnaires, photographs and visual art. These methods of data collection were chosen due to the following reasons:

- It was imperative to have a written record of my own observations and all relevant role-players. These written records reflected the gradual development of an understanding of the issue of concern and also the improvement thereof during the research period.
- It was significant to observe, capture and record my learners’ social interaction as it helped me to notice patterns of transformation in their social interactions.
- The unstructured interviews helped me to ascertain answers to questions not provided for in the questionnaires. It also allowed me to see the degree of sensitivity I needed to adopt when conducting interviews. Individuals sometimes respond in what they perceive is expected of them (McGinley, 2001:3).
- Photographs and visual art enabled me to shift the balance from closed-ended to open, from individual to group, from verbal to visual, from measuring, to comparing in order to facilitate reflection before taking action (Chambers, 1997:104).

4.3.1 Written reflection

I gathered written reflection through:
Reflective journals, diaries and fieldnotes in which natural occurrences pertaining feelings, perceptions, social experiences and attitudes were meticulously recorded by myself and my learners. This process helped me to identify patterns in social interactions. It also helped me to increase my own understanding of the issue under investigation (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002:94-97), in this case, the self-esteem of my learners. This range of written reflection provided me with a broad range of data from which I could deduce my findings.

4.3.2 Observation

Over the period of four years, I managed to observe the learners in my classroom, aiming to gauge whether the learning and teaching strategies I employed in my classroom were having any impact on their behaviour, interactions and responses. I was of the opinion that I could gauge improvements in their self-esteem through observing behavioural changes. I observed typical stereotypes throughout the study period to enable me to look upon the typical behaviour patterns as an indication of the impact of transformation in general (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006:65-71).

4.3.3 Interviews and questionnaires

Unstructured interviews and structured questionnaires were used to elicit spontaneous, unrehearsed and honest responses from learners. I interviewed learners to ascertain their feelings, perceptions, social experiences and attitudes towards their own selves and other peoples’ feelings about them. This not only provided a balance to my own reflections and observations regarding them, but it also provided a deeper insight into their written reflection (Wilkenson & Birmingham, 2003:7-8).

4.3.4 Photographs, drawings and pictures

Although visual images were used to capture instances of poor self-esteem as well as improved self-esteem, the visual methodologies were mainly used to depict social change (De Lange, Mitchell & Stuart, 2007:2-3). Drawings and pictures were also
used as a powerful technique to elicit opinions and beliefs of learners (De Lange & Stuart in Wood & Olivier, 2008:132-133).

Sagor (2000:19-20) suggests the use of various data sources, commonly referred to as triangulation (Stringer, 2004:57), to enable researchers to find out what they want to know. This data will later be turned into evidence when I ask:

- What have I done?
- What have I learned?
- What was the significance of my learning and those of my learners?
- How will the new learning generate new actions?

The data I have generated will be used as evidence to support my findings, which was also the rationale for collecting it in the first place.

4.4 INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) posit the process of data analysis as involving the following aspects:

- Moving from describing what occurred to comprehending the rationale behind it.
- The discovery of patterns in the data presented.
- Facilitating a tentative explanation of events that occurred, feelings or attitudes expressed or responses elicited.

This is a complex process involving ongoing reflection of the data and its significance. These data also need to be validated in order to be considered reliable, credible, legitimate and authentic (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:158).

4.5 THE VALIDATION PROCESS

In order to produce authenticated evidence, the claims to knowledge required the validation of peers, colleagues, critical friends and validation groups to critique and
evaluate data (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:158). I invited my peers, colleagues, my fellow Masters’ students, my fellow Doctoral students, as well as my seniors to observe my learning and teaching strategies and also the behaviour and development of the learners in my classroom. They were asked to observe and record their findings in journals and diaries and to present them to me in writing at the end of this study period which basically lasted four years, spanning the period January 2007 to October 2010. These recordings were done anonymously to encourage honesty in their responses. This validation group consisted of primary as well as high school educators whose teaching experiences varied from fifteen years to thirty years respectively. The written validations are included as appendices. This process was then preceded by ethical measures to protect the rights of all role-players.

4.6 ETHICAL MEASURES

McNiff and Whitehead (2005:34) state that ethical clearance is an essential part of the research as it involves human beings as participants and sources of data. Issues of ethics are basically categorized as follows:

- **Negotiating access** – getting written permission.
- **Protecting participants** – assuring your own credibility by providing confidentiality and anonymity if needed.
- **Assuring good faith** – maintaining a reputation for good practice and personal integrity by keeping promises and demonstrating courtesy and respect for others at all times.

I have sought and gained permission to conduct my research from the parents of my participants, my principal and the District Director of Education, as well as the Ethics Committee of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. I have assured them of confidentiality and anonymity and promised to exercise good faith by demonstrating respect and courtesy at all times. Letters of permission are included in the appendices. The originals will be kept in my data archive.
What follows, is a description of my situation as it was and as it unfolded. This entails my own learning, my actions, my learners’ learning and my learners’ actions. This journey of learning commences with my own learning (my situation as it was).

4.7 ME AND MY LEARNING

When Sharma (2006:56-73) reminds us that we as human beings are here to find our causes, our primary goals, the vital destinies that will serve as our inspiration and light that fire within, I started to remember my own purpose. When I first entered the teaching profession, I set out to do my best to be of greater service to others, to daily realize more of my potential and to become a better citizen who will enrich the lives of all with whom I come into contact. As a novice teacher, I aimed to maintain high standards and to make more of my own life by climbing the mountain of success, never taking my eyes off the summit – facilitating the development of the learners in my care and helping them reach their highest potential. Driven by a “can-do” mentality (Osteen, 2005:129), positive thoughts guided my practice. After twenty six years of teaching, they still do!

My classroom is an interesting myriad of abilities, orientations, responses, behaviours and potentials. The learners constitute a diverse body of individuals whose characteristics and qualities need to be taken into account in order to provide effective education. The excitement of my teaching experience is grounded in the rich array of potential encompassed by the learning component. The bubbling energy characterizing these young individuals and the task of providing them with learning experiences that will change their respective lives, add to this exciting teaching experience. My primary task is to construct learning experiences by equipping my learners with knowledge and skills that will enhance their understanding of their social setting, whilst simultaneously providing them with the social tools needed to live fulfilling and productive lives in a complex, technologically advanced society (Stringer et al., 2010:6).

I tend to agree with McGinley (2001:11), who is convinced that no person is capable of imposing a change in the way another individual thinks about him/herself and
therefore how that individual feels about him/herself. It is possible though, to treat an individual in a way that transforms the individual’s view and opinion of him/herself. If the individual is treated with a high degree of respect and compassion, then the resulting changed views of him/herself may very likely be positive. The change, however, occurs freely and intrinsically. A forced extrinsically motivated change, on the other hand, is a temporary occurrence. This is due to the fact that motivators come and go, but voluntary changes from within are lasting as they occur willingly, without any outside pressure (McGinley, 2001:11). Bearing in mind that transformation occurs in the minds of individuals first before it is turned into action (McNiff & Whitehead, 20012:103), I initially endeavoured to change myself and then attempted to influence my learners to change their thinking. If this transformed cognition can be transformed into actions, then my claim to knowledge would be that my improved thinking has helped others to learn and modify their ways.

My current role as mediator of learning, interpreter and designer of learning and intervention programmes, facilitator, leader, administrator, life-long scholar, assessor and learning area specialist, can be considered a reflection of my inherent values that I daily live out in my practice. These values, based on equality, social justice and basic human rights, serve as the living standards by which I judge my own practice (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006:85). My theories, however, are created from within my practice; therefore my values are also the standards by which I judge my theories. Endeavouring to help my marginalized learners to develop their self-esteem for self-actualization requires a caring, compassionate classroom environment where values of kindness, mutual respect and a sense of purpose are promoted. The value I attach to kindness, caring and compassion enables me to acknowledge and recognize the rights and uniqueness of all learners in my care in my quest to helping them realize their full potential (ELRC, 2003:E-17).

Before realizing their full potential though, learners need to accept themselves for who and what they are and also what they stand for. Williams (2004:185) notes that self-acceptance is a challenging and liberating dimension of our journey through life. He elaborates on this by stating that if we truly accept who we are and what we stand for, it becomes easier to show compassion to others. As an experienced educator, I can endorse this statement as showing compassion to my learners and others
outside my classroom comes naturally to me, because I have accepted myself for who I am and what I stand for. My teaching experience has also led me to discover that those individuals who feel comfortable being themselves and confident about themselves, generally achieve more, while those lacking confidence in themselves, achieve less. Individuals who believe that they are capable of succeeding are more likely to do so, because individuals’ images of themselves largely determine what action they take (Hawkins, 2007:11-13).

This statement of Hawkins (2007:11-13) is emphasized when I started doing something about my current status quo. Discovering that the majority of learners in my classroom displayed a negative concept and low self-esteem compelled me to do some introspection into my own contribution to this state of affairs. Mwamwenda (2004:242) advised that educators assign learners’ tasks that match their intellectual abilities, since a sense of accomplishment elevates their self-esteem. This prompted me to ask myself:

• Do I create opportunities for my learners to demonstrate their unique abilities?
• Do I equip them with skills to enable them to cope with challenges confronting them in the classroom?
• Do I adapt my learning and teaching strategies to suit the needs of all my learners?
• Do I make allowance for each individual to experience a sense of accomplishment?
• Do I determine the ability of each individual before assigning tasks?

When I discovered that the answers to most of these questions were negative, I needed to acknowledge that I was experiencing myself as a living contradiction because my values contradicted my actions (Whitehead, 2008). I realized that I believe in one thing, yet do another as I have failed to live in the direction of my values (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010:94). I have not realized my values in my practice due to the fact that I did not make allowance for all of the self-inquiring questions as previously mentioned. Even if only one aspect was neglected, then I have denied my
own values. I therefore needed to engage in a reflective mode to overcome this barrier.

In addition to the questions mentioned before, I needed to reflect on my general learning and teaching approach. I asked myself the following question with regard to my learning and teaching approach in my classroom: “Is my teaching approach inclusional, emancipatory, democratic, holistic and collaborative?” These approaches are in accordance with my values which are based on inclusivity, equality, social justice and basic human rights. My strategies should therefore include differentiation, giving credit to any contributions (however trivial), the involvement of learners, encouraging participation, giving responsibility to learners, being generally positive and focusing on strengths. If these are not implemented, then I am negating my own standards of judgement (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:23-24).

With regard to my characteristics, I reflected on whether a caring, compassionate, kind, empathetic and respectful approach is employed. This included my interaction with my colleagues and others. If my learners or other individuals do not feel free to approach me or are not willing to reach out to me, am I being true to my values I articulate so publicly? I claim to be approachable, willing to reach out to others, always ready to affirm, recognize the good in others, always positive, motivate others towards attaining their full potential and to display a genuine concern for others. Is this demonstrated in my behaviour and interaction in and out of the classroom situation?

My professionalism is displayed by my interaction with others when I am guided in my daily teaching practice according to my personal values and commitments. This elicits a sense of responsibility, integrity, reliability and accountability. Overall, my value and belief system ought to give recognition to basic human rights, inclusivity, equality and social justice to reflect who I am and what I stand for. Through the process of observation, reflection and experimentation, I developed a critical perspective on my own practice. I started to recognize how my interactions affected the learners in my care. Learners naturally imitate and model the behaviours of their teachers (Hill, 1985:154).
In the light of this awareness, I started conducting mass assemblies at the school to demonstrate my leadership abilities and also to overcome my own lack of confidence. At these assemblies, I usually prepared motivational speeches to inspire learners to be the best that they can be. At one particular assembly, I stated that “action speaks louder than words”, indicating that we so nonchalantly throw the word “inclusion” around, yet do nothing to prove how serious we are to implement it. I then had the words of a Xhosa gospel song on a chart. A few Xhosa learners sang the song, after which I asked everyone else to sing along, following the words on the chart. I then called upon three other learners to choose one coin from the four that I had in my palm (I had one five rand, two two rands and one five cent coin). They made their choice, leaving the five cent in my palm. I asked the other learners why they thought the five cent was overlooked and they responded that it was basically worthless as you could buy nothing with it.

I informed them that I disagreed and that I would prove to them why. I had a big chocolate in my hand and attached to it was a price tag totaling nine rand and five cents. The three learners who chose coins were told that they could purchase the chocolate but they had to have the exact amount. Obviously they were short of five cents and couldn’t make the purchase. The moral of the lesson was that “small things could make a big difference”. A simple “good morning”, “you look beautiful today”, “I missed you”, or even just giving a smile, lending a helping hand, a listening ear or letting someone know that you are there to support them, are small gestures that can make big differences in the lives of those who need it. One small gesture can lift someone who is down, can enhance a crushed self-esteem or even help bring out the best in another. It does not have to cost much or even take much effort. We only need to make an effort to give recognition and acknowledgement to the other individuals’ basic human rights to help them realize their full potential (ELRC, 2003:E-17). This was the first of many other assemblies that I conducted which commenced in January 2007. In addition to conducting assemblies, I also accepted a number of invitations to deliver motivational talks at valedictory services, prefect and leadership camps and prize giving events. This started in January 2007 and proceeded up to October 2009. By starting this transformation in myself, I hoped to model behaviour my learners could imitate (Schau et al., 1983:301). I discovered much about my own strengths during this period.
The vicarious learning method as described by Gibbs (2003:5) was proven in an incident with Learner A. This particular learner was usually inattentive, disruptive and just generally uncooperative in class. After numerous attempts to change his/her behaviour and attitude, I told him/her: “That was your last chance; I am done talking to you! If you do not wish to be a part of this class, I will grant you your wish. From today onwards, you do not exist; do whatever you wish, as long as you don’t ask me anything!” (May 2009). I then continued to do exactly that and to my shock realized that his/her peers unquestioningly followed my example and also started to ignore Learner A.

This startling discovery and new insight compelled me to gain a different perspective towards my role as educator. I now believed that my role extended well beyond the confines of the classroom walls. If learners could support me by ignoring their peer, I could use this power to lead and guide them to more socially acceptable behaviour. I then experimented by putting in extra effort where Learner A was concerned. I drastically changed my approach which was wrong in the first place. I could not use verbal or physical hostility in my classroom as that would imply legitimizing the very same behaviour in my learners. I then reasoned that if I demonstrated humaneness and respect, my learners might reciprocate. Educators should model the behaviour they wish to see (Hook & Vass, 2000:62). I changed course by taking extra effort to listen to Learner A, talking to him/her, acknowledging his/her contributions and trying to understand and show compassion. By developing a strategy tailored to Learner A’s needs, I soon reaped the benefits of what I sowed. Though Learner A was suspicious and reluctant to respond at first, he/she soon came around and became more attentive, less disruptive and more cooperative (VCD – Journal Entry, June 2009).

I attributed this transformation to the change in myself, the change in the way I treated Learner A, and to the power of social learning theory (Hill, 1985:154) whose premise is based on modeled behaviour. I am also so much more aware of how my actions affect the behaviour of the learners in my care, therefore I have consciously changed my approach so that when I disagree with the behaviour of a learner, I am selective as to how I respond, because I now realized that my learners follow my lead. This, I realized, could be utilized to my benefit – if they could imitate bad
behaviour, they could also imitate good behaviour! When my behaviour towards Learner A changed from intolerance and impatience to being caring, loving and accommodating, the learners also followed suit (Gibbs, 2003:5). When Learner A started feeling better about him/herself, he/she also improved academically and achieved more (VCD – Journal Entry, July 2009).

In another incident, Learner B appeared to be totally withdrawn and refused to participate in group activities. He/she seemed to be miserable, unhappy, dissatisfied with his/her life and not very well adjusted. Socially during breaks, Learner B was alone and in class he/she preferred sitting alone, avoiding eye contact. When prompted for a response, Learner B simply refused to do so. In written assignments like essays, the self-defeating and negative thought patterns were evident. Examples of this defeatist attitude were, “I am no good, so what is the use of even trying. Even mom says I am a failure, so I am one. I have no friends and hate school. I wish I could die, life is not worth living at all” (Learner B – Diary Entry, May 2009).

I began focusing on what Learner B was good at. When I discovered that Learner B loved books, I carefully selected books containing interesting topics he/she could easily relate to. I would challenge him/her to read a particular book I presented to him/her and then offer my views on it. Thereafter, I would ask Learner B to give me an informal book review. At first, Learner B was not very receptive, but later warmed to my attention. An informal book club was established at my insistence and as Learner B’s opportunities to demonstrate his/her abilities increased, he/she started to thrive. He/she became less withdrawn and eventually took charge of the book club. He/she also started to engage more socially and became more socially adaptable during breaks and in the classroom. My continued efforts finally paid off when Learner B wrote in his/her diary, “Reading is my favourite hobby. I am good at reading. My book review was the best! I look forward to our next book discussion!” (Learner B – Diary Entry, June 2009).

These two cases were the motivation behind my reconceptualization which flowed naturally from my reflection, observation and analysis (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004:128). I now felt a renewed sense of purpose and confidence in my power to
influence my learners to increase their self-esteem for self-actualization. What intervention strategies did I employ in my endeavour to attain this goal?

4.8 ME AND MY ACTIONS

My strategy to modify my existing practice to address my issue of concern, the low self-concept and poor self-esteem of my marginalized learners, included three basic phases namely: an introductory phase, an intervention phase and application of acquired knowledge (Didloft, 2009). These phases were implemented interchangeably. Reflection, planning, evaluation and modification were done throughout the teaching and learning process. Basically, the first or introductory phase involved the learner (participating), the facilitator (initiating) and the social contexts (foundations on which contexts were built). This triangle served as a means by which to gain different perspectives of the learning process (Sagor, 2000:93). During the introductory phase, the facilitator taps into the prior knowledge of the learner to create context for effective and meaningful learning to take place. Prior knowledge is significant as it helps learners to master the skill of making associations in the learning process (Rozmiarek, 2006:22). This is an important commodity, as it is essential to reach a point of understanding (Hanekom, 2008:2). Once the point of understanding is attained, learning is active and learners are ready to commence with the second phase.

During the second phase, the intervention phase, learners are encouraged to become involved in the learning process, are given responsibilities, use drama to help deal with and overcome personal experiences by taking on personas of others, and receive deserving praise and motivation. Basically, involvement entails getting learners involved in classroom activities to give them a sense of worth and boost their self-concept and self-esteem. The allocation of responsibilities will add to this sense of self-worth and value. Finally, the incorporation of drama-in-education helps learners to express their feelings and thoughts through the situations of others (Athiemoolam, 2008).

The third phase, or the application phase, involves effectively applying required knowledge to different social settings. If newly acquired learning can be applied
appropriately, then the learning process was successful and self-actualization can be attained (Hanekom, 2008).

Other strategies will include **modeling** and **reciprocating**, used integratively and interchangeably.

### 4.8.1 The introductory phase (phase one)

If educators fail to capitalize on the richly diverse knowledge that is derived from their learners’ prior knowledge, then they will not be able to fulfill the maximum learning potential of each individual in their classrooms. Educators should start the learning process with what learners know and then work with what they can do with what they know. What learners know originates from a long history of learning and prior experiences in their family backgrounds and social contexts. What learners can do encompasses all the skills that learners acquire before coming to school and within their social contexts. These skills have the potential to extend great possibilities to educators (Stringer *et al.*, 2010:67-70).

I tapped into this prior knowledge to determine what my learners knew about themselves, intending to work with what can be done by them to improve their own self-esteesms. A questionnaire comprising five basic questions was distributed to help me determine their levels of self-esteem (Dilley *et al.*, 2005:52-53). (The original will be attached as an appendix). The questions varied from personal appearance, emotions regarding peers and school, to social adaptability and confidence. To the question, “*How do you feel when you look in the mirror?*” most learners indicated that they would change their looks if they could. They responded that they felt unhappy about their noses, lips, eyes, hair and physical appearance, to mention but a few discontented areas. To the question asking if they were happy with their friends, the majority responded that they were. When answering the question pertaining to their feelings about school, most learners expressed their dislike regarding school and educators. A large number of learners were of the opinion that educators either picked on them or disliked them. The majority also anticipated failure. Most of the learners indicated a lack of interest in sport and other extra-mural activities. The confidence levels of most, according to the scores, were very poor. In addition to this
quiz, I also informally interviewed (using unstructured questions) the learners to establish their levels of self-image and how well they knew themselves and their own strengths and weaknesses.

When learners were asked to describe themselves, I concluded that most of them showed signs of poor self-images and low self-esteem. Learner C, for example, responded as follows: “I have pimples in my face and stretch marks all over my body. I hate the way I look and wish I could look like some of the movie stars I admire on television. Why is life so unfair?” (Learner C – Diary Entry, May 2009). Another learner, Learner D, commented: “My problem is that I am fat. Nobody invites me to their parties. I suppose I’m too ugly to be someone’s girlfriend. I don’t blame them, because I don’t like my face and my body either. I’m always so lonely.” (Learner D – Diary Entry, May 2009). Yet another, Learner E, had the following to say, “I’m so stupid. I don’t think I’ll ever pass matric. I study, but can’t seem to get good levels. Everyone thinks I’m dumb. What’s the use of trying? I might just as well give up and quit school now. I’m a total failure!” (Learner E – Diary Entry, May 2009).

These learners represented the majority of learners in my classroom. They harboured self-defeating thought patterns which negatively affected their self-acceptance. This resulted in a lack of self-esteem and a low self-concept. As a result, their negativity caused them to fear risks, preventing them from making changes, always predicting the worst, ultimately leading to failure (Barnard et al., 2005:119). To form a positive self-concept, you need to know yourself and be aware of your attributes, thoughts, feelings, actions, reactions and experiences. Unless my learners know who they are, they will not know what they are capable of becoming. By becoming aware of your thoughts, feelings, actions and trying to comprehend why you think, feel, act, react and experience things as you do, you can empower yourself and improve your self-concept (Barnard et al., 2006:117). This encouraged me to find ways of allowing learners to get to know themselves so they can become instrumental in assisting me to orchestrate their own transformation of working towards an increasingly positive self-concept.
I got the learners to work in pairs. Each learner had to take a turn to give each other a positive label, starting with the initial of the learner or any chosen positive, for example, “terrific Tandeka”, “brilliant Brian”, “gorgeous Gabby”, “clever Cindy”, “fantastic Farren”, “proud Peter”, etcetera. They could then add to the labelling by calling out, “Cindy is cute, clever, calm, caring, compassionate, charming, creative,” etcetera. If they had difficulty formulating a word with an initial, they could use any possible positive adjective for an individual whose name was Zena, for example. The aim of this exercise was to grant learners the opportunity to experience positive things about themselves. To build on the previous exercise, learners were invited to design a positive advertisement about themselves in which they draw attention to their good qualities, using the descriptive words given to them by their classmates. These advertisements served to teach them to market themselves and to focus on the positive. An example of an advertisement looked as follows:

Figure 15: An advertisement (positive affirmation)

A news wall was also created on which learners were expected to write positive
comments about each other as they got to know each other better, for example, “Andile is amazing, he knows his Maths so well!”, “Cindy is a great friend, she was very supportive towards Gail who lost her mom last week!”, “Peter scored great marks in his English test this week, we’re proud of you buddy!”, “Zandile was selected for the Eastern Province Netball Team. Congratulations, girl!” and “Wayne is headboy for 2010, well done, you’ve done us all proud!” Learners were also requested to sit in a close circle. Each learner got a chance to sit in the middle of the circle to do a “sponge act”. They had to sit passively, eyes closed, not responding, just absorbing positive bombardment. The other learners then had to “bombard” the learner in the circle with positive comments such as “friendly”, “kind”, “caring”, “loving”, “a good listener”, “helpful”, “creative”, “goal orientated”, “hardworking”, etcetera. This exercise, like the others, afforded the recipients the opportunity to experience a sense of worth (Reid, 2007:49). The intention was to boost the self-concepts and self-esteem of all the learners (VCD – Journal Entry, July 2009). See attached images of a news wall and positive bombardment as done by learners:

**Figure 16: News wall**
Now that the learners were aware of who they were and what they were capable of, I asked them to do an additional exercise where they had to draw three circles on a page. The inner, smallest circle represented how they saw themselves. The middle, bigger circle, how others saw them and the biggest, outer circle, how they would like to be seen. This time, the learners were instructed to focus on their positive characteristics only and not the negative ones such as “fat”, “lonely”, “failure” and “dumb” they used in a questionnaire (VCD – Journal Entry, May 2009). The three examples that follow were typical of what learners had to offer:
Figure 18: How learners perceived themselves after intervention sessions (VCD – Journal Entry, July 2009)

Figure 19: Learners’ self-perceptions (VCD – Journal Entry, July 2009)
As seen in the above example, the way others saw them, positively influenced the way they perceived themselves. Initially, learners displayed a low self-concept. After the interventions (July 2009), I then asked them to compile a collage where they had to reflect how they saw themselves, how others perceived them and how they wanted to be perceived. The above (Figures 18 – 20) are validations of their positive self-concepts after the implementation of intervention strategies.

My underpinning purpose in implementing affirmation strategies in my classroom interactions in general and in the way I treat my learners specifically, was to create an atmosphere where all the learners in my care would feel valued. It was my intention to boost their self-concept and self-esteem by demonstrating to my learners the values of inclusion, equality, gentleness, care, compassion, kindness and respect. I intended to enable all my learners to experience the feeling of being valued, respected, loved and being included. Now that learners were aware of their
own worth, it was time for the next lap of the journey, to strengthen the development of the self-esteem through more strategic intervention strategies.

### 4.8.2 The intervention phase (phase two)

This phase comprised learner involvement, learner responsibilities and drama-in-education, implemented inter-changeably. Learner involvement entailed getting my learners involved in decisions relating to classroom policies such as a classroom code of conduct, seating arrangements and wall decorations (only learners’ work was displayed on walls). Learners were encouraged to be involved in the formulation of a classroom code of conduct which would set the ground rules for general classroom management and classroom behaviour. The purpose in formulating basic ground rules as a support to establishing a sense of security was to protect the rights of all individuals in the classroom (Leaman, 2006:63-66). It is my firm conviction that a feeling of security emerges from knowing that your rights will be protected and the infringement thereof will be dealt with accordingly.

Firstly, a discussion was held as to the purpose of rules and regulations in general. Sport and rules of the road were used as examples to demonstrate the necessity of rules. The rules in their respective homes were then looked at, for example, their curfews, television viewing times and the necessity thereof. Learners were guided to see the purpose behind rules and how they protect the rights of all. Classroom rules followed hereafter, then our responsibilities and lastly our classroom code of conduct. It was decided to limit the code to a minimum of five rules to ensure that it is simple enough to be memorized and adhered to by all learners.

The classroom code of conduct comprised five basic rules:

- It is our responsibility to ensure and respect everyone’s right to listen to the lesson without disruptions.
- It is our responsibility to ensure that everyone and everything will be treated with respect.
- We will be honest in whatever we say and do.
- We will try our best in whatever we do.
We should acknowledge, give recognition to and embrace the diversity of our fellow learners (Implemented January 2009).

The code of conduct was implemented to help me instil values I regarded as significant in addition to instilling a sense of security and protection (Leaman, 2006:63-66). The involvement of the learners was my way of helping them take ownership of their own development in general, and the development of a positive self-concept and self-esteem in particular. Other means of involvement were also implemented, such as discussing which posters should be displayed in class, the general layout of the classroom setting and choice of texts. Learners were encouraged to bring interesting articles from their homes and these were used as comprehension and language texts. This gave learners a sense of purpose and worth as they realized that their inputs were valued, appreciated and applied (Rosenberg, 2003:70-73). This process occurred throughout the academic year of 2009 (January – November 2009).

The next cycle in this phase, was the learner responsibility. During this cycle, Grade Twelve learners were given the responsibility of mentoring grade eight learners. Each Grade Twelve learner was allocated a learner for whom they had to take responsibility. This mentoring process included keeping a record of their mentees’ personal profiles, academic progress, aims, strengths and weaknesses. Mentors had to take responsibility for the mentees in their care and also get information regarding them from friends, parents, educators and any relevant role players.
A typical information profile looked like these below:

**Figure 21: A typical information profile**

This is Shireen Dawood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home town:</strong></td>
<td>Pretoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hobbies:</strong></td>
<td>Going to the movies, baking, visiting friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Favourite food:</strong></td>
<td>Chocolate cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Favourite music:</strong></td>
<td>Jazz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greatest wish:</strong></td>
<td>To travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greatest fear:</strong></td>
<td>Spiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future plans:</strong></td>
<td>To run her own business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shireen’s mother says:

“My daughter has been brought up to be proud of her culture. She has always been a very caring and responsible girl.”

Shireen’s class teacher says:

“Shireen is a good student. She gets on well with others in the class. Her strongest subject is mathematics. If she works hard, I believe she can achieve a great deal.”

Shireen’s friend writes:

14 April

“Today Shireen came to visit me for the afternoon. We walked to the shop and bought some chips. Then we listened to some music. I wish my brothers wouldn’t tease her every time she visits. She gets so embarrassed. I felt sorry for her.”

A family friend says:

“I have known Shireen since she was a little girl. The Dawood family plays an important role in the community. Shireen has grown up with strong values. She has a commitment to her community.”

(Extracted from Hawksley, 2000:6)
PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Age : 17
First Name : Sizwe
Surname : Buhle
Address : 10 Blue Street, Bluedowns, Port Elizabeth
Contact No : 073 555 4446
Strengths : Good listener, patience, honest, hardworking
Weaknesses : Shy, withdrawn, low self-concept, academically challenged

Sizwe’s class teacher says:

Sizwe has great potential, but he lacks confidence. He needs to believe in himself and assert himself more.

Sizwe’s friend says:

He always helps me when I struggle. Sizwe is quiet and withdrawn, but very supportive. I can always rely on Sizwe being there for me when I need a friend.

An uncle states:

If only Sizwe could choose his friends more carefully, he would make it!

Sizwe’s English teacher notes:

Though Sizwe has the potential to excel, he does not believe in his own abilities. He has to assert himself in order to restore his own self-worth.
The roles and tasks of the ideal mentor, according to Sweeny (2008:106-107), would be:

- To be a helper by being a source of knowledge and experience;
- To encourage, motivate and support;
- To be the link between the mentee and the schoolwork;
- To help develop and improve academic and social skills;
- To be a friend, listener and confidante;
- To be a role model and someone the mentee can look up to and emulate.

Rhodes, Stokes and Hampton (2004:43) add to the above by stating that mentors reveal the best in others. As described above, the mentor had to try to fulfil all those roles and tasks to help their protégées achieve their maximum potential. When asked about their feelings regarding the roles they portrayed, they had the following to say:

“I felt absolutely great! For the first time in my life I experienced a sense of purpose. I loved being given the responsibility; it proved to me that the teacher trusted me enough to give me the task of mentor!” (Learner F – Diary Entry, August 2009).

“It’s good to know that I’m needed and that I meant something for someone. For a long time, I felt so worthless, but the teacher showed me that I can make a difference in the life of at least one person. I’ll do it again if I have to” (Learner G – Diary Entry, August 2009).

“I have decided to become a teacher. My role as mentor helped me to finally make up my mind about my future plans. I enjoyed my role as mentor and felt so blessed to give of my time, energy and experience. I think all matriculants should go through this experience!” (Learner H – Diary Entry, August 2009).

These are only three of the learners’ views of their mentoring experience, but it represents the general views of most of the mentors. The purpose of this exercise was to prove that every individual has a contribution that he/she can make to society. I wanted to instil the value of caring and compassion in the matriculants, so they
could proudly enter society as citizens who could add to the value and quality of life. This leaves the last cycle.

The last cycle in this phase was drama-in-education. My rationale behind incorporating this cycle into the intervention phase was to grant learners the opportunity to step out of their own circumstances and take on the persona of another person. This exercise serves to enable learners to confidently express their feelings and thoughts through the situation of others (Athiemoolam, 2008:164-168). It makes the experience less personal and easier to deal with and will also possibly assist in the development of a positive self-concept and self-esteem. Provided it is correctly implemented, drama-in-education is one of the most valuable tools a facilitator can use in the classroom. Through the creation of scenarios, educators can teach values such as empathy, compassion, basic human rights, fairness and equality in a playful, fun way, without learners even realizing they are being taught important values. The shy introverts are also given a chance to get out of their shells by pretending to be confident.

During this exercise, learners divided themselves into groups they were comfortable with. Various role-playing strategies were employed, such as role-playing television programmes, where the others had to guess what the programme is that they were acting out. The idea was to help them relax, laugh and work as a group, also, to get them to gain confidence to speak in front of an audience. Another role-playing exercise we did was improvisation where nothing is planned and learners had the freedom to create scenarios from their own personal experiences (impromptu). A role-playing exercise they particularly enjoyed was the masks and opening lines, where learners used paper bags or paper plates for masks. The opening lines included, “I cannot go on anymore…”, “Nobody understands me…”, “Nobody likes me…”, “I am no good…”, “I’m such a loser…”, “Mom, but you don’t understand…”. Working in groups, the learners had to create roles starting with the opening lines portraying different roles, for example, son, mother, teacher and principal. Learners were also given opportunities to create their own scenarios and possible solutions to imaginary problems.
Painful emotions and experiences were mimed and learners had to guess what the one miming is trying to depict, for example, sadness, bitterness or losing a loved one through death. A role-play exercise they found extremely enjoyable was the “I am You”, where a learner portrayed being the other person. Each learner chose the person to become. The learner then had to walk like that person, talk like that person, and behave like that person.

Discussions, analysis and reflection followed all role-play sessions. Leading questions, such as “What did we learn from this role-play?”, “How can we apply it to a real life situation?”, “What did you learn about yourself?”, “How did you feel?”, “How do you feel now?” were asked after each role-play session. Learners were asked to reflect on their interactions and to write about their feelings in their journals. The general comments were:

“It gave me the courage to speak about things that bothered me!”

“This is really something I’m good at. I know I can become a great actor, perhaps greater than Leonardo Di Caprio!”

“I enjoyed taking on the roles of adults. It provided an opportunity for me to change the outcome of situations the way I want them to be. My mom and I should do that some time as she could experience how helpless I feel sometimes.”

“We should do role-play more often, it is much more fun than the boring old language lessons. I am allowed to yell, cry and laugh whenever I want.”

“I could share my innermost feelings in a playful way and my fellow learners came up with some good solutions to problems I considered to be insurmountable!”

“No one knew that I was actually role-playing my real life situation. It felt great to get rid of my problems in this way. I look forward to doing it again! I feel so relieved!”

“It is a cool way to get rid of bottled-up feelings!”
“When I’m confronted with a problem like this again, I’ll know exactly how to deal with it, thanks to the input of my group!”

“I discovered a strength in myself that I didn’t know I had!”

“I wasn’t shy at all. I’ll definitely do it again!”

(Grade 12 Learners – Journal Entries, November 2009)

The role-playing exercises occurred continuously over the entire year of 2009, between February and November 2009). These exercises were integrated with praise and affirmation. This leaves the last phase.

4.8.3 The application of acquired knowledge (phase three)

This phase, also known as the application phase, involves unlimited learning opportunities and possibilities. Acquired knowledge is appropriately applied during this important phase. It is also a measuring instrument to determine whether the learning and teaching strategies were successful or not.

To implement this phase, I used the learners chosen as prefects, class monitors and mentors to first make a SWOT analysis of themselves. They had to determine their own inner strengths and weaknesses, environmental opportunities and threats, by filling in a personal SWOT analysis form (Barnard et al., 2005:23-26). This is an example of a learner’s SWOT analysis (which was done in November 2009):
My personal SWOT analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL FACTORS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRENGTHS</strong></td>
<td><strong>WEAKNESSES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am hardworking.</td>
<td>• I sometimes tend to doubt my abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am focussed.</td>
<td>• I like to procrastinate at times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am a good motivator.</td>
<td>• I lack self-control and given in easily when friends persuade me to join them partying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am socially adaptable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Others see me as supportive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL FACTORS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>THREATS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My parents have study policies available for me.</td>
<td>• We live quite a distance from school and I struggle with transport sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I have a computer in my room.</td>
<td>• Friends bothering me to join them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My older brother who is at university helps me when I struggle.</td>
<td>• Friends calling me a “nerd”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After learners identified their particular strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats they were faced with, they could use the information to assist them in setting relevant and realistic goals. It could also help them overcome the obstacles preventing them from becoming self-actualized.

After this exercise, they had to fill in a second self-esteem questionnaire to determine their self-esteem levels after interventions were done (Barnard et al., 2005:115). (Both these questionnaires will be included in the appendices). This first one was done at the beginning of last year and then again after the introduction and intervention phase in November 2009. Just before the final phase was implemented, they were trained at a leadership camp I organized, to portray confidence through body language and to be assertive without being aggressive or arrogant (this was done using imaginary scenarios – role-play exercises). Learners were equipped with various skills at this leadership camp, which was held in July 2009. These skills included conflict management, teamwork, stress management, assertiveness and public speaking. The following photos were then taken at the camp.
Figure 22: Photo taken at leadership camp (July 2009)

Figure 23: Photo taken at leadership camp (July 2009)
After the camp, they articulated their views as follows:
“I have learnt to work in a group, how to be a good leader and to always lead by example!”

“I’ve learnt to always display exemplary behaviour, both inside and outside the classroom, because a leader must lead by example.”

“I have learnt to always be confident and back it up by the way I carry myself. My body language should be the convincing factor. I’ve also learnt to be responsible and respectful.”

“I need to believe in myself first before I can expect others to follow me or obey my orders.”

“We have learnt not to be shy and to assert ourselves when dealing with others. We also learnt to respect others if we expect them to respect us.”

“I am much more confident now, because I have learnt to overcome my shyness.”

“I didn’t know most of my fellow learners experienced exactly the same fears as I did. I feel much more confident now!”

“Perfect duties? Bring it on!”

(Grade 12 Prefects – Journal Entries, July 2009)

It is important to mention that, even though my action plan comprised three basic phases, I have also integrated within my daily teaching and learning strategy, the foundation on which I build my approach, which is motivation. This motivation is characterized by genuine, well-deserved praise and affirmation strategies. I am guided by my inherent value and belief system which justifies my actions inside and outside the classroom (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:23-24). These values are contained in The Constitution of South Africa No. 108 of 1996 No. 7, 9 and 10 (Oosthuizen & Rossouw, 2003:13, 14, 185-188). These values basically encompass creating equal opportunities for all individuals, respecting basic human rights, fair treatment, being non-discriminatory and acknowledging uniqueness of everyone.
My teaching practice is embedded on these values, therefore all the actions I undertake, reflect consideration of these values. I therefore endeavour to plant seeds of confidence in my learners, urging them forward, encouraging them, instilling a “can-do” attitude, reassuring them when they are doubting themselves and believing in them more than they believe in themselves (Eichhorst, 2001). It is Covey (2006:x) who echoes my sentiments when he states, “Everyone has seeds of greatness inside of them – tell them how great they are and soon they’ll believe it and rise to your expectations”. To help this seed take root and grow, I use praise and affirmation generously to well-deserving learners.

I also intentionally search for good in every learner. Where the marking is concerned, I limit the use of the red pen and indicate a maximum of five errors per individual. I then use general errors to do remedial work. Positive, encouraging remarks are made on assignments and tasks to show that I value their efforts and contributions. The remarks, however, are always specific, so that learners can be clear about where they have gone wrong and what is expected of them. So instead of just writing “good”, “excellent” or “not good enough”, I will state clearly and unambiguously, “you’ve got a good grasp of literary devices, but need to do more reading to improve your spelling!” or “I’m impressed with the layout of your essay, you seem to understand the concept of one idea per paragraph. Keep it up!” or “Wow! You’ve researched this topic well, I’m impressed!” When giving directions, it is essential to describe exactly what it is that needs to be done or was done correctly to avoid confusion (Hook & Vass, 2000:50). Every contribution, however trivial, is acknowledged and proudly displayed in class. I focus on learners’ strengths and always try to lead by example. In retrospect, I need to ask myself, “What did my learners gain from this whole intervention procedure?”

4.9 MY LEARNERS’ LEARNING

As a result of our time spent together (I’ve been teaching them since Grade 9 – for four years now), my research participants and I gained an in-depth understanding of the importance of a positive self-concept and self-esteem. Being travellers on this journey of self-discovery, my learners can claim to be instrumental in the construction of their knowledge as they helped realize their own potentials and also those of
others. Lambert et al. (2002:151) sum it up so well when they describe a learning discovery journey as, “a process of trial and error that involves building, tearing down, and rebuilding”. My learners experienced it as a journey of introspective transformation. This journey compelled them to focus on values based on compassion, caring, responsibility, sharing, respect, integrity and basic human rights. The process allowed them to reflect, observe, interact and experiment with their own and one another’s strengths and weaknesses. This learning process was about learning how to use their strengths to eradicate their weaknesses (Rhodes et al., 2004:118).

Learners learnt to support one another and started to draw from one another’s strengths. This was imperative in helping them overcome obstacles such as low self-concepts and poor self-esteesms. Learners also learnt from one another. Relationships were cemented by dismantling barriers such as negativity and lack of confidence and helping one another focus on the positives and the strengths. When learners discovered that they were not the only ones in the classroom experiencing negative feelings and feelings of inadequacy, they started to feel more comfortable. They also began to show a willingness to assist in overcoming this by taking on responsibilities and becoming more involved. Learners learnt that as a class, everyone had an important contribution to make; irrespective of how big or small, they were all pieces of thread woven together to form a rich tapestry (Lambert et al., 2002:148).

The multiplicities of the learners’ diverse thoughts were liberated on this discovery journey (Lambert et al., 2002:xviii). They learnt to embrace diversity as a natural understanding on their road to learning about caring, compassion, tolerance, fairness, empathy, equality and basic human rights. This awareness gave meaning to their existence in general and their presence in the classroom specifically. They discovered that they could add value to the lives of others by exercising some of these values and by being involved and taking some responsibility for their own learning and growth. This is an essential part of their developing process.

How did their new learning and growth become evident in their modified behaviour? One way it can be demonstrated is by means of visual images done by the learners.
before and after the intervention strategies. These visual images took the form of A – My river of life (before intervention) and B – My road to success (after intervention):

Figure 26: New learning & growth

Figure 27: New learning & growth
These two images portray the learning and growth of the learners in general. The one, *River of life* (A) was produced in January 2009 and the other, (B) *My road to success*, was drawn after the interventions, in October 2009. In the sketch entitled “River of Life”, it was evident that learners grappled with serious social issues such as divorces, deaths and separations of parents or guardians. They were ill-equipped to deal with the emotions associated with these issues and it had a negative effect on the self-concepts and self-estees. This is proven in the sketch marked Figure 26, where the learner wrote, “I am dumb, ugly and useless – like these rocks!” However, the same learner wrote in a sketch marked Figure 27, done after the interventions, “I am a doctor!” (Learner X). Clearly, new learning and growth have taken place if inference can be made by comparing these drawings. In what other ways did their development become active in their modified cognition and behaviour?

4.10 MY LEARNERS’ ACTIONS

Since the beginning of February 2009, when I introduced my intervention strategies in the form of learner involvement, learner responsibilities, drama-in-education, motivation through praise and affirmation and vicarious learning through modelled behaviour, I observed behavioural changes in the participants I researched. Pooling their respective knowledge, skills, values and cognitions to the learning and teaching contexts in the classroom, required continuous social interaction (Donald *et al.*, 2002:90). This was primarily facilitated through groupwork and collaboration where active participation was the rule rather than the exception (Choate, 2004:42).

During the introductory phase where learners had to share and utilize their prior knowledge, they experienced positive feelings and a sense of value when they were asked to consolidate what they already knew with new knowledge. They were allowed to offer their own opinions which were taken into consideration and respected. This elicited positive feelings of *self-worth* and feelings of *being valued* and appreciated.

They stated in their journals:

“I feel great when my ideas are used by the teacher and written on the blackboard.”
“When my opinion is respected, it motivates me to offer more of my views.”
“I feel a part of the teaching process. My opinions are valued!”
“I like to hear and see the teacher using my examples.”
“It feels like I’m a teacher myself.”
“It is amazing to be part of the education process. I never imagined that I could also contribute.”
“I want to participate in the classroom. It makes me feel worthy and valued!”
“Other people value my input. I am special.”

(Grade 12 Learners – Journal Entries, October 2009)

These responses were elicited when they were asked about their feelings regarding their contributions being used in the teaching process. The intervention phase also made allowance for the learners to experience a sense of purpose. Their roles of responsibility enabled them to develop positive self-esteem as they portrayed the roles of leaders, teachers, motivators and role models. During their mentoring programme, they confirmed this when they wrote in their reflective journals:

“I experienced a sense of being wanted” – Learner F.
“I realized that I can make a difference” – Learner G.
“It’s good to know that I’m needed” – Learner H.

(Learner F, G, H – Journal Entries, October 2009)

The values of caring and compassion helped them to fulfil their responsibilities of mentees, prefects and seniors, but it also gave them a sense of purpose. This helped to develop a positive self-esteem as proven in the excerpts of the reflective journals above and the comments they made about themselves before the interventions started:

“I am no good, even my mom calls me a loser.”
“Why do I even bother to try, I know I will not make it.”
“I’m so stupid.” “Nobody likes me, I’m fat and dumb!”
“Why can’t I be clever and beautiful?”

(Grade 12 Learners – Journal Entries, May 2009)
The role-plays served the purpose of inclusivity; learners became more able to express their emotions and opinions. They also appeared to display a renewed confidence. This became evident when they started to make eye contact, offer their opinions and to be more spontaneous. Values of empathy, compassion, basic human rights, fairness and equality were displayed in a fun and creative manner. Learners were enabled and equipped to assist in the development of their own poor self-esteem and low self-concepts through drama-in-education. Insights into their personal dilemmas were gained which most probably would not have been the case under normal circumstances. Important values and concepts could be experienced and dealt with, without learners even realizing that they were instrumental in their own learning and development. This will be validated in the next chapter when colleagues, critical friends and validation groups offer validations to support these claims. This was also reiterated when they noted in their diaries:

“It is fun.”
“I could get rid of what bothered me whilst pretending that it was just an act.”
“It was a fun way of getting rid of all my anger and frustrations.”
“I got to know how others experience and deal with painful happenings.”
“It helped me to deal with similar situations.”

(Grade 12 Learners – Diary Entries, April – June 2009)

All other actions undertaken by learners contributed to the enhancement of their self-concepts and self-esteem. These were their involvement in classroom management such as the general environment and layout as well as the code of conduct and choice of texts (February – November 2009). Their contributions, however trivial or insignificant, encouraged feelings of self-worth, value and importance (Hunter, 2004:18-19). Learners became involved in their own improvement by taking on more responsibility and basically taking ownership of the learning process by increasing their participation and witnessing their own growth and development. They have now become agents of change in the learning and teaching activities and have also become partners in their own development process.
4.11 CONCLUSION

How we are treated by others and how we believe they will treat us in future, somehow influence how we perceive ourselves (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2006:177). This selfhood emerges when we interact with others in a social context like a classroom setting. A sense of self is not innate, but develops gradually, from the moment we are born, continuing throughout adulthood. Many factors influence the development of the self. These factors include our culture, background and social context. We are aware of ourselves as individuals; therefore we have a conception of who we are, how we relate to others and how we differ from others in our abilities and limitations. We possess an awareness of the qualities, values, feelings and attitudes that we inherently possess and which are unique to us (Ballantine & Roberts, 2009:104-105). Working towards an increasingly positive self-concept is of cardinal significance as the self-concept influences all human behaviour and can be either a motivating or inhibiting force. Action was taken to ensure that learners were given opportunities to discover their positive qualities, skills and potentials.

Every effort was also made to ensure that positive self-concept formation was developed in learners. This was done through intervention strategies implemented in the classroom context. I have now come to understand that a low self-esteem can be overcome by treating my learners with respect, compassion and care. This implies that it is possible to treat an individual in a way that transforms his/her opinion about him/herself (McGinley, 2001:11).

I can now confidently claim that I have generated my own living epistemology. This was done by testing my theory within my own classroom context by articulating my values as my living standards of practice and judgement (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:23). In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how the conclusions I have come to are reasonably fair and accurate by giving an interpretation of the data I collected. I also plan to support my claims with appropriate validation and also establish criteria by which my claims to knowledge can be judged. Lastly, I will show how these criteria, in accordance with my values, will act consistently as the signposts that guide my work (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010:239).
CHAPTER FIVE
DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate how the conclusions I have come to are reasonable, fair and accurate. I aim to do this by critically analyzing the data I collected. In addition to this, I aim to support my claims with appropriate validation whilst simultaneously establishing criteria by which my claims to knowledge can be judged. I also plan to illustrate how these criteria, in accordance with my values, will act consistently as the framework guiding my claims (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010:239). I have generated my own living epistemology by testing my theory within my own classroom context. The value I attach to equality, social justice and basic human rights, serve as the living standards by which I judged my own practice (Whitehead & Mcniff, 2006:85).

5.2 ANALYZING THE DATA

Dana and Yendol-Silva (2003:91-93) liken the process of data analysis to an endeavour to solve a jigsaw puzzle without a picture as a guide. They elaborate on this by mentioning that the researcher is usually aware of the fact that the different pieces (data) will eventually result in a complete picture (findings), but is uncertain of what the end result will look like. Sometimes, there may even be more pieces than the researcher will need. The process of analyzing is commenced with assessing the puzzle pieces and asking oneself, “What do I observed about these pieces that might give me insights into what the final result is going to be?” Based on one’s conclusions, one then starts a process of grouping and sorting according to similarities, differences, themes, behaviours, strategies and events, to name but a few groupings. This sorting process is commonly known as coding. Schwandt (1997:16) defines coding as “a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments and identifies or name those segments …”.
At times, the data analysis process may feel daunting and overwhelming, as researchers may search for a very long period to find where the particular data may fit, only to discover later that it is not even a part of the puzzle. In the same manner, an important piece may be left out which turns out to be a very significant part of the puzzle. This is why the researcher should engage in the task of what is generally known as memoing or recording. This process, according to Glaser (1978:89-90), is a procedure for “explaining or elaborating on the coded categories that the fieldworker develops in analyzing data”. Memos are primarily written for the researcher’s own use and may include commentary on the meaning of a coded category, explanation of a sense of pattern developing among categories and descriptions of events. The final analysis is based on analysis of memos and notes made by the researcher.

Dana and Yendol-Silva (2003:92-94) mention that many classroom-based researchers make use of a four-step approach when they analyze their data. These four steps are:

• description
• sense-making
• interpretation, and
• findings.

**STEP ONE – THE DESCRIPTION PROCESS:**

During this process, the researcher reads through the data several times, with no other objective but to get a descriptive sense of the data collected. The aim is to describe the inquiry data using the following questions as a guide:

• What did I observe during the investigation?
• What significant events occurred during this period? and
• What were my initial conclusions of the data collected?
This procedure is completed by discussing it with the researcher’s critical friends and validation group to gain confirmation of the findings, and memos or notes are taken during the process.

**STEP TWO – SENSE-MAKING:**

This step entails thorough reading of the data in conjunction with probing questions such as:

- What significant events occurred in my data?
- What pieces of data are different from the rest? and
- What are the similarities / patterns in my data?

To find answers to these and other questions, it becomes necessary to make notes to refer back to when the data analysis begins – this is also the stage where data are organized into units by sorting them into patterns, themes or categories (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003:92-93).

**STEP THREE – THE INTERPRETIVE STEP:**

During this particular process, the researcher constructs statements that express the new learning and its significance. This is done by carefully examining coded patterns, themes or categories and answering questions such as:

- What was my initial concern and how do these patterns, themes or categories address it?
- What is the relevance of events, themes and categories to my issue of concern?
- How do these events, themes and categories fit into my own classroom context?

The answers to these questions may serve as evidence for my claims.
STEP FOUR – THE IMPLICATION DRAWING:

This final step is implemented by asking the following questions:

- What have I learnt about myself as an educator?
- What have my learners learnt in the research process?
- What are the implications of this new learning for my practice?
- What modifications are needed in my practice in the light of this new learning?

These and other similar questions assist educators in interpreting what they have learnt. Educators are then equipped with the tools and knowledge they need to facilitate the action required for transformation and also to generate new inquiries to commence a new cycle in their research.

Initiating an entirely new cycle implies that a classroom-based researcher’s work is never quite complete, even after intensive analysis. I tend to agree with Hubbard and Power (1999:117) who note that “good research analyses raise more questions than they answer”, as this correlates with my own experience. I discovered that research itself is cyclic in nature and a process which is never totally complete. Researchers may never be able to find a perfect set of findings based on the data analysis from a particular inquiry, but they can take comfort in the significance and value of what they learn while engaging in the research process. The research process itself also holds great transformative potential for the researcher, the researched and the practice. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001:46) suggests that “A legitimate and essential purpose of professional development is the development of an inquiry stance on teaching that is critical and transformative, a stance linked not only to high standards for the learning of all students, but also to social change and social justice and to the individual and collective growth of teachers”.

Burnett (2009:198) advises that an adequate set of data allows the researcher to “reach a reasoned judgement as to its valid meaning”. What exactly is implied by an adequate set of data? An adequate set of data is relevant data providing sufficient evidence to draw conclusions (Burnett, 2009:185). Graziano and Raulin (2010:38-
Emphasize that the preceding phase, the data analysis phase, is one where the researcher is able to make sense of the data collected. Having statistically analyzed the data, it then becomes essential to interpret the statistical results in terms of how they help to answer the research question and also how the answer contributes to new knowledge in a particular field.

During the interpretation phase, which follows hereafter, the researcher then relates the findings not only to the specific research question, but also to other concepts and findings in that particular field. Answers to research questions can therefore determine how accurately theories predict new observations. Inductive reasoning is then used, working from the specific results of the study, back to the generality of the theory. The results may suggest methods to expand or modify the theory to enhance its usefulness and validity. Communication of findings is critical to serve as a basis for further research. This process can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 28: A representation of the process of conceptualizing and carrying out a research project (Graziano & Raulin, 2010:40)
The process describing the conceptualizing and carrying out of a research project is then continued by a method preferred by the researcher, in my case, a reflective, narrative format.

5.3 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The data analysis conducted during the research led to the emergence of four major themes. These themes will be discussed separately. Each respective theme consists of various categories. Cognizance should be taken of the fact that my interventions to increase and develop the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization were mainly guided by the theory of behaviourism (Pritchard, 2005:6), especially social learning (Mwamwenda, 2004:187) and social constructivism (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:301-303). These theories are discussed in detail in Chapter Three (Methodology). The commonalities of these theories can be encompassed by the self-efficacy theory of Gibbs (2003:3), who remarks that self-efficacy is “The belief that individuals are capable of exercising personal control over their behaviour, thinking and emotions”. In addition to this, it also emphasizes people’s beliefs about their capabilities as strong predictors of their effectiveness.

Bandura (1997:3), a social psychologist instrumental in both social learning and human behaviour, advocates that this self-efficacy belief positively influences the hopes, actions, efforts, motivational levels and feelings of individuals when engaged in certain behaviours. The learners, by constructing knowledge, are actively engaged with, and in control of, the learning process that helps to develop positive self-esteem as they take responsibility for their own learning (Pritchard, 2005:41-42). When learners feel good about themselves, it impacts on their achievements (Yong, 1999:1; Rowley, 1996:11). They tend to put more effort into what they are doing, display more passion and intrinsic motivation, and constantly push harder to achieve better results, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally.

When learners experience success, it ultimately leads to the development of self-efficacy beliefs. It also appropriately demonstrates the four major themes emerging from the data collected. These themes are:
• Mastery experiences
• Vicarious learning
• Verbal persuasion and
• Emotional and physiological arousal.

Each respective theme has its associated and distinctive educational implications which will be substantiated in detail. The diagram below is an illustration of the four major themes emerging from the data collected:

Figure 29: Strategies to increase self-efficacy to develop self-esteem (Gibbs, 2003:5; Bandura, 1986:391)

5.3.1 Theme One: Mastery experiences – its influences on the development of self-esteem on learners

After introducing phase one of my intervention strategies, which included activating prior knowledge to invoke the interest of learners and create context, I commenced the mastery experiences which consisted of learner involvement, learner responsibility and drama-in-education. Focusing primarily on the impact these interventions have on the development of the learners’ self-esteem, I observed the following behavioural changes in my learners (VCD – Journal Entry, 13 January – 30 November 2009):
Whilst engaging in the formulation of a classroom code of conduct, mentoring of peers and drama-in-education, the learners participated in their own development, thus becoming their own agents of change. This became evident when they became more focused on their allocated tasks, showing a greater sense of responsibility and generally displaying appropriate, socially acceptable behaviour while unsupervised. Their interpersonal relationships improved drastically and there was a greater sense of recognition of the individual rights of others to be observed, especially during the last semester (July to December 2009). The positive remarks entered in their personal diaries and journals during this period effectively reflected their improved confidence and developing self-esteem. Some of the validations offered by teachers reiterated this when we discussed the modified behaviours of learners who were previously identified as having poor self-concepts and low self-esteem.

Here follow a few validations offered by colleagues, critical friends and a validation group who helped me to observe these learners:

“Learner M and N were always evasive in terms of eye contact and participation in class activities, but now Learner M makes eye contact with me and even seems eager to offer possible solutions to problems presented in class. During the first term and even last year, Learner M always avoided and sometimes even refused to make eye contact or to offer an opinion or answer even if he/she knew the answer to a question, but now Learner M seems to be making up for lost time. He/she not only makes eye contact, but displays a confidence and assertiveness that even baffles his/her peers. The change in Learner M is a pleasing and welcome one! I also noticed a change in Learner M who was always sitting right at the back in class, doing things not even closely related to what he/she was supposed to be doing, like drawing or graffiti, while he/she was supposed to complete a Biology worksheet or exercise. He/she was always sitting alone, even during breaks and always seemed so sad and unhappy. However, after the interventions, just like Learner M, Learner N seems much happier lately and even paid me a compliment the other day – I couldn’t believe my ears when Learner N said, “Ma’am you look great in red, you must wear this colour more often!”’. I noticed a positive change in quite a few other learners too,
even those not identified as having poor self-concepts and low self-esteem. Mrs. Didloft's mentoring programme, as well as the intervention involving and giving responsibility to learners inside and outside the classroom, seems to be working to the advantage of most of the learners, not only Learner M and N. I am definitely going to experiment with it in my Biology class!"

(Mrs. S. Topkin, Critical friend, Grade 12 Biology, Teacher and Colleague – Journal Entry, 3 December 2009 – Contact Numbers: 084 264 8618 / 041 481 2247)

Another colleague in the Geography Department offered the validation below:

“Learner O was a cause of great concern for almost the entire year of 2008. (He/she was in my Grade Eleven class as well). Learner O simply refused to respond in class which frustrated me to the point of wanting to ask Learner O to leave my classroom and never return! He/she never participated in classroom activities and never communicated with his/her peers which made groupwork with this particular learner an impossible task. The other learners refused to have him/her in their group because of this refusal to speak or work. I was very concerned about this particular learner and suspected that the learner was subjected to possible forms of abuse within his/her social setting at home. I contemplated roping in the help of a psychologist, but first tried various strategies of my own to get Learner O to open up to me, but to no avail. I defaulted by not getting Learner O the professional help he/she so desperately needed and justified my failure to act by blaming it on my heavy workload, large classes and personal problems. Miraculously, Learner O managed to pass Grade Eleven and ended up in Grade Twelve class this year again. I really expected Learner O to fail as he/she was a weak to average learner. I expected the pattern of 2008 to be repeated and it was the case; up until the beginning of the second term. I was totally taken aback by the transformation in Learner O. He/she had undergone a complete metamorphosis, even asking me for advice to help clarify a concept he/she needed to explain to his/her mentee. When I asked learner O what brought about the change, he/she responded that the English teacher, Mrs. Didloft, unlike most of his/her previous teachers, always encouraged him/her, motivated him/her to do his/her best and believed in him/her even more than he/she believed in himself/herself. He/she said that he/she decided to show
everyone who always picked on him/her and expected the worse from him/her, that he/she is capable of doing what is expected and much more besides. I am glad to report in my capacity as his/her Geography teacher that Learner O had done exactly that – proven that he/she can do what is expected and much more! Learner O will definitely pass Geography in the final exams. The interventions conducted by his/her English teacher, Mrs. Didloft, have worked miraculously for learner O and most of the other learners as well. I feel proud of Learner O.”

(Mrs. L. Daniels – Critical friend – Grade 12 Geography Teacher and Colleague – Journal Entry, 2 December 2009 – Contact Numbers: 083 995 1755 / 041 481 0331).

Such validations demonstrate the impact the interventions had on the learner in the form of learner involvements, learner responsibility and drama-in-education. These interventions were introduced after January 2009. My own journal entry is included below as a way of confirming the validations of my colleagues. The concept of triangulation, according to Stringer (2004:57), is a useful tool as it ensures credibility through multiple perspectives for mutual confirmation of data.

“Over the past year (2009), I have been reflecting on my practice and observing the learners, particularly the Grade 12 learners in my English class. My interventions included learner involvement, learner responsibilities and drama-in-education used integratively and interchangeably throughout the academic year. These interventions were implemented in conjunction with daily motivation, praise and affirmation strategies.

The impact of my interventions was evident in the following:

• My learners displaying an increased interest in the activities in class by participating more enthusiastically than before;
• Making more frequent eye contact than before;
• Displaying an increased willingness to offer their opinions;
• Rendering support to peers which did not occur before;
• Motivating and encouraging others which was a new occurrence; and
•  *Improved relationships and interactions with teachers and their peers.*

*These behavioural changes became evident during the second semester of 2009 and seemed to improve as the interventions continued. Most of the learners seemed to have undergone a transformation which positively impacted on their self-esteem and also on their academic performance as validated by my colleagues in the various departments.*”


The mastery experiences in the form of learner involvement, learner responsibilities (mentoring) and drama-in-education, in conjunction with being given challenging, but manageable tasks, have developed the inter- and intrapersonal skills of the learners suffering from poor self-concepts and low self-esteem. Mastery experience is a very powerful source of self-efficacy (Nietfield & Enders, 2003:1; Bandura, 1997). When individuals are successful in mastering something, their self-efficacy beliefs are automatically raised. Mastering allows them to both experience and witness their ability to succeed which makes it more likely that they will attempt to attain other goals which they, before the mastery experience, falsely believed, was unattainable.

Experiencing success in the afore-mentioned intervention activities and being praised for it, raised the learner’s mastery expectations and they reciprocated by displaying an enhanced confidence which seemed evident in their general behaviours and overall academic performance. The learners became involved in decision-making, such as compiling their own classroom rules and classroom code of conduct, taking on responsibility through mentoring and participating in activities that they found challenging, yet manageable. This turned into a mastery experience that helped to increase their confidence (Easton, 2008:140) and also to develop their confidence (Easton, 2008:345). These mastery experiences were now implemented continuously and interrelatedly with vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and emotional and physiological arousal strategies as part of my daily learning and teaching intervention strategies.
5.3.2 Theme two: Vicarious learning: How it affected the development of learners’ self-esteem

Vicarious learning occurs when an individual, such as a role model or mentor, is observed performing. The role model is then imitated by the observer. When the role model or mentor performs well or successfully, the efficacy of the observer is enhanced. However, if the person being observed performs in an undesirable manner, the efficacy expectation of the observer decreases (Gibbs, 2003:5). This implies that vicarious experiences can have either a negative or positive influence on the observer, depending on how desirable or undesirable the model is (Hill, 1985:154). Learners have the tendency to emulate behaviour, either consciously or unconsciously, almost everyday by watching their parents, teachers, peers and others. Almost every action of these afore-mentioned role models therefore has the potential of being modeled. It would thus be wise for teachers to capitalize on this social learning through observation by making extra effort to be desirable models (Schau et al., 1983:301).

During interaction with other learners in the classroom, learners learn naturally, simply by observing socially acceptable and desirable behaviour (Fontana, 1995:298-299). Living out my inherent values based on basic human rights, inclusivity, caring and compassion, I created opportunities for my learners to follow my lead (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:242-245). The mentoring programme helped me to facilitate a change in the behaviour of my learners that has led to attitude change. Labone (2004:347) notes that self-modeling of successful performance has been found to enhance self-efficacy beliefs. Models that are perceived by the observer to be competent, efficient and successful, are more likely to influence the efficacy of the observer than those who are less competent, inefficient or even failures (Bandura, 1977). Mastery of a task by a teacher, peer, parent or mentor may very likely benefit the development of positive perceptions of the self, for when a model with whom the observer identifies performs well, the efficacy of the observer is enhanced (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002:4).

For most of the time, my learners observed me displaying care, kindness, compassion, respect, tolerance and patience. They reciprocated by displaying
similar behaviour patterns since they learn vicariously, but also because they longed to receive my approval (Long, 2000:166). I can now claim that I have positively influenced the behaviour of most of my learners by using myself and some of my learners as mentors to display exemplary behaviour. I heeded the advice of Davis (1983:144) who claims, “Learning by observing and imitating others (models) is a very effective method of learning and an effective method of teaching”. How did the vicarious learning process affect the development of the learners’ self-esteem?

(i) Vicarious learning – the teacher and learner

From my observation, I learned that a number of learners were demonstrating behaviour problems and that some of the learners were emotionally detached and withdrawn. I also experienced that the number of disciplinary problems occurring daily made creating a sustainable, positive learning environment extremely difficult. These behaviour-related incidents were very frustrating as it impacted negatively on the general culture of learning and teaching in my own classroom and those of my colleagues. The learners were generally inattentive, disruptive, passive, withdrawn and disrespectful. The rest of the learners, not guilty of these behavioural tendencies, were as frustrated as I was as their rights were infringed by the guilty ones. These disruptive behaviour patterns made it difficult to live out my values and to protect the rights of those in my care (RNCS, 2002:1-2). I was, after all, supposed to be in loco parentis, or in the place of the parent (Botha et al., 2003:60). Instead of failing in my duty, I opted to take action to address this issue.

I wanted my learners to learn vicariously by observing and imitating me (Davis, 1983:144), so I commenced the vicarious learning process by accepting invitations to deliver motivational talks, conducting scripture lessons at our school’s weekly mass assemblies and basically exercising care, compassion, respect, patience, humanity, humility and tolerance in- and outside the classroom. I moved around in the classroom, sat with the learners at their desks, engaged in conversations with them, made and maintained eye contact while speaking with them and basically just showing genuine interest in their welfare and progress. I also made extra effort to involve them, to ask for their opinion, to use their ideas and to acknowledge their
contributions and give recognition to their rights by keeping them involved in classroom-based choices and decisions.

I then reflected on the changes I introduced and on the possible impact of those changes. I noticed indications of improvements or modifications in aspects of my learners' behaviour when they:

- Listened to one another for example, in groupwork when they took turns to speak).
- Respected one another (showed more respect when their peers contributed or offered an opinion).
- Showed kindness to peers and teachers (offered gestures such as smiles, compliments, kind words).
- Became task-orientated (concentrated and remained focused when working on projects and assignments).
- Made eye-contact (looked at peers and teachers when addressing them).
- Engaged in classroom activities (actively participated and willingly cooperated in class).
- Volunteered their opinions (spontaneously offered information relating to topics of discussion).
- Showed consideration for the rights of others (showed respect for the rights of peers by being less disruptive).
- Accepted responsibility (enthusiastically participated in the mentorship programme and fulfilled roles in groupwork responsibly).
- Took pride in their contributions (wanted their work displayed on classroom walls and walls of the administration block).

(VCD – Journal Entry, 9 November 2009)

Validations for the vicarious learning were also offered by the learners themselves:

“When I started my high school career, I was scared, insecure, overwhelmed and yes, also very intimidated. I guess the fact that I was now the junior and the one who had to listen to seniors, contributed much to my insecurity and fear. The workload was also much more than I was used to, I now had to work independently on projects
and even do research on my own! I quickly had to adapt to the demanding pace of high school, but somehow could not, so I failed. I could not cope with the workload and started acting out. I was rebellious, disruptive and disrespectful. My parents and the teachers constantly complained about me, reprimanded me and regularly sent me out of class. Nobody understood how lonely I felt; they all thought I was just being rude and disrespectful – until Mrs. Didloft, my English teacher, came along. She was kind to me, believed in me and always had something positive to say about me. When a certain teacher called me a loser, she advised me to see it as a challenge and prove everyone wrong. She said that I could be successful, but that I had to work hard at it. Since she was my role model and everything I wanted to be, I started following her footsteps. I worked hard, showed respect and started focusing on my goals. I sowed what I reaped when I received two diplomas at the end of that year. The achievement motivated me to do even better. I can honestly say that the motivation and kind attitude of Mrs. Didloft, my role model, inspired me to do my best. The other teachers have also changed their attitudes towards me! Mrs. Didloft brought out the best in me – she made me believe in myself and my abilities!"

(Learner R, Grade 12 – Journal Entry, 12 October 2009)

Yet another learner, Learner S, offered the following validation:

“Many events and people influenced how I perceived myself. My family, friends, academic performance and teachers all had an influence on how I saw myself. Though all the events and people had a share in helping me to be the well-adjusted person I am today, there is one person who needs to get special recognition. That person believed in me more than I believed in myself. She lifted me when I was down. She focused on my strengths rather than on my weaknesses. I made extra effort just to please her, because she always told me to be the best that I can be in whatever I do. So, even though my success can be attributed to many factors, I can honestly say that Mrs. Didloft was the person who helped me to bring out the best in myself!”

(Learner S, Grade 12 – Journal Entry, 12 October 2009)

These two examples mentioned above, are representative of the general responses offered as to the factors or individuals who influenced their perception of themselves.
Apart from the teacher’s influence, my learners were also influenced by mentors through the mentoring programme.

(ii) **Vicarious learning – the mentor and the mentee**

The mentoring programme required purposeful dialogue between mentors and mentees. Initially, the mentors (Grade 12’s) did not fully comprehend the significance or impact of their contribution to the responsibilities allocated to them. I realized that the learners acting as mentors needed to be guided and trained to adequately prepare them for their roles they accepted so readily. The data gathered in the form of diary and journal entries of learners revealed an important need that had to be addressed. The need was lack of confidence and poor self-esteesms. The mentors needed to be more confident in their abilities to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities. To achieve this, mentors needed to be informed about their responsibilities and to receive relevant training to perform their duties. Furthermore, they needed to be supported by the teachers.

This support was rendered in the form of motivation, affirmation, encouragement, sharing of expertise and informal workshops to equip them with the necessary leadership skills required. The mentors realized that they had a support system in the teachers and they knew that they could depend on the teachers to guide them through this new and unknown territory. The mentors’ fears were soon eradicated and a relationship of trust developed between the mentors and the teachers. When the mentors started to realize the significance of their contributions, they took pride in their achievements and valued the positive feedback of their mentees. The process then became one of collaborative learning for matriculants and vicarious learning for mentees. The validations regarding the influence of the mentoring programme provide evidence of this claim:

“I feel valued and worthy. I mean something to someone.”

“I finally have someone who can guide me.”

“My mentor is my role model.”

“For the first time in my life I mean something to another individual.”

“I learn so much from my mentor.”
“Though it takes up much of my time, I know it prepares me for the responsibilities that await me after I complete Grade 12.”
“This experience is very rewarding, it causes me to believe in myself”
“I have someone who helps me when I struggle.”
“Helping someone helps me!”

(Grade 8 and Grade 12 learners – Diary Entries, 14 July 2009)

Evidence of developing self-esteem could already be observed at this stage (14 July 2009). The same learners who initially wrote in their diaries that they were “no good”, “losers” and “too fat to be invited to parties”, were now afforded the opportunity to restore their self-worth and develop their self-esteem by giving a little of themselves to others, especially since that particular modified behavior was now reinforced by praise, motivation and approval (Delamater & Myers, 2007:11-12).

Having analyzed the effects of the mastery experiences and vicarious learning, we will now focus on the effect verbal persuasion had on the self-esteem of the learners.

5.3.3 Theme three: Verbal persuasion: How it affected the development of learners’ self-esteem

Verbal persuasion occurs when individuals provide positive feedback to others, convincing them that they possess the necessary skills and ability to perform a task successfully. Positive feedback has the potential of increasing self-efficacy, especially when individuals become convinced that others believe in their potential. The value of persuasion however, depends on the credibility, trustworthiness and expertise of the persuader (Mwamwenda, 2004:173).

In the case of most of my learners, this verbal persuasion, which included positive feedback as well as affirmation, praise and encouragement, was much valued as it was given by me, their Grade 12 class teacher, who lived out her inherent values of care, compassion, respect and trust. The verbal persuasion created a classroom culture that was conducive to continuous development in terms of personal growth and confidence. Most of the learners were now convinced that they possessed
capabilities and skills that could develop their self-esteem in such a way that they could manage any task or overcome any difficulty. These afore-mentioned learners were also more likely to put in greater effort and persist longer where tasks were concerned.

Implementing the stimulus-response model in my classroom (Pritchard, 2005:8) by using motivation and praise as a stimulus and eliciting learning as a response, I involved my learners, enabled them to achieve success, invoked their interest, challenged their intellect, aroused their curiosity and made them feel valued, loved and respected. In addition to this, I used the power of reinforcement whenever I returned their written work by commenting positively on their efforts (Mwamwenda, 2004:179-180). This facilitated the development of an improved self-concept and a developing self-esteem in learners. This was evident in the following areas:

- Eye contact and interpersonal skills (for example, making eye contact and participating in discussions)
- Withdrawal/shyness (coming out of themselves more)
- Self-expression (expressing their thoughts coherently)
- General demeanor (standing/sitting up straighter)
- Sense of responsibility (working unsupervised and independently).

Validations offered by my critical friends and validation group comprising my fellow students as well as my teacher colleagues, serve to provide evidence of the powerful impact verbal persuasion had on the development of the learners’ self-esteem.

These are the validations the above-mentioned individuals offered to support my afore-mentioned claim:

To whom it may concern

Validation: Virginia C. Didloft

I have great pleasure in attesting to Mrs. V.C. Didloft's competencies as an educator and colleague.
General learning and teaching approach
Mrs. Didloft has proven herself as a very caring educator who ensures maximum learner involvement in her lesson presentation. Her lessons are always characterized by thorough planning, innovative presentation and skilful inclusion of all learners. Her thoroughness with regards to assessment and positive reinforcement has been evident in the excellent performance of her learners.

Characteristics
Mrs. Didloft’s passion for her work, her caring and loving nature, her humility and her strong Christian beliefs makes working with her a very pleasant experience. She always tries to act in the best interest of those around her and truly displays a spirit of compassion, empathy and consideration.

Professionalism
She always acts with the highest degree of professionalism, showing equal respect for peers, superiors and those placed in her charge. Her sense of decorum, courteous and polite interaction with others, is great attributes to her both as a professional and as fellow human being.

Interaction with others
Mrs. Didloft’s interaction with others is characterized by mutual respect, integrity and reliability. She values the opinion of others, gives credit where credit is due and is keen to help and support those in need.

Value and belief systems
She is a strong believer in the rights to equality and social justice. Mrs. Didloft has always led by example by inculcating in her learners the importance of respect for others and their property, harmonious working relations and the need to treat all people as equals.

Mrs. Didloft has, over the years, proven her mettle as an excellent teacher, a wonderful friend and a trustworthy, reliable colleague who is never too busy to lend a helping hand.
I wish her everything of the best with her studies and any other future venture and I trust that she will continue to impact positively on those people who are lucky enough to have their paths cross hers.

I personally have been blessed with experiencing her as my student, later as a colleague, but best of all as a true friend who never fails to encourage, to support and to give guidance when needed.

Yours sincerely,
Ms. Lizette C. Oosthuizen
27 July 2010
(Senior Education Specialist – Uitenhage District Office & Ex-Deputy Principal – Arcadia Secondary School & PhD colleague and critical friend)
Contact Number: 084 687 6974

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To whom it may concern

Validation for Virginia Didloft

Mrs. Didloft is a Language Educator at my school of which I am the Deputy Principal. As the coordinator of our school’s Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) I, on a continuous basis, have to make classroom visits.

At school, Mrs. Didloft works with other educators in her faculty, focusing on developing relationships, guiding them on becoming open to instructional changes they could make in their own classes, often sharing tips from her own teaching, such as organizing her class into student cycles to facilitate participation in different tasks and activities. She has managed to develop a professional learning community at school in which educators could have constructive conversations about their teaching practices. She believes in the educability of all learners and she emphasizes the ability of each person to determine her/his own destiny. She encourages her
learners to be decision-makers in their own lives through the choices they make. She believes that when her learners make decisions, they are exercising not only their human freedom, but also their values, because all actions are value-laden. This, according to her, creates the opportunity for her learners to self-actualize through exercising their rationality.

Her teaching profession is a way in which she fulfills her professional responsibilities with a sense of purpose and meaning. Sometimes without knowing, I believe she enhances not only the lives of her learners, but those of her colleagues and parents too.

Mrs. Didloft uses her leadership skills in order to best serve others and especially the learners in her care. She gives much more than is expected of her, because she wants to help and empower as many learners as she can.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Deidre Geduld (Deputy Principal – Sanctor Primary School, PhD colleague, critical friend, validation colleague)

Contact Number: 072 135 5897

20 July 2010

The validations offered provide evidence of the strategies I employed to strive towards developing the self-esteems of my learners. More validations are included in the appendices.

The last theme, emotional and physiological arousal, emerging from the data collected, will now be discussed:

5.3.4 Theme four: Emotional and physiological arousal: How it affected the development of learners’ self-esteem

Emotional and physiological arousal refers to the emotions and moods individuals experience about a situation. Individuals determine their own levels or emotional and
physiological feelings in given situations which may have either a positive or negative impact on them. This implies that being calm and relaxed will impact positively on individuals, whilst being stressed out and anxious will have a negative impact (Gibbs, 2003:6). The emotional and physiological factors tend to strengthen self-efficacy beliefs, subsequently influencing the performance of the individual. This suggests that just as positive emotions and moods affect self-efficacy positively, negative emotions and moods affect self-efficacy negatively. The implication of this for learners implies that self-efficacy beliefs can be intrinsically controlled by increasing the intrinsic motivation and enhancing one’s own personal growth and interaction with others (Wood & Olivier, 2008).

When Bandura (1997) strengthens Gibbs’ (2003:6) argument that emotional and physiological arousal either impairs or enhances self-efficacy beliefs and thus influences subsequent performances, it opens up the possibility for teachers to capitalize on this opportunity. Teachers can facilitate, influence and create opportunities or situations which will elicit positive feelings and moods in their classrooms which are likely to have a positive effect on the self-efficacy of their learners. Teachers need to facilitate opportunities where learners of different abilities and intellectual levels are given challenging, yet manageable tasks that will elicit positive feelings and moods which will enhance their self-esteem. By focusing on the learners’ strengths and not their weaknesses, I managed to increase the learners’ self-efficacies.

When I discovered that most of my learners were unable to give a verbal description to summarize a short story, I found alternative ways to still enable the learners to attain the required outcomes. Learners were allowed to summarize in the form of pictures or drawings, an activity they really enjoyed. When learners struggled to read, I used scaffolded, pair and guided reading to assist them. I then strategically planned my lessons in such a way that the struggling readers could be afforded the opportunity to reciprocate by helping those who helped them with creative activities such as drawings, planning and role play. In that way, I could instill a sense of self-efficacy and simultaneously increase my learners’ self-esteem for self-actualization!
The emotions and moods learners experienced after the interventions, validate how their self-efficacy and confidence levels increased:

“At first I hated English. I found it boring, because I don’t like writing much. When I discovered that I could give expression to my thoughts by using the thing I loved most, which is drawing, I started to feel much better. I am now more enthusiastic and even look forward to the English classes. Instead of feeling anxious and stressed, I am now relaxed and happy. English is the bomb!”

“I was always nervous when it was time to read in class. I am not a very good reader and don’t like it to be embarrassed when the others laugh at me. The guided reading and Mrs. Didloft’s calm personality helped me to overcome that obstacle.”

“When the teacher makes positive remarks about my efforts, I feel good. I then try harder the next time, because I like it to hear good things about myself. I also like to see positive comments in my essays, but hate the red pen, it messes up my work!”

“I always try to do my best in the English class, because the teacher is always supportive and encouraging. I just want to please her, but by doing that, the best in me comes to the fore.”

“I look forward to the English period, because I always feel at ease, calm and stress-free there!”

(Grade 12 learners – Diary Entries, 2 – 30 November 2009)
5.4 OTHER FACTORS THAT AFFECTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY LEARNERS’ SELF-ESTEEM

Figure 30: Intervention strategies to develop self-esteem of learners (Didloft, 2010)

The above illustration demonstrates the levels of connectedness between my four intervention strategies (cycles) and the development of my learners’ self-efficacy, positive self-esteem and self-actualization. However, although the intervention strategies formed the foundation for the development of the learners’ self-esteem, other factors also contributed towards the development of their self-esteem. One of these was the integration of a social learning theory approach in the classroom.

5.4.1 How the social learning approach and social context affected the development of learners’ self-esteem

Within the context of learning, social learning can be defined as a significant supplement to the learning process as it involves the development of attitudes, also known as social competencies. Weisberg, Resnik, Payton and O’Brien (2003) are of the opinion that learning is influenced by social factors. This implies that social learning is dependent on a learning environment in which social interaction, conducive to learning, occurs.
Social learning theorists claim that behaviour is modeled by observing significant others such as peers, parents and teachers, within the social environment. This includes both the desirable and undesirable behaviour observed through the media, such as movies on television and popular happenings reported in the newspaper. These occurrences provide the social context in which modeling takes place (Taylor et al., 1997).

Social learning theorists further advocate that individuals have certain expectations, beliefs and attitudes that influence the manner in which they gain their information and develop their perceptions. These perceptions are strengthened by external factors which can have either a negative or positive influence on the observants (Nicholas, 2003). Social learning theorists elaborate by suggesting that a reciprocal relationship exists between individuals and their social environment, explaining that just as the environment influences the individual, the individual in turn, can influence the environment.

In the classroom situation, the learners are exposed to various external influences such as the teacher, peers and learning content, to name but a few. The demands placed on the learners to behave according to social standards, influence their behaviour. In my context, this became evident when learners changed their behaviour in the classroom after observing desirable behaviour of others.

Kolesnik (1978:2) notes that learners sometimes lack the willpower to use their abilities in a way that their teachers and parents would like. However, Reeve (1996:221) points out that if environmental influences are strong enough, even the least motivated will display determined behaviour patterns. This implies that the environment can influence motivation. Kruger and Adams (1998:148) reiterate the afore-mentioned statements when they state that environmental influences can either encourage or demotivate the learner. Eccles and Wigfield (2002:128) claim that it is very difficult to comprehend what it is exactly that motivates learners without an understanding of their social contexts in which they find themselves. Home and school environments influence learner motivation and achievement in various ways.
Behaviourists contend that an individual is born a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) with no inherent tendencies to behave in a pre-determined way (Kruger & Adams, 1998:47). Over a period of time, the environment slowly shapes the individual into an adult with unique characteristics and ways of behaving by “writing” or “filling in experiences” on this blank slate. Although many theorists disagree with this statement, and for good reason, it cannot be refuted that an individual’s environment generally affects him or her decisively as I have experienced in my own classrooms over the years. Miller’s (1994:iv) study of the home environment and educational motivation and achievement emphasizes the fact that learners from more advantaged family backgrounds tend to be more eager to attend school and also to perform better academically than those learners who originate from disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, deprived learners are more likely to underachieve at school (Pretorius, 1998:309; Zaki, 1983:80).

Ohles (1970:333-334) posits that the work of the teacher is restricted by family and community values, as reflected in the learners’ attitudes. Pretorius (1998:308-310) strengthens this argument when he states that other external influences, such as impoverished environments, can also lead to the manifestations of character and behaviour deficiencies such as a low self-concepts, poor self-estems and lack of self-confidence. The impact of these influences was evident in my marginalized learners who predominantly come from impoverished environments where unemployment, illiteracy and poverty are prevalent. Most of them lacked the motivation due to environmental deprivation. This *status quo* however, was changed after the intervention strategies were implemented.

### 5.5 MODIFIED BEHAVIOUR

The strategies represented by the four themes, namely, vicarious learning (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002:4), verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1997), mastery experience (Labone, 2004:343) and emotional and physiological arousal (Bandura, 1986), all attributed to an increase in self-efficacy as proven in the validations offered. Learners appeared to be more persistent, focused, goal-orientated and confident. They displayed an increasing enthusiasm to participate in activities which are all signs indicative of an enhanced self-esteem (Snowman & Biehler, 2003:246). The
interpersonal relationships of the learners also improved. Individuals now also started to engage in meta-cognitive processes such as analyzing, synthesizing, comparing, discussing, contradicting and evaluating when engaging in classroom and oral discussions and even in their written work. This is a sign of progression and development according to Bloom (1956).

Learners started to change their own behaviour after observing desirable behaviour as modeled by me, their class teacher. When their reciprocal and vicarious desirable behaviour was reinforced by affirmation, praise, encouragement and positive comments, the transformation process seemed to increase even more. However, when in role play, drama-in-education or normal interaction, learners displayed undesirable behaviour that resulted in their being reprimanded and criticized by me and their peers; they adjusted their behaviour accordingly to seek the favour of those individuals with whom they fell into disrepute.

Some learners’ perceptions of themselves also changed when they discovered that they could manage tasks successfully after being under the impression that they were failures. Their low self-concepts and poor self-esteem were transformed and developed gradually when they were convinced that a change in attitude can help them to master tasks they previously considered to be impossible to accomplish. The positive classroom culture attributed to the positive change in attitude. After I have modeled a positive attitude and facilitated opportunities for mastery, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and physiological arousal, many learners reciprocated by demonstrating enhanced self-esteem.

Doorey (2001) cites Rotter (1954) who emphasizes that the behaviour of an individual is not merely a reflexive response to the environment, but rather a response to stimuli that is influenced by the individual’s prior learning experiences. This suggests that individuals respond to stimuli according to how their lives were shaped by their past experiences. This is the reason why each individual responded differently to the same environment, because the experiences they encountered differed from one learner to the next. The marginalized learners in my classroom come from diverse backgrounds and responded differently to the same interventions and social settings. For this reason, an approach of inclusivity was adopted where
diversity, recognition of individuality, acknowledgement of basic human rights and equality were embraced (RNCS, 2000). This resulted in most of the learners responding positively to a stimulus of reinforcement in the form of motivation, affirmation and praise for their efforts and contributions. The responses of learners were low absenteeism, enthusiastic participation in activities, highly motivated learners, improved self-concepts and developing self-esteem.

The challenge of eradicating the influences of learners’ past experiences had been overcome due to continuous reinforcement and establishing an internal locus of control in learners. This was done by daily ensuring, through strategic interventions, that learners develop a belief in their own personal powers and abilities to influence events and attain desired outcomes (Wood, 2004:183). An internal locus of control, according to Grantz (1999:1), refers to the types of attributions an individual makes regarding successes and failures. An internal locus of control refers to the ability to develop personal power in order to attain desired goals, as opposed to an external one, where goal attainment is perceived to be due to external forces. If learners possess an internal locus of control, they will have sufficient confidence to deal with problems, in spite of difficult socio-economic circumstances, and they will also be able to take full responsibility for their actions.

An internal locus of control has the ability to help individuals to change their behaviour due to the fact that individuals having an internal locus of control are intrinsically motivated. Such individuals have specific goals and work hard towards attaining them (Grantz, 1999:2). My learners started to believe in their own abilities to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. This may have helped them to adopt a positive attitude that brought the fulfillment of their goals much closer (Fazey & Fazey, 2001:346; Thielker, Kwok & Senisisas, 2001:1). The learners also showed signs of being more assertive and a willingness to stand up for their beliefs (Simons, Irwin & Drinnin, 1987:494). The majority of learners have managed to establish an internal locus of control which resulted in their being able to identify the actions that resulted in their goal attainment, encouraging them to act accordingly. They became more competent and confident, their academic performance increased and they believed in themselves and their abilities.
Learners now also tended to predict personal accomplishments, such as, “I know I am going to do well!” or “I know I can do this!”, whereas before they would have anticipated failure, for example, “I am no good, why do I even bother to try, I am sure to fail again!” Another tendency visible in their modified behaviour is their renewed sense of persistence and perseverance when faced with challenging tasks. All the strategies employed attributed to the development of the learners’ self-esteesms. These included the mastery experiences, the vicarious learning, the verbal persuasion and the emotional and physiological arousal strategies. All the strategies led to the self-efficacies of learners, which helped them to increase their motivation, persist in goal attainment and expand their life skills, attitudes and values. It also led to positive self-concepts, higher self-esteesms, improved achievements and the ultimate objective, self-actualization, where learners could realize their utmost potentials (Gibbs, 2003:5; Bandura, 1986:391).

5.6 CONCLUSION

Teachers spend such a lot of time with the learners in their classrooms. Teachers therefore have the potential of playing vital roles in the lives of their learners. Teachers are particularly important when family relationships are not as secure as they are supposed to be. The classroom can then become a safe haven for the learners, the place that provides security and stability. Central to this, however, is the teacher, who must portray this consistent, nurturing role to protect the learners from anything or anyone intending harm or risk (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2003:70). This caring connection with one’s learners is the most powerful tool a teacher may have. When the teacher establishes a safe, loving and nurturing relationship with the learners in the classroom, the learners in turn find a secure foundation for emotional development. The learners then begin to value themselves and start to believe in their own potentials. The learners realize that they can send messages that influence their significant others in their world and that they can help to fulfill whatever needs the learners may have.

With a caring, nurturing and loving teacher as a role model, the learners can learn to understand and control their emotions and behaviours, and also learn to care about other individuals, see things from their perspective, and understand their feelings too.
(Emde & Robinson, 2000; Greenspan, 1996). However, when challenging behaviour is displayed, this significant relationship may be jeopardized, because the behaviour gets in the way, obstructing the teacher’s perspective of the learners’ potential and making it much more difficult to establish a good connection with them. In spite of this, it remains essential to create a bond or rapport between teacher and learners, because that relationship becomes the key to whatever you wish to accomplish with the learners. When the teacher and the learners establish a caring relationship, the learners develop a desire to improve. They then find a model to emulate, and the teacher is afforded the opportunity to help the learners develop positive self-esteem.

How can teachers establish a good relationship and help learners to attain self-actualization? Knowing the social context of learners will certainly help, but even before teachers can appreciate where the learners are coming from, it is essential to understand the self. Whether teachers are aware of it or not, everything about their teaching – how they respond to the learners, the classroom setting, their planning, choice of activities, even their knowledge of child development and theory – filters through the prism of their own beliefs, values and cultures as well as their own temperament, emotions, and experiences (Bowman, 1989). Ayers (1989:137), a teacher, say it so well when he states that a teacher is “the perceiver, the selector, and the interpreter of a child’s behaviour”. That is why it is imperative for teachers to discover who they are, to know what matters to them, to understand why they are doing what they are doing, to figure out their philosophy of child care and education and to know what kind of individuals they want their learners to become. Knowing about themselves allows teachers to see their learners more clearly!

How we live our values is influenced by our actions within our social context. My values are communicated through my daily interaction with my learners. I generate my own living epistemology of practice by engaging in academic propositional discourses. I have the capacity to claim that I have helped to develop the self-esteem of my marginalized learners. This knowledge is based on the validated evidence I have offered in this chapter. To attain my objective, I modified my practice in a way that was educationally and socially beneficial for myself and my learners. I hold myself accountable for my actions by testing my emergent theories against the critique of others (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).
CHAPTER SIX
EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF MY CLASSROOM-BASED INQUIRY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A change in my professional context compelled me to include this account in order to demonstrate how my much articulated values were put to the test in my new context. This, according to me, linked theory to practice and encouraged the development of my own transformative potential whilst stimulating my own personal growth.

Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008:1) echo my own sentiments when they cite Barth (1981) who states: “Nothing within a school has more impact upon students in terms of skills development, self-confidence or classroom behaviour than the personal and professional growth of their teachers. When teachers examine, question, reflect on their ideas and develop new practices that lead towards their ideals, students are alive. When teachers stop growing, so do their students.” As a classroom-based teacher, I have allocated myself the responsibility of facilitating the process of enhancing the self-esteem of my marginalized learners for self-actualization. I intended doing this through action research interventions and critical reflections. This endeavour uniquely positioned me to commence my practitioner inquiry, defined by some as “a systematic, intentional study by teachers of their own classroom practice”, by reflecting on my current practice (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003).

6.2 WHAT IS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?

Reflective practice, according to Osterman and Kottkamp (2004:1-2), is not only meaningful and effective professional development strategy. Drago-Severson (2009:75) elaborates, on this by citing Osterman and Kottkamp (2004), in claiming that this is done through a process of identifying, assessing, challenging and transforming the fundamental beliefs and assumptions that influence our behaviours. It is also a way of thinking that encourages personal learning, behavioural transformation and improved performance. If systematic investigation and analysis
are used, it can also be a means of creating meaningful and lasting transformation for individuals by transforming themselves. Reflective practice is a means by which problems instead of symptoms can be addressed. It is however, essential that new ways of acting be implemented, otherwise little progress will be made in attaining objectives.

Pollard et al. (2008:14-26) outline seven key characteristics of reflective practice. These are basically:

- A focus on objectives and consequences of classroom practice.
- A cyclical process of monitoring, evaluating and revising of one’s own practice.
- Gathering data to support progressive development of improved standards of teaching (reflecting, data gathering, analysis and evaluation).
- An open-minded, responsible and whole-heartedness towards teaching.
- Teacher judgement on evidence-based enquiry and insights from other researchers.
- Collaboration with colleagues.
- Creative mediation of externally developed frameworks.

The process as described above can be seen as a shift from routine actions rooted in common-sense reasoning to reflective action stemming from professional reasoning. Reflective practice is thus carefully gathered evidence that substitutes subjective impressions, open-mindedness that substitutes prior expectations. It is also insights from engaging in research literature or constructive critique and dialogue from collaborators substituted by what might previously have been taken for granted (Pollard et al., 2008:26). Adopting the reflective approach allows teachers the opportunity to elevate their standards of professional competence (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008:2-3).

One of the most significant advantages of adopting a reflective approach however, is the potential for transformation of self, practice and others (Pollard et al., 2008:14-26).
Having engaged with relevant literature, I proceeded to focus on myself and my practice. I identified my own shortcomings and realized they were largely due to my own low self-esteem. This was accentuated by my having experienced a rather traumatic period on the domestic front (with a husband undergoing a series of amputations to his leg and to an unsuccessful attempt I made at teaching in Abu Dhabi to try to increase earnings for our family). When this overseas teaching contract had to be aborted after a few months, I returned to South Africa as an unemployed person – since my previous post had, of necessity, been filled by another teacher. It thus became necessary for me to urgently seek employment in any local school. I consider myself fortunate to have been appointed to a primary school not too far from my home. However, the switch to primary school teaching, after 25 years of teaching in a secondary school, did require quite an adjustment from me, including learning new skills and competencies “on the job”. These “unsettling” experiences occurred while I was completing the writing up of my doctoral thesis. Instead of omitting these recent past events from my thesis submission, I decided to accept a challenge posed by my supervisor which was to include an additional chapter (Chapter Six) which tried to understand, and come to terms with, these recent events in a way that would be in keeping with my claims and values. Furthermore, he challenged me to explore the extent to which I could carry over and apply the self-reflective/transformative insights of my earlier chapters to my new primary school teaching context.

6.3 THE DYNAMICS OF TRANSFORMATION

The dynamics associated with transformation is appropriately captured by Barbara Jordan in Smith (2008:11), who states, “Life is full of challenges and we measure ourselves and our success in life by how we meet those challenges … challenge validates our aliveness and often disturbs the order of our lives”. The rationale for transformation is further offered by John Glenn, US Senator and Astronaut in Smith (2008:11) who describes it as “an innate, searching curiosity about all around us – what do we not know? How can we do differently? How can we do it better? It is at the heart of excellence. Human progress and excellence come about when someone goes beyond ‘why’ to ‘why not’”.

195
Transformation entails being subjected to the reactions of all relevant stakeholders. These reactions include the reluctance to embrace transformation, the resistance against transformation and the implication resulting from transformation. Transformation, whether personal or professional, immense or trivial, obvious or tangible, is a concept that defies definitions or descriptions, due to the fact that it involves emotions and often defies logic. Though transformation is a complicated and complex phenomenon, we somehow navigate ways to manage it. This is because the essence of change, which is determination, passion and triumph, can be very rewarding. However, individuals perceive or react to transformation in different ways. This is because transformation involves an individual endeavour and experience and often feels like an uphill struggle or lonely battle (Smith, 2008:13).

6.4 MOTIVATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

The words of Bernauer (2002:91), “Unless school become places for teachers to learn, they cannot be places for student learning”, motivated me to initiate transformation in my own practice: to address my concern regarding the lack of self-esteem evident in the majority of my learners. Transformation, according to Bernauer (2002:910, ought to commence with the teachers if they want to see improvement of learners or practice.

I therefore had to commence with self-reflection or introspection to orchestrate this. This resulted in my own personal development becoming a pre-requisite for any possible improvement I envisaged. Personal or professional development is not something “done” to an individual, because in essence a person cannot be developed by others. Personal or professional development should be premised on the awakening awareness or the realization and acknowledgement of one’s inability or incompetence to perform according to one’s own expectations or potential (De Beer, 1994:6).

In traditional professional development, there is an assumption that transformation or behaviour change occurs through the acquisition of new knowledge. However, this kind of “transformation” is generally short-lived and temporary. Reflective practice contradicts this perception by viewing personal and professional development as a
more complex process that requires transformation in deeply-rooted action theories such as the constructivist learning theory where transformation is significant, lasting and taken into the mainstream of organizational life (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004:14-15).

Considering my current ontology and reflecting on where I was and where I wanted to be, I asked myself how I was going to move from my current status quo to my objective self-actualization. I considered the process or journey which included the complexities of changes – its unpredictability, its emotional component, the resistance, reluctance, disruptions to changes of routines and also the product or final destination which indicated the transformation itself (Smith, 2008:32). I agree with this as I have experienced the implementation of transformation as challenging because things do not proceed exactly as planned. Some colleagues and significant others are set in their ways and do not always agree with the changes one has in mind. Some of them resist and sometimes even try to sabotage the plans and behave in unexpected ways. In short, transformation turned out to be totally unpredictable and unanticipated.

My own obsession with transformation is closely linked with my commitment to self-improvement. This commitment to self-improvement commenced when I enrolled for the Masters Study Programme in 2007. I conducted a self-reflective action research study in collaboration with Professor Bill Holderness. My endeavour was given recognition and acknowledgement by internationally acclaimed researchers (Didloft, V., Holderness, W. in Fichten et al., 2008). In addition to this, I started engaging with literature relating to self-improvement. My engagement with literature, dealing with unlocking ones potential such as the books of Chopra (2004), “Fire in the heart: A spiritual guide for teens”, Osteen (2004), “Your best life now: 7 Steps to living at your full potential”, Sharma (2010), “The leader who had not title” and many other similar books, motivated me to facilitate and unlock my own potential for transformation. This was done by conducting extensive research in my own classroom and those of my colleagues. This initiative brought about new insights that significantly transformed my own cognition and epistemological framework. The intent of my inquiry was firstly, to comprehend the concept of self-esteem; secondly, to reflect on whether my own self-esteem was adequately developed; thirdly, to transform myself
for self-actualization and lastly, to transfer that transformative potential to my practice, my learners and hopefully to the practices of others.

6.5 TRANSFORMATION WITHIN MY OWN CONTEXT

My commitment to self-improvement flowed over into my practice. I started conducting intervention strategies to overcome the barriers caused by low self-esteem. I unlocked the transformation potential in myself, my practice, my learners and the practices of others with whom I normally interacted educationally. These intervention strategies included accepting invitations to act as motivational speaker, conducting mass assemblies, organizing leadership camps, workshops, allocating responsibilities to learners low in self-esteem, involving learners in decision-making, introducing drama-in-education and giving praise, recognition and acknowledgement to learners (see Chapter Four – Data Collection). Generally, I made a concerned effort to act as a role model to my learners and colleagues and exposed myself and my learners to every opportunity for facilitating the personal growth process in myself and my learners. My endeavours were not easy though and I had to mentally prepare myself for the challenges associated with this initiative.

6.6 CHALLENGES OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS

Ndhlovu et al. (2009:102) cite Michael Fullan (1992), a Canadian school organization researcher of educational change who demonstrates how new knowledge increases teacher resistance as, “A more complex representation of the relationships between different parts of a change process”. The process of transformation can therefore be explained as illustrated in the diagram below:
Figure 31: A more complex representation of the relationships between different parts of a change process (Adapted from Fullan (1992) in Ndhlovu et al, 2009:102)

- Etc.
- therefore less classroom change
- therefore increased resistance

- New information about the development of self-esteem for self-actualization
- makes teachers more knowledgeable
- therefore increases fears and insecurities
- exploring transformative potential by implementing change in learning and teaching strategies
- but no assistance or recognition of fears provided by school
As Fullan emphasizes in the above representation (Figure 31), the transformation process is associated with various challenges (Ndhlovu et al., 2009:102). Those I have personally encountered when conducting my own investigation were teachers fearing the unknown, lack of support from colleagues, resistance to change and reluctance or refusal to implement change. Other challenges included conflicting perspectives and values, power struggles and practical obstacles such as time constraints, ignorance and psychological barriers. Ndhlovu et al. (2009:115) cites Fullan and Miles (1992) who list the most common problems evoked by transformation as “… resistance, intransigence, entrenchment, fearfulness, reluctance to comply, complacency, unwillingness to alter behaviours, and failure to recognize the need for change …”.

These fears, uncertainties and feelings of anxiety can be seen as common in times of change, therefore the onus rests on me, the implementer of change, to eradicate those fears. I recognized that the fears of those who resisted change stemmed from being pushed from what they were familiar with, to the unknown; from the loss of the old, to a commitment to the new. I therefore decided to articulate clearly and unambiguously my objectives to them, by including them in all the support necessary. I also equipped them with the tools needed to enforce the transformation of learning and teaching strategies. This eradication of fears occurred on a continuous basis to get them to take ownership of the changes I advocated. A major challenge was convincing my colleagues why transformation was necessary.

6.7 MY RATIONALE FOR EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF MY STUDY

Blake, Bird and Gerlach (2007:22) mention that children develop empathy, trust, perseverance and independence through the establishment of positive relationships. They state that these helpful experiences help children to develop skills needed to participate actively, to interact socially, to aspire, to dream, to set themselves challenges and to control their behaviour. This is why I deemed it essential to initially research the behaviour of my learners, learning about their fears, joys, hopes, dreams and forming effective relationships, demonstrating my deeply embedded values of care, compassion, empathy and trust. However, this investigation led me
to the emergence of an issue of great concern: the lack of a positive self-esteem amongst the majority of learners in my care. Enhancing the self-esteem in my learners for self-actualization then became my primary objective due to the following reasons:

- The majority of my learners displayed signs and symptoms indicative of low self-esteems and poor self-concepts.
- These symptoms complicated the attaining of simple objectives such as achieved desired outcomes in learning areas (Barnard et al., 2005:119).
- Individuals with positive self-esteems not only tend to achieve more, they tend to lead more satisfying and fulfilling lives (Hawkins, 2007:11-13).
- My deeply ingrained values compelled me to give recognition to my learners’ basic human rights by creating an environment of trust, care and compassion.
- Teachers have a responsibility to exemplify appropriate behaviour as learners view them as role models (Fox, 2005:267-270).
- I wanted to utilize my authority to influence a transformation in how my learners perceive and feel about themselves.
- I refused to become a “living contradiction” to the beliefs and values which are such an inherent part of who I am as these values serve as the living standard by which I judge my own practice (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006:85).
- To improve my own practice and become a potential transformation agent in my own classroom and hopefully motivate others to do the same in their respective classrooms.
- To demonstrate how value-based, self-reflective action research can help find possible solutions to issues of concern in the classrooms of practitioner researchers.
- To generate my own living educational theory and by doing so, make significant contributions to the personal growth and transformation of educational epistemology (Whitehead, 1989).
- To demonstrate the transformation of the self and to show how this journey can lead to the possible transformation of others.
The quest to explore the transformative potential of my learners led me to the next logical step, which was how to incorporate my new epistemology into my current ontology.

6.8 LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Heeding the advice of Griffiths (1998:47) who suggests “putting theory into action”, I commenced my research with the aim to understand my own ontology, transform myself and improve the quality of my living educational conditions. I aimed to do this by living out my inherent values and beliefs and to ultimately influence others to achieve their transformative potential in order to become their own change agents in their own settings. Formulating learning theories led me through a process where the theory was emergent, transformational and grounded in the human capacity for learning and the possible construction of new knowledge whilst generating my own living theory as I went along (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:255).

Becoming my own agent of change and fulfilling my own transformative potential, I was moved to action. I begun by reflecting on my current status quo. Adopting a reflective approach, I focussed on my objective, initiating the process of enhancing the self-estees of marginalized learners in my care for self-actualization. This classroom-based inquiry was conducted in my own classroom context at the high school I had been teaching at for the past twenty seven years. I was taking responsibility for addressing educational needs whilst fired by passion and moral purpose (Wilkens, 2004:9). Central to my vision was enabling my learners to achieve their utmost potential. Once that process was firmly established, I set out to expand and possibly transform the boundaries that existed outside of my familiar context.

6.9 MY INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Proposing to demonstrate my standards of judgement within my practice of creating my own living theory, I hoped to explore the ongoing nature of transition between living educational spaces upon myself and to address this process of change as I moved from one context to the next. The endeavour to encourage learners to be involved in their own personal growth and development for self-actualization, allows
me to evaluate my own influence on the potential transformation process. The significance of reciprocal relationships within my education contexts, both at the primary and secondary schools, explores how these relationships impact on my practice and on me as an individual. My educational experiences incorporate and capture these relationships through enabling others to take responsibility for their own personal development. I am creating the opportunities to explore the possibilities of realizing the afore-mentioned objective.

The conscious decision to shift the familiar boundaries of my own classroom, led to a major paradigm shift in my own cognition. Expansion and transformation implied breaking down barriers and shifting horizons, therefore I resigned and secured myself a position in a foreign country, Abu Dhabi, at an international private school that accommodates primary-, middle- and high school learners at the same institution. This experience allowed me an opportunity to make an informal comparative analysis of the differences in self-esteem between marginalized South African learners and their affluent counterparts in the Middle East. These findings were based on my observations which lasted one term (July – October 2009).

The learners and teachers in this country, at that particular school (Abu Dhabi International School), originated from surrounding countries such as Egypt, Israel, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Turkey, Greece, Jordan and Yemen. This cosmopolitan setting afforded me the opportunity to experience different cultures and languages. Most of the learners where chauffeur-driven, nanny-chaperoned, technology-advanced, highly intelligent and well-travelled. During reading time, they enthusiastically shared their travelling encounters which spanned across many continents. Arabic is the vernacular of the local Abu Dhabi citizens, but on any particular day, a multitude of languages can be heard on the playgrounds and in the staffroom. Islamic is the only religion followed in this country.

Since Abu Dhabi is a Muslim country, their school week starts on a Sunday and ends on a Thursday. Females, in general, appear to be submissive and subservient with the males dominating and having superior attitudes in their respective households. These contextualized relationships flow over into the school setting where the authorities in general and the boys specifically, expect to get special treatment. If
this fails to occur, then the female found “guilty” of disrespecting the male, can face serious consequences, she could even end up being fired. This resulted in the majority of boys and the male colleagues displaying over-confidence and over-inflated self-esteem. In the classroom setting however, most of the boys are academically strong and also expected by their authoritarian fathers to be academic achievers. Most of the boys are named Mohammed, after the Prophet Mohammed. I found this confusing, but after thinking strategically, I used the family names to distinguish between the boys. Their names represented their families, which is why they took great pride in them. The male learners would not hesitate to correct you if you pronounced their surnames incorrectly.

The majority of the girls are equally confident, but not allowed equal rights. Most of the girls have positive self-esteem, because they are highly intelligent. The intelligence of most of the boys and girls causes them to challenge and critically analyze everything teachers teach them, which can be very challenging but also very irritating at times. It challenged my previous commitment to build assertiveness as some learners overstep the boundaries at times by being too assertive. I discovered that too much of a good thing can sometimes be very challenging. One of the factors influencing this is the climate of the country that averages 35 degrees throughout the year, making it unbearable for learners to play outdoors. They are compelled to find alternative ways to occupy themselves. Consequently, most parents invest in the latest technological gadgets, with the result that learners spend their leisure time reading, surfing the Internet, communicating on Facebook or playing technological games that stimulate their intellect.

In addition to the stimulation above, all the classrooms are all technologically equipped with electronic writing boards, computers and whatever is essential to prepare learners to produce excellent results. There is an abundance of resources and support structures in place. The school has a few computer rooms with computer experts, remedial teachers, doctors, nurses and psychologists available on a full-time basis. Each homeroom and advisory teacher has a teacher assistant who does the administration. The advantage of this is that the school boasts a hundred percent pass rate. Some parents, however, insist on a percentage level of 95% plus
for their children and teachers are expected to comply with whatever demands are made since parents contribute generously.

The teacher-learner ratio is 1:20 and the learners were considered to be very knowledgeable and extremely opinionated by our group of visiting teachers. This can be very stimulating and rewarding to a teacher, but if their over-enthusiasm causes you to feel redundant, it can become too much at times. The learners are required to evaluate the performances of their teachers at the end of each term. This is recorded and taken into consideration if you are evaluated by the Head of Department. This enhances the self-esteem of learners and reinforces their sense of worth, because it implies that their opinions are valued. These evaluations also determine whether you qualify as a homeroom or advisory teacher, the latter being a much sought-after position, especially since these teachers receive higher salaries and get more incentives such as quarterly monetary bonuses.

Factors associated with the positive self-esteem of the majority of these learners were the availability of resources, affluence, extensive prior knowledge, good social backgrounds, exposure to highly intellectual discussions and debates at home and parental involvement. These stimulating entities contributed to the enhancement of positive self-esteem in most of these learners. Coming to the classroom with such an extensive prior knowledge base meant that nothing is taken at face value and the validity of facts is often questioned. This occurs because most of the learners come to the classroom with their own opinions, ideas and perceptions and not as empty vessels.

The possibilities of transformation were seriously hampered by the irrefutable laws of the country and the Education Department. Though I was not allowed to influence the learners or my colleagues in any way I gained much from this experience. It allowed me to get a glimpse of how things should be if conditions are what they should be. I could also more easily recognize the shortcomings within my own context and identify the factors influencing it. My experience helped me to try to eradicate or minimize the obstacles hampering the natural development of positive self-esteem in learners.
Personal growth and development are associated with transformation, which can be advantageous, but also devastating. We continuously grow – it is a process, not a product. Throughout my journey of self-discovery, I exist within a multiplicity of selves (Hill & Stephens, 2005) that at some times encourage improvement of self, practice and others, but at other times merely serve to emphasize my own living contradiction. In this case, my true self and the values that are inherently part of me, came into direct conflict with my personal and professional development. Complying and adapting to the circumstances I faced in Abu Dhabi implied that I negated the values that up to now have been the embodiment of who I am and the living standards by which I judge my professional practices (see 1.3 – My educational values). My basic human rights were now seriously denied as I could no longer articulate my own opinions. I was compelled to comply to a dictatorial system where democracy was not an option. Females were treated unfairly and discriminated against. These social ills were the rationale behind my initial investigation (see 2.1) and a “living contradiction” of the values I hold (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:46-47).

Since the values that I hold are based on the relationships that I have with others, and since these values were not allowed to be reflected in the living environment I found myself in (in Abu Dhabi), I decided to return to South Africa before my two year contract ended. I wanted to use the knowledge I gained to facilitate improvement and transformation within a South African context. The conditions under which I have worked have helped me to re-examine and clarify the type of teacher I am. The experience reinforced my value-based passion to create my own living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989) as a way of improving self, practice and others. However, the experience also created an awareness that certain external factors can possibly facilitate the development of a positive self-esteem. The internal motivation is linked to these positive external factors such as exposure to intellectual discussion and debates, parental involvement, available resources and good social background, to name but a few.

Riding (2008:22) cites Eisner (1993) who posits that human beings create their own experiences and the quality of these experiences depends on the way they employ their own minds. I agree with the words of Eisner as I am convinced that I created my own life directions through the choices that I have made. This conviction
prompted me to apply for a position as primary school teacher at a South African school. I wanted to explore the transformative potential of learners at this level and compare it with my previous experiences. This new context would also create an opportunity to put my new challenge to good use.

6.10 MY PRIMARY SCHOOL CONTEXT

Kincheloe (2003) reminds individuals to acknowledge the significance of experience in contributing to the construction of new knowledge in educational research. My ontological approach is rooted within my emerging epistemology that is a result of my interactions encountered throughout my journey of discovery. This implies that who I am, determines what I know. Thayor-Bacon (1995) is of the opinion that one’s ontology and epistemology are interrelated, therefore they cannot be viewed as separate entities. I agree as I have discovered this to be true about myself.

I secured a position at a local, South African primary school, situated in a previously disadvantaged area. The school was initially established as a temporary structure thirty five years ago, but is still in its original state, thirty-five years later. The staff establishment consists of 22 teachers. There are 500 learners and the ratio is approximately 1:30. The medium of instruction is predominantly English, but there is still one Grade Six and one Grade Seven class that are taught in Afrikaans. In two years time, the Afrikaans as medium of instruction will be phased out completely. The school has about 30% Xhosa-speaking learners.

My intention when making this change of course was to expand my boundaries and explore the transformative potential of a primary school context. Additionally, I aimed to apply my new epistemologies to a different context to allow others to also learn from my own experience. My educational theory is premised on being able to acknowledge and recognize my own transformative potential and those of my learners. I then intend using my influence to lead my learners to self-actualization.

Reflecting on my twenty-seven years of experiences at a high school, I remember the innumerable times I denied my learners their voice by forcing them into compliance and submission, just because I needed to complete the prescribed syllabus. I also
remember how, after commencing my PhD studies, I introduced the cycles of involvement, responsibility, recognition, modelling, motivation and affirmation integratively and interchangeably (see 4.8). I now intended to link theory to practice in order to explore the transformative potential of my primary school charges, just as I did with my high school charges.

Recent changes in educational environments, prompted me to revisit, refine and reformulate my “living theories”. Whitehead (1993:80) aptly stated that: “By a ‘living’ theory I mean that the explanations generated by the theory to explain the educational development of individuals contain an evaluation of past practice and evidence of present practice which includes the ‘I’‘s’ intention (a human goal) to produce something valued which is not yet in existence”. These words encapsulate my journey of exploring the educational development of myself, my learners and others through critical past reflection and future projection.

My future projection was now targeted at my new primary school context. This was where I would promote and apply my newly constructed epistemology as it emerges from within my practice. My prior experience prepared me for this explorative journey. Riding (2008:45) articulates it so eloquently when he remarks that “learning is never completed, but is always seeking the next way to improve learning”. This is so true as I have encountered when I started my own cyclical nature of learning more than a decade ago. I discovered that once an objective is achieved, another waits around the next turn of one’s quest for improvement of self, practice and others.

This discovery journey gives meaning and purpose to my life. It basically implies that my action is in accordance to the values I use to judge improvements in my practice. Living out my values within my primary school context now implies re-evaluating, re-strategizing and modifying my actions after critical reflection. This cyclical approach was the one I used at my previous school (see 4.8 – Me and my actions), and the one I was forced to ignore in Abu Dhabi.

I now brought my transformation of cognition I gained in Abu Dhabi and my previous high school, onto my current context. I implemented all the phases I endeavoured to apply in my previous contexts, in my new primary school setting. I raised my
expectations because I believe in the words of Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe, a famous philosopher, who once said in a speech, “Treat people as if they already are what they are capable of becoming and you help them become exactly that”. If expectations are raised, it serves as encouragement to rise to the expected level.

When I challenged my primary school learners to produce and direct their own play scripts based on school-related issues, they managed to rise to my expectations. When they were asked to engage in a storytelling activity where each learner is expected to contribute by making up a story or sharing one they remember from what they were told by grandparents or parents, most of them could portray the role of narrator with confidence. It was evident that most of them were willing to venture into unknown territory, loved challenges, persevered, were optimistic, made eye contact and did not fear the ridicule of peers. These signs were all indicative of a positive attitude (Bernard et al., 2005:119).

Additional learning and teaching strategies employed to elicit the transformative potential of afore-mentioned learners included:

- Creating opportunities for dramatization and role play.
- Encouraging creativity by asking learners to express their thoughts and ideas and voice their opinions verbally, in writing, by using pictures or by drawing.
- Allocating roles and responsibilities such as leadership roles and class duties to learners showing signs of low self-esteem.
- Finding alternative (easier or more manageable) methods to accommodate learners who struggle to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Scaffolding struggling learners until they can manage independently.
- Displaying all the contributions (however small) in class.
- Daily praise, motivation and affirmation to deserving learners.
- Giving as much exposure to learners as possible by allowing them to do scripture readings at mass assemblies, to perform on stage, model reading and telling stories.
- Encouraging them to publish their essays and poems.
• Involving them in decision-making procedures such as classroom rules and classroom code of conduct.

• Quoting them where relevant to demonstrate that their views and opinions are valued (January – October 2010).

These learning and teaching strategies form part of my daily intervention cycles to facilitate and influence the potential transformative in my learners. The following images taken from Grade 5 to Grade 7 classes are offered as examples of my educational values incorporated into my practice. I am offering these examples as validation that my classroom is a reflection of the democratic and inclusive values that I claim to be an inherent part of me. These few pieces of evidence represent my classroom as it forms part of the living space that I create as a teacher. These images serve as evidence of the democratic, inclusive way I endeavour to elicit the utmost potential of all my learners.
Learners were asked to draw a list of the things they like doing best, the things that make them happy, what they are good at and the things other people say they are good at (see intervention activities dated January 2010 entitled: “The road to success”).
6.10.2  The road to success (self-reflection) (Figure 33)

The learners were asked to illustrate where they were and where they hoped to be, at the end of their endeavours (January 2010).
6.10.3 Children’s rights (involvement) (Figure 34)

Learners were asked to give their own interpretation of children’s rights (February 2010).

- All children have the right to a decent place to live.
- All children should be protected from violence and abuse.
- All children should be looked after when they get sick.
- All children have the right to grow up with love and security.
- All children have the right to free education.
- No child should be forced to work.
- Disabled children have the right to special education.
- No child should be treated badly.
- All children should be protected by discrimination.
- No child should be allowed to use their talents.

Mishka
6.10.4 Classroom rules (involvement) (Figure 35)

Learners had to compile a list of 10 things they thought should not be done in class (February 2010). This strategy served to encourage learners to become actively involved in decision-making processes in class. It was also a scaled-down South African version of my overseas experience of learners having a say in determining their learning environment.
Learners had to illustrate their ideas regarding classroom rules and code of conduct (February 2010).
6.10.6  Developing personal growth (self-esteem enhancement) (Figure 37)

The following images (6.10.6 (i) – (iv)) were taken at a leadership camp organized to develop their leadership skills (February 2010).

(i) 

(ii)
6.10.7 Feelings and feedback (involvement – evaluation) (Figure 38)

To reinforce self-worth of learners, the Grade Five to Seven learners were asked to evaluate me and my teaching by answering the following questions (I explained this to them before-hand):

1. Write down what you think of Mrs Didloft’s teaching methods.
2. How does she make you feel about yourself?
3. What emotions do you feel when you are in her class?
4. How can she improve her teaching methods?
5. How has she influenced change in you? (October 2010)

I think she is a very nice teacher.
She make me feel good about myself.
I feel like I can do anything in her class.
I like the games, the drawings, the dancing and plays.
She can do better in Activities, the games and the plays.
I was shy at the beginning of the year but now since I’ve been in her class I got less shy.

Teacher Didloft
is the Best ♥
All the images offered above, serve as reflections of the values I instilled into the learners I teach each day. These images represent their involvement, their self-reflection and their responsibilities in the classroom context. These examples are my attempts to try to bring education to life and to involve the learners, as young as they are, to reflect with me on our classroom practices and how to improve them. This ability of young learners to participate as action researchers has been convincingly demonstrated by Holderness, Bold, Henry and Wood (2008).

The above images also serve as a platform to demonstrate and give voice to how I am living out my values and those of my learners within a classroom context. This sense of empowering demonstrates the power of teacher-research. Kincheloe (2003:39) sums this up so well by stating that the research on learners is “a cardinal tenet of good teaching, as the teacher details his or her observations of the student as well as his or her reaction to the learner”.

6.11 REFLECTING ON MY ENDEAVOURS TO INFLUENCE IMPROVEMENT

My critical judgements are being demonstrated through my interactions with my own emerging educational theory, through my engagement with the relevant literature of other researchers, through my understanding of my own ontology and my own transformation potential and those I encounter on this educative journey. It is through my engagement with educational stakeholders and critical reflections of my own practice that I am seeking to improve myself, my practice and others. Through this thesis I have accounted for my own living values and explained how I have applied these to my own practice (see 1.3 – My educational values). I have reflected on my ontology and critically analyzed it. I have incorporated the voices of significant others in order to help me account for and validate my claims.

I have analyzed and evaluated myself and accounted for how I have come to see things as I do. I have drawn on theory in order to account for my own practice and contributed to living theory in order to contribute to new epistemologies and understanding. Day (2004:15-16) encapsulates my endeavours so well when he remarks, “Good teaching is to do with teachers’ values, identities, moral purpose, attitudes to learning (their own as well as those of their students), their caring and
commitment to be the best they can at all times and in every circumstance for the good of their students. It is about their enthusiasm and their passion”.

My thesis reflects my engagement with values, morals, identities, attitudes, commitment and potential transformation. These significant concepts are given acknowledgement and recognition in my practice. In this thesis I also demonstrate who I am and what I do; drawing evidence from my interactions to explain my own identity. The self morphs and emerges, depending on the situation it finds itself in.

According to my context, my journey of change and exploration was about self-discovery, but evolved into a reciprocal benefit between researcher and researched. My classroom was transformed from a place of teaching to a place of stimulation, opportunities, potentials and possibilities (see Chapter Four – Data Collection). It became a living educational space where my values allowed me to give recognition and acknowledgement to the positive entities in all the individuals I encounter.

This thesis is one about how I, as a teacher, use my ontology to influence my marginalized learners suffering from poor self-esteem, to transform into individuals with positive self-esteem and ultimately, to self-actualization.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I intend to return to my initial concern and the primary argument of this study whilst simultaneously examining the extent to which I managed to attain my initial objectives. I aim to bring closure to this investigation by briefly restating the research questions and objectives I set out at the beginning of this study. Additionally, I also plan to discuss the extent to which I fulfilled those aims and answered those questions. Lastly, I will conclude by making some recommendations, review the limitations of this study and indicate future research possibilities.

Teachers nowadays are potentially the single most significant asset in the achievement of the vision of a democratically just learning society. Teachers are therefore compelled, more than ever before, to be more than mere transmitters of knowledge. In this technological era, they need to portray more complex roles if learners’ creativity, intellectual curiosity, emotional well-being and sense of active citizenship are to be realized. It is teachers who hold the key to a learner’s developing or dwindling self-esteem, scholastic achievement, and visions of future hopes and dreams. It is the commitment, dedication, perseverance and passion of teachers that will ultimately determine and influence their ability to facilitate development in their learners (Day, 2004:9).

Fried (1995:27-28) elaborates on the afore-mentioned statements when he states, “The example we set as passionate adults allows us to connect to [pupils’] minds and spirits in a way that we can have a lasting, positive impact on their lives … by … working with the [pupils] at the frontier of their own individual and collective experiences, feelings and opinions”. It is this passion that is seldom acknowledged in education as being at the core of the intellectual endeavours and commitment to service of teachers as they work towards the attainment of personal goals they have set for themselves. Teachers are driven and motivated to comprehend and articulate this passion and the ways it is socially constructed and mediated through
experiences, their respective backgrounds, their inherent values and beliefs and the social context in which they operate. Teachers who have a passion for teaching, view teaching as more than just a profession, more than an intellectual challenge and more than a task. To passionate teachers, calling and commitment are essential elements. Teaching is for individuals who care, are passionate, committed, driven, dedicated, determined and also caring.

Stronge (2002) emphasizes the importance of passion in teaching when he mentions that passion is associated with enthusiasm, caring, commitment, and hope, which are viewed as key elements of effectiveness in teaching. For teachers who care, the learner as an individual is as important as the learner being just another entity in the learning process. This respect for the human factor is likely to result in greater motivation to improve or develop. Caring teachers who know their learners, form bonds or create relationships that enhance the learning process and elicit a greater possibility for the attainment of objectives.

Classroom-based practitioners are expected to be knowledgeable, skilled and accountable for raising the levels of achievement of all the learners in their care. They are also expected to address issues relating to equity, social justice, democracy, basic human rights and lifelong learning. This becomes possible when we as teachers reflect upon our practices and ask ourselves:

- Who am I as a teacher? (Self-esteem)
- How well am I doing my job as a teacher? (Self-esteem)
- What motivates me? (Job motivation)
- What must I do to be a good teacher? (Task reception)
- What are my expectations for the future? (Future perspective) (Kelchtermans, 1993).

The answers to these questions should serve as a directive as to our current positions and practices so that we can plan effectively for the future. This planning will enable us to be more goal-oriented and therefore more effective. For learning, personal growth and development to be evaluated though, evidence must be observable. Van Der Horst and McDonald (1997:238) use an illustration of an apple
as the symbol of the fruits and seeds of learning and personal growth and development. In order to be effective, these entities must bear fruit. Effective learning, including personal growth and development, are based on the principle of lifelong learning. The illustration marked Figure 39 follows below:

Figure 39: Symbol of fruits and seeds of learning, personal growth and development (Van Der Horst & McDonald, 1997:23)
The illustration, based on the principle of lifelong learning, takes the following ideas into consideration:

- It is the right of every learner to fulfill his/her potential.
- Effective learning, growth and development require a positive culture of learning which includes respect, love, accepting and trust.
- Learning, personal growth and development should occur within the school context as well as within the wider social context.
- Learners should be equipped to cope globally.
- Learners should be educated holistically.
- Educators need to be aware and stay abreast of the latest technology in order to prepare competent, technologically advanced individuals.
- Learning, growth and development have no cutting-off age; we need to constantly seek new knowledge.

In order to assess our respective current practices, we as teachers need to put intervention plans into place. As teachers, it becomes necessary to ask ourselves: Where am I now? Where do I want to be in a few years’ time? What am I happy/unhappy with? What would I like to improve? What is my ultimate goal?

7.2 REVIEWING THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

Intending to reflect on this study thus far, a succinct summary of my initial objectives follow. The research question I initiated at the commencement of this study was:

**How can I enhance the self-esteem of my learners for self-actualization?**

At the outset of this study, I identified the following objectives as a way of investigating the above main question. These objectives were as follows:
7.2.1 To determine the causes of the low self-esteem in order to help the learners develop positive self-esteem for self-actualization

- Identifying the most common causes of a negative self-esteem.
- Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of a positive self-esteem.
- Reflecting on the impact of the development of a healthy self-esteem.
- Creating an awareness of the significance of a positive self-esteem.
- Endeavouring to overcome the causes of poor self-esteem in order to eradicate its effects (see 1.3).

From observations of social interaction in the classroom setting, it became clear that the most common weakness was the general lack of self-esteem. This observation is validated in Chapter Four (Data Collection). The tendencies or effects displayed among learners were:

- The inability to cope with challenges confronting them in the classroom.
- Learners being passive, withdrawn and depressed.
- Reluctance to explore new things.
- Being generally pessimistic.
- Giving up too easily.
- Compliance to whatever is presented.
- Harbouring suicidal and negative or destructive thoughts.
- Being self-critical.
- Taking on conformists approaches.
- Not verbalizing their opinions regarding issues (see 2.2).

7.2.2 To involve learners in relevant decision-making procedures in the classroom. This basically comprised:

- Getting learners involved in the formulation of a classroom code of conduct which helped to set the ground rules for general classroom management and classroom behaviour.
• Establishing a sense of security by protecting the rights of all individuals within the classroom context.
• Acknowledging, recognizing and embracing the diversity of all individuals in the classroom.
• Instilling important values such as respect, honesty, care, compassion, integrity, equality and fairness.
• Taking ownership of their own development by being part of decision-making involving them.
• Giving learners a general sense of purpose and self-worth.
• Restoring their dignity and belief in themselves (see 4.8).

7.2.3 To encourage learners to take on greater responsibility within the classroom context and beyond the confines of its boundaries. This procedure entailed:

• Mentoring junior learners.
• Helping others attain their maximum potential.
• Being a source of knowledge and experience.
• Encouraging, motivating and supporting.
• Helping mentees with their schoolwork.
• Helping to develop and improve the academic and social skills of their mentees and those of themselves.
• Portraying the roles of friend, listener, counsellor and confidante.
• Endeavouring to be a role model and someone the mentee can emulate.
• Showing care, compassion, respect, fairness and determination (see 4.8).

7.2.4 To give positive verbal and written feedback regarding their own growth and development to my learners. This exercise consisted of:

• Taking extra time to listen to my learners.
• Showing a genuine interest in their lives by communicating with them individually and collectively.
• Motivating them on a daily basis.
• Giving verbal and written feedback in the form of positive, constructive comments to deserving individuals.
• Modelling desired behaviour.
• Giving acknowledgement to every single contribution and effort by quoting them, using their examples, displaying their work, asking for their opinions and giving credit where it is due.
• Encouraging them.
• Reassuring them.
• Focusing on their positive attributes.
• Believing in their potentials to be the best that they can be.
• Supporting them in all their endeavours (see 4.8).

7.2.5 **To add to the body of knowledge in the area of self-esteem within the classroom context. This included:**

• The acquisition of a self-awareness to assist learners to cope in a world of accelerated transformation.
• Acknowledging and respecting the uniqueness of self and others.
• Recognizing their respective strengths and weaknesses in order to enhance or eliminate them and start living a more meaningful and contented life.
• Developing a positive self-esteem to raise the level of academic achievement.
• Realizing learners’ full potential for self-actualization (see 4.8).

The benefits to be gained from the previously mentioned objectives included:

• Developing new strategies to transform low self-esteem and negative self-concepts in learners to positive self-esteem and self-concepts.
• Motivating other educators to explore and find methods of their own to overcome similar barriers in their classrooms.
• Comprehending our own ontologies and displaying more compassion and care towards the issues relating to negative self-esteem and low self-concepts.
• Focusing on the **how** and not the **what** with regard to teaching or learning area policies.

• Encouraging educators to endeavour developing their own theories of practices tailored for their specific needs.

• Adding to the self-worth of learners.

• Helping learners develop positive self-esteesms and self-concepts.

• Making learners feel valued, empowering them, emancipating their thoughts, illuminating their assets and unlocking their hidden and untapped potentials.

• Helping learners to ultimately attain self-actualization (see 5.3).

During the course of this particular study, I am convinced that I achieved most of my objectives and answered the question I set out to address. The focus of my research question was also the primary focus of this study; therefore it held special significance for me. The other objectives related more broadly to the overall learning process that emerged from the research question and the first objective, determining the causes of the low self-esteem to help develop positive self-esteesms for self-actualization.

By facilitating movement during this inquiry, along a continuum of negative to positive as illustrated below, I was able to influence positively the behaviour of learners in my care to change from an inhibiting to a motivating force. The circles on either sides of the arrow represent the learners and the arrow between the circle, the developing process or interventions undertaken to orchestrate the change from negative to positive.
The illustration appropriately depicts the transformation of an existing negative self-esteem to a developing positive self-esteem, which is the process that occurred during this classroom-based inquiry.

Along this discovery journey, there were various contributory factors influencing this process of transformation and development of self-esteem.

7.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS’ SELF-ESTEEM

7.3.1 Environmental influences

(i) The school

Papalia, Olds and Feldman (2006:25) contend that environmental issues definitely have an influence on the social development of individuals. Theorists view social
intelligence as skills that are prerequisites for personal growth and development (Gordon & Browne, 2004:541). Being part of a group is essential for the acquisition of social skills due to the fact that it helps to establish the identity of an individual. This ability to associate with a group is facilitated by the sharing of similar interests or goals (Smidt, 2006:115). The learner in school is there not only as an individual, but also as part of a larger group. Here the learner has the opportunity to function and engage in group activities where he/she can assert him/herself within the group, while simultaneously integrating harmoniously with the other members of the group (De Witt, 2009:255).

Pellegrini and Blatchford (2000:114) cite Weinstein (1991:52) who states that: “The classroom is not simply a social context in which students learn academic lessons. It is a social context in which students also learn social lessons – lessons about appropriate behaviour in various contexts, about one’s self as a learner and one’s position in the status hierarchy, about relationships with students from other ethnic and racial groups, about the relative value of competition and cooperation, and about friendship. Experiences in activity segments influence the content of these lessons”.

This basically implies that the classroom context is significant for both academic and social development.

The school plays a fundamental role in the development of the learner, because the learner enters the formal school as a seven-year-old child and leaves it as an eighteen-year-old adult. He/she spends approximately twelve years in the school setting. School-related events and issues therefore have an impact on learners. The ethos of the school is critical to motivation and achievement which implies that order and control become necessary to motivate and stimulate learners. This order and control include discipline – a much-needed commodity to help learners attain their objectives. Extra-mural activities and proper educational facilities are also offered at schools which help to create positive, interesting and meaningful learning (Msutwana, 2004:113).
Recommendations regarding the school
I have learnt, in earlier chapters, that schools play a pivotal role in the development of learners. I therefore agree with the following suggestions offered in this regard (De Bruyn et al., 2002:125-139).

Ethos
The core of the ethos at school should be team spirit, discipline and perseverance. In a school where discipline prevails, all stakeholders cooperate harmoniously. This then leads to open communication, self-discipline and good conduct, attributes that can be advantageous to the development and growth of learners. The ethos is related to the philosophy of the school (De Bruyn et al., 2002:126).

Philosophy
The school must prepare learners for the future and ensure that everything possible is done to ensure the well-being and happiness of each child in the school. Inclusivity and equality should be embraced and enforced at all times. This will facilitate the objective of developing learners who will become valuable members of society. The philosophy of a school should lead to its mission (De Bruyn et al., 2002:125).

Mission
The school should decide on a common mission to prepare learners for their respective tasks in life. The mission of a school is the reason for a school’s existence, articulated in a single sentence. If, for example, teachers at a school wish to produce learners with a positive self-esteem, the mission of the school should include the development of self-esteem as a common objective. This will help to encourage and create a positive organizational culture with a common mission as its goals. The goals of a school emanate from its mission (De Bruyn et al., 2002:126).

Goals
Goals influence actions of individuals and form part of the ethos of a school. Definite, clear and unambiguous goals should be set to ensure that all stakeholders work towards a common objective. If all teachers are aware that they need to develop the learners’ self-esteem for self-actualization, they will adapt their teaching and learning
strategies accordingly. If, however, there is no clear goal, measures cannot be undertaken to attain goals set. The goals are related to the norms and values considered important in the school (De Bruyn et al., 2002:126).

**Norms and values**

Norms and values form an integral part of any school and it is the school’s task to enhance the desirable norms and values such as respect, care, compassion, honesty and integrity. It is also the school’s task to fight against undesirable norms and values such as disrespect, dishonesty and mistrust. The school should promote norms and values which are in harmony with and a reflection of its ethos, mission and goals (De Bruyn et al., 2002:127).

(ii) **Role models**

Teachers, parents and peers or mentors are all significant others who have the potential to exert both positive and negative influences on learners’ self-esteem and achievement. De Witt (2009:264) remarks that parents instil the initial norms and values in learners. The parent is primarily responsible for the learner’s first experience and exposure in socialization. Parents play a decisive role in the formation of the learners’ self-concept, self-esteem and motivation (Blake, Bird & Gerlach, 2007:44). Hence in their holistic development process, children come to school with an inherent admiration for their parents. Besides considering the parents as significant others whom they look up to, the parents are usually the most important people in the learners’ lives. Parents need to realize that they are endeavouring to achieve the same objective as the teacher, namely worthy, mature and independent adults who will actively portray their roles in society. Parents and teachers form a team, who together can fulfill a role and a function in respect of the child’s development.

Gordon and Browne (2004:609) maintain that the teacher guides the learner into a world of learning and development. The fact that the teacher is often the first “other” adult with whom the child forms a relationship, makes the parents view him/her very critically. It then becomes imperative that the teacher justifies his/her actions in the classroom on the basis of his/her knowledge and expertise. The teacher also needs
to be supportive as a partner in the education of the learner. The teacher, though not as emotionally attached to the learner as the parent, also maintains a certain amount of care and warmth towards the learners. He/she has an appreciation for the learner as an individual, but is more objective as the learner is one of many in his/her classroom. There are always objectives to attain and emotional attachment may hinder this process.

A teacher can leave an indelible impression on learners and can easily influence them. The personality of a teacher plays a major role in the teacher’s ability to function effectively. Personality embraces a person’s behaviour, mood, emotions and abilities. The following attributes are considered important in teaching (see 5.3.3). These attributes include being:

- Optimistic and goal-oriented
- Motivated
- Sensitive
- Confident
- A life-long learner
- Aware of changes
- Technologically advanced
- Fair
- Unbiased and objective
- Caring and compassionate
- Passionate about his/her calling
- Flexible and creative
- Accommodating and approachable (Gordon & Browne, 2004:609).

Pellegrini (2000:23) reasons that the influence of peers or mentors on learners’ social behaviour and development can be interpreted from a social cognitive theoretical viewpoint as well as a Piagetian point of view. Peers and mentors may serve as role models and reinforcers for one another, as well as for their mentees or charges. Peers can affirm one another by giving positive attention and approval, affection and personal acceptance. Peers can also serve as role models for one another, especially if their behaviour or performance is socially acceptable and desirable.
However, since both positive and negative behaviours are modeled and subsequently imitated by the follower, this can have negative consequences as well as positive results. Peer relations can resultantly be both negative and positive, depending on the behaviour modeled. Mentoring has the potential to enhance every child’s experience of school. Peer support is a very important aspect of schooling and can be a possible source of emotional support. Learners can benefit from mentoring where they are made aware of the reciprocal value of sharing expertise and responsibilities (Hartley-Brewer, 2002).

**Recommendations regarding role models**

Teachers, parents and peers are indispensable and represent significant others who fulfill a positive role and influence on the development of learners’ self-concept and self-esteem for self-actualization. Off all the literature consulted during my study, the following may provide the most helpful list of guidelines, hence they are included in my conclusion. The guidelines also serve to ensure the sustainability of an ongoing and healthy relationship of these key role players (see 4.10) (McLaughlin & Alexander, 2004:12).

**Teachers**

- Should always display enthusiasm and create opportunities for problem-solving, originality and creativity to cater for individuality, diversity and inclusivity.
- Should have a broad general knowledge and be well read and informed to be able to quench the learners’ continuous thirst for new knowledge.
- Should have a willingness to listen to the learners’ point of view and recognize, accept and acknowledge it to ensure learners that they are worthy and valuable contributors in the learning and teaching context.
- Should always appear to be self-confident and in control of the situation, however, they should also acknowledge their own imperfections to teach learners the value of learning from mistakes.
- Should be available to learners both inside and outside the classroom to create a sense of security and protection.
- Should know the learners well in order to establish relationships of trust and respect.
• Should exercise good humour, patience, compassion, fairness, honesty, integrity, democracy and equality in the normal interactions to establish a secure and loving classroom atmosphere.

• Should provide stimulation and challenges for learners to help them give expression to their skills and abilities.

• Should encourage discovery learning to accommodate different abilities and levels of competence.

• Should support parents and view them as partners in education.

Though I tend to agree with most of these guidelines and recognize the value in each of them, I realize that not all of them can be found in one individual. Teachers should endeavour to display as many as these attributes as possible if, and when the situation requires it (McLaughlin & Alexander, 2004:12).

Parents
The journal entries produced by learners in 4.9, serve as a foundation upon which I base these recommendations below. Parents should…

• create a loving, stimulating environment for the child to provide the stimulating environment for developing a positive self-concept and self-esteem.

• show consistent, unconditional acceptance, concern, empathy and respect, in order to provide a sense of security and protection.

• maintain a caring relationship where communication is encouraged to enable learners to express their feelings and concerns spontaneously and without any pressure.

• encourage their children towards freedom and independence within clearly established boundaries to teach them the value of democracy.

• show an interest in their children and support them emotionally, financially, spiritually and educationally.

• encourage, motivate, affirm and support their children in everything they do or attempt.

• establish ties with the school and educators in support of their children by regularly visiting the school.
If parents strive to apply most of these guidelines, they will bring learners closer to self-actualization as these acts stimulate healthy relationships that lead to the development of personal growth (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997:23).

**Peers or mentors**

Pellegrini and Blatchford (2000) argue that peers or mentors provide the most efficient and highly motivating context for the learning and development of social skills which will ultimately equip children with the tools needed to live effectively as valuable members of an adult society. These authors add that much of the building of shared understandings that lies at the heart of friendships develops through play. The following activities are therefore recommended to develop learners’ social skills:

- Group activities such as role play, dramatization, quizzes, debates, games and sport can be organized to encourage cooperation and team spirit – this is a fundamental element in learning and motivation.
- Scaffolding in the form of peer-and-guided reading or tutoring can be orchestrated to allow the more-abled learners to provide assistance to those less-abled than themselves.
- Should be encouraged to be helpful and willing to share knowledge, experience and expertise.
- Should be allocated responsibilities to give them a sense of value and worth.
- Should be given a platform to exercise leadership roles, for example, the role of mentor, class leader, monitor or prefect – this will enhance their confidence and develop a positive self-concept and self-esteem.
- Should be given meaningful roles in their social interactions with others to prepare them for their future roles in society and also to enhance their self-worth.
- Should be given opportunities to offer contributions pertaining to educational matters to encourage their creativity, individuality, skills and abilities.
These initiatives should be undertaken by significant others such as peers, parents, teachers and role models to develop social skills that will lead to an enhanced self-image and, ultimately, to self-actualization (McLaughlin & Alexander, 2004:12).

(iii) **Home environment and neighbourhood**

The home forms the basis of most of the learner’s development and learning and serves as the foundation for the motivation. It is also a determining factor in the learner’s academic achievement or lack thereof. The home and neighbourhood are therefore seen as important factors influencing the motivation and self-esteem of the learner for the following reasons:

Berk (2006:164) stresses that marginalized individuals raised in severely deprived environments households remain below average in physical and psychological development. The environmental cumulative deficit hypothesis postulates that the repercussions of deprived conditions result in early deficits which increase gradually, and become more difficult to overcome as time progresses (Berk, 2007:326). In South Africa, the following aspects are symptoms of environmental deprivation:

- Low economic status
- Low social status
- Low level of education
- Employment in inferior jobs and unemployment
- Limited social involvement
- Limited potential for upward social mobility (Feeny, Christensen & Moravcik, 2006:102).

The concept of environmental deprivation also refers to individuals facing poverty, lack of food, shelter, clothing or basic essentials caused by environmental deficiencies and socio-economic backlogs such as political marginalization. Resultantly, learners exposed to these conditions experience serious limitations in terms of self-actualization, improvement of their opportunities in life and achievement of a satisfactory standard of living (Berk, 2007:281).
The education and development of environmentally deprived learners can sometimes be so seriously hampered by their home environment and neighbourhood, that they are either unable, or find it difficult, to cope with the demands imposed by the classroom and school context. Due to the socio-economic backlogs, the parents of these learners are often unable to provide the stimulating environment needed to prepare their children adequately for school and its demands – mainly due to a lack of knowledge and means (Smidt, 2006:14). These neglected children are then often untidy and inappropriately clothed which makes them feel inferior. They are deprived of adequate housing, food, clothing, hygiene and basic essentials. This deprivation manifests itself in the form of a poor self-concept and low self-esteem. Other typical characteristics and symptoms include defective creativity, limited attention span, poor vocabulary, low cognitive levels, being morally and intellectually poor, experiencing constant failure and having poor communication skills (De Witt, 2009:312-324).

Recommendations regarding home environment and neighbourhood
The teacher has a very important role to play in the teaching of marginalized learners. Firstly, the personal strengths of such learners should be identified and then used as strong points. The following objectives can then be strived for as mentioned in 1.3 and suggested by Feeny et al. (2006:277-278):

• Creating a loving and safe environment.
• Allowing learners to experience feelings of belonging.
• Involving learners in everything relating to them.
• Giving recognition to all their efforts.
• Empowering learners and their families by demonstrating how to care for themselves – this can be done through home visits or workshops.
• Nurturing task independency within the family and the child.
• Making allowance for learners to take up responsibilities such as mentoring or leadership roles.
• Allowing them to experience success or a sense of accomplishment by setting attainable goals.
• Emphasizing the values of respect, care, compassion and justice.
• Teaching them how to deal with emotions, manage problems and crises.
• Teaching them how to recover from setbacks such as failure.
• Helping them to envisage future potential for themselves.
• Restoring their value and self-worth as human beings by constantly motivating, praising and affirming deserving efforts.
• Developing positive attributes with the intention of helping them attain self-actualization.

7.3.2 Learners themselves contribute to their own self-esteem development or stagnation

When learners actively participate in their own development and growth as individuals, their self-estees increase and their self-actualization may become more likely. A learner can be in a demoralizing or deprived environment, but still manage to attain his/her full potential. This requires the learner to display characteristics such as determination, diligence, perseverance, and being focused. However, certain aspects of a learner can hinder the process of attaining self-actualization. They are:

(i) Behavioural aspects

• Inattentiveness and disruptive behaviour can cause learners to meet with failure.
• Antisocial forms of behaviour displayed by certain learners such as negativism, aggression, bossiness, selfishness, egocentrism, destructiveness, antagonism and prejudice can lead to peers and teachers avoiding or ignoring them due to the negative occurrences associated with these tendencies (Hurlock, 1980:126).

(ii) Emotional aspects

All of us are born with the potential for high self-esteem. Life’s experiences can either nourish or erode this innate potential. Our self-esteem is shaped by our environment and our interaction with others. We may develop feelings of low self-worth and negativity as a result of our experiences. When this occurs, feelings of low self-esteem are created. A good thing is that self-criticism, a low self-concept, poor self-esteem and negative thinking patterns are learned behaviours that can be
changed with clever intervention strategies. A positive environment and interaction with individuals with high self-esteem may help to develop a positive self-esteem for self-actualization (Barnard, 2005:112-122).

(iii) Social aspects

Having a positive self-esteem can contribute positively to your social interaction with others; therefore it is important to know how your self-concept and self-esteem are formed, what influences them and also how to improve or develop them. A positive self-concept and self-esteem enable you to get on well with others, reach your potential in life, enjoy socializing, accept yourself, be happy with yourself, feel valued and needed, make friends easily, accept criticism without feeling put down and to be independent.

To be an effective member of society in a rapidly changing world, it is essential to know who you are. Each of us is an individual with unique characteristics. We all need to become our own best selves without comparing ourselves with what society would value. We need to realize that each person has his/her unique strengths and focus on our strengths not on our weaknesses. If positive interactions are established, a positive self-esteem develops (Barnard, 2005:113).

(iv) Physical aspects

Kremer et al. (2003:16-19) state that behaviour always occurs in a context. This is why one perspective is concerned with comprehending environments, such as classrooms, homes and neighbourhoods, as settings in which a learner thinks, feels or acts. This perspective originates from the premise that it is impossible to comprehend or predict how a learner will feel or behave without regard for the milieu in which emotions are experienced or actions performed. For example, the expression of fear can only be understood in the context of an individual’s perception of the potential threat posed to him/her by someone or something in his/her environment. The environment, such as the classroom, provides meaning and influences behaviour in much the same way as social setting or developmental stages provide guidelines for understanding behaviour patterns.
The majority of the marginalized learners who participated in this study had been exposed to conditions of poverty, unemployment, lack of education and housing. As a result of this, they often displayed predictable behavioural tendencies of rebelliousness, disruptive, defiant behaviour and even aggression.

My own recommendations, based on the findings of my research (see 5.3) regarding the learner contributing to their own self-esteem development or stagnation, are as follows:

• Learners should cultivate relationships with others who make them feel good about themselves.
• Learners should endeavour to learn something new each day. They should concentrate on engaging in activities that challenge their abilities, yet do not overwhelm them. Through risk taking, they will take steps towards realizing their full potential and building their self-esteem for self-actualization.
• Learners should focus on their strengths and the positive aspects of their lives.
• When learners are confronted with negative thoughts, they should try to substitute them with encouragement and praise.
• Learners should take control of their own lives. Individuals who are of the opinion that their situation or circumstances in life are beyond their control, are more likely to experience feelings of helplessness. Though learners are not always in control of their circumstances, they are in control of how they respond to them.
• Learners should learn to accept themselves and others as they really are, not as society would like them to be and a love for self.
• Learners should be aware of their attributes, thoughts, feelings, actions, reactions and experiences. Unless they know who they are, they will not know what they can become.
• Learners should realize that what counts is not where you come from, but where you are heading to. They should focus on their objectives.
• Learners should list their values as they determine their choices in life.
• Learners should develop a personal mission statement to guide their decisions and behaviour with regard to how they handle situations. They should include what inspires them, their beliefs, dreams, objectives and future endeavours.
• Learners should identify their past successes and need to remind themselves that there are things they are good at.
• Learners should identify areas in their lives that they would like to change. These areas can be pointed out by significant others or identified through reflection. Endeavours should be made to overcome those areas.
• Reflecting and developing yourself should be a continuous, life-long exercise.

Educators’ role in all the afore-mentioned aspects should be to constantly affirm, motivate, guide, inspire and praise learners in order to illicit desired responses as mentioned above, in learners.

7.4 WHAT I LEARNED REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ESTEEM FOR SELF-ACTUALIZATION

I learned that how my learners thought and felt about themselves and how others treat them, influence how they perceived themselves. How they saw themselves also influenced their self-efficacy (their beliefs in their own abilities to succeed at specific tasks) and their self-confidence (how they acted). In the course of doing this research I learned the following:

• That raising your expectation level will help the learners rise to elevated levels of expectation.
• That learners need a lot of affirmation, praise, motivation and stimulation to help them restore their own self-worth and realize their potentials.
• That giving learners opportunities to live out their values creates the challenge to meet them.
• That most marginalized learners respond more readily to kindness and compassion due to the lack thereof in their own milieus (most parents do
not show emotion and just see to basic physiological needs like education, clothing and shelter – the emotional needs are neglected).

• That the agreement of ground rules in the classroom serve as an important support structure as it has an impact on the development of security and trust and on the protection of learners’ rights; learners feel more secure when there are parameters within which they have to operate; they need rules as these give their lives structure and a sense of order and control.

• Involving learners in the drawing up of parameters affords them the opportunity to take ownership and gives them a sense of responsibility; it makes the internalization and implementation process so much easier.

• That the learners’ sense of responsibility, their sense of self-worth, involvement and affirmation all contribute to the development of a positive self-esteem in marginalized learners.

• That living out the values of equality, inclusivity, social justice and basic human rights, can contribute to the development of self-esteem.

• That it is possible for teachers to create their own theories regarding concerns emerging in the classroom context and to research the practical application of those theories.

7.5 WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MY ACTIONS?

Why is the development of a positive self-esteem such a major issue? How is it going to benefit education in general and the learners in particular? What is the significance of the attainment of self-actualization for learners?

These concerns can be answered easily. If we learn to fully comprehend what it is regarding our personalities that hinder us from ultimately attaining our objectives, we can commence the process of breaking down those obstacles and unleash our fullest potential. We can even become self-actualized. Becoming self-aware and recognizing our strengths and weaknesses will enable us to focus on our strong points and change, modify or discard the weaknesses.
Individuals who have a high regard for themselves attain higher levels of academic achievement (Barnard et al., 2005). Self-esteem is one of the most important issues that determines whether an individual reaches his/her potential or falls short of that potential. The personal and social expectations and socio-economic circumstances into which we are born may limit us. A positive self-concept can enable an individual to overcome his/her circumstances. This is my rationale for creating a caring practice which encourages and facilitates the development of a positive self-esteem in my classroom.

By integrating my ontological, spiritual and ethical values within my practice-based knowledge, I have managed to improve my own professional learning while simultaneously developing new learning and teaching strategies to transform low self-esteem in my learners and myself into positive self-esteem. New epistemologies emerged during this process as I consulted various literature in this regard. My colleagues, witnessing the transformation in the learners and also in me, were motivated to explore and find methods to overcome similar barriers in their own classrooms.

As a classroom-based inquirer, I have managed to generate my own living educational theory of learning to teach for equality, inclusivity, social justice and basic human rights. I can claim that I have developed the self-esteem of my marginalized learners for self-actualization. These learners initially displayed low self-concepts and poor self-esteem, but after my intervention strategies comprising involvement, responsibility and affirmation, they rediscovered their new-found value and self-worth. They were now collaborators in the construction of new knowledge and made meaningful contributions in the classroom. These contributions varied from discussions to theory.

The above claims were justified and validated in the previous chapters. The change in my practice is a living transformation process. My objective of developing the self-esteem of my marginalized learners for self-actualization has led to my own personal and professional growth and development. My learners and I can now claim to have an improved self-esteem and can be perceived by ourselves and others as valuable citizens adding value and meaning to the lives of others.
I have developed an epistemology that explains how self-esteem can be developed through well-planned and thorough researched learning and teaching strategies. I am claiming that I have enhanced my understanding of a low self-esteem, determined the causes of it and facilitated the development of a positive self-esteem in my learners. Facilitating this enabled me to demonstrate the value I attach to respect, equality, inclusivity, social justice and basic human rights. Further significance of my research in relation to my own learning about the theoretical aspect, was that I now understand more clearly the ontological foundation for my epistemological stance. I determined and verbalized my own perception of self-esteem and its related factors by commencing with practice and generating theory from within my own practice.

I learned about the significance of personal knowledge acquired through personal experience within my own classroom context. I gathered this knowledge against the background of previous researchers, making comparisons, finding similarities, drawing conclusions and incorporating my ontological, spiritual and ethical values within my practice-based knowledge. This *modus operandi* helped me to improve my own learning whilst developing strategies to develop the self-esteem of myself and those of my learners. I have managed to overcome my own learned helplessness and those of my learners by finding our voices and articulating them through our actions and interactions within our contexts and with significant others. What significance does this have for education in general?

7.6 IMPLICATION FOR POLICY MAKERS

The DoE, through the National Educational Policy Act, has the responsibility to plan, provide, finance, manage, monitor and govern the education system in general and schools in particular. Teachers are expected to produce learners “… able to achieve and maintain personal well-being when they are able to apply various strategies to enhance self-awareness and self-esteem, while acknowledging and respecting the uniqueness of self and others …” (NCS, 2006:43). They are also expected to produce “a learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate and able to participate in society as a critical and active citizen” (RNCS, 2002). The kind of teachers envisaged to produce this type of learner should
have the following qualities “... an educator who is qualified, competent, dedicated and caring – also being mediators of learning, scholars and lifelong learners” (RNCS, 2002)(see 1.3).

If these afore-mentioned requirements are to be met effectively, then, ideally, the DoE needs to make a psychological needs analysis at every school to determine the psychological needs of all learners. This should be done at the beginning of every year. The rationale is to create an awareness of and sensitivity towards the increasing problems related to low self-concepts and poor self-esteem. Teachers are not psychiatrists or counselors and definitely not qualified, equipped or trained to deal with deep emotional issues that learners are exposed to within their social context. In spite of this, it is expected of teachers to deal with an ever-increasing range of psychological problems presenting themselves in their classrooms. These problems directly and indirectly give birth to self-esteem issues. Though teachers are in a position to manage straightforward matters pertaining to psychological and self-esteem problems, they are not adequately trained to effectively handle all situations relating to low self-esteem issues. I have been in a fortunate position to have done research which could assist in this regard. What about my colleagues?

My findings reflect only one classroom situation, but my teaching experience of 27 years and my interaction with other educators reveal a general tendency rather than an exception. Psychological issues in modern society/South African classrooms are rapidly increasing and teachers are despondent and demoralized due to this. They do not have the expertise to transform their own ontologies; therefore the onus rests on the policy makers to bring about changes in this regard. Some might argue that this can be realized through in-service training, regular workshops, psychological support services and the possibility of at least one qualified psychologist for every three schools. This psychologist can collaborate with teachers and parents in support of effective teaching and learning. This will also ensure teacher development which will benefit themselves and their learners.

The technicalities regarding the design of such a policy should be done in collaboration with all role players. The existing education and curricula policy needs to be re-visited to accommodate the growing number of psychological issues. Input
is needed from classroom-based teachers to remain informed and updated as to what is currently happening in classrooms. Teachers need to become more involved in designing policy as they are the ones expected to implement it.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

If teachers are to create classroom contexts where “confident, independent, multi-skilled and lifelong learners” are being prepared to become “critical and active citizens of society”, then teachers will need to adopt the following approaches within the classroom context:

• An awareness of, and involvement in, the constant interaction with all learners.
• Engaging in genuine communication through consciously focusing on the learners and their needs.
• Being aware of, and detecting symptoms relating to, psychological problems the learners experience at an early stage.
• Active listening and genuine eye contact.
• Effectively dealing with conflict while respecting the dignity and rights of learners.
• Displaying care, warmth, concern and compassion.
• Exemplifying appropriate behaviour.
• Focusing on how classroom interactions will impact on the self-esteem of learners.
• Having adequately trained teachers who are equipped to deal with psychological issues hindering learners from attaining their objectives and becoming self-actualized.

The lack of these approaches became evident in Chapter Four – Data Collection.

7.8 THE LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This study is based on my own classroom-based experience. The participants were drawn from one secondary school, but interventions were applied and incorporated
into my current primary school setting as well. The contextual and socio-economic settings of the two schools were similar in many respects. A brief teaching experience of one term (July – October 2009) in another country Abu Dhabi in the Middle East, at an International Private School (Grade 1 – 12), enabled me to make a comparison between a poverty-stricken South African setting and an affluent Middle East setting. The findings are limited to three schools and can therefore not be generalized to all learners although most of the schools share similar social contexts with the schools from which I drew my sample.

Self-esteem is a broad and complex concept with many related factors which made it quite challenging to decide which data would be relevant for the purpose of this study. Self-esteem development does not occur overnight, it is a process which needs time. However, shortage of time and financial constraints somewhat limited the study. As a full-time educator, I had to manage my time carefully and sometimes had to neglect certain family responsibilities and professional duties to complete tasks I set out for myself. In spite of all these challenges, I have enjoyed initiating a quest which according to me has been long overdue! A few suggestions or recommendations for further research were generated while conducting my own investigation:

7.9 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO FURTHER RESEARCH

- Extending this study by focusing on developing the self-esteem of significant others such as parents and teachers (to encourage reciprocal influencing).
- Exploring the possibilities of creating greater awareness of the benefits of a positive self-esteem amongst all stakeholders (to enable individuals to recognize their own weaknesses and to focus on their strengths in their endeavour towards attaining their fullest potential).
- Examining creative ways of involving children in their own developmental processes (to increase their senses of responsibilities, add to their sense of worth and in the process equip them with essential life-skills needed to bring out the best in themselves).
• Expanding this study to a wider population, drawing samples from different backgrounds, not just marginalized learners (to determine and find causes and solutions for lack of self-esteem and/or to conduct a comparative study).

• Re-defining the role of self-esteem in the curriculum of modern society (to emphasize the significance of self-esteem and the development thereof within the social context and how it influences the performance levels of learners).

7.10 GENERAL REFLECTIONS

Palaiologou (2008:15) encapsulates my quest when she states that recently, research in the field of child development has become increasingly concerned with applying its vast knowledge base particularly to education for children. This reiterates my view that the child is of paramount importance in the education process, therefore we as educators need to find ways to eradicate the hindrances in their development process. Today we know so much more about the contexts that foster the development of children. More than ever before children are actively involved in their own development processes.

Behaviourism has many limitations, but it has the potential of transforming cognition in developmental psychology. The behaviourists emphasize the importance of observations in development. Theorists such as Watson, Pavlov and Skinner developed scientific ways of observing in order to comprehend development. Their main principles are based on human social behaviour which is acquired, learned or imitated rather than innate; their emphasis is on the role of environmental stimuli and a focus on learning. Learning, according to these theorists, is defined as “changes in behaviour which occur as the result of experience and interactions with the environment” (Glassman, 2000). The theory of behaviourism not only offers an account as to how human beings learn, it also contributes to deepen our understanding of children’s development and learning whilst offering a scientific approach to the observation of children. However, it shows little or no consideration for the social context of human beings. Bandura, on the other hand, proposed a social learning theory as an alternative to behaviourism.
Bandura (1971, 1977, 1986, 1989, 2001) argued that human beings develop by using their cognitive abilities within their social and cultural contexts. He suggested the notion of observational learning as a significant aspect for development, because human beings develop and learn vicariously. Children make sense of the world and learn through observing significant others such as peers, parents and teachers. In schools, the particular challenge for emotional and social development is that there are so many children in a classroom managed by one teacher. How can we expect our learners to learn if their most basic needs are not met (like my marginalized learners) or if they are emotionally unstable, carrying emotional baggage too heavy for adolescents to handle?

As teachers we need to initiate emotional and social support by first facilitating our own understanding of the way our learners develop and then assisting in the developing process itself. Our learners’ emotional health is increasingly being recognized as important because emotions play a significant role in learning. How we feel affects who we are, and how we are affects what we do, how we relate, how we get on, how we cope and even determines who we become or what we wish to accomplish. Research in neuroscience has recently revealed that emotional well-being is not a given; it is developed and the process can be influenced through interaction with others (also see 5.3.4) (Blake, Bird & Gerlach, 2007:1).

In the classroom contexts our learners offer us, through a range of behaviours, clues and signs about their innermost feelings and emotions. Their behaviours reflect what they have learned so far about dealing with their emotions, which include both negative (anger, rage and jealousy) and positive emotions (joy, excitement, happiness). Teachers who understand about emotional development are then able to determine how well the learners deal with their emotions by observing the learners’ behaviour. How learners learned to deal with their emotions is an important element in their social development. Once this is established, the teacher steps in. This is done by showing care, compassion and support and promoting the developing of a much needed emotional intelligence which enables learners to effectively manage their emotions by reacting and behaving responsibly (Goleman, 1998:82).
7.11 REFLECTING ON INSIGHTS GAINED

Have you ever considered why there are curves or bends in a road? Why can’t all roads be straight, without sharp, dangerous corners? People surely find curves irritating, tricky and sometimes unnecessary. Yet, curves are there for a specific reason. It provides them with the opportunity to take in a little at a time. As we move forward on this journey of life’s experiences, covering more ground in our everyday encounters, a little more is revealed to us as each day unfolds. Life gives us what we can handle in small doses, even when we think we are able to handle more.

There was a time in my life when I felt that I was not good enough, smart enough, right enough, for myself. There was always “more” I should have done, “better” I should have performed or “harder” I should have tried. I always found something wrong with me or what I had done. I never seemed to get anything right and always complained about something. The glass was always half-empty, never half-full. I did not like myself very much. Today, however, I have come to realize that no matter how much is in the glass, it is for that time, in that moment, as full as it is going to get.

Wherever one finds oneself is exactly where one needs to be. Even when you want to be somewhere else or be someone else, under different circumstances, you probably could not handle it. When you are ready for change, it will happen. The road is curved and we are being prepared to handle what is around the bend. Change is a gradual process that leads toward a particular result. We experience a little and then change occurs. We discover a little more about life, ourselves, significant others, and change some more.

The result we are seeking is remembering who we are. In order to remember that, we must know who we are not. Each time we face a challenge, obstacle or difficulty, we learn what we can and cannot do. No matter what we do, it is the best we can do under the given circumstances with the knowledge we possess at the time. The conditions we face do not define us, but they remind us of who we are and who we want to be. The experiences we encounter are not who we are. They only serve to remind us of what we are thinking about ourselves. Every experience moves us a little further along life’s road and around its curves (Vanzant, 1998).
I have now reached a curve in my current research study road and have explored as much as I can manage. The process of facilitating the development of self-esteem for self-actualization was a slow and tedious one which I could not have travelled along had it not been for the curves. The curves afforded me the opportunity to revisit, re-strategize, consult, collaborate, reflect and react. The curves represented the cycles in this research journey (Stringer, 2004). The cycles represent my experience, my interventions, and the results thereof, as well as future research possibilities. Other researchers will most probably resume this journey to cover more ground into unknown territory regarding other aspects that emerged from this particular study.

7.12 CONCLUSION

I encapsulated the concept of ‘self-actualization of self-esteem in marginalized learners by using the synthetical metaphor of a traveller undertaking a journey. I attempted this synthesizing through the use of an extended metaphorical approach to reflect my individual idiosyncrasy on the existential “I” of action research in my quest to finding answers to my concern. This concern, articulated as the general lack of self-esteem and its accompanying consequences, led to the rationale for undertaking this study. Aiming to ultimately improve my learners’ self-esteem for self-actualization, my primary objective was to emancipate my own mindset regarding limitations to my own potential. Empowering myself by firstly understanding my own ontology, and secondly, becoming my own agent of change, automatically led to the emancipation of my learners by transferring my new epistemology to them. This value-driven behaviour was made possible by engaging with literature relating to my topic. Intervention strategies, through a cyclic approach, enabled me to maintain methodological rigour and uphold pedagogical standards of judgements throughout this study. Validating my account of learning necessitated ethical procedures whilst simultaneously focusing on my own ontology and those of my learners.

One of the most significant gifts we as teachers can give our learners is a positive view of themselves. Without this gift, they will merely exist whilst constantly seeking for extrinsic reassurance as most of them are either unable or unaware of methods to seek it intrinsically (Dowling, 2010:15). However, if learners are accepted and seen
as valued, a positive self-esteem can be developed, as illustrated in this study. This development process included allocating responsibilities, encouraging involvement, setting realistic goals, giving praise and generally building the learners’ self-confidence by creating opportunity for learners to experience a sense of accomplishment (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009:40-42).

This value-embedded reflective action research allowed me to generate my own living epistemology of practice by continuously engaging in academic propositional discourses relating to my issue of concern, being self-actualization through the development of self-esteem. I can now claim to have facilitated the development of positive self-esteem in most of my marginalized learners, as validated in Chapter Five. Attaining self-actualization is a process that will occur gradually, as my learners develop both physically and emotionally.

Most of the research participants may have developed their self-esteem to such levels that it led them to become self-actualized in order for them to reach their full potential (see Chapter Four – Data Collection). This research has managed to achieve its objectives. It has also managed to awaken an awareness of the significance of a positive self-esteem for self-actualization. This awareness will hopefully evolve into recognition, acknowledgement, action and ultimately, transformation potential of all who engaged with this literature.
REFERENCES


268


Riding, A. (2008). How do I contribute to the education of myself and others through improving the quality of living educational space? The story of living myself through


275


# APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL

**NMMU RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HUMAN)**

## TO BE FILLED IN BY A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE FACULTY RTI COMMITTEE:

<table>
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<th>Application reference code:</th>
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<td>HUMAN</td>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>FACULTY</td>
<td>DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>NUMBER</td>
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**Resolution of FRTI Committee:**

- Ethics approval given
- Referred to REC-H (if referred to REC-H, electronic copy of application documents to be emailed to Kirsten.Longe@nmmu.ac.za)

**Resolution date:**

**Faculty RTI representative signature:**

---

## 1. GENERAL PARTICULARS

### TITLE OF STUDY

Concise descriptive title of study (must contain key words that best describe the study):

**ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM AS A TEACHER OF ENGLISH USING ACTION RESEARCH**

### PRIMARY RESPONSIBLE PERSON (PRP)

- Name of PRP (must be member of permanent staff. Usually the supervisor in the case of students):
  **PROFESSOR W.L. HOLDERNESS**  
  FACULTY OF EDUCATION, NMMU SOUTH CAMPUS, P.E., 6031

- Contact number/s of PRP:  
  bill.holderness@nmmu.ac.za (E-MAIL) / 083 389 2113 (CELL)

- Affiliation of PRP: Faculty **Education**; Department (or equivalent): **ADVANCED STUDIES IN EDUCATION**

### PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATORS AND CO-WORKERS

- Name and affiliation of principal investigator (PI) / researcher (may be same as PRP):
  **VIRGINIA C. DIDLOFT**  
  Gender: Female

- Name(s) and affiliation(s) of all co workers (e.g. co-investigator/assistant researchers/supervisor/co-supervisor/promoter/co-promoter). If names are not yet known, state the affiliations of the groups they will be drawn from, e.g. Interns/M-students, etc. and the number of persons involved:  
  NOT APPLICABLE

### STUDY DETAILS

- Scope of study: **Local**
- If for degree purposes: **Doctoral**
- Funding: **No specific funding**
- Additional information (e.g. source of funds or how combined funding is split)
- Are there any restrictions or conditions attached to publication and/or presentation of the study results? **NO**
- If YES, elaborate: (Any restrictions or conditions contained in contracts must be made available to the Committee)
- Date of commencement of data collection: **JANUARY 2009**
- Anticipated duration of study: **TWO YEARS**

- Objectives of the study (the major objective(s) / Grand Tour questions are to be stated briefly and clearly):
  1. TO IMPROVE MY OWN UNDERSTANDING OF THE EFFECTS OF SELF-ESTEEM ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIAL ADAPTABILITY
  2. TO DEVELOP MY LEARNERS’ SELF-ESTEEM FOR SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND
     (3) TO SHARE ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHERS.
Rationale for this study: briefly (300 words or less) describe the background to this study i.e. why are you doing this particular piece of work. A few (no more than 5) key scientific references may be included: CHILD (2007:241-242) MENTIONS THAT OUR SELF-CONCEPTS (IMPRESSIONS OF OURSELVES) AND OUR SELF-ESTEEMS (HOW WE VALUE OURSELVES), OPERATE IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY OFTEN MANIFEST IN A SELF-FULFILMENT PROPHECY. THIS BASICALLY IMPLIES THAT THE BEHAVIOUR OF INDIVIDUALS LEADS TO THE FULFILMENT OF THEIR EXPECTATIONS. WHEN MOST OF MY LEARNERS DISPLAY NEGATIVITY, ALWAYS PREDICTING WORST-CASE SCENARIOS, WHICH ARE SYMPTOMS OF LOW SELF-ESTEEMS AND NEGATIVE SELF-CONCEPTS ACCORDING TO BARNARD ET AL. (2001:119), I REALIZED THAT I NEED TO TRANSFORM THE NEGATIVE ATTITUDE OF THESE LEARNERS. I AIM TO DO THIS BY HEEDING THE ADVICE OF WILLIAMS (2004:185), WHO NOTES THAT SELF-ACCEPTANCE HELPS YOU TO BELIEVE IN YOUR OWN ABILITIES. HE CONTENDS THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF SUCCEEDING ARE MORE LIKELY TO DO SO. ACCORDING TO THE ELRC (2003:E-17), SACE REQUIRES OF EDUCATORS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE UNIQUENESS OF LEARNERS AND ENCOURAGE THE REALIZATION OF THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. THESE REQUIREMENTS REFLECT THE EMBODIMENT OF MY OWN VALUE AND BELIEF SYSTEM WHICH I INCORPORATE INTO MY DAILY PRACTICE. BY HELPING MY LEARNERS BECOME THEIR BEST SELVES, I SHALL BE CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN MY OWN CLASSROOM (MCNIFF & WHITEHEAD, 2006:46-47).

### METHODOLOGY

Briefly state the methodology (specifically the procedure in which human subjects will be participating) (the full protocol is to be included as Appendix 1):

**ACTION RESEARCH WILL BE THE PRIMARY METHODOLOGY. IT WILL BE BASED ON THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST AND BEHAVIOURISM THEORETICAL APPROACHES. A QUALITATIVE DESIGN WILL BE USED. IT WILL BE A CLASSROOM-BASED INQUIRY. INTERVENTIONS WILL BE CYCLIC IN NATURE.**

State the minimum and maximum number of participants involved (Minimum number should reflect the number of participants necessary to make the study viable) Min: **40** Max: **50**

### 2. RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY

- Is there any risk of harm, embarrassment or offence, however slight or temporary, to the participant, third parties or to the community at large? **NO**
  - If YES, state each risk, and for each risk state i) whether the risk is reversible, ii) whether there are alternative procedures available and iii) whether there are remedial measures available.

- Has the person administering the project previous experience with the particular risk factors involved? **NO**
  - If YES, please specify:

- Are any benefits expected to accrue to the participant (e.g. improved health, mental state, financial etc.)? **NO**
  - If YES, please specify the benefits:

- Will you be using equipment of any sort? **NO**
  - If YES, please specify:

- Will any article of property, personal or cultural be collected in the course of the project? **NO**
  - If YES, please specify:

### 3. TARGET PARTICIPANT GROUP

- **a** If particular characteristics of any kind are required in the target group (e.g. age, cultural derivation, background, physical characteristics, disease status etc.) please specify: **NOT APPLICABLE**

- **b** Are participants drawn from NMMU students? **NO**

- **c** If participants are drawn from specific groups of NMMU students, please specify: **NOT APPLICABLE**
### 4. CONSENT OF PARTICIPANTS

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<thead>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Are consent to be given in writing?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>Are any participant(s) subject to legal restrictions preventing them from giving effective informed consent?</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will participants receive remuneration for their participation?</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>Do you require consent of an institutional authority for this study?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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### 5. INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

<table>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Are provisions made to protect participant’s rights to privacy and anonymity and to preserve confidentiality with respect to data?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>Will data collected be stored in any way?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will stored data be made available for re-use?</td>
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### 6. PRIVACY, ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

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<tr>
<td>Will the participant be identified by name in your research?</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>Will data collected be stored in any way?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>Will any part of the project be conducted on private property (including shopping centres)?</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>Are there any contractual secrecy or confidentiality constraints on this data?</td>
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7. FEEDBACK

Will feedback be given to participants? **YES**

If YES, specify whether feedback will be written, oral or by other means and describe how this is to be given (e.g. to each individual immediately after participation, to each participant after the entire project is completed, to all participants in a group setting, etc.): **A MEETING - FEEDBACK SESSION - END OF STUDY (2010)**

If you are working in a school or other institutional setting, will you be providing teachers, school authorities or equivalent a copy of your results? **Not Applicable** If YES, specify, if NO, motivate: **NOT APPLICABLE**

8. ETHICAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS

The Declaration of Helsinki (2000) will be included in the references: **YES** If NO, motivate:

I would like the REC-H to take note of the following additional information: **NOT APPLICABLE**

9. DECLARATION

If any changes are made to the above arrangements or procedures, I will bring these to the attention of the Research Ethics Committee (Human). I have read, understood and will comply with the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Research and Education at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and have taken cognisance of the availability (on-line) of the Medical Research Council Guidelines on Ethics for Research ([http://www.sahealthinfo.org/ethics/](http://www.sahealthinfo.org/ethics/)).

All participants are aware of any potential health hazards or risks associated with this study.

I **AM** aware of potential conflict(s) of interest which should be considered by the Committee.

If affirmative, specify:

07 April 2011

**SIGNATURE: PROFESSOR W.L. HOLDERNESS** (Primary Responsible Person) **Date**

07 April 2011

**SIGNATURE: VIRGINIA C. DIDLOFT** (Principal Investigator/Researcher) **Date**

10. SCRUTINY BY FACULTY AND INTRA-FACULTY ACADEMIC UNIT

This study has been discussed, and is supported, at Faculty and Departmental (or equivalent) level. This is attested to by the signature below of a Faculty (e.g. RTI) and Departmental (e.g. HoD) representative, neither of whom may be a previous signator.

**NAME and CAPACITY (e.g. HoD) SIGNATURE Date**

**NAME and CAPACITY (e.g. Chair:FacRTI) SIGNATURE Date**

11. APPENDICES

In order to expedite the processing of this application, please ensure that all the required information, as specified
below, is attached to your application. Examples of some of these documents can be found on the Research Ethics webpage (http://www.nmmu.ac.za/default.asp?id=4619&bhcp=1). You are not compelled to use the documents which have been provided as examples – they are made available as a convenience to those who do not already have them available.

**APPENDIX 1: Research methodology**

Attach the full protocol and methodology to this application, as "Appendix 1" and include the data collection instrument e.g. questionnaire if applicable.

**APPENDIX 2: Informed consent form**

If no written consent is required, motivate at 4a). The intention is that you make sure you have covered all the aspects of informed consent as applicable to your work.

**APPENDIX 3: Written information given to participant prior to participation**

Attach as "Appendix 3". The intention is that you make sure you have covered all the aspects of written information to be supplied to participants, as applicable to your work.

**APPENDIX 4: Oral information given to participant prior to participation**

If applicable, attach the required information to your application, as "Appendix 4".

**APPENDIX 5, 6, 7: Institutional permissions**

Attach any institutional permissions required to carry out the research e.g. Department of Education permission for research carried out in schools.
I will be employing the Living Theory Action Research Movement, described by McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996) as a LIVED practice – not merely a rhetorical or theoretic exercise. I have chosen this methodology within which to situate my study, “Helping my marginalized learners to develop their self-esteem for self-actualization”. I consider Action Research as the most appropriate means of seeking improvement and development within myself, my learners and my practice. My classroom is also a LIVED practice of which I am central. It is therefore not a rhetorical or theoretical case study. McNiff and Whitehead (2006:7) describe Action Research as an enquiry enabling practitioners to be self-reflective. The practitioners’ accounts demonstrate their attempts to improve their own learning whilst influencing the learning of others. This methodology will provide the opportunity to form a reflective and personal educational theory about developing a positive self-esteem towards attaining self-actualization in my classroom practice. My study will be conducted within the framework of a qualitative design. The learning theories on which the study will be based, will be varied, but the behaviourist and social constructivist learning theories will be most suitable. A cyclic methodological Action Research approach will be adopted for my intervention strategies.
Dear Mr/Ms _____________________________

We have the interest of ________________________ at heart. We are therefore partners in ________________________ education. As ________________________ English teacher, I therefore urgently request you to visit me at school on ______________ in order to discuss the development of ______________________ self-esteem and the advantages thereof. I hope to explain to you, how I, with your help, can assist in this regard. It is in ______________________ interest that you are present. I depend on your co-operation.

Many blessings!

Thanking you.

_____________________
V.C. DIDLOFT (Mrs)
1 January 2009
1 January 2009
Contact person: Mrs Virginia Didloff (Cellno: 083 581 3626)

Dear Parent/Guardian

You are being asked to give permission for your son/daughter to participate in a research study. We will provide you with the necessary information to assist you to understand the study and explain what would be expected of your son/daughter (participant). These guidelines would include the risks, benefits, and his/her rights as a study subject. Please feel free to ask the researcher to clarify anything that is not clear to you.

For your son/daughter to participate, it will be required of you to provide a written consent that will include your signature, date and initials to verify that you understand and agree to the conditions.

You have the right to query concerns regarding the study at any time. Please advise your son/daughter to immediately report any new problems during the study to the researcher. Telephone numbers of the researcher are provided. Please feel free to call these numbers.

Furthermore, it is important that you are aware of the fact that the study has to be approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of the university. The REC-H consists of a group of independent experts that has the responsibility to ensure that the rights and welfare of participants in research are protected and that studies are conducted in an ethical manner. Studies cannot be conducted without REC-H’s approval. Queries with regard to the rights of your son/daughter as a research subject can be directed to the Research Ethics Committee (Human). You can call the Director: Research Management at (041) 504-4536.

If no one could assist you, you may write to: The Chairperson of the Research, Technology and Innovation Committee, PO Box 77000, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, 6031.

Participation in research is completely voluntary. Your son/daughter is not obliged to take part in any research. If your son/daughter choose not to participate in medically related research, his/her present and/or future medical care will not be affected in any way and he/she will incur no penalty and/or loss of benefits to which he/she may otherwise be entitled.

If he/she does partake, he/she has the right to withdraw at any given time during the study without penalty or loss of benefits. However, if he/she does withdraw from the study, he/she should return for a final discussion or examination in order to terminate the research in an orderly manner.
If he/she fails to follow instructions, or if his/her medical condition changes in such a way that the researcher believes that it is not in his/her best interest to continue in this study, or for administrative reasons, his/her participation may be discontinued. The study may be terminated at any time by the researcher, the sponsor or the Research Ethics Committee (Human) that initially approved the study.

Although your son/daughter’s identity will at all times remain confidential, the results of the research study may be presented at scientific conferences or in specialist publications.

This informed consent statement has been prepared in compliance with current statutory guidelines.

Yours sincerely

_________________________
MRS VIRGINIA DIDLOFT
RESEARCHER
1 January 2009

cc:

I freely and voluntarily give my child _______________________________ permission to participate in activities related to your Action Research Project. I understand that all data collected will be strictly confidential and used for research purposes.

Signature of parent/guardian : _________________________________

Name in print of parent/guardian : _________________________________

Date : _________________________________
APPENDIX 1(d)
ORAL INFORMATION

Orally, I will inform participants and their parents/guardians of the importance of the development of a positive self-esteem with regard to their own personal development. I will stress that a positive self-esteem is essential as a negative or low self-esteem has been proven to negatively influence the academic progress of learners in general. I will explain the aim of my study and also my modus operandi. I will mention the importance of parental involvement and collaboration. I will allow opportunity for questions and discussion. Additionally, I will also invite any suggestions or advice which will help to boost the self-esteem of the learners in my classroom. Lastly, I will emphasize the benefits of a positive self-esteem.
APPENDIX 1(e)
LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

THE PRINCIPAL
Arcadia Secondary School
Rensburg Street
Arcadia
PORT ELIZABETH
6001

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A CLASSROOM-BASED INQUIRY

I am presently an educator at above-mentioned school, as well as a part-time first year PhD student at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), doing full research under the supervision of Professor W.L. Holderness.

My study involves helping marginalized learners develop self-esteem for self-actualization. I aim to do a classroom-based inquiry.

The investigation will include a meeting with parents of the participants, classroom observations, completion of questionnaires, as well as implementing my own learning and teaching strategies. The aim of my study is to help learners develop a positive self-esteem for self-actualization.

I hereby seek permission from you and the School Governing Body to conduct my investigation in the classroom. The investigation will be guided by a strict code of ethics, as prescribed by the Ethics Committee of the NMMU. All data collected during the investigation will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

I am available to answer any queries you may have regarding the nature of my investigation.

Thanking you in anticipation of a favourable response.

Yours sincerely,

______________________  ____________________
VIRGINIA DIDLOFT  Date

Persal Number:  50355929

I freely and voluntarily give my permission to participate in your Action Research Project.

Signature :  ________________________________

Name in print :  ________________________________
APPENDIX 1(f)
LETTER TO DISTRICT DIRECTOR

THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR
Department of Education
PORT ELIZABETH
6001

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A CLASSROOM-BASED INQUIRY

I am presently an educator at Arcadia Secondary School, as well as a part-time first year PhD student at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), doing full research under the supervision of Professor W.L. Holderness.

My study involves the development of a positive self-esteem towards attaining self-actualization. I aim to do a classroom-based inquiry.

The investigation will include a meeting with the parents of the participants, classroom observations, completion of questionnaires, as well as implementing my own learning and teaching strategies. The aim of this study is to improve the self-esteem of learners towards attaining self-actualization.

I hereby seek permission from the Department of Education to conduct my investigation at the aforementioned school. The investigation will be guided by a strict code of ethics, as prescribed by the Ethics Committee of the NMMU. All data collected during the investigation will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me at school (041–4812247) or on my cellphone (083-5813626). You may also contact my supervisor, Professor W.L. Holderness at 083-3892113.

I trust that my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely,

______________________
VIRGINIA DIDLOFT
Persal Number: 50355929

I hereby grant/do not grant permission to Virginia Charmaine Didloft to proceed with her classroom-based inquiry which will be conducted at Arcadia Secondary School.

Signature : ____________________________

Name in print : _______________________ Date: ___________________
APPENDIX 2
VALIDATIONS

To whom it may concern

Validation of Mrs. V. Didloft

It is with utmost pleasure to inform you that Mrs. V. Didloft has the astounding ability to positively encourage learners to be the best they can be. Mrs. V. Didloft is compassionate, kind, respectful and shows empathy so that both colleagues and learners feel free to approach her about any matter. I have a very high regard for Mrs. V. Didloft as she recognizes the good in others and motivates them to attain their full potential.

Mrs. Didloft’s teaching approach is one which is inclusional, holistical, emancipatory and democratic. She readily acknowledges the learner’s uniqueness, focuses on their strengths and positively builds their sense of self-worth. She encourages active participation in class activities by contributing positive, uplifting criticism to learners’ abilities and performances. Learners appreciate her positive comments when marking creative assignments. She frequently uses roleplay and dramatization in classroom activities which has positively influenced her learning and teaching approach.

Mrs. Didloft’s integrity and dignity enables her to display a professional approach of an extremely high quality. I am proud to say that she displays an exemplary code of conduct. She has great leadership qualities, is responsible and hardworking and always lead by example.

Mrs. Didloft’s high standards cause her to create an environment of trust, integrity, honesty, reliability, responsibility and respect. She respects the opinions of others and assures them that she values their input.
Mrs. Didloft’s self-worth and confidence is such that she easily and respectfully shows recognition for Basic Human Rights, Equality and Social Justice. She believes that every human being should strive to uphold and adhere to these fundamental basic rules to make life a better place for you and me.

Thank you.

Yours in education

Ms. S.B. Isaacs (Validation group, Grade 12 Teacher, Colleague in English Department – Arcadia Secondary School)
Contact Number: 041 481 2247 / 071 605 1556
21 July 2010

To whom it may concern

Validation for Mrs. V.C. Didloft

General teaching and learning approach
Mrs. Didloft creates an atmosphere in her class which is conducive to teaching and learning. She is always well-prepared and takes the intellectual levels of learners into consideration when planning her lessons. Learners are encouraged to participate. Their contributions are proudly displayed on her classroom walls. The focus is on the learners’ uniqueness and emphasis is placed on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. She employs a variety of teaching methods and techniques. Mrs. Didloft educates the learners in their totality by using a holistic approach.

Characteristics
Mrs. Didloft values and displays kindness, compassion, empathy and respect towards her learners and colleagues. She has an altruistic approach to teaching. She believes that effective teaching elicits effective learning. She always reaches out to her learners, has an open-door policy, is approachable, motivates others and
manages to help learners attain their full potential by always displaying genuine concern.

Professionalism
Mrs. Didloft always displays professional conduct towards her learners and colleagues. She is responsible, leads by example and her behaviour is exemplary. She does not only talk, but walks the route as well.

Interaction with others
She creates and encourages an environment of trust and honesty. She respects the opinions of others and is a good listener. She also makes others feel valued.

Value and belief system
She respects the value and belief system of others. Her values of caring, kindness, compassion and respect are regarded as the cornerstones on which she builds her practice. She also shows tolerance, patience and humility to her learners and colleagues. Mrs. Didloft sees her values as prerequisites for learning and teaching.

It is a pleasure validating for this colleague with whom I have worked for more than two decades.

Yours in education,
Mr. S. Hendricks (PhD in Education, Head of English Department – Arcadia Secondary School, Validation group)
Contact Numbers: 041 481 2247 / 041 457 3604 / 083 295 7055
21 July 2010
APPENDIX 3

LETTER OF APPROVAL OF APPLICATION

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Tel.: +27 (3) 943 3010 Fax: +27 (0) 404 1910

3 June 2008

Ms Y C Dlodlo
31 Hamilton Crescent
Head Park
Port Elizabeth
6038

Our No. 2076/06

Secretaries: Care Point
Email: care@nmu.ac.za

Dear Ms Dlodlo,

RE: APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO THE DOCTOR FOR EDUCATION

With reference to the above-mentioned, I have pleasure in advising that you: application to the thesis component of the DEE programme was approved.

You are required to register annually as a candidate for this degree until your studies are completed and the degree has been conferred. If a candidate does not renew his/her registration in a particular year of study and thereafter wishes to continue with his/her studies, he/she will be required to re-apply for admission.

Your registration details are as follows:

- Promoter: Prof B Holderness

Please contact your promoter to initiate your research at telephone number 041-506 2889.

May I have this opportunity to wish you all the best for your studies.

Yours sincerely,

PROF NM BOTHA
PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR

cc: Prof B Holderness
APPENDIX 4
LETTER FROM ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Ms Y. Didloff
p/c Arcadia Secondary School
Port Elizabeth

Dear Ms Didloff,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ARCADIA SECONDARY SCHOOL PORT ELIZABETH

I refer to your letter dated 13 August 2009.

Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct your research on the following conditions:

1. your research must be conducted on a voluntary basis;
2. all ethical issues relating to research must be honoured;
3. your research is subject to the internal rules of the school, including its curriculum programme and the code of conduct and must not interfere in the day-to-day routine of the school.

Kindly present a copy of this letter to the principal as proof of permission.

I wish you good luck in your research.

Yours faithfully,

Dr N. Ntsiko
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR: PORT ELIZABETH

13 August 2009
APPENDIX 5

LETTER FROM ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Ma V. Ditlott

doctoral research

Dear Ms Ditlott

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SANGTOR PRIMARY SCHOOL: PORT ELIZABETH

I refer to your letter dated 18 February 2010.

Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct your research on the following conditions:

1. your research must be conducted on a voluntary basis;
2. all ethical issues relating to research must be honoured;
3. your research is subject to the internal rules of the school, including its curricular programmes and its code of conduct and must not interfere in the day-to-day routine of the school.

Kindly present a copy of this letter to the principal as proof of permission.

I wish you good luck in your research.

Yours faithfully,

DR N. NTSIKO
DISTRICT DIRECTOR (ACTING): PORT ELIZABETH

10 March 2010
### APPENDIX 6
### QUESTIONNAIRE 1

**Testing your self-esteem.** How you feel about yourself.

The next section is a shortened, subjective, self-esteem test and simple, yet another TRUE or FALSE to each question if you don’t choose TRUE or FALSE check below to interpret your scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Other people are not better off or more fortunate than me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I accept myself as I am and am happy with myself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I enjoy socialising.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I deserve love and respect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I feel valued and needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I feel good about my job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Being myself is important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I make plans weekly.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I can express my own opinions feeling put down.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I admit my mistakes openly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I never hold my true feelings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I always speak up for myself and get my views across.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I am a happy, carefree person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I don’t worry what others think of my views.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I don’t worry about doing or doing what I want.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I don’t worry about doing or not doing what I want.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total the number of TRUE answers you gave, and give one point each**

- 16 - 15 points: You have a high level of self-esteem.
- 14 - 13 points: Not bad but room for you to improve.
- 12 - 11 points: Low self-esteem - it is holding you back.
- 10 - 9 points: Very low self-esteem - drastically last.

Regardless of what your score is, self-esteem is a characteristic that gradually develops and you need to reflect on it and work on it for the rest of your life. The information that follows may assist you in understanding what you need to do to improve your self-esteem. There are various resources such as your university’s student counselling centre, social psychologists, workshops, etc. which can be applicable should you feel you require further assistance in this regard.

**“We all have our issues and we are not alone. And when you have confidence, you are also beautiful.”**  
Unknown

---

*Brownell, S. (2005:19)*
### APPENDIX 7
### QUESTIONNAIRE 2

The student self-esteem questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are there lots of things about yourself you do not like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you worry about things you should have done differently?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Do you ever lie awake at night worrying about things?</td>
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<td>4. Do you wish you were somebody else?</td>
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<td>5. Do you have trouble eating too many sweet foods?</td>
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<td>6. Do other people tease you about your way of doing things?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do you easily start when you find fault with yourself?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Do you feel you are not as good as other people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Do you feel that not many people like you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you worry about your past mistakes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Do you get in easily in the face of difficulties?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Do you feel you steal from others?</td>
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<td>13. Do you feel you spend too much money?</td>
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<td>14. Do you feel you could be more generous?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Do you feel you think clearly in conversations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Are you good at understanding others?</td>
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<td>17. Would you take an idea to help you get through a meeting?</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Do you dislike your appearance?</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Do other people more often praise you than criticize?</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Are you the first to make up your mind?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring the questionnaire**

- Total score: 0 - 9 points: Medium
- Total score: 10 - 19 points: Low self-esteem
- Total score: 20 - 30 points: Average self-esteem
- Total score: 31 - 50 points: High self-esteem

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Lauren 2000: 67
APPENDIX 8
QUESTIONNAIRE 3

How positive is your self-image?

Complete the following questionnaire and write down your answers in your yearbook.

1. How do you feel when you look in the mirror?
   A. I look great.
   B. I look okay but could make some improvements.
   C. I have a few good points, but would change many things if I could.
   D. I hate the way I look.

2. Are you happy with your friends?
   A. Yes, I have great friends. We really support each other.
   B. I have one or two close friends who I can trust and rely on.
   C. I don’t have any close friends, just a few people I hang around with.
   D. Nobody likes me. I don’t have any friends.

3. How do you feel about school?
   A. I like school. I get on well with my teachers and try to do well in all my subjects.
   B. School’s okay. I get on alright with my teachers and I don’t mind doing my homework.
   C. I don’t really like school. Some teachers don’t like me and the work’s too much and too difficult.
   D. I hate school. Teachers always pick on me. I’m going to flunk.

4. Do taking part in sports and other activities such as drama, playing music and dancing make you feel good about yourself?
   A. Yes, they are an important part of my life.
   B. Yes, but it takes a lot of effort to be good at any of them.
   C. No, because I’m not good at any of those things.
   D. No, I have no interest in sports and other activities. They’re boring.

5. Do you feel good in the clothes you wear?
   A. Yes, always. I choose clothes that I know suit me even if they aren’t the latest fashion.
   B. I feel good when I have the latest fashions.
   C. Not really. My friends always have better clothes than me.
   D. Nothing suits me. I always look terrible.

End your score at 100.

Add your score here:

If your score is 18-20:
   You have a very positive self-image. Why don’t you help others to improve theirs?

If your score is 11-15:
   Your self-image may be okay but there are things you can do to improve it.

If your score is 6-10:
   You have a poor self-image. You need to work on it to feel better about yourself.

F. Hills (ed) (2005: 22-33)